

STONY KILL ALMANAC

BY AND ABOUT
Stony Kill Farm Environmental Education Center

Calendar of Events Inside

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www.dec.ny.gov

My Year of Firsts

by Julia Preston-Fulton, SCA AmeriCorps Member

It has been seven months since I first arrived at Stony Kill Farm. The time has moved so fast I feel like it has only been a few weeks. I look back at what has passed and think of all the opportunities Stony Kill has provided me along with all the "firsts" I have experienced along the way.

This past January was the first time I have packed all my stuff and moved away from home. I was moving to Wappingers Falls to start my ten-month internship at Stony Kill as an AmeriCorps Member of the Hudson Valley Conservation Corps. Yes, it was a little scary especially considering I was moving to a place I had never been to, where I didn't know anyone, but I was mostly excited about this opportunity. Shortly after I arrived I met my fellow intern, Josh Roberts, for the first time. He, too, had never

been to Stony Kill and was seeing it for the first time.



Tree identification was the topic for Julia (standing) at Conservation Fields Days.



A view of the Hudson River from Breakneck Ridge in Dutchess County. Julia and Josh co-lead this interpretive hike.

Within a short while I was co-teaching my first weekend program with Josh. It was on identifying trees in the winter. I didn't have much experience with trees, but Josh and my supervisor, Rich Parisio, took me for walks outside on the Woodland Trail and I slowly began learning to identify trees.

The program day came and it was a success. I even made my first batch of sweet birch tea as part of the program. Soon I started teaching lessons for Stony Kill's "Operation Explore" program. Third to fifth grade students come from New York

City by bus and spent a day at Stony Kill. From here, they traveled to Taconic Outdoor Education Center to spend two nights in cabins. I loved to watch the children's faces as they saw a cow up close and in person for the first time in their lives.

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New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
Eliot Spitzer, Governor Pete Grannis, Commissioner

**STONY KILL FARM
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER
Main Telephone Number: 845-831-8780**

Office Hours

Monday - Friday, 8:45 AM to 4:30 PM
Saturday, 9:30 AM to 4:30 PM
Sunday, (April, May, June, September, October)
1:00 PM to 4:30 PM
CLOSED ON ALL MAJOR HOLIDAYS
Grounds - Open seven days a week from
sunrise to sunset

EDUCATION STAFF

Reba W. Laks, Director, ext 303
James Herrington, Environmental Educator, ext 305
Rich Parisio, Environmental Educator, ext 302
Susan Kmiotek, Office Manager, ext 300

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Jason Yaekel, Maintenance, ext 308
Cindy Yaekel, Maintenance, ext 308

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Stony Kill Almanac is a quarterly publication and
program listing of Stony Kill Farm EEC events.

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FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

by Reba W. Laks, Director

Stony Kill had a very successful summer and is looking forward to a busy and full autumn. A quick recap of the summer follows:

- A very successful Butterfly Mini-Festival turned out to be not so "mini." Despite a hot and somewhat humid day, almost 600 people came out to enjoy crafts, storytelling, games and live butterfly viewing.
- The Summer Explorers day program for children ages 6-9 had a total of 55 participants. Children built primitive shelters in the forest, used sweep nets in the field and dip nets in the pond to sample insect life, made nature journals from recycled paper, and harvested fresh produce from the vegetable garden, among many other outdoor activities.
- Many summer recreation programs and camps brought groups to visit at Stony Kill.
- Weekend public programs covered topics ranging from how to raise worms for home composting, or learning about dragonflies, snakes, hummingbirds and other creatures, to cooking on a campfire, or with a solar oven.

All in all, despite the heat, things at Stony Kill did not slow down this summer. Now we are gearing up for a full slate of Fall classes, programs and events. Please check our calendar listing and be sure not to miss Stony Kill's 29th annual Harvest Festival. Teachers should call soon to schedule their classes for visits this fall. Remember, the grounds are open seven days a week from sunrise to sunset. Don't forget to take advantage of our trails and grounds during the Hudson Valley's most colorful time of the year. We hope to see you here!

SLATE OF PUBLIC PROGRAMS

We welcome those who have any type of physical challenge to all our programs.
If you call ahead to let us know your needs, we will be happy to learn how we can best serve you.
All programs are approximately one and one-half hour in length.

OCTOBER

Fall Flower Foray

Saturday, October 6 **2:00 PM**

Join a Stony Kill naturalist on a leisurely ramble when goldenrods, asters, and other fall wildflowers are in bloom in our fields. Learn how to recognize some of the common species and find out why meadows are important to wildlife. Meet at the Manor House.

Harvest Festival

Saturday, October 13 **Noon-5:00 PM**

Stony Kill's classic event, our 29th annual Harvest Festival. Music by "Betty and the Baby Boomers," harvest soups by the Verplanck Garden Club, children's activities and environmental and agricultural exhibits.

Autumn Ablaze

Saturday, October 20 **2:00 PM**

Discover the chemistry behind the magic of the annual fall foliage display, and deepen your appreciation of peak colors in the Hudson Valley. Meet at the Manor House.

Things That Go Bump in the Night

Saturday, October 27 **7:00 PM**

Overcome your fear of the dark by coming on a full moon nightwalk with a naturalist as your guide-just in time for Halloween. We'll listen for owls, foxes, and other night-prowlers as we sharpen our night vision and our other senses. Leave your flashlights at home, and bring your sense of adventure. Meet at the Manor House.



NOVEMBER

Late Autumn Family Nature Walk

Saturday, November 3 **2:00 PM**

The whole family will enjoy this scavenger hunt on Stony Kill's forest trails, looking for signs of wildlife getting ready for winter. Meet at the Manor House.

Seed Search

Saturday, November 10 **2:00 PM**

The lush green of summer plants is gone, but fruits and seeds remain as a promise of the spring to come. They are also important winter foods for birds and other animals. Join us for a search to discover what fruits, nuts and seeds can be found here at Stony Kill.

Half Moon Night Walk

Saturday, November 17 **7:00 PM**

Late fall can be an ideal time to get acquainted with the "dark side" of the forest. We'll experience Stony Kill's forest as wildlife does, relying on our night vision (no flashlights, please) and other senses. Meet at the Manor House.

Getting Ready for Winter

Saturday, November 24 **2:00 PM**

Join us for a stroll on Stony Kill's trails to explore the ways in which wildlife prepares for the cold season to come. Meet at the Manor House.

Summer Happenings at Stony Kill Farm



June-Enjoying the thrill of fishing for the first time at our family fishing day program.



August-Wild turkeys.



July-Summer Explorers Nature Day Camp program. Campers learned about animals, where they live and the importance of having shelter. Campers got to build their own shelter!



September-SCA AmeriCorps Member Josh Roberts teaching at Conservation Field Days.

A Look Ahead to December

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|-------------------------------|--|
| Saturday the 1 st | Family Nature Walk |
| Saturday the 8 th | Winter Birding with the Waterman Bird Club |
| Saturday the 15 th | Have an Earth-Friendly Holiday |
| Saturday the 22 nd | Solstice Walk |
| Thursday the 27 th | Holiday Open House |
| Saturday the 29 th | Winter Adaptations |

(Firsts continued from page 1)

Winter eventually left and spring arrived. We started our ecology programs at Stony Kill. This was also a time of "firsts." I had never taught a program on pond life before, nor had I ever used a sweep net to catch bugs in the field. Aside from the lessons this was also the first time I had seen children afraid to sit on grass because it was "dirty;" they actually preferred sitting on asphalt! This was also the first time I had seen a child look at the leaves of a maple tree and think they were poison ivy. As bleak as that seems, it made me realize for the first time how important environmental education is. I got inspired when I saw a child who once preferred sitting on the driveway sitting on grass by the end of the day, or recognizing maple leaves and no longer fearing them.

This was also my first time living on a farm. I went into the chicken coop for the first time and picked up eggs, which I then ate for breakfast. I fed bales of hay to cows for the first time, and witnessed my first sheep shearing. I also saw my first lamb being born. One Saturday, a few months after I had arrived, was the first time I walked into the barn and had cows, pigs, chickens and sheep "yell" at me because I was 30 minutes late with their breakfast. They can create quite a racket!

Interpretive specialist for the Hudson River estuary Program, Steve Stanne, took me on my first tour of the Hudson Valley region. My fellow co-workers and I piled into a van and traveled to see different places along the Hudson River, such as Bear Mountain Bridge, Iona Island, and even the great view from Storm King Mountain. I didn't realize Storm King Mountain was such a historic place. While on the tour, I saw my first barge traveling down the Hudson. I also visited many other places for the first time, including Norrie Point, Five Rivers Environmental Education Center (Stony Kill's sister center in Delmar, NY), Bear Mountain Zoo, Taconic Outdoor Education Center, and Sharpe Reservation in Fishkill, to name a few.

In the summer, Stony Kill interns run the Summer Explorer nature day-camp program. Josh and I planned the lessons, advertised the program, and were instructors for it. Our first session went great, as did the rest of the summer. I even learned how to drive a tractor for the first time so that I could take the kids on a hayride. Summer Explorers taught me a lot because it was the first time I'd been in charge of a program from start to finish.



Hudson River barge.

Anyone who has been to Stony Kill doesn't have to be told that there is a lot of wildlife near the Manor House and on our trails. I have seen many animals for the first time while at Stony Kill. Some of the most memorable have been the dragonfly nymph bigger than my thumb, our resident beaver at the Sierra Pond, a coyote exploring one of our fields, our state bird (the eastern bluebird), a river otter in the farmstead pond, and baby wild turkeys. I've heard red-tailed hawks give their territorial call, seen woodcocks performing their mating aerobatics, barn swallows fledging, and even my first adult bald eagle (along with two younger eagles clashing talons)! Stony Kill is truly a wondrous place.

Stony Kill Farm Environmental Education Center provided my first experience in environmental education, as I knew it would, along with many other unexpected first experiences. It has been seven months and my time here is drawing to an end. As I look back at what I've experienced, I can only imagine what my last three months have in store for me. Next time you come to Stony Kill, keep your eyes and ears open. You never know what you may experience for the first time.

Volunteer Spotlight--Art McCormick

Art has been a volunteer at Stony Kill since 1997. His love of nature and of children led him to become a volunteer instructor in Stony Kill's program of outdoor ecology lessons for school classes. Art consistently gives the center more than 100 volunteer hours a year.



Art McCormick

Farm classes for New York City and local school children, as well as forest, field, and pond lessons are among the many programs Art has taught at Stony Kill. He has also helped monitor the bluebird trail and assists with special events, including Stony Kill's Earth Day, butterfly, and harvest festivals, Draft Horse Day, and the Holiday Open House. Art is also the treasurer for the Stony Kill Foundation.

Art is retired after 31 years as an analytical chemist for the Texaco research facility in Beacon, NY. He is a graduate of the University of Rhode Island with a BS in Chemistry, and earned his MS in Analytical Chemistry from Cornell University. Art and his wife Gail (also a Stony Kill volunteer) have four children and six grandchildren. He enjoys bird watching, gardening, golf and reading. When asked for a quote, Art responded, "Go Red Sox!"

Notes from the Wacky Weeders

Volunteer gardeners responsible for the Verplanck Memorial Perennial Garden

The garden was exceptionally beautiful this summer and has only been munched on a little by deer! The flowers are blooming, butterflies are fluttering by and the bees are busy. We would like to thank some of the special people who make it all possible: Bob Strang (who updated our computerized plant list for the first time in years); Alessio Antoneccia (who cleaned and sharpened all our garden tools, did repairs, and gave us some bright new plants); Oakwood Friends School volunteers (who spent a whole day working in the garden); Stony Kill staff members Jason Yaekel (who repaired our water fountain/birdbath), Sue Kmiotek (who took many wonderful photographs of the garden and its inhabitants), and Cindy Laccone (who gave us constant help and support in the garden); Heather Gierloff (who donated a whole bed of ferns for us), and the Wacky Weeders themselves: Gladys, Paula, Lisa, Tina and Judy (who have dedicated their efforts to the garden throughout the year).

Please come and enjoy the last warm days of the season strolling through the garden. Take the time to notice and appreciate, not just the flowers, but the garden's many other inhabitants as well. If you'd like to volunteer some of your time and join the Wacky Weeders, please call Rosemarie at 845-831-8780 ext 306. Hope to see you among the flowers!



Monarch butterfly caterpillar on butterfly weed at Stony Kill.



SPLASH'S PAGE

The Official Page of Stony Kill's Mascot,
 Splash the River Otter

As you know, SPLASH is considered a mammal and lives in New York State. However, he is not the only mammal in the state. SPLASH has created a word search called "Mammals in New York." Can you find all of his fellow mammals?

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| woodchuck | beaver | fisher |
| gray squirrel | mink | muskrat |
| opossum | raccoon | white-footed mouse |
| chipmunk | red squirrel | river otter |
| coyote | red fox | moose |
| little brown bat | eastern cottontail | bobcat |
| white-tailed deer | skunk | black bear |

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