



Summer 2016 Vol. 38 Issue 3

PawPrints

A Dahlem Conservancy Publication for
The John and Mary Dahlem Environmental Education Center

What is Environmental Education?

by Ellen Rathbone, Education Director

According to the EPA, “Environmental education is a process that allows individuals to explore environmental issues, engage in problem solving, and take action to improve the environment. As a result, individuals develop a deeper understanding of environmental issues and have the skills to make informed and responsible decisions.”

Wikipedia defines it as “organized efforts to teach how natural environments function, and particularly, how human beings can manage behavior and ecosystems to live sustainably.”

The North American Association for Environmental Education says “Environmental education (EE) is a process that helps individuals, communities, and organizations learn more about the environment, develop skills and understanding about how to address global challenges. It has the power to transform lives and society. It informs and inspires. It influences attitudes. And it motivates action. And it’s a key tool in expanding the constituency for the environmental movement and creating healthier and more civically-engaged communities.”

And the Tblisi definition of environmental education, which started it all

in 1977, says “EE is a learning process that increases people’s knowledge and awareness about the environment and its associated challenges, develops the necessary skills and expertise to address the challenges, and fosters attitudes, motivations, and commitments to make informed decisions and take responsible action.”

That’s all some pretty heavy stuff. According to those definitions, we environmental educators are supposed to be the ones who set in motion the means to change the world for the better, in terms of the environment. Does that mean we should be training kids to be environmental warriors? Creating new Monkey Wrench Gangs? If so, it’s no wonder we are disliked by many groups!

It has been my experience, in nearly 30 years in this field, that kids are not ready to cope with such heavy concepts as global warming, environmental degradation, or species extinction. As an adult I find these topics depressing, but imagine the impact it can have on a child’s psyche. No doubt, it has contributed to the trend we see of people disassociating from nature and the environment - we are overwhelmed with bad news and feel we cannot do anything about it, anyway, so we turn



instead to things that distract us or make us feel happier.

Does this then signal the end to environmental education centers like Dahlem, and nature centers in general? Absolutely not! In fact, I think it proves the point that our work is more important than ever, although we need to change our approach.

Enter the new trend in environmental/nature/outdoor education, a trend that we first saw just over 100 years ago: nature study. By this I don’t mean spending your time memorizing the scientific names of plants and animals. That will come later. No, what we need to do is reconnect children (and adults) with nature on a very personal level: they have to get out there, into their back yards, their neighborhood parks, the woodlot down the road, the pond or field at Grandma’s house. Spend time out there and get to know it.

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Visitor Center Hours

Tuesday - Friday
9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Saturday
10:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Sunday Noon - 5:00 PM

Trail Hours

Trails and grounds are open daily dawn to dusk.
The entrance gate opens at 6:30 AM and closes at 9:00 PM

Contact

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*PawPrints is published
for members of
The Dahlem Conservancy*

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*The Dahlem Conservancy's
mission is to provide
environmental education &
outdoor experiences to
the people of
south central Michigan.*



Message from Linda Brian, Out-going Board President

This is the time of the year that we start to gear up for all of our spring and summer activities. Our Day Camps and annual events, like the *Birds, Blooms & Butterflies Festival*, are right around the corner. The beautiful early spring flowers that we are enjoying now are just a forecast of what is to come.

As Spring changes into Summer, we at Dahlem are also experiencing many changes. Rod Malloy decided to leave Jackson and Dahlem and return home to spend more time with his family in California. We will miss his strong advocacy for Dahlem as he spread the word about us to everyone that he met. During his time with us our preschool was initiated and has continued to grow and flourish. We have had 64 three and four year old students enrolled in our Little Acorns. We have established a partnership with Jackson Public Schools and implemented an exciting pilot program, Annie's Big Nature Lesson. In the past two years, through this program six fourth grade classes have collectively spent 20 days at Dahlem in integrated learning experiences in nature. We wish Rod well in his new endeavors. The executive committee of the Board of Directors has already been involved in identifying an interim executive director as we head into our busiest season.

We are also saying good-bye to two of our long serving Board of Directors. Andy Walz and John McLaughlin have completed their terms and will be going off the board this May. These two individuals were part of the six original incorporators and were elected to the first Board of Directors in 2004. We will miss their passion and the dedication that they have shared with the Board over all these years.

Finally, Mark Snedeker, our Facilities Coordinator and Weekend Manager, has taken another job and has moved on. His love for Dahlem is reflected in his long-term commitment to Dahlem. He was a member, a volunteer and an employee, but ultimately a lover of nature and our facilities.

As we look forward, Dahlem is embracing some new endeavors, including opening our site to couples looking for an outdoor venue for their wedding day. Our first bride and groom will tie the knot on our beautiful grounds in May. It's hard to imagine a more picturesque setting for a young couple to exchange their vows than here at Dahlem.

We also are eagerly looking toward the opening of our new Butterfly Trail later this summer.

We continue to thrive as an organization because of our 961 members, dozens of dedicated volunteers, generous donors and dedicated staff. Without your support none of these things are possible. As we move forward this spring we need your support more than ever. We look forward to seeing you on our trails or at one of our upcoming events. 



Field Report & Stewardship Updates

by Gary Siegrist, Naturalist & Stewardship Coordinator

Summer is almost here and there is a lot going on around Dahlem!

Dahlem's Tuesday Nature Group

was busy in March and April with field trips to The Hurst Planetarium, to nearby lakes looking for migrating waterfowl, around northwest Jackson on a geological features tour with geologist George Econ, to Michigan Audubon's Kate Palmer Sanctuary and Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary, and even out to Dowagiac Woods to see the glorious spring wildflowers. May was full of migrating songbirds and native wildflowers.

The future **Tuesday Nature Group** schedule holds trips to the Waterloo Recreation Area, Oak Openings in Ohio, fishing lessons at Brown's Lake, Ives Road Fen, Binder Park Zoo, Burke Banding Station, Hawk Watch at Lake Erie Metropark, and W. K. Kellogg Bird Sanctuary.

But not all our time will be spent off-site! We are planning an equal amount of time on Dahlem's property with wildflower hikes, a seed gathering lesson, stream water ecology, Michigan Butterfly ID team contest, and some "What's Out There" hikes. Indoor sessions in the Dutcher Room include "What is a Fen," and programs from retired Ohio nature center education director Joann Ballbach entitled "Weeds: if you can't beat 'em, eat 'em" and "Winter Night Sky."

As you can see, we have a very full and busy schedule planned for the Tuesday Nature Group - and you, too, can be a part of this group! We meet at Dahlem (most weeks) from 9:00 until noon, unless otherwise noted. Please come out and join us! (And did we mention that all these programs are free?)

Meanwhile...out on the Dahlem Property...

Come check out the **Wickwire Prairie** this summer and fall. This is Year Two of its conversion to native wildflowers, and it should be spectacular!

Dahlem was notified in April that we were the recipient of the 2016 **Ecological Restoration Grant** awarded by PlantWise Native Landscape and Ecological Restoration, LLC. Last year the grant award winner was the Flint River Watershed Council and their partners at the Spring Grove Wetland Restoration in Flint. This grant awarded us five thousand dollars to help redesign the dipping pond out in front of our building.

Don't forget that Dahlem's own restoration crew, **The Cut -n- Dab Society**, meets Thursday mornings from 9:00 until noon and will continue to do projects that not only help keep our grounds looking good, but also restore native habitat out on the property.

With that in mind we need **volunteers** to help with the up keep of the **native plant beds** around the building, over by the rock garden, and the sensory garden. Anyone interested please contact Gary: 517-782-3453 or gsiegrist@dahlemcenter.org. 



Blue-eyed Marys at Dowagiac Woods, April 2016; Searching for the blue grosbeak, August 2015; Jack-in-the-pulpit berries, July 2015.

Summer Public Programs

Program Codes: Adult - (A) Family - (F) Child - (C)

Tuesday Morning Nature Group

Tuesdays 9:00 AM
Every Tuesday morning we set out for a new nature adventure. Some trips are here at Dahlem, while others go off-site to explore new places. Birds, flowers, geology, trees, wetlands, forests, grasslands...we never know just what might be awaiting us around the next bend. Come join us! The group often goes out to lunch together afterwards. Free (the program, not the lunch).

Little Acorns Golf Scramble (A)

Sat., June 11 8:00 AM
Help raise money for our Little Acorns Nature Preschool. For details, see ad on page 7.

Butterfly ID Workshop (A)

Sat. June 11 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM
Whether you want to help collect baseline butterfly data for the Michigan Butterfly Network, or you just want to start learning to identify our native butterflies, this is the perfect workshop for you! Learn 25 basic butterflies that call Michigan home - how to identify them and where to find them. **Bring your own lunch. Pre-registration by June 9. FEE: \$10/member; \$15/non-member.**

Introduction to Bee Keeping II (A)

Sat., June 18 10:00 - 11:30 AM
Ben Schlenker returns with part two of their beginner bee keeping class. Topics include organic beekeeping, swarm control, hive and honey bee behavior (fanning, bearding, swarming, robbing, dancing), proper ventilation, pollen, nectar and propolis. Package installation, Nuc installation. **Fee: \$5/member; \$10/non-member. Pre-registration by June 16 required.**

The Hunger Games V-Dahlem Style (C 11-17)

Fri., Aug. 5 & Sat., Aug. 6 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Join us for our Hunger Games program, based on the books by Suzanne Collins. Participants are 11 -17 years old. Friday we train players in a variety of outdoor skills that will be put to the test Saturday in The Arena as players try to avoid being "killed" by each other (losing their bandanas). Whoever passes the most skills and still has his/her bandana at the end of the game, wins. **Volunteers needed!!! Pre-registration required by 8/3. FEE: \$35/member; \$45/non-member. Payment due upon registration.**

Birds Blooms & Butterflies Festival

Sat., August 13 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Warm summer days, with flowers blooming and bees buzzing, birds flying hither and yon, can only mean one thing: it's time for the annual Birds, Blooms and Butterflies Festival! Be sure to come out and join us for a day of education and fun. Hummingbird banding returns, and live birds-of-prey. We'll have native plants for sale as always, especially those that are host plants for butterflies. New and returning vendors. **Free** fun for the whole family. Stop on by!



The Astronomy of Harry Potter (F) (A)

Sat., August 20 10:30 - 11:30 AM
Harry, Ron, and Hermione studied astronomy at Hogwart's. Sirius, Phoenix, Draco, Fawkes... learn about these cool Harry Potter characters and the fabulous science of astronomy. Discover the astronomical basis of your favorite Rowling characters. Recommended for Muggles of all ages. Decide which house you're in before you come—or we'll sort you ourselves. Robes and wands welcome! Led by guest naturalist Joann Ballbach. **FEE: \$3/member; \$5/non-member. Pre-registration required by August 19.**

Silent Walk - Forest Bathing (A)

Sat., August 27 10:00 AM
Learning to be silent is a real challenge in today's hyper-connected world. Come join us for a slow, silent walk through the woods, as we leave knowledge, information, and the sounds of humanity behind. We will experience every step we take, and learn how to simply BE in nature. **Pre-registration required by 5:00 PM August 26. FEE: members free; \$3/non-member.**

- Live Birds of Prey
- Hummingbird Banding
- Native Plants Sale
- Native Gardening Tips
- Artists & Vendors



Birds, Blooms & Butterflies Festival



Ideal for
the Whole
Family!

Saturday, August 13
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Tour de Dahlem 2016

Have you taken a Dahlem Tour lately? Wait - a "Dahlem Tour?" What is that, and why would you want to take one? After all, perhaps you walk out here on your own several times a year, or maybe you volunteer regularly, either helping remove invasive species or leading school programs. Why would you need to go on a formal tour?

Dahlem's one-hour tours are designed to help newcomers and old friends alike learn what is happening at Dahlem - they are a taste of our past, our present and our future.

A Dahlem Tour is a perfect way to introduce your friends and family to just what makes Dahlem special and why you spend your time out here. It is a great way for people who have just moved to Jackson, or even those who have lived here for forty years and have never heard of us, to learn what we have to offer.

During a Dahlem Tour, our guests get a taste of all the opportunities we have to offer, from our Little Acorns Nature Preschool and our Nature Playscape, to public and school programs and volunteer opportunities. We also show you how simply being out on our trails can help you unwind from the stress of your day.

Did you know that Dahlem serves over 20,000 visitors annually? Of these over 8,000 are walk-ins, and over 13,000 participate in programs. We have something for visitors of all ages and abilities - we just need to get the word out. And that's why we offer these tours.

If you would like to learn a little more about Dahlem, or if you have some friends, family, neighbors or colleagues that you would like to introduce to Dahlem, consider joining us for a Dahlem Tour.

Upcoming dates:

Tuesday May 24 @ 5:30PM-6:30PM
 Tuesday June 21 @ 5:30PM-6:30PM
 Saturday June 25 @ 9:00AM-10:00AM
 Monday July 11 @ 5:30PM-6:30PM
 Tuesday July 19 @ 5:30PM-6:30PM
 Monday August 8 @ 5:30PM-6:30PM
 Wednesday August 24 @ 5:30PM-6:30PM
 Saturday September 10 @ 9:00AM-10:00AM
 Wednesday September 21 @ 5:30PM-6:30PM

Please RSVP by phone or email 24 hours before the tour you and/or your guest will be attending: 517.782.3453 or bpilgrim@dahlemcenter.org. Remember Dahlem is a Jackson treasure!

Dahlem has...an Army of Frogs, a College of Cardinals, a Lounge of Lizards and a Bale of Turtles.



What is missing from this list?

Be a part of this important Team!

Fill a table with 8 guests. Ask your guests to attend a "Discover Dahlem" tour.

Attend the Benefit Lunch. Yes, the 2016 event will be a lunch.



Please call or e-mail today with your questions and your commitment to 782.3453 or bpilgrim@dahlemcenter.org

Save the Date
The Dahlem Annual Benefit LUNCH
Wednesday, October 12, 2016
RSVP to bpilgrim@dahlemcenter.org or 782.3453

Annual Lunch 2016

If you have been a member of Dahlem the last few years, you will be familiar with our annual Benefit Breakfast - that time of year that we ask our members and friends to help support us by donating to our operation funds. This year, we are changing the venue slightly by holding our event at lunchtime instead of breakfast.

This annual benefit event is crucial to Dahlem's success because it raises much-needed unrestricted dollars. This means that this money is used to pay our utilities and salaries, purchase supplies, and repair infrastructure. Unrestricted funds are the most difficult to raise because foundations, corporations and businesses focus on projects, events or specific programs. Therefore, for our daily operations, this event is imperative to the financial health of Dahlem.

What can you expect at this event? This is when Dahlem showcases what we've accomplished over the last year, and

share what we have planned for the year ahead. We tell our story and express our heartfelt passion for environmental education and outdoor experiences.

The numbers paint a picture of what we have achieved:

- since 2008 this event has raised \$641,035.52;
- this is a yearly average of \$80,129.44.

Imagine how these funds could be raised without this annual event and your generous time. All this in one hour once a year!

Please take a moment to consider being a Table Captain and filling a table with eight guests. If eight is too many, you are welcome to invite even one or two friends to come along - we have room for everyone! Your time and your guests' will help make Dahlem stronger and continue its mission of providing environmental education and outdoor experiences to the people of south central Michigan. 

1001 Amazing, eye-popping, exhilarating, stunning, fantastic, stupendous things await you at **CAMP!**



Summer Camp is nearly here, so be sure to sign up your children soon! Financial assistance available.

Regular Camp (campers entering grades K-6 in the fall)
\$130/member camper; \$155/non-member camper.

- **Session 1 - Life in the Woods**
July 11-15; 8:30 AM - 3:30 PM
It's all happening in the woods this week!
- **Session 2 - Outdoor Skills**
July 18-22; 8:30 AM - 3:30 PM
Campers learn all sorts of great outdoor skills, from shelter-building to what to do if they get lost.
- **Session 3 - Out in the Field**
July 25-29; 8:30 AM - 3:30 PM
We are spending the week learning all about fields and grasslands - who lives there and why.

Preschool Camp (ages 3-5 years; must be 3 by 6/1 and must have independent bathroom skills)
\$85/member camper; \$105/non-member camper.

- **Session 1 - Water Adventure - June 13-17**
Session 1A 8:30 - 11:30 AM
Session 1B 8:30 - 11:30 AM
- **Session 2 - Forest Explorers - June 20-24**
Session 2A 8:30 - 11:30 AM
Session 2B 8:30 - 11:30 AM
- **Session 3 - Little Farmers - June 27-July 1**
Session 3A 8:30 - 11:30 AM
Session 3B 8:30 - 11:30 AM
- **Session 4 - Nature Explorers - August 1-5**
Session 4A 8:30 - 11:30 AM
Session 4B 8:30 - 11:30 AM

Pick up a copy of our new brochure.
Registration form available online or at our office.
Financial assistance available.

Help your kids unplug this summer at Dahlem!



Help Send Children to Nature School!

The Little Acorns Nature Preschool's Golf Scramble is Saturday, June 11 at Hankerd Hills

Would you like to be a sponsor?
Contact Marie at mpage@dahlemcenter.org.

Want to play?
For \$300 you and three friends can come play and at the same time support our preschool!

For more information contact Marie:
mpage@dahlemcenter.org

Teachers' Summer Camp

June 28-30; 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM
\$85; possible CEU credits

Play with bugs!
Try your hand at mapping!
Discover your inner naturalist!
Explore the woods!
Learn how to integrate nature into your lessons!

Register by June 20th.

For more information, contact Ellen
517-782-3453 or erathbone@dahlemcenter.org

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PawPrints

(continued from pg. 1)

Forget the rainforest...for now. And cheetahs and whales. When the only nature children know is on another continent, or the other side of the world, they really have no connection to it. It's "over there" and they will probably never see it except on a screen (or, dare I suggest, in a book). But if we can teach them first about fox squirrels and house finches, oak-hickory forests and fens, then they will understand that things are pretty special right here. They will develop a kinship with their local environment, develop what is called in the literature a "sense of place." Once they learn to know and love their local environment, they will quite naturally branch out to learn about the rest of the world, and then later, when old enough, they will be ready to understand the impact of environmental issues.

At Dahlem we are already taking strides in approaching environmental education with an eye toward reconnection and instilling a sense of place in our members and visitors. It starts with something as simple as our **Nature Playscape**, or programs like **Get Out and Get Dirty** and events like **Faerie Fest & Dragon Days** - just getting kids and families outside playing and using their imaginations. They learn not to fear the woods, and that getting a bit muddy is okay. And perhaps, along the way, they learn to identify a chipmunk from a red squirrel, or discover a crayfish castle, or catch a frog in one of our ponds. At **summer camp** or while here on a school program, they learn how to make a whistle from an acorn cap, or find a deer skeleton in the field and see where the coyotes dragged the bones and the mice gnawed on the antlers.

Later on the whole family comes out for **Birds, Blooms and Butterflies** and they not only get to watch a hummingbird be banded, but little Sally gets to release it afterwards. Joshua and his mother get a chance to hold and release a monarch butterfly. The Patel family discovers they can help monarchs by planting a butterfly garden and buy some milkweeds to plant the next day.

I urge everyone - parents, teachers, grandparents, neighbors, aunts and uncles, cousins - to take the time to get yourselves and the children in your lives outdoors to befriend your local environment. Meet your neighborhood birds, trees and squirrels. Make friends with the frogs, the fireflies, the snakes. The best way to "save" the environment is to teach tomorrow's leaders today how to love it. And if you need a little help, we are here to lend a hand. 