



Volume 21, Number 1

The Environmental Education Alliance of Georgia

Winter 2013

## 21st Century Communication for Environmental Educators

at the 2013 EEA Conference  
March 22-23, 2013 • The Foundry, Athens

**T**he 2013 conference location is The Foundry, located across the street from the Classic Center on Foundry Street in Athens, GA. In a smaller space reserved for EEA, we'll have plenty of chances to reconnect with old friends, network with colleagues, and learn about communication for environmental educators. Over two days, concurrent sessions, field trips, and workshops give you the opportunity to gain and develop techniques and tools for environmental education.

This year's session strands are:

**Promoting Programs:** Managing a web presence, using social media, connecting to media trends, and designing programs to reach generations Y and Z.

**Differentiating Instruction:** Developing messages and teaching materials to effectively reach multiple audiences regardless of differences in learning style.

**Changing Behavior:** Social marketing strategies to help your audience apply their education lessons and contribute to the environmental good.

Since The Foundry is located right on the edge of downtown Athens, your Friday lunch and dinner are on your own to allow for some fun exploration of the town. The conference committee is working to set up some group dining options to continue the great socializing and networking at these meals.

Saturday will bring another full day of sessions, workshops, and field trips. A conference highlight is our annual service project. Awards will be presented during a banquet lunch to applaud the great work being done in the environmental education field.

Check out [www.eealliance.org](http://www.eealliance.org) for registration details and a call for exhibitors. [Scholarships are also available on the website.](#) We look forward to seeing you in Athens for the 2013 EEA Conference!



The Foundry, Athens

## ATEEG has become Nationally Accredited!

It was a lofty goal and a long arduous road started in 2006 but thanks to the efforts and devotion of EEA members, support for the program from the EEA Board and our state certifying agent, Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources at UGA, we can boast in EEA's 20th anniversary year that we are the first state to have a North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) accredited certification program for environmental educators. ATEEG, or Advanced Training for Environmental Educators in Georgia, was officially recognized on December 10, 2012.

Here is the official quote in the letter received from Judy Braus, Executive Director of NAAEE: "Based upon the review of your initial application and accompanying documentation in May, and the subsequent review of the requested addendum and additional documentation pertaining to your assessment of candidates in August, the Chair of the Application Review Panel (ARP) and Chair of the Accreditation Board have concurred with a decision to recognize Georgia's certification program, ATEEG, with full accreditation by NAAEE."

Thank you to those who believed that it could be done and worked tireless hours to compile statistics and complete applications, to those that believed in the program and supported it by enrolling in and promoting it to colleagues, to those who devoted time and resources as instructors for the past four years, and to those who advised, reorganized, and reiterated...it was all worth it!

However, our work is not yet done. Each of us has a part to play.

- You can begin your certification by [enrolling in our next round of Core Courses](#): (Course 1 - June 28-30, 2013; Course 2 – July 26-28, 2013; Course 3 – September 7-9, 2013).
- Faculty at Warnell School is formulating syllabi for semester-long college credit classes that will incorporate the ATEEG Program.
- The ATEEG Certification Advisory Board is readying for our re-accreditation in 2017.

Join ATEEG as we continue to advance the profession of environmental education in the state of Georgia!

## Snapshot of EEA Volunteer Service

EEA is powered by volunteer service from an engaged and active membership and a hard-working and dedicated Board of Directors who collectively plan events and programs that allow members to develop their enthusiasm and passion for environmental education.

We have recently implemented a new infrastructure to better receive and place volunteers within our committees that includes an online overview of volunteer opportunities. EEA has welcomed eight new volunteers since April 2012, bringing our total pool of active volunteers to 27. We appreciate the time, talent, and interest given by each of our volunteers. Our organization thrives because of the volunteer hours given by individuals all over the state. From October 2011 through November 2012, EEA volunteers gave over 1,315 hours in service! Our collective work supports environmental educators across Georgia as we strive to achieve our vision, a statewide culture of environmental literacy and stewardship.

For more information about volunteering for EEA, please visit the [volunteer section of our website](#).



The Council of Outdoor Learning Presents

### The Outdoor Learning Symposium

Oatland Island Wildlife Center

Savannah, Georgia

## Interpretation : Tell Your Story

By Naomi Thompson

Interpretation is a way of communicating to your visitors what makes your site or center so special. Perhaps you have struggled at your site to reveal what is there. Do you know what it is you want people to do and/or know after leaving your programs? Perhaps you are searching for a way to tell your story in a better, new way. Interpretation is the professional field that can help you. For example, when describing a trip I took to the Mexican state of Michoacan, I realized I could use colors to interpret my experience there.

*“If you want to form an idea of our journey, take a map of Mexico and you will see that Michoacán is one of the most beautiful and fertile regions of the world, crossed by hills and lavish valleys, its prairies watered by several streams and its climate temperate and healthful.”*

- Marquise Calderón de la Barca -

Michoacan is obviously the place to visit for color sensations. At elevations of 8000 feet or more the particular blueness of the sky mesmerizes you. Once you manage to drag your eyes down, you feel you are looking through a kaleidoscope. Handicrafts specific to the town are on display in a swirl of color. My favorite is the particular blue I have only seen in Mexico. In the color spectrum it is between blue and violet, thus called indigo. In life on buildings, coloring a large tablecloth, or accenting shirts and hand towels, it is between a creative inspiration and a narcotic.



Within the state of Michoacan, the town of Paracho shows guitars, masks are in Tocuaro, pottery in Capula, embroidery in Patzcuaro, and works of copper found in Santa Clara de Cobre. Morelia, the state capital, has an Artisan Museum

with small shops staffed by locals who display crafts their particular town excels in. Here, the shelves in the small rooms are so crammed full that the assault on your color sense is exhilarating.

The open air markets are also filled with people, local fruits and vegetables, and food smells. Along side streets, unique items burst out of wooden doorways in the stone buildings. Patzcuaro had my favorite find – long, black, wrinkly-skinned vanilla beans that are native to this region of Mexico.



A February journey to Michoacan is best because the weather is dry, sunny, and warm in the 10,000 foot high trans-volcanic mountains. At this height, oyamel fir stands help create another unique landscape of color and display. The deep green of the oyamel fir is interrupted by darker masses on the trees. Within shade or under clouds, the mass remains smoky grey, almost light black. Under weak sun, the mass changes to grey speckled with tan and random flashes of brilliant orange. Under direct, warming sun, the mass suddenly heaves, bursts upwards in a tornado swirl of color from monarch butterflies. The wind from the wings of the monarch butterflies finding a winter refuge in these trees is less intense, but just as hard to ignore.

Interpretive writing and interpretive programs certainly have their differences in presentation. They are the same though in striving to tell a story. Learn how to tell the story of your site, resource, park, or center at the May 21-24, 2013 Certified Interpretive Guide course at Stone Mountain Park. This 4 day-32 hour course is designed for frontline interpreters who teach public programs daily. It is also highly applicable for professional environmental educators who want to communicate with their audiences in new ways. [Online registration](#) is open.

## Focus on Membership

**V**enetia Butler has been involved with the EEA since its inception 20 years ago. She played part in that initial group that jump-started the organization from the beginning. At her first contact with the EEA she immediately knew that she was experiencing opportunities to learn from the best and she harmonized alongside other incredible icons such as Petey Giroux and Jerry Hightower. Venetia continues to bridge formal and nonformal teaching practices throughout her professional life.

Venetia grew up on Wilmington Island outside of Savannah. As a child, this island was basically undeveloped and she spent years roaming the woods and marshes, and exploring the rivers, creeks, and barrier islands by boat. In an early chapter of her life she married a biologist who became a commercial fisherman. When she was not teaching in the classroom, she was working on the shrimp boat, cleaning the catch or manning the helm, and thus continuing experiential, environmental education. Her second teaching position was at Tybee Elementary School on Savannah's barrier island. With visionary administrative support and wonderful colleagues, she taught all content areas in the outdoor environment as much as possible. This experience with outdoor education led to the co-authoring of a national award



winning curriculum, Environmental Studies for the Primary Grades. Venetia accepted a position teaching at the Oatland Island Education Center (now the Oatland Wildlife Center) in Savannah, which was one of the first leading facilities in environmental education—one of the very first EEA conferences was held at Oatland Island Wildlife Center. She was also fortunate to become a resource teacher for Wilderness Southeast, a school of the outdoors, which combines formal and informal teaching practices. She became a naturalist by co-leading and learning from some of the best naturalists in the country. She served in many positions, including President, on the board of Directors for the Georgia Science Teachers Association for many years. GSTA provided opportunities to work with the best science education leaders in Georgia and beyond. She was also a member of the team who facilitated GSTA's Science Teachers Teaching Teachers (ST3) leadership program for more than 12 years. She spent the last 3 of 32 years with the Savannah Chatham County School System as the Instructional Science Education Specialist. Venetia has not let much grass grow under her feet since retirement from the school system. She serves as an education representative on several boards and is currently the Schoolyard Coordinator for the Georgia Coastal Ecosystem-Long Term Ecological Research (GCE-LTER), NSF funded program. In addition, she has spent nearly seven years intimately involved in the development of ATEEG, the Advanced Training of Environmental Educators in Georgia. She has been involved with Georgia's Adopt-a-Stream, the Savannah Tree Foundation, Georgia Association of Marine Education, NOAA Grays Reef National Marine Sanctuary, and the Georgia Science Teachers Association. They all played a significant role in developing her leadership abilities, enhancing her knowledge base, and fostering lifelong professional and personal friendships.

Venetia's favorite part about being an environmental educator and teaching outside is "the opportunity to share our incredible natural world and see faces light up as discoveries are made." She believes that "environmental literacy is so important for the future of our exponentially fast changing world, and that our citizenry needs to be armed with the necessary skills to make informed decisions to tackle the issues and challenges that we face."

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In terms of dealing with environmental illiteracy or differing stewardship beliefs, Venetia advises other environment educators to set the example themselves, not being afraid to speak out, and doing so with understanding and respect for others. Sometimes educators are confronted with apathy and narrow-mindedness, and sometimes it is best to avoid conflict. Stay informed, be present, and gently present differing points of view in a non-confrontational manner—this is the best way to gain respect and plant a seed of thought to make difference. Also, believe in what you are doing, foster opportunities for yourself and others, and be the best person you can be. §



Our feathered friends in winter. Top: female cardinal. Bottom left: red-bellied woodpecker. Bottom right: cedar waxwing. (Photos by Linda May)



## Advancing Environmental Literacy

[The Alliance for Sustainable Colorado](#) is a model program many EE organizations can learn from. Their programs are center around “advancing sustainability through collaboration.” Their website offers a full listing of resources including a step-by-step guide for schools interested in starting a sustainability literacy program called [Advancing Environmental Literacy in Schools](#).

## Centennial High School Dedicates its Outdoor Classroom



The Environmental Club at Centennial High School was established over 5 years ago. Since that time, these committed students have accomplished a great deal. Julie Burroughs, the club’s sponsor and a Mathematics teacher at Centennial High, said, “These students set a great example. They have benefitted our school in many ways while engaging with community non-profit partners and corporations as well as with all levels of government in supporting and modeling initiatives where ‘stewardship’ means taking ‘Action.’”

On October 24, 2012, their recently completed Outdoor Classroom was dedicated with a small ceremony involving city council members, students, and volunteers. They also celebrated the school’s certification as a Schoolyard Habitat through the National Wildlife Federation. The beautiful pergola that welcomes visitors to the outdoor classroom was dedicated to honor Anne Kennedy, a North Fulton Master Gardener, and Cindy Eade, a Centennial parent volunteer, who have mentored the students and assisted them with the design and execution of the project. The classroom also contains several handmade picnic tables, a rock garden, and nine raised garden beds currently occupied by autumn vegetables. October 24 was also dedicated as “Julie Burroughs Day.”

In addition to the outdoor classroom, Environmental Club students have participated in an annual Rivers Alive cleanup on the Chattahoochee River, organized paint, bottle, and paper recycling events, volunteered their time with local animal shelters and city events, and have won awards for their efforts from Keep Roswell Beautiful and Keep Georgia Beautiful.



Damp, but happy EEA members pose on a Jekyll Island beach after an ocean paddling trip.



Snorkelers search for fish in the beautiful Conasauga River in Tennessee.



Hikers pose during our Summer Solstice event at Arabia Mountain.

## Be Wild, Be Free... With EEA Member Events!

By Tara Muenz,  
EEA Member Services Chair

2012 marked our first year of member trips, and what a year it was! Coinciding with the 20th celebration, EEA hosted 20 member events all around the state and with many of our partners.

Trips ranged from winter solstice hikes and berry picking to snorkeling for fishes in Tennessee, to longer gatherings of members such as the special 3-day adventure to Jekyll Island visiting Coastal Georgia. These trips offered many affordable opportunities to both new and current members who wanted to spend time with other members learning about ecosystems, or simply enjoying time together in beautiful surroundings.

Since we had such a fantastic response to these trips, we will be offering more in 2013. Please let us know if you would be interested in leading a trip, partnering with EEA to host an event, or have a location and/or trip in mind by [submitting these ideas to our online survey](#).

We look forward to taking you to amazing places in 2013, and in the spirit of EEA and its members, 'Be Wild, Be Free!'



Members channel their artistic side while painting the sunset on Jekyll Island.



Nothing says 'friendship' like posing in a wetsuit while standing in a river!



Members learn about coastal ecology on Jekyll Island.

# Environmental Education Alliance of Georgia



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*EEA works to promote environmental education by providing opportunities for members, schools, organizations, and the general public to get involved through the annual EEA conference, Outdoor Learning Symposium, and other special events.*

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