



Winter 2006

Five Rivers Environmental Education Center

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

5rivers@dec.state.ny.us

Talking about Owls

I consider myself lucky; I get to see an owl every day. And I'm very curious about owls.

My curiosity started one summer evening, while sitting against a hemlock tree in the woods beyond my yard. I was relaxed, comfortable and possibly near sleep when a swooping figure to my right startled me. Within an eye-blink, a huge owl descended, pouncing on a small rodent I hadn't noticed. Feathers flapped, the successful owl disappeared and only a mark in the dirt remained.

After that, I always looked for owl signs in my backyard. Over the next year, I discovered many things new to me, like owl pellets (the coughed-up portion of their indigestible food remains). Sometimes, walking to the hemlock near dusk, I would hear an unusual sound. It was the owl, looking at me from its perch. If I stood still, it would often freeze, at least until I began moving again. On several occasions, I tried to sneak slowly enough to enter its territory unseen, all the while watching it. I never succeeded.

This all took hours of wandering, getting lost and a lot of sitting quietly. Now, at Five Rivers, I visit daily with Aries the barred owl. I hope many people will visit with Aries as I do.

A few things my visits have taught me:

- Aries clicks his beak when agitated. He seems to do it more for those he recognizes and young children.
- Aries' hearing is vastly superior to mine. He seems to anticipate someone coming well before their arrival.
- Like any individual animal, Aries' behavior isn't predictable. Like each person, each barred owl is unique.

Aries facts:

- Aries is about three-and-a-half years old.
- Having been hit by a car, Aries can't obtain food for himself. He has only one wing; the other had to be amputated.
- Aries can rotate his head to look directly behind him.
- Aries (like all owls) has eyes fixed in their sockets, so he has to turn his head to look at something.
- Barred owls, although weighing only 1 to 3 pounds, boast a wingspan of up to 50 inches.

--Andy Fyfe, Naturalist Intern

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

Five Rivers Environmental Education Center Winter Program Schedule 2006

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

We regret that we cannot accommodate organized youth groups at these public programs.

For further information call Five Rivers at 518-475-0291. If weather is severe, programs may be cancelled.

- Sunday, January 1 26th ANNUAL NEW YEAR'S DAY BIRD COUNT 9:00 AM
Come help us ring out our old annual bird list and ring in the new. In the 25 years of this annual survey, more than 67 different species have been recorded. Bring binoculars and dress warmly.
- Saturday, January 14 FLYING WILD TEACHER WORKSHOP 1:00-3:00 PM
A participatory workshop for educators about wildlife, with activities for K-12, focusing on birds. In-service credit may be arranged through the Greater Capital Region Teacher Center. Please call to pre-register by Jan.12.
- Saturday, January 21 SNOWSHOE MAKING WORKSHOP 12:30-4:00 PM
See back cover for details. Kits must be pre-ordered.
- Saturday, January 28 NATURE ART IN WINTER
A class in nature drawing, indoors and out, for adults. Beginners are encouraged! Pre-register by January 25.
- Sunday, January 29 SNOWSHOE WALK 2:00 PM
Learn snowshoeing basics, turns and steps, and then try them out on a short hike! Call the Center to pre-register if you wish to use our snowshoes. We also have a limited number of children's snowshoes available.
- Friday, February 3 WINTER STARS 7:00 PM
The crisp winter air makes for good viewing, and hot beverages inside the building will warm us up!
- Saturday, February 4 THEY WENT THAT'A WAY 2:00 PM
Join us for an "in-depth" look at animal tracks and traces on this outdoor field study of winter ecology, as we celebrate the National Wildlife Federation's 70th birthday.
- Sunday, February 5 SNOWSHOE WALK 2:00 PM
An introductory snowshoe stroll. See January 29 listing for details. Call to pre-register.
- Saturday, February 11 SNOWSHOEING - AN ACCESSIBILITY EVENT 1:30 PM
Persons with limited vision are invited to come snowshoeing. Our volunteers will give personal assistance to all participants. We have snowshoes for children and adults and all levels of ability are welcome. If there is no snow, we will do some hiking. Pre-registration by groups and individuals is appreciated.
- Sunday, February 12 SNOWSHOE WALK 2:00 PM
An introductory snowshoe stroll. See January 29 listing for details. Call to pre-register.
- Saturday, February 18 GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT 9:00-10:00 AM
Join us as we count birds at our feeder, and show how you too can help the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and National Audubon Society track the distribution and abundance of winter birds.
- Sunday, February 19 SNOWSHOE WALK 2:00 PM
An introductory snowshoe stroll. See January 29 listing for details. Call to pre-register.

PROGRAMS FOR HOME-SCHOOLING FAMILIES

Tuesday, January 17 10:00 AM EXPLORING THE ECOLOGY OF WINTER
Thursday, February 2 10:00 AM THE SCIENCE AND FUN OF SNOWSHOES
Monday, March 13 10:00 AM MAPLE SUGARING
Fee per program: One adult and one child; FOFR members \$6.00 + \$2.50 for each additional child
Non-members \$9.00 + \$3.50 for each additional child Paying for the series? Take a 10% discount!

Tuesday, February 21 NATURE ART IN WINTER

A class in nature drawing, indoors and out, for children. Beginners are encouraged! Please pre-register by February 19.

Thursday, February 23 FAMILY PROGRAM: WINTER COLORS 10:00 AM

A winter walk for parents and children to seek out colors: where they are, what they are and what they can tell us about the winter woods. Sky blue, berry red, scat brown: winter is not just black and white. Fee: FOFR members free, \$1.00 for non-members. Pre-register by February 21. Refreshments will be provided.

Friday, February 24 NIGHT SKI, SNOWSHOE OR HIKE 7:00 PM

A night adventure! Pre-register to ski or snowshoe. We will hike only if there is no snow.

Saturday, February 25 A WINTER TEA PARTY 2:00 PM

A walk through the woods as we collect the fixings for wild teas, then come inside to make your own tea.

Sunday, February 26 SNOWSHOE WALK 2:00 PM

An introductory snowshoe stroll. See January 29 listing for details. Call to pre-register.

Saturday, March 4 DR. SEUSS' BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION 2:00-4:00 PM

Come commemorate the date of the late Dr. Seuss' birth, with our *Read Across America Day* mirth. We'll read the Seuss books that have classical stature, with those animal names of unnatural nature. Whether sister or brother, or father or mother, parent and child must accompany each other. On top of all that, meet the Cat in the Hat and win nifty prizes for the Seuss-iest noses, shoeses and eyeses.

MAPLE SUGAR OPEN HOUSES

Saturdays and Sundays, 1:30-3:30 PM

March 11, 12, 18, 19, 25 and 26

At our Maple Sugar Open Houses, watch sap drip from the tapped trees, and smell the syrup boiling in the evaporator. Scout and other youth groups are welcome; call the Center to **pre-register a group**.

Friday, March 24 IS IT SPRING??? 7:00 PM

The calendar may say it's spring, but what does Mother Nature say? Join us for this evening walk to find out!

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

Join us on a field study of robins, bluebirds and our other friends in the thrush family as we celebrate the date of the great Catskill naturalist John Burroughs's birth.

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. Please call the Center to pre-register by Friday, March 18.

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

Snowshoe Making Workshop

Saturday, January 21
12:30 PM to 4:00 PM

Want to make your own snowshoes? We now have access to snowshoe kits (see www.snowshoe.com). These kits include the wooden frame and the webbing. The frames are made of white ash and the webbing material is white nylon. The webbing shrinks, tightens, and colors with varnish, to take on a natural look.

To get a discount, the kits must be paid for prior to the workshop and we need to order at least eight kits. Paid orders must be at the Center by Monday, January 9.

Frames come assembled. Workshop time is to weave the webbing. It should take an adult about 2-3 hours to do the first shoe. Varnishing will not be included.

Bindings, not included, may be purchased locally or from Friends of Five Rivers.

The kit designs are: Ojibwa

Huron



Alaskan



Also available are 20-inch pairs for decorations.

Youth sizes go up to 110 pounds; adult sizes go up to 260 pounds.

Interested? Call the Center at (518) 475-0291 and ask for an order form, or stop by and pick one up for information on design, size, price, and bindings.