



5 RIVERS

TRIBUTARY

Spring 2006

Five Rivers Environmental Education Center

www.dec.state.ny.us/website/education/5rivers.html

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Student Fellowships at Five Rivers: Special Perk for Special Teens!

"I took Snappy (snapping turtle) and observed him. I then wrote a couple of paragraphs about him. Anita says it will wind up in the newsletter eventually. I think that's pretty cool."

Paul

Paul, a Student Fellow, worked at the Center for one week last summer. Fellowships were open to members of our Student Naturalist volunteers who had reached 14 years of age and who had given at least 15 hours of service to Five Rivers, and the Fellowships were competitive.

"I would like to win this fellowship because it would be a great work experience and I would enjoy working with the staff."

"I have no fear of reptiles and amphibians. I also like working with children."

"I hope you will consider me for the fellowship because we can learn from each other."

"I will work without supervision, I am a hard worker and I bring a lot of energy to whatever I do."

"I have a sense of humor and people enjoy working with me."

"By choosing me ... it would expose me to new experiences which I could then incorporate into the volunteer program."

Four fellowships were awarded: Max Batcher of Knox, Alex Finkelstein of Delmar, Chloe Gatta of Slingerlands, and Paul Jones of Schenectady.

The teens worked a five-day week and took part in a variety of Center activities. And they all kept journals.



Paul Jones with summer visitors

*New York State Department of
Environmental Conservation
George E. Pataki, Governor
Denise N. Sheehan, Commissioner*

"I went to a senior center with Jo and talked about flowers." "Held owl, lots of fun, for a (public) program." "Cleaned algae from pond(water garden)." "Went to Heldeberg Workshop to help..."

Max

"Today we did lots of orientations. I even did the last three. Jo said that she heard someone say that I did a good job. Later I went out and counted monarch butterfly eggs."

Paul

"... I went out and checked a trail. It was very buggy out! Then I helped ... by filing and stuffing envelopes."

"I had program prep with Anita. We're doing a bat program... I have a few chapters to read so I can become familiar with bats. I never knew how much planning went into every public program."

Chloe

"Filled the brochure boxes and checked the Woodlot Trail. I also released animals with Dee... I went to collect flowers with Jo. Tonight I'm coming back to talk about turtles (public program)."

Alex

Fellows met and worked with each staff member, discussed careers and creating a resume, and did some creative writing.



*Max
Batcher &
friend*

"If you stand by Aries' cage you will notice that he sees every move you make and hears every sound that is made. His milky white eye gives him a mysterious feeling. His beak is like a bone and is very sharp and makes it easy to hold his prey."

Max

"The appearance of the snapping turtle looked almost like a dinosaur. His dark brown skin was loose and flabby. His super-protective shell seemed small and not exactly protective. He was also very sensitive and followed every move I made. Not once did he try to attack me."

Paul

"As I lie in a blanket of grass, I listen to the grasshopper chirping beside me. I smile as I watched her knobby back legs move together like the bow and string of a violin to produce that sweet sound. As she sings I feel at ease and I watch her arch her almost invisible long antenna with the grace of a ballerina. Never have I felt so free."

Chloe

"Turtles move without making a sound gliding under water so wild and free he swims right up to me colors swirl in my head I see flashes of forest green, pale yellow, and red on the shell ivory, khaki, and burnt orange I see the colors come and go so free the turtles swims so intently..."

Alex (writing free verse)

Staff meetings, staff trainings, staff lunches: all part of a full week for our young volunteers. At week's end they were evaluated for their performance and they got to evaluate us!

"Being able to do things with the public ... helped me learn how to get my point about nature across to people."

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Five Rivers Environmental Education Center Spring Program Schedule 2006

Programs are free of charge unless otherwise noted. Participants should dress for the weather! We regret that we cannot accommodate organized youth groups at these programs. Please call to make special arrangements for a group.

We welcome those who have any type of physical challenge to all of our programs; please call ahead to let us know your needs.

For further information or for pre-registration, call Five Rivers at (518) 475-0291. In the event of severe weather, programs may be canceled. Please call the Center to confirm.

Saturday, April 1 *Watchable Wildlife:* ROBINS AND THEIR KIN 10:00 AM.

John Burroughs proclaimed April the month of the robin, with whose "first utterance the spell of winter is thoroughly broken." Join us on a field study of robins, bluebirds and our other friends in the thrush family as we celebrate the great Catskill naturalist's 167th birthday.

Saturday, April 1 *Family Fun:* MAKE A BIRDHOUSE 2:00 PM

Early April is a great time to set out a birdhouse. And this program, geared for parent-and-child participation, is all you need to get started. You'll learn all about cavity-nesting birds, and then measure, mark, glue, screw and hammer together your own standard bird house suitable for bluebirds, tree sparrows or house wrens! Please call the Center to pre-register by Thursday, March 30.

Sunday, April 2 CONSERVATION FOR THE HOME GARDENER 2:00 PM

Did you know that gardeners can help save some of the world's most threatened plants? Discover simple, everyday actions to promote plant conservation when you practice gardening, from purchasing seed-propagated plants to growing non-invasive species. Also learn about major threats to plants worldwide, and government, nonprofit and citizen efforts to save plants in gardens and in the wild. This class is sponsored by Botanic Gardens Conservation International (www.bgci.org). Please call the Center to pre-register by March 31 for this two-hour workshop.

Thursday, April 20 FAMILY FUN PROGRAM 10:00 AM

Early spring is a wonderful time for parents and children to explore the changing outdoor world together. What's turning green, what birds are at the feeders? This program involves a walk and an indoor craft. Please call to pre-register. Members free; non-members \$1.00/family.

Saturday, April 22 FROGWATCH AT HOME! 2:00 PM

If you would like to monitor amphibian populations at home or at a natural site you visit, celebrate Earth Day by joining us for this fun and easy indoor Frogwatch training. Kids welcome! You will learn how to identify the calls of different species of frogs and how to participate in Frogwatch USA by filling out a simple data recording form, and doing a "three-minute listen." Please call to pre-register. See back page of the newsletter for more information on Frogwatch.

Special Programs for Homeschool Families

All sessions are hands-on and interactive between adult and child, and all participants will be asked to keep journals.

Monday, April 24 TOOLS OF EXPLORATION 10:00 AM

Exploring our world through looking, hearing, smelling and touching.

Wednesday, May 31 FROGWATCHING 7:00 PM

Learn the scientific method of censusing amphibian populations.

Wednesday, June 21 STREAM EXPLORATION 10:00 AM

Catch, identify, record, and release animals of a stream community.

Please call the Center to pre-register.

Fee per program:

FOFR Members \$6.00 for one adult and one child plus \$2.50 for each additional child.

Non-members \$8.00 for one adult and one child plus \$3.50 for each additional child.

If you enroll for the whole series you receive a 10% discount.

Thursday, April 27 *Watchable Wildlife: THE AMERICAN WOODCOCK* 7:00 PM

In the last 20 years, the American woodcock has had its ups and downs. Changing land use practices and other factors have had a significant effect on this squatty gamebird throughout the eastern seaboard. Join us for an uplifting look at woodcock management as we search field and fen for this most extraordinary bird.

Friday, April 28 PEEPERS AND FROG WATCHING 7:00 PM

Our annual trek to the wetlands to find those tiny frogs with the big voices. Our search is now a part of "Frogwatch USA," a national survey of amphibian populations. Bring a flashlight, and wear shoes that you don't mind getting wet. No nets, please!



Saturday, April 29 *Watchable Wildlife:* MOTHER GOOSE WALK 2:00 PM

Canada geese have been raising families at Five Rivers for decades. Join us as we search for mother and father geese, and check on whether any youngsters have hatched out.

THE EARLY BIRDER

Walks are held on Thursday mornings: **May 4, 11, 18 and 25.**

The early birder gets the bagels! Plus some great birding in Five Rivers' woods, fields, and wetlands. This spring, birders will get some great coffee, too. We serve **shade-grown organic coffee** at our bird walks. This coffee is grown in a manner that preserves the rainforest canopy that is such an important habitat for so many migratory birds. It is “fairly traded,” organically grown, and on top of all that, it tastes great!

Join us at 7:00 AM for refreshments and watching birds at the feeder. The outdoor walk begins at 7:30 AM. Beginners are always welcome! Bring binoculars and bird identification guides if you have them—we have some to lend.

Saturday, May 6 TREES AND SHRUBS YOU SHOULD KNOW 2:00 PM.

Five Rivers has many species of trees and shrubs, both native and non-native. Come learn to identify some of our native trees and shrubs, and discover the different types of wildlife for which they provide food and shelter.

Saturday, May 13 *Cheep Thrills:* BIRDING BY EAR 9:00 AM

Come celebrate International Migratory Bird Day on a walking tour of the grounds as we engage in “sound science” at the height of the annual spring migration.

Friday, May 19 FROGWATCH, USA 7:00 PM

Join us for a group frogwatch! First, we'll acquaint you with the sights and sounds of our local frogs and toads, including a look at some live amphibians. Then we'll go afield to frogwatch: to monitor the health of our amphibian population by documenting the type and intensity of calls we can hear in the Five Rivers wetlands. Bring flashlights if you have them, and shoes that you don't mind getting wet.

Saturday, May 20 BUGS, BUGS AND MORE BUGS 2:00 PM

Lady bugs, blackflies and mourning cloak butterflies: the good, the not-so-good and the beautiful. This walk will focus on emerging insects and how their re-appearance affects the other creatures coming to life in spring.

Saturday, May 27 DANDELION HUNT 2:00 PM

The familiar, despised weed is actually one of the most nutritious plants that grow in the garden. Dandelions used to be highly valued for their medicinal benefits. We'll discuss the food and medical uses of the cheerful dandelion and other common lawn plants, and then finish by sampling some dandelion tea and coffee. Delicious? Well, it's healthy, anyway!

Saturday, June 3 TURTLES IN THE POND 2:00 PM.
See some live captive turtles and then join us for a walk around a Five Rivers pond as we look for these fascinating creatures in their natural habitat. We'll hope to observe painted and snapping turtles. Bring binoculars, if you have them; we have some to loan.

Saturday, June 10 DRAGONS AND DAMSELS 2:00 PM
Censussing of dragonflies and damselflies is a scientific tool to monitor the health of wetlands and their inhabitants. On this indoor/outdoor program we will learn the clues to look for in proper identification and search out these special insects and their unique behaviors. This program is offered in cooperation with Audubon New York.

Thursday, June 15 DIGITAL NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY 7:00 PM
Bring your digital camera, batteries, and media cards to this two-part class for absolute beginners. We will discuss the different automated settings on your camera and what ones to use for a variety of outdoor subjects. If weather permits we will go outside and try our new-found knowledge. Please call to pre-register.

Saturday, June 17 THE LIVES OF BEAVERS 2:00 PM
This program is a glimpse into the lives of some of New York State's largest rodents. We will learn a little about the lives of these fascinating creatures, and then go for a walk to find abundant signs of their activities.

Wednesday, June 21 MIDSUMMER FLOWER WALK 7:00 PM
The summer solstice is the time of the longest day and shortest night. This was traditionally a time of mystery and magic for our superstitious ancestors. Join us for a walk to enjoy the stories and beautiful plants of the solstice.

Thursday, June 22 DIGITAL NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY II 7:00 PM
In part two of this series we will advance into the world of that frightening digital menu. Bring your camera and your instructional booklet. We will touch on the subjects of nature photography compositions and problem photos. We will again venture into the outdoors to experiment with our new information. Please call to pre-register.

Saturday, June 24 WONDERS OF WETLANDS 2:00 PM
Experience the rich diversity of Five Rivers' wetlands in summer on this outdoor walk to one of the ponds to look at wetland plants and animals.

Saturday, July 1 *Family Fun:* 9th ANNUAL BUTTERFLY COUNT 2:00 PM
What's red, white and blue and flutters in the wind? Dang, there goes another one! Whatever it is, they're flying all over the grounds. Join us for a close-up look at common butterflies of the Capital District as we continue our annual catch-and-release census. Nets or binoculars are welcome. Please call to pre-register by Wednesday, June 28.

**Staff: Nancy Payne, Anita Sanchez, Dee Strnisa, Craig D. Thompson, Lori Whiting
Kimberly Roberts (SCA), Kitty Rusch (SCA)**

(*Student Fellows*, continued from page 2.)



Chloe Gatta & Aries

“I wanted to talk about careers and I did.”

“Through meeting with the employees I got to understand what they did.”

“Contact with co-workers - excellent. Variety of experiences - excellent.”

“I think a two-week fellowship would allow for deeper involvement.”

“All of the staff seem to really love what they do!”

Thanks, Alex, Chloe, Max, and Paul!
The Five Rivers staff enjoyed your energy and enthusiasm!

These young adults came from our corps of volunteers known as the Student Naturalists. If you know a young person between the ages of 10 and 17 who loves nature and wants to volunteer some time at Five Rivers as a Student Naturalist (which would make them eligible to apply to the Fellowship program) have them contact the Center.

--Nancy Payne

Director’s Notebook

Sooner or later, everything put together falls apart. But who expected it would all happen at the same time?

Over the winter, several major infrastructural problems have painfully reminded us of the financial, environmental and health/safety exigencies of operating a world-class program out of 70-year-old buildings. Granted, there is comfort, perhaps even romance, to old shoes. But there comes a time. Which brings us to unit management planning.

As I write this, we’re finishing up a series of open house meetings to collect public input on future directions for the Center, particularly a major capital project developed by the NYS Office of General Services to consolidate the functions of several of our buildings into a new Visitor Center. We have heard many excellent ideas at these sessions which have helped shape our thinking on this proposal and on a variety of other important issues.

Currently, we are working with a team of DEC regional and central office experts to incorporate these comments into a Draft Unit Management Plan, which we hope will be available for public review and comment later this summer.

I bring this to your attention for several reasons: (1) there is still ample opportunity for you to get involved in the planning process during this draft phase; (2) the success of the UMP process, and ultimately of the Center, depends on maximizing public participation, the more the merrier; and (3) without public support and input, who really cares what falls apart?

--Craig D. Thompson

Learning to Frogwatch

The loud peeping you hear each spring comes from a tiny frog the size of a grape: the spring peeper is often heard, but rarely seen. Then the gray tree frogs begin their bird-like trilling; you may hear them all summer, especially after a rain. American toads also have a musical trill. Throughout the summer, green frogs “pluck their banjo strings” while the bullfrogs join the party with their “jug-o-rum.”

These are all species you can hear in our area--if you listen. **Frogwatch USA** would like you to report these calls. The National Wildlife Federation, in partnership with the United States Geological Survey, conducts this citizen science program to help monitor declining amphibian populations.

All of the data collected will be sent to the National Wildlife Federation to be put on the Frogwatch website. You can access this data for all areas in the United States.

We are holding an official training session at Five Rivers for Frogwatch volunteers on April 22 at 2:00 PM. You can “watch” at Five Rivers with us, or register a site near your home. We hope to start a “buddy” system for new Frogwatchers to join together and learn. It takes 20 minutes each week, or as much time as you can spare during the season from April until August. Your participation will help the spring singers to continue their chorus.