EEA Annual Conference—Register Today!

The 2014 EEA Conference, “Promoting the Next Generation of EE Leaders”, will be held at Rock Eagle 4-H Center on March 28-29, 2014. The conference has over 30 workshop offerings, an exhibit hall, and the annual awards banquet. Workshops are organized in the following session tracks:

**Ignite the Passion** – Engaging in EE;

**Making Connections** – Finding Your Path in EE;

**Professional Development** – Skills for Success in EE; and

**Experience Rock Eagle** – Experience Georgia 4-H Environmental Education.

This year’s keynote speaker will be Diane Davies, the founder of the Georgia 4-H Environmental Education program (see Page 3). She is the recipient of many awards and honors in our field and will provide an enlightening and engaging presentation. The deadline to register is March 14 and there will be no on-site registration this year.

Are you an educator who serves the Metro-Atlanta area and would like to attend EEA’s Annual Conference? DON’T MISS THIS OPPORTUNITY! Thanks to the George M. Brown Trust Fund, EEA has scholarships available for educators who serve Metro Atlanta communities and are interested in attending one or both days of the conference. Scholarships will be awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis- so please email us today to sign up! Please email Becca Iverson at fundraising@eealliance.org to secure your scholarship.

North Fulton Council PTA is also offering teacher and volunteer scholarships, more information can be found at http://eenorthfulton.weebly.com/scholarship-application-for-the-2014-eea-conference.html

There are several registration options:

- **$100 Full time registration for current members** Includes all sessions Friday and Saturday, Friday lunch, Friday awards dinner, and Saturday breakfast and lunch
- **$85 Full time registration for current student members** Includes all sessions Friday and Saturday, Friday lunch, Friday awards dinner, and Saturday breakfast and lunch
- **$60 Friday only registration for current members** Includes all sessions Friday, Friday lunch, and Friday awards dinner
- **$50 Saturday only registration for current members** Includes all sessions Saturday, Saturday breakfast and lunch
- **$37 Friday night lodging** Based on double occupancy. Includes linen. Room assignments will be made on a first-come, first-served basis on March 28. New and traditional cabins available. Lodging must be reserved with registration.

Please visit www.eealliance.org/annual-conference to register today!
By Naomi Thompson

Think of a time you took a trip to a fantastic location. On your return, you told the story of your trip to everyone who would listen, but felt people really did not get it. You had the enthusiasm and passion for where you had been, but couldn’t pass on the connection, the meaning, of the place. What you needed was a good interpreter. That interpreter can be you.

Think of a time you have been challenged to share a message, or a lesion, and felt as though your lesion was lost. The Certified Interpretive Guide program, designed for anyone who delivers or would like to deliver interpretive programs to the public. It combines both the theoretical foundations of the profession with practical skills in delivering quality interpretive programming to visitors. The CIG program offers an opportunity to train facilitators in interpretive techniques and acknowledge that training with an internationally recognized certification. The CIG credential is gaining recognition in the Environmental Education world. Join in and be part of the growing profession of interpretation.

Interpreters make meaning out of their site for their audience. You work at a place that was given meaning and you have been given the opportunity to tell the story of that place. If you want people to be in tune with you and your site, attend a Certified Interpretive Guide training.

Hal Cannon, an extraordinary folktale storyteller, says “It is [an interpreter’s] honor to help open up the world and thus turn the mundane into the extraordinary.” You master this by learning how to shift your visitor’s perception about your site. Interpretation is the professional field that can help you.

The mission of the National Association for Interpretation, the organization that oversees CIG, is to inspire leadership and excellence to advance heritage interpretation as a profession. NAI provides benefits to members who work at parks, public forests, historic sites, museums, nature centers, aquariums, and anywhere that informal heritage education programs are offered to the public.

Learn how to tell the story of your site, resource, park, or center at the **May 20-23, 2014** 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 now open, visit the EEA website to register.

For more information about NAI, visit [www.interpnet.com](http://www.interpnet.com)
**ONE MILLION STUDENTS SERVED BY GEORGIA 4-H PROGRAM**

By Merritt Melancon  
University of Georgia

With the arrival of 456 third- through fifth-graders at the University of Georgia Rock Eagle 4-H Center on Thursday, Oct. 10, Georgia 4-H marked its millionth student served by its environmental education program.

While Georgia 4-H may be best known for student leadership and skills development programs offered through UGA Extension’s 4-H clubs, the organization has offered environmental education to youth across the Southeast since 1979. The programs are open to all Georgia students, whether they attend class at public or private schools or are home-schooled.

“The Georgia 4-H Environmental Education Program provides students the opportunity to experience science in the outdoors,” said Arch Smith, Georgia 4-H state leader. “Too many children have not been afforded the chance to experience nature. The 4-H Environmental Education Program provides hands-on learning in the natural environment at our five 4-H centers from the mountains to the piedmont to the sea.”

Diane Davies, now a retired 4-H specialist and EEA’s Keynote Speaker at this year’s conference, started Georgia 4-H environmental education in 1979 with a $300 annual budget and six months to establish the program.

She was inspired by her childhood growing up in the foothills and mountains of Pennsylvania and the connections she made between her schoolwork and the time that she spent outside, she said.

“I wanted the students to understand what they were learning in the classroom was applicable to their lives,” Davies said. “Children are naturally curious about nature, so why not use that to teach them? Don’t separate them from the outdoors.”

Now, 35 years later, the program serves more than 44,000 students annually at five locations across Georgia: Rock Eagle 4-H Center in Eatonton, Wahsega 4-H Center in Dahlonega, Fortson 4-H Center in Hampton, Burton 4-H Center on Tybee Island and Jekyll 4-H Center on Jekyll Island.

“It’s absolutely incredible to think of the last 35 years and how it’s grown,” Davies said.

During the summer, staff at the 4-H centers help thousands of Georgia 4-H’ers make the most of the club’s summer camp programs. When school is back in session, the school year staff deliver a research-based curriculum linked directly to the Georgia Performance Standards. They draw on Georgia’s unique ecosystems to teach lessons in biology, environmental science and geology.

“Teachers and parents recognize the Georgia 4-H Environmental Education Program for bringing school concepts to life and connecting students to the natural world using nature as a class-room without walls,” said Melanie Biersmith, the environmental education coordinator for Georgia 4-H.

While the programs emphasize the sciences, lessons also touch on history, language arts and mathematics and promote team building and communication skills.

“Our entire school has made the annual trip to Rock Eagle since the school opened in 2005,” said Jennifer Hernandez, principal of the Marietta Center for Advanced Academics, a magnet school in the Marietta City Schools system. “Having the millionth camper makes it extra special for us because we see the great value in outdoor education as well as the other positive aspects the trip brings—creating a bonding experience for all that attend.”

**Georgia 4-H**

Georgia 4-H at UGA assists youths in acquiring knowledge, developing life skills and forming attitudes that will enable them to become self-directing, productive and contributing members of society. UGA Extension 4-H agents are in nearly every county in Georgia, offering fifth- through 12th-graders hands-on learning experiences focused on leadership, agriculture, the environment and a broad range of other topics. For more information on Georgia 4-H, see www.georgia4h.org or call 706-542-4444. For more information on UGA Extension, see http://extension.uga.edu/ or call 1-800-ASK-UGA1.

(Merritt Melancon is a news editor with the University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.)
ATTENTION GARDENERS: MONARCHS NEED YOUR HELP!

November 2nd is the date of the traditional Mexican celebration of Día de los Muertos, or The Day of the Dead. It is on this day that families across Mexico come together to remember and pray for family and friends who have passed away. It is also around this day that the monarch butterflies begin to arrive in the Oyamel fir forests in central Mexico. Millions of butterflies arrive from their months-long flight down eastern North America to spend the winter months in these forested mountains before returning in the spring. According to traditional beliefs, the monarchs are the souls of dead ancestors returning to Earth for their annual visit.

The arrival of the monarchs in Mexico is clearly an important event, both ecologically and culturally. Unfortunately, the well-documented decline of monarchs has scientists fearing that this amazing phenomenon may be near collapse. In 2012, the migration reached a record low of 60 million butterflies. So far, this year was even more dismal at only 3 million individuals straggling in nearly a week late.

The decline of the monarchs can be partly attributed to the widespread use of pesticides and herbicides in farming and gardening. While pesticides can kill caterpillars outright, herbicides contribute to the decline in a more backhanded way - they kill the monarch’s host plant, milkweed (Asclepias spp.). Some studies show that up to 90% of wild milkweed has been obliterated by herbicides.

While the facts can be sobering and even downright depressing, there IS good news. Gardeners can help monarchs and other insects by planting pollinator friendly plants, especially milkweed (which, in addition to the being the only food source for monarch caterpillars, is a valuable nectar plant for all sorts of insects). Butterflyweed (Asclepius tuberosa) is a particularly hardy milkweed, adapted to the scorching Georgia sun and dry conditions. It needs little maintenance, and in our warm climate is a perennial. This and other milkweed species are also getting easier to find in chain garden centers, and are a staple of any native plant sale. Once they are established, their bright orange, yellow, white, or pink flowers are a cheerful addition to any garden.

Native species, such as butterflyweed, common milkweed (A. syriaca), and swamp milkweed (A. incarnata) are the best choices. Recently, the non-native Mexican milkweed (A. curassavica) has also become popular, due to their long-lasting flowers. Those choosing to plant A. curassavica should proceed with caution since their effects on the migrating butterfly population and the spread of a protozoan parasite are unknown. If grown, gardeners should be careful to cut them back in the fall after the monarch migration has passed through and again in the spring after the first generation has returned from Mexico.

Even though average home gardens may only have a handful of milkweed plants, they are an integral part of restoring habitat by becoming pathways that connect our fractured ecosystem. These small patches of milkweed and other nectar plants are like desert oases for migrating monarchs, providing a place to rest, eat, and lay eggs as the butterflies travel south.

Monarchs Across Georgia, a non-profit organization dedicated to restoring pollinator habitat across the state, offers a Pollinator Habitat Certification for qualified personal and public gardens. Recipients receive a beautiful sign for their garden as well as the satisfaction of knowing that they are contributing the success of future monarch populations. To learn more about the Pollinator Habitat Certification, visit www.MonarchsAcrossGA.org. Other organizations offer similar certifications, such as Monarch Watch’s Monarch Waystation Program (www.MonarchWatch.org) and the National Wildlife Federation’s Backyard Habitat Certification (www.nwf.org). The Monarchs Across Georgia website also has a comprehensive list of resources for those unsure how to get started with the pollinator garden.

Let’s work together to provide habitat for Monarchs and other pollinators – and maybe, in 2014, we will see more beautiful souls returning to Mexico on Día de los Muertos.

Upcoming dates:
February 28: MAG Service Award
Nominations Due, see http://www.eealliance.org/mag-service-award

March 11, 6:45PM: MAG at Georgia Native Plant Society Meeting
http://www.gnps.org/geninfo/calendar.php#GNPS_Meetings_and_Ev
GIVING BACK TO EEA

Funding a statewide EE organization really does take a village. Thank you EEA supporters who generously gave to our end of year campaign. Your support is critical to EEA’s mission and program initiatives that serve YOU and other EE professionals and Georgians. We’ve been busy cultivating support, improving internal controls, and creating new and exciting ways to give to EEA:

- EEA is completing a financial review which will make us eligible for the Georgia State-wide Giving Campaign. The review demonstrates our fiscal responsibility and confirms that our mission and investments are valuable.

- Register your Kroger card to benefit EEA! It’s easy and everybody needs to eat something right? feed EEA! [http://www.eealliance.org/donation](http://www.eealliance.org/donation)

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- Fundraising committee is always looking for additional members. If you have contacts, in-kind gifts, and are passionate about EEA, join us. We welcome your contributions and energy. Contact fundraising@eealliance.org to get involved.

- Give now, because now is the time! [http://www.eealliance.org/donation](http://www.eealliance.org/donation)
PADDLE GEORGIA TEACHER SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

Are you a Georgia educator teaching grades K-12 looking for a unique summer opportunity? If so, you are eligible to apply for one of 12 scholarships to participate in Paddle Georgia 2014 for FREE (Registration regularly $). Paddle Georgia is an annual event by the Georgia River Network. Venture down the Chattahoochee River from Buford Dam to Franklin GA June 21-27, 2014. You’ll journey along with fellow teachers, receive training in Georgia Adopt-A-Stream and Project WET and bring your skills back to the classroom during the 2014-15 school year. This program is made possible through support from the Captain Planet Foundation, National Park Service and Cobb County Watershed Stewardship.