

ANSS

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello members,

We have gathered yet another stellar group of naturalists to serve on our board this term. Join me in welcoming our two newest members to the class of 1999-2001. **Ruth Wilson** is from Bowling Green University and the author of numerous articles on children and environmental education. **Mark Baldwin** is the Director of Education for the Roger Tory Peterson Institute, a nature advocate who has also conducted numerous writing workshops. Help our new board members feel welcome and at home by putting them to the task of leading ANSS into the new millennium.

The ANSS is going through the evolution necessary of all vital organizations. We are staying current on the information highway by maintaining a web site with a newly established 'front door.' Please visit us at www.nature-study.org and give our web volunteers your input.

The Society appears to have reached that of a climax community. Our membership consists of many from the 'old school,' many of the grand names of the environmental movement. In order not to be swallowed up by one of the numerous conglomerate alphabet soups of organizations in this day of consolidation, we have determined to find our niche and forte and retain our separate identity. Our current niche is still to be determined in the broad spectrum of environmental education. We hope to remain generalists in the ecological sense of the word; i.e., having the ability to explore a specialty and yet, be able to survive the hard times by relying on the diversity of our members' strengths.

Our strengths as an organization have been our longevity, our history and continued support of environmental literacy with our presentation of the Eva L. Gordon Award, our journal, *Nature Study*, and through the many published works of our members. The purpose of ANSS will always be to "promote nature study, conservation education, and the concept of environmental education dealing with interrelationships within and among all systems, natural and man-made."

As we move into the next century we need to chart the course of ANSS. The Seneca people have a saying, "You must know for which harbor you are headed if you are to catch the right wind to take you there." I am hoping that you as a member will not only help determine what ports we call, but use your knowledge and experience to aid our navigation, your enthusiasm to help set the sail and your determination to pump the bilge when needed.

Please read Liberty Hyde Bailey's *Holy Earth* again this winter and then share that book, this newsletter and a copy of our Journal with a friend and colleague. If each of us can become a mentor to just one budding naturalist, birder, educator and/or writer, our membership can double. Great ideas such as those expressed by Bailey circle around again and again. I believe many naturalists and educators and writers will be 'seeking their roots' in the near future. The American Nature Study Society needs to be prepared to meet the needs of, provide an historical background for and nurture the innate sense of wonder in nature for both the professional as well as the lay community of naturalists, educators and writers.

Yours in Nature,
SA Melcher
President, ANSS



President: - Steve Melcher - Vice President: Delmar Janke - Recording Secretary: Flo Mauro - Treasurer: Paul Spector - Editor, *Nature Study*: Janet Hawkes - Directors: Mark Baldwin, Margaret Barker, Frank Knight, John Gustafson, Bill Hammond, Tracy Kay, Kevin Peter, Laurence Pringle, Helen Ross Russell, Edith Sisson, Ruth Wilson.

TEACHING TIP: THE BAITED TRACKING BOX.

by Dillon J. Finan

By utilizing the art of tracking a nature observer can witness the interrelationships between animals and their environment. The observer follows the steps of the animal witnessing the world through the animal's eyes, experiencing the life of the animal. A good tracker knows the animal's behavior, diet, and moods. To reach a thorough understanding of tracking the observer must first learn to see tracks and identify them. A baited tracking box is an invaluable tool for learning the basics of tracking. The baited tracking box is simply a eight foot by eight foot sand box with bait placed in the middle. The bait attracts a variety of animals whose tracks are preserved in the soft sand. The tracking box helps students appreciate the variety of animals in their area, allowing students to learn about animal tracking in a controlled environment.

Materials:

- Four eight foot 1<by>6 cedar boards.
- 1000 pounds of sand.
- One four foot 2<by>4.
- A three foot, one inch wooden dowel rod.
- Scraps of plywood & scraps of 2<by>4s.
- Ten 2 inch screws & ten 1.5 inch screws.
- Drill, One inch drill bit, saw, screwdriver, shovel, rake.

Building the Baited Tracking Box:

The Tracking Box: Dig a 8'<by> 8'square trench six inches deep. Set the cedar boards in the trench at ground level. Fill in around the boards with dirt, and pack tightly. You should now have a framed in section of ground. Dig out the inside of the frame about 1 to 1.5 inches deep. Fill in the box with one thousand pounds of sand. Make the sand box level with the ground around it. Use a rake to keep the sand smoothed out for track collecting.

The Bait Pole: Make a 2'<by>1.5' table top, out of scrap plywood, and screw the small tabletop on top of the four foot 2<by>4, using the scrap 2<by>4s as braces. 1.5' down from the table top drill a one inch hole through the center of the 2<by>4. Put the one inch wooden dowel rod through the hole so half of it sticks out on one side of the 2<by>4 and the other half sticks out on the other side. This dowel is used for hang different types of bait above the ground. Set the pole eight inches in the ground in the center of the tracking box.

Types of bait: Choice of bait depends on the animals you wish to attract. Peanuts and suet attract a wide variety of herbivores and omnivores. I have heard deer cannot resist ginger root, but nothing has touched the ginger root hanging from my bait pole. Bird seed mixes will attract rodents of varying sizes. Fish and/or fresh road kill will attract scavengers and carnivores. Stay away from manufactured foods, with the exception of suet, to avoid

creating a drastic change in the animals' diet.

How to bait the box: I would suggest baiting for herbivores at first. Place peanuts and suet balls on the table top and scattered around on the ground around the pole. Hang some ginger root and a suet pole from the one inch dowel rod. Be patient with the box. At first only a few species of animals with a high tolerance for human contact will visit the box such as raccoons, opossums, squirrels, deer, and wild turkey. As the local animals gain familiarity with the tracking box a few rare surprise visitors will begin to appear.

Suet Recipes

1. 2.5 cups of peanut butter, 0.5 cups of honey, 1 cup of mixed bird seed, 0.5 cups of dried fruit. Place all the ingredients in a bowl and mix thoroughly.

2. Sausage and/or bacon grease mixed with sunflower seeds.

The suet can be rolled into balls or smeared on a pole with numerous one inch holes drilled into it.

After a couple months of baiting herbivores and omnivores, leave the box without bait for 3-4 weeks. Then place fresh road kill on the table top and hang whole fish from the one inch dowel rod. Place some fish on the ground around the pole as well. At first, the fish and roadkill will lure mostly scavengers like vultures, crows, and opossums. With patience, many other types of visitors will discover the box.

When should I bait? Baiting at any time of the year will be effective. I feel August through November are great months to bait. Many animals are foraging heavily during these months to prepare for winter, and the bait will be a welcome supplement to their diet. Especially if you bait with foods high in fat like peanuts and suet.

One word of caution: Pay close attention to the visitors of the tracking box, and if nocturnal animals visit the box during the day or animals display peculiar behavior, then stop baiting the box for a while. *The goal is to study tracks and observe wildlife by supplementing their diet, not creating animals dependent on your food source.* Read about identifying rabid animals before creating a tracking box. Rabies can affect all mammals including humans. Some signs of rabies include but are not limited to: nervousness, aggression, and abnormal behavior (nocturnal animals out in daylight, wild animals exhibiting no fear of humans etc...) If a rabid animal visits the tracking box call the local game warden, and stop baiting the tracking box. In the event of a bite by a rabid animal clean the wound thoroughly, get immediate medical attention, and report the incident to local authorities.

A baited tracking box can put you in contact with many local animals. The tracking box is intended for people interested in studying animal tracks and signs. Please remember to treat animal visitors with respect, and they will provide much knowledge and joy. Through tracking we can enter the lives of many animals. These lives tell stories of the cycle of nature allowing us to view the earth as the animals we are. Happy tracking!

... FYI ...

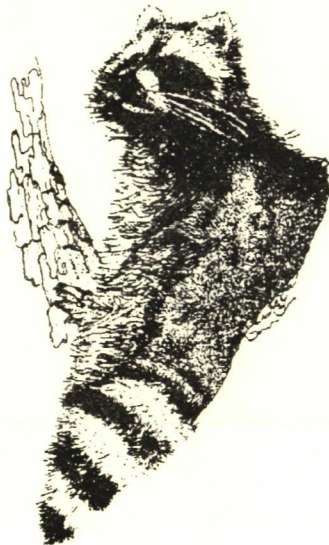


Yellowstone Wildlife Courses Offered Year-Round

The Yellowstone Association Institute has issued its new catalogue featuring more than 100 short courses on the natural and cultural history of the Yellowstone area. The Institute is a non-profit field school operated in partnership with the National Park Service. Among current offerings are courses on grizzly bears, wolves, bison, geology, wildflowers, horsepacking, kayaking, nature writing and Yellowstone history. Courses are taught all seasons in the park and several offer graduate or under-graduate credit. To request a free catalogue, write; Yellowstone Association Institute, PO Box 117, Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190, call 307-344-2294, or www.Yellowstoneassociation.org

National Conservation Training Center - Catalogue of Training FY 2000

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's National Conservation Training Center (NCTC), located 85 miles from Washington, DC, just north of Sheperdstown, VA, is a leader in providing training and education services to better accomplish the common goal of conserving fish, wildlife, and their habitat. The Catalogue of Training FY 2000 lists the hundreds of courses to be offered at NCTC. For information and/or a copy of the catalogue contact; NCTC FY2000 Catalogue of Training, NCTC Publications, 304-876-7659, www.nctc.fws.gov



Watershed Information Network

EPA's Office of Water recently unveiled the Watershed Information Network (WIN). This Internet-based tool can be used to find and exchange environmental information needed for activities to sustain and restore water quality. WIN can be used to provide information on how to network with others,

ANSS would like to publish any announcements, issues, teaching tips, etc. that you or your organization would like to send us. If you would like to review a book/publication for the newsletter, just let us know, we would be happy to let you help us out. Please forward your information to: ANSS Newsletter, PEEC, RR 2, Box 1010, Dingmans Ferry, PA 18328.

what resources are available, how to start a watershed group, the conditions of watersheds and who is working on watersheds. Contact WIN at <http://www.epa.gov/win>



Coastlines

Coastlines is a publication of the Urban Harbors Institute at the University of Massachusetts (UMASS), Boston, MA, and is prepared in cooperation with the US EPA, Office of Wetlands, Oceans, and Watersheds. It is designed for those interested in information about estuaries and near coastal waters. For information and/or subscriptions contact; coastlines@umb.edu or www.epa.gov/nep/coastlines/

Ecotones - PEEC Learning in a National Park

Ecotones is a publication of the Pocono Environmental Education Center, featuring articles and information designed for educators, administrators, students, group leaders, families and individuals interested in learning about and enjoying nature and natural systems in a National Park. This newspaper includes articles and lesson plans on a variety of subjects including; partnerships, hiking, introducing young children to nature, birding, urban tracking, women in science, internships, a calendar of Workshops & Institutes for 2000, Learning Standards and professional development opportunities for educators. For more information and/or to obtain a copy write; PEEC, RR 2, Box 1010, Dingmans Ferry, PA 18328, call 570-828-2319, e-mail peec@ptd.org, or www.peec.org



OUR SINCERE APOLOGIES . . .

Please note a correction regarding information in our last ANSS Newsletter. In the article regarding the Liberty Hyde Bailey cabin, the sentence "The beautiful stone cabin built by Bailey and friends is now maintained by a local Girl Scout Troop..." needs to be corrected to "...the beautiful stone cabin built by Bailey and friends is now owned and maintained by the Seven Lakes Girl Scout Council, Inc...." In addition, anyone interested in contributing to the cabin's upkeep and repair please contact Darwyn Jepson, Property Director, Seven Lakes GSC, Inc., 300 Route 318, Phelps, NY 14532-9315 (or call 315-539-5085)

A GATHERING OF THE ELDERS

In 1988 an event called 'A *Gathering of the Elders*' met at the Holden Arboretum in Mentor, Ohio in order to re-connect with the past by spending time with many of those individuals who helped shape and influence the nature study movement in this country. The event was viewed as a huge success--beneficial to all who attended--and everyone thought there would be a need to gather again.

The American Nature Study Society and the Pocono Environmental Education Center will co-sponsor the second '*Gathering*' as a new millennium celebration sometime in the year 2000. It is our intent to bring together many of the elders who can share their thoughts, experiences and relationships with others in shaping this vitally important area of study.

Look for more information in the coming months . . .



NATURE STUDY AT PEEC

WITH JOHN SERRAO AND HELEN ROSS RUSSELL

ANSS and PEEC invite you to join us for a series of two-day workshops with these celebrated teachers and authors. Their programs are appropriate for all educators, group leaders, nature center staff members, and individuals seeking personal enjoyment or professional enrichment through nature study. Bring your books for signing . . . there will be ample time for meeting and talking with each of these presenters.

The First PEEC at Spring with John Serrao

April 28-29, 2000

This is a time of year when all of nature reaches a peak of activity in the Northeast: the forest is full of wildflowers, several species of frogs, toads, snakes and turtles are breeding, baby mammals venture out into the open, swallow tail butterflies and luna moths emerge from winter pupae, and over 100 species of birds are present in the fields, forests and wetlands. This two-day program includes slide presentations, several field forays, and a special program with live, native reptiles and amphibians.

Ten Minute Field Trips with Dr. Helen Ross Russell

September 8-9, 2000

These 'Ten Minute Field Trips' will focus on Fall as the precursor of Winter. This is yet another time of the year when all of nature is in transition. Sunlight fades earlier in the evening, leaves begin to turn color, birds begin to migrate south, and squirrels gather and store food at a furious pace. All of these activities and more will be explored in a series of 'Ten Minute Field Trips' in and around PEEC.

To register by mail, complete the form, return it with full payment or a **\$25/pp non-refundable, non-transferable deposit to: PEEC, RR2, Box 1010, Dingmans Ferry, PA 18328.** To register by phone using Visa or Master Card, call PEEC (570) 828-2319. Registration fees are per person/per event. Confirmations, directions and a tentative schedule will be sent to you.

Rates: \$ 69/pp -Current Member, ANSS includes program, meals and lodging.

\$ 99/pp - Non-member, ANSS, includes program, meals, lodging and a one year individual membership with the ANSS.

\$25/pp - Additional charge for 'Bed & Breakfast' Saturday night/Sunday morning.

PEEC Program Registration Form

Name of Institute _____ Date of Institute _____

Cost of Institute _____ Amount Enclosed _____

Name _____ Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

Please apply Program charges to my ___ Visa ___ MasterCard

Card# _____ Exp. Date: _____

I would like to share accommodations with: _____

If you have questions, please write or call (570) 828-2319, www.peec.org

BOOK REVIEW

by Dr. Helen Ross Russell

The Wood Duck and the Mandarin, the Northern Ducks by Lawton L. Shurtleff and Christopher Savage
University of California Press, 232 pp, with 100's of colored photographs, \$34.95. All royalties from the sale of this book are being donated to the Nature Conservancy and Ducks Unlimited in the US and to the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust in England.

The Northern Wood Duck found in every one of the contiguous 48 states and the Mandarin Duck of Asia are the only members of the genus, *Aix*. Similar in size with the strikingly handsome 'helmeted' males and almost identical beautiful females. The two ducks share a unique woodland habitat, nesting holes in trees, leading their young to water immediately after hatching where they feed on aquatic plants.

By a strange series of human relationships the two ducks share the same habitat on Lawton Shurtleff's ranch in Sonoma County in Northern California. In 1968 when Lawton Shurtleff first owned the ranch he decided to build a pond. An old-timer running the bulldozer told him about the wood ducks that used to come into the area and suggested that nest boxes be built. This launched a 30 year adventure in learning about predators, food, relationships and behavior. In 1972 when Lawton was walking in the woods with a friend who lived 20 miles away a Mandarin duck arrived at the ranch and perched on a nest box.

What a fortuitous day! The friend not only identified the Mandarin, he told its story. Many years before, his father had

a wild bird collection, and on at least one occasion, a door blew off a pen and ducks escaped. These feral ducks had raised many generations of young in the area. Gradually more Mandarin's arrived in the forest nest boxes and waterways on the ranch.

In 1983, Dr. A. Starker Leopold, Aldo's son, met with the author and encouraged Lawton to keep even more extensive records. The web continues and on and on, through A. Starker Leopold, Lawton met Aldo's younger brother, Frederick, who had studied the wood ducks on the Mississippi flyway for 50 years. Then Christopher Savage, who had written a book about the Mandarin duck in England and was still studying these birds in their native habitat joined in the study.

This is a ravishingly beautiful book with 100's of exquisite color photographs. The story that it tells is exciting, sobering, challenging, touching base in the US, Russia, Japan, China and Great Britain, weaving together art, culture and the environment.

The final sentence of the introduction says it all, "The future is in large part in the hands of dedicated individuals and organizations working worldwide to protect valuable forests and wetlands on which so much wildlife relies. By journey's end, the reader will be able to share with Christopher and me our insight into the workings of a well-organized but little understood web of conservation world wide and our deep admiration and affection for two of the world's most beautiful water fowl."

"It is a time of Winter Solstice when one experiences going into a darkness of ensnaring dangers. Hold to the lessons of nature. When one releases oneself from subjective attitudes, one becomes like water in a ravine, and moves on as actions become correctly responsive to a situation. One cannot ladle with a sieve, nor strain with a dipper."

—I Ching Calendar

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