

# directions

Journal of the Association of Nature Center Administrators

## Can you afford NOT to attend ANCA's Summit? the Great Smokies Summit - Aug. 17-20

Ken Voorhis  
Executive Director  
Great Smoky Mountains Institute  
Townsend, TN

during difficult financial times professional development opportunities are often cut from our budgets. Those who do so may view such opportunities as a nice but not essential benefit for staff - as not critical to an organization's operation and mission.

Are there any times more critical however, than those when an organization is stressed, for those in leadership to "go to the well," so to speak, to seek the wisdom and experience of others and contribute to the discussion about how to manage during difficult times?



photo by Mary Silver

*The Mountains are Calling! Join us in Great Smoky Mountains National Park for the 17th Annual ANCA Summit.*

The annual ANCA Summit is a time and place for new and veteran directors to find the help and solutions they need to face the challenges in front of them.

The ANCA Summit is a time:

- To learn about and be reminded of best practices.
- To seek solutions based on those best practices and the experience of seasoned leaders.
- To discuss issues that our peer administrators have in common.
- To get "outside the box" of our own center's concerns, so as to view them from a fresh perspective.
- To be renewed, re-energized, and better equipped.
- To be prepared to return to our centers with new tools and

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Founded in 1989, the Association of Nature Center Administrators is a private non-profit organization dedicated to promoting and supporting best leadership and management practices for nature and environmental learning centers.

Serving nearly 500 organizations, ANCA is the leader in the profession.



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# Director's Notes

## Strategic Plans

Jen Levy  
Executive Director  
Association of Nature Center  
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**h**appy Spring ANCA Members! I am very pleased to report that ANCA has received funding from the William Bingham Foundation of Cleveland in support of Strategic Planning. In addition, Paul and Debbi Brainerd, long-time ANCA supporters, have also contributed to the project. Our goal is to complete a Strategic Plan for the next 3-5 years by the spring of 2012.

Since ANCA developed its most recent Strategic Plan before hiring professional staff in 2007, this will provide the first opportunity for ANCA board and staff to look at the current climate and future opportunities and create a combined vision.

The proposed work plan includes utilizing a strategic planning consultant from the Institute for Conservation Leadership (ICL). During ICL's 20-year history, they have assisted thousands of environmental and conservation organizations with organizational and leadership development needs.

An important step in the process will be in soliciting feedback from the ANCA membership. Preparation work will include reviewing background materials such as the existing plan, budget and financial reports, and the results of the member meetings held at annual Summits. Assessment tools will include an online survey of the ANCA membership and phone interviews with board members and other stakeholders. With input from the membership and the planning committee, the



ICL consultant will develop retreat goals and design an agenda for a retreat to review assessment data, discuss key issues, and develop strategic directions.

Successful strategic planning leads to action and the desired outcome of ANCA's planning will be effective management that focuses on the needs and desires of our membership. I hope you will contribute to the process by coming to the Summit in August and also participating in the online survey. Your feedback will be critical to the success of our planning program.

Speaking of the Summit – we have some fabulous programs lined up once again this year. The Thursday workshops will be presented in “tracks” and although not required, it allows ANCA members to select programs within one topic area. Are you a new director? We will be offering a half-day “Leadership Skills” workshop led by Saul Weisberg, executive director of North Cascades Institute, Ken Voorhis, executive director of Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont, and Pat Welch, retired executive director of Pine Jog Environmental Education Center. The workshop will share the real world experience of three success-

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Strategic (continued from page 2)

ful directors who have learned the skills needed to sustain their organizations and themselves. This will be followed with "Fundraising 101" led by Pat Welch, retired executive director of Pine Jog Environmental Education Center, Buffy Cheek, executive director of Schlitz Audubon Nature Center, Charity Krueger, executive director of Aullwood Audubon Center & Farm, and Gordon Maupin, executive director of the Wilderness Center. These four veteran directors will share their best practices in fundraising and participants will leave the workshop with an action plan for advancing fundraising at their centers.

Are you considering implementing new program ideas at your center? Two ANCA members, Rachel Larimore and Buffy Cheek, both with nature pre-schools at their centers will present, "Nature based pre-school – is it right for your center?" This session will give participants an overview of the plethora of information that needs to be gathered and decisions that need to be made before opening a preschool program. Following that, Bill Hopple will present "NatureVersity: Implementing our New Educational Philosophy." In this workshop, Bill will describe NatureVersity – a new program initiative that has been implemented at Cincinnati Nature Center.

A third track will follow a human resources theme. Charlene Stewart, HR manager at Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont will teach us how to work with others by sharing the process she uses to integrate new staff and motivate current staff to work together more productively. In the accompanying workshop, Jenn Wright and Sarah Reding of Kalamazoo Nature Center will share their wisdom on effective staff

management including interviewing, staff evaluations, and communicating across the generations.

Finally, a fourth track will focus on evaluation of current programs and an examination of environmental socialization phenomena. Rob Bixler, professor of interpretation at Clemson University, will lead a workshop that examines the simple things we can do with our members to increase competency, meaningfulness, involvement, commitment, enjoyment, identity, and a sense of belongingness to our organizations and nature. Bob Powell, associate professor in the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management and the Department of Forestry and Natural Resources at Clemson University, will lead a workshop that examines the steps that are necessary to develop an internal system for continued programmatic improvement and a culture of learning.

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commitment for being successful in supporting our missions in the important work that we do.

This year's Summit will be held August 17-20 in Great Smoky Mountains National Park on the border of Tennessee and North Carolina. The Summit will focus on accomplishing all of the above with a special emphasis on managing during hard times.

One of the things that impresses me most about ANCA and drew me to be regularly involved is the quality and professionalism of those who are leaders in our field and their willingness to share and help one another.

Perhaps this is because many of us began this work with a love of nature and the outdoors that led us from being in the field in interpretation or environmental education, to become managers who moved into leadership roles with a steep learning curve for how to manage and administer. We often needed help and found it offered readily by seeking those in the profession who were managing in the unique context of nature and environmental learning centers.

Another important ingredient of ANCA Summits is that they are intentionally held at a nature and environmental learning centers. Our profession is rooted in special places and the facilities, programs, and people that fulfill their mission. The value of seeing another center and how things are done

there is a huge opportunity for us to learn.

I have returned from many a Summit with some great ideas from simply living at another cen-

ter for the Summit, talking to their staff, or seeing a different way of doing something.

The host site this year, at Great Smoky Mountains Institute at

Tremont, is unique as a residential facility as well as being located within the boundaries of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Those who take advantage of the opportunity of staying on Tremont's grounds will enjoy the solitude of the place, with the chorus of birds in the morning and the voice of the river and fireflies, the night sky and campfires each evening.

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photo by Sandy Sgrillo

*The Great Smokies Summit will immerse participants in the rich tradition of story and song that speak of the relationships between people, nature, and the land in the southern Appalachians.*



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Summit registration information is posted on-line at [www.gsmit.org/anca2011](http://www.gsmit.org/anca2011).

In addition to plenty of sessions that are guaranteed to be relevant, our staff at Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont are designing opportunities for you to engage with the many natural and cultural resources that are available in Great Smoky Mountains National Park and look forward to hosting you in the great tradition and hospitality of the southern Appalachians.

The Smokies is rich in the culture of Scots-Irish and others who settled here and the Cherokee people who roamed these mountains calling it "Shaconage" – the place of blue smoke.

It is a place rich in story, song, cuisine, and culture that we plan


to bring to life for Summiteers. The Smokies is a naturalist's paradise and one of the most diverse places in North America with more than 1,500 species of flowering plants, over 700 miles of mountain streams, elevations and forest types similar to those from Georgia to Maine, and dubbed the salamander capital of the world!

Tremont is located in a secluded river valley on the banks of the Middle Prong River giving participants the opportunity to become immersed in the magic and life of the

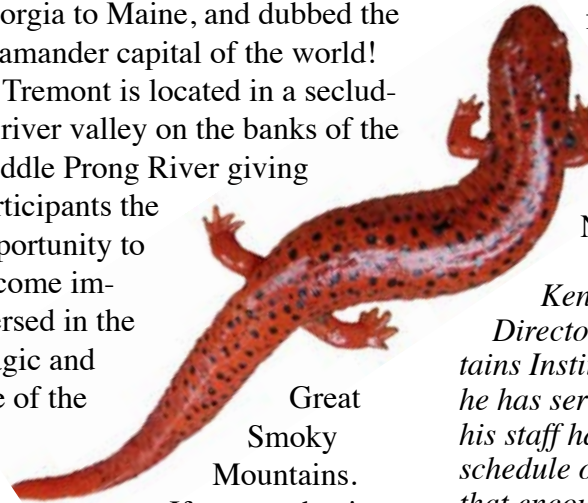
Great Smoky Mountains. If you are having problems convincing your board, staff, or yourself, that the investment of attending the Summit is

worth it, consider the cost of not taking the opportunity to step back, focus on what you could be doing better, with the help of others who have been where you are and have a desire to share and hear of important lessons learned.

The Mountains are Calling!

We hope you will join us for this special gathering and critical growth experience for nature and environmental learning center directors. You can't afford NOT to be there. 

*Ken Voorhis is Executive Director of Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont where he has served or 26 years. He and his staff have developed a varied schedule of successful programs that encourage children and adults in the appreciation of the Smokies and their connection to the natural world.*



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# From The Field:

## Summer Internships: Strategies for Success

Lydia Johnson  
Faculty, College of Graduate and  
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John F. Kennedy University  
Berkeley, CA

**S**ummer. Is that when visitation numbers spike and staff resources grow thin at your organization?

Summer internships are a great way to relieve some of the stresses of the season. I sat down with Madlyn Runberg, a board member of Utah's Society for Environmental Education and Director of School Programs at the Utah Museum of Natural History and Jenny Woods, the Campus Outreach Coordinator at the University of Utah to compare notes on internships with high schoolers, undergraduates, and graduate students. Here's a summary of our observations from decades of experience.

### Recruiting Interns

#### Recruiting High School Students

*Madlyn:* Recruitment approaches vary by community. To determine a recruitment strategy for high school interns you must first understand who your audience is. At-risk youth, minority audiences, girls only, field/interest specific, high performing students...they all require different recruiting strategies.

Establish the goals and benefits of your internship program based

on what is mutually beneficial for both the organization and the students. Most high school students yearn for a social experience, so

prepare to work with these students on group projects.

Recruitment is most effective when the coordinator forms a

partnership with people most closely connected to the students: teachers, school counselors, student leadership advisors, parent leaders, etc. These adults are the best recruiters for building interest and support of your program. Ensure that through the recruitment process you take the time to provide students with a meaningful application process that gives them real world



*An important part of any successful intern program is cultivating an inclusive workplace environment that promotes community and belonging.*

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experience in earning a place in your program.

**Recruiting undergraduates**

*Jenny:* Recruiting undergraduates is a little more difficult than reaching high school students. These students are becoming more independent, so adult contacts are less involved in students' decision-making. Some effective strategies for reaching undergraduates include:

- Post job descriptions and application instructions on your organization's website. Include a downloadable application if possible.
- Post flyers in the buildings on campuses where classes related to your mission (non-profit administration, environmental science, etc.) are taught.
- Contact college career offices –

they often list internship opportunities as well as jobs.

- Notify academic advisors at local colleges and universities.
- Use social media – post about your internships on your organization's facebook, twitter, blogs etc.
- Post flyers at your front desk/entry point.
- Talk to other local organizations about spreading the word to their interns – many students are interested in completing multiple internships at different types of organizations.
- If you have a membership program, inform your members of internship opportunities.

**Recruiting graduate students**

*Lydia:* Graduate students are most selective about internships: they look for projects that relate to their interests, mentors who have professional standing, organiza-

tions with name recognition, and a stipend. Very few positions offer all four of these – emphasize the best features your position has to offer.

In addition to the suggestions for undergraduates, tap into your professional network and put the word out among your peers that you are looking for a grad student with particular interests (i.e. education, development, communications, etc.). Contact graduate studies programs not just in your organization's discipline, but also in these related areas. Check your own alma mater and talk to your contacts about current students who may be looking for an internship. In addition to the social media channels mentioned above, online platforms like InternActive.org, Idealist.org, and Internship.com are useful web sites to find graduate students.

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The best way to recruit graduate students is through networking. Be prepared to communicate directly with students as you look for the best candidates. It is important to find the right candidates who will easily fit into the culture of your organization, since these interns will probably be on site many hours each week for a few months.

### Incorporating an Internship Program

Incorporating an internship program for high school students

*Madlyn:* The three key components of a successful high school internship program are

1. Program Design
2. Implementation
3. Recognition

Ask yourself the following questions as you develop your high school internship program: Who is your audience and what are the opportunities and challenges with this group? What are the program goals? What are the mutually beneficial activities of the interns? What are the social dynamics of the program? Does the organization's staff value the role of interns? Do the interns have the chance to interact in ways that build a sense of community among fellow interns and staff? Thoughtfully consider experiences that build connections to academic and career pathways through meaningful contributions to the organization.

As you implement the internship program, consider these ideas: Are interns engaged in au-

thentic work or learning tasks that are of high interest to them while influencing their perception of their own capabilities and futures? Do interns have regular interaction and mentoring from organizational staff? Are lines of communication consistent, clear and timely?

Recognition is often over-



photo courtesy of Great Smoky Mountains Institute

*The most rewarding internships take into account the supervisor's expertise, the organization's needs, and the intern's interests and academic requirements.*

looked, but it is a critical component of a successful high school internship program. Are the contributions made by the interns tracked, quantified, and communicated back to staff and interns? Do interns receive regular feedback, encouragement, and mentoring to help them to grow and make connections that help them recognize the value of the experiences in their own lives?

Are interns provided appropriate forums for sharing or reporting their work?

Incorporating an internship program for undergraduates:

*Jenny:* In addition to the considerations listed above, make sure that all organizational staff members are on board first – they need to be willing to dedicate the time to train/work with interns or contribute to an intern-friendly environment.

Provide structure for the application process and placement. Set firm semester-friendly dates for the intern to work within. Provide a workstation for interns. If needed, make sure there is a functional computer available for interns to use in their work.

Conduct an intern orientation. Discuss what to expect, where to park, how to use the copier, and introduce interns to other staff and other interns. Provide perks for interns like enrichment opportunities, free parking, invites to special events, etc.

Incorporating an internship program for graduate

students:

*Lydia:* While an organization may decide to establish an internship program, the best graduate student internships are often a result not of an established program, but rather a one-to-one relationship between a professional supervisor and a student.

Graduate students bring an academic understanding of practices and a real commitment to their internship(s). They hit the ground

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running, so to speak, and become a vital member of your team. They are better prepared to perform in self-directed ways, but they need mentoring.

The most rewarding internships take into account the supervisor's expertise, the organization's needs, and the intern's interests and academic requirements. Some graduate interns look for specific internship opportunities that will support a thesis project. Often, the resulting thesis brings new attention to the organization and/or intern's supervisor. Supervisors and graduate interns often develop professional relationships that continue well beyond the few months they share working side-by-side.

This age group does not readily make those connections as easily or quickly as older students. Being clear about this and consistent in the ways you communicate and



Interns need regular mentoring, feedback, and encouragement.

manage the program should help build their sense of ownership and the commitment necessary for the

program to be a success.

**Paid vs. unpaid internships for undergraduates:**

*Jenny:* Offering paid internships to undergraduates can help attract interns to your organization.

Organizations located closer to universities and colleges may find that they have more applicants than intern positions – and because of this competition, most students are willing to work unpaid. Other institutions not as centrally located to a large population of undergrads may have to consider offering a stipend to help accommodate students who would need to move to the area in order to complete an internship.

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### **Paid vs. Unpaid Internships**

**Paid vs. unpaid internships for high school students:**

*Madlyn:* The needs of the audience must be considered in deciding whether or not your high school internship program will be paid or unpaid. There is merit in both options. Not all students need to be paid as their motivation for participation lies in their desire to broaden their experience.

For some students, however, the opportunity costs for participating are prohibitive unless they are paid. In either case, a primary driver for participation is the desire to be part of a group.

Social interaction is a strong motivator for high school students. It is important to be very explicit about the expectations you have of high school interns and their role.

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Unpaid interns should be recognized for their commitment. That may include offering flexibility with their schedules as they fit their internship hours around classes and other jobs.

Paid vs. unpaid internships for graduate students:

*Lydia:* Graduate students are in a critical transition phase between school and career. They bring a new level of experience, energy, and involvement to an organization, and they look for paid internships to prove to themselves and to future employers that their graduate studies have made them more marketable.

Graduate students usually work between 25-40 hours a week for three or four months at a time, and often relocate for the right opportunity. Organizations that offer stipends have a much better chance of recruiting the best students. Stipends can range anywhere from \$500-\$5,000 per placement (depending on the local cost of living).

A recent trend is for organizations to raise stipend money and name specific internship positions after donors (much like endowed chairs at a university). These arrangements can lead to some very effective public relations opportunities for the organization, and offer additional important points-of-contact for the intern who is working to build a professional network.

### How to be a Good Intern Mentor

How to be a good intern mentor to high school students:

*Madlyn:* High school interns

require mentors who:

- Can match interns' interests and strengths to available opportunities, and can work to balance expectations and experiences in ways that take these understandings into account.
- Serve as a professional role models in ways that help interns to



Recruitment methods depend on what type of intern you are looking for - high school, undergraduate or graduate student.

reflect on their own professionalism.

- Are approachable and provide regular communication, coaching, and feedback.
- Work consistently to build and explain connections between intern experiences and interns' future academic and career pathways.
- Provide clear expectations in a caring and appropriately flexible way.
- Cultivate an inclusive workplace environment that promotes community and belonging.
- Do not assume high school students know the appropriate workplace etiquette and will spend time sharing the culture and expectations of the organization.
- Provide regular recognition of

interns' contributions and growth.

How to be a good intern mentor to undergraduates:

*Jenny:* Before you advertise for an intern, spend some time writing out a job description. Then ask yourself: Is this work meaningful and will it help a student build a resume and organization-related skill set? Do you have time to train and work with the interns each week? Is this internship going to be mutually beneficial?

Once the interns start, take time to train them and be available during their scheduled hours. Introduce them to other staff and explain the quirks of your organization.

Keep track of their progress and be prepared to adjust their work-load according to how quickly or slowly they work. Address unacceptable or sloppy work the instant you see it. Be kind, but let the intern know what your expectations are.

Invite interns to department or staff meetings where they can observe how the organization functions on a larger scale.


Be respectful of interns and express your appreciation for the amount of time they are giving to your organization. Complete a formal performance review at the end of the internship and provide interns an opportunity to evaluate you as a supervisor and the internship program as a whole.

How to be a good intern mentor to graduate students:

*Lydia:* Chances are graduate students have made a decision to pursue a career related to the mis-

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sion of your organization. They are intent on doing a great job and experiencing what it is like to work full-time in a meaningful capacity among professionals. They need mentoring more than training. They have studied principles, but lack the experience of seeing how principles are affected by practice. Give them a complete picture of how their efforts fit into the organization's overall mission and strategy, and be prepared to answer insightful questions and explain why you do things the way you do.

Interns likely will continue to have periodic contact with an academic advisor throughout the internship. Treat this as an opportunity to establish a connection to academia rather than as a threat to your supervisory position and you will find many more opportunities to extend your professional network. These students are working on establishing a professional network of their own, and you will be a key player in that endeavor. You can use this mentoring relationship to your advantage, too, by tapping into the interns' energy and developing an awareness of and an appreciation for the perspectives of their peers. 

*Lydia Johnson has worked in the cultural non-profit sector for over 25 years and has managed graduate interns in natural history, archaeology, and fine art activities and organizations across the West. For more information from these contributors, contact Lydia at [ljohnson1@jfk.edu](mailto:ljohnson1@jfk.edu); Madlyn at [mrurburg@umnh.utah.edu](mailto:mrurburg@umnh.utah.edu); and Jenny at [jwoods@umfa.utah.edu](mailto:jwoods@umfa.utah.edu).*

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# Profile: Sabal Palm Audubon Sanctuary

## Things worth doing find a way - a case in point

Larry Richardson  
Executive Director (retired)  
Lake Erie Nature & Science Center  
Cleveland, OH

**S**abal Palm Audubon Sanctuary has historically proven to be a very popular Audubon Sanctuary on the Rio Grande River south of Brownsville, Texas. This 527-acre upland tract is one of the most unusually biodiverse habitats in the country and a subtropical Mecca for many endangered and high priority breeding birds and neotropical bird migrants. It is an important link in the corridor of wildlife habitat that still exists in this region and provides natural habitat that is critical to numerous species of birds, mammals, reptiles, and other wildlife.



Established in 1971, the sanctuary provides a remnant Sabal Palm forest that was once some 70,000 acres of the Rio Grande River Delta and extended more than 80 miles from the Gulf of Mexico inland into Mexico and Texas. Since the first European contact

in the 16th Century, the mighty river delta has been dramatically altered by agriculture, increased human habitation, and water and flood control.

The National Audubon Society, after many years of conservation, education, and financial investment, was, sadly, forced to close the sanctuary a couple of years ago.

According to the 2000 Census, Brownsville has the highest poverty rate (36.0 %) of any city in the U.S. of over 100,000 people. It's a tough place to raise money, and the National Audubon Society—not being a local organization with fundraising capacity in that community—was in a poor position to generate funds there. Also, the construction of the border fence north of the property (putting Sabal Palm on the Mexican side of the wall) did not inspire the confidence of donors.

This is one example of the collateral damage created by a struggling economy, political and social issues, and the need to adjust priorities.

The Gorgas Science Foundation (GSF) of Brownsville has long invested in the Sabal Palm Sanctuary. GSF was established in 1947 by Texas Southmost College Biology Professor Barbara T. Warburton. In 1983, Mrs. Warburton along with former students and local volunteers formally incorpo-



*Sabal palm trees* - public domain image on Wikipedia

rated GSF as a registered 501(c)3 foundation.

With the Audubon's closing of Sabal Palm Sanctuary GSF saw a need to keep the sanctuary open, an opportunity to serve their conservation and education mission, and have the capacity to raise funds locally. The National Audubon Society will continue to own the tract and GSF began operating the sanctuary this past January.

This partnership between the National Audubon Society and the Gorgas Science Foundation is much more than a working agreement. This is a win for conservation and the community as well as for both partners. The GSF

(continued on page 13)

manages biology field stations in North Eastern Mexico and South Texas and manage outreach nature centers that facilitate public understanding of earth's natural biodiversity. They also develop and produce books, films, guides, and educational materials that focus on biodiversity and its relationship to humans.

The nature center community knows all too well just how hard it is to move environmental, conservation, and educational missions forward. The financial and management issues of running centers and organizations seem sometimes impossible and have often pushed professionals and organizations to the brink.

The closing and reopening of Sabal Palm Sanctuary should be a reminder to ANCA members that solutions are out there if only we are willing to find a way to make things worth doing, possible.

Larry Lof, President of the Gorgas Science Foundation told me in January that it took some convincing with the GSF Board of Directors to come to this agreement. "It's a financial and management stretch. It will be a challenge, but it is something the Gorgas Science Foundation must do. We have a vision, we have a plan, and we have the commit-

ment."

The Gorgas Science Foundation is in a very good position to generate support in the Rio Grande Valley and South Texas. With community support Sabal Palm Sanctuary will be preserved, educational and accessible for years to come.

### Visiting Sabal Palm Sanctuary

Sabal Palm Sanctuary is home to many native species of plants and animals that reach the north-



photo courtesy of Texas Parks & Wildlife Department

Many of the interesting birds whose range is in extreme southern Texas, such as the green jay, can be found on the grounds and at the feeders of Sabal Palm Sanctuary.

ernmost limit of their Mexican range here and do not occur elsewhere in the U.S.

The Sanctuary is dedicated to instilling a shared appreciation and sense of stewardship for the natural world through hands-on nature education, citizen science and preservation of the Sanctuary.

The sanctuary features:

- More than 3 miles of nature trails with wildlife viewing areas.
- Short walk down to an observation deck overlooking the Rio Grande.

- Wheelchair-accessible observation deck, Forest Trail, and photo blind.
- Weekly Guided Birding Walk & History Tours through the Rabb House.
- Educational displays and gift shop.
- Wildlife presentations, workshops, and special events as announced.

Sabal Palm Sanctuary is open 7 days a week - 7am til 5pm. 🌿

*Larry Richardson retired as Executive Director of the Lake Erie Nature & Science Center, in Bay Village, OH after 21 years. He is a long-time ANCA member and former Board member, having served as V.P. for Professional Development for most of his term. After a 30-year career in natural resources related field in*

*Ohio & Oklahoma Larry is continuing to following his passion for birding.*





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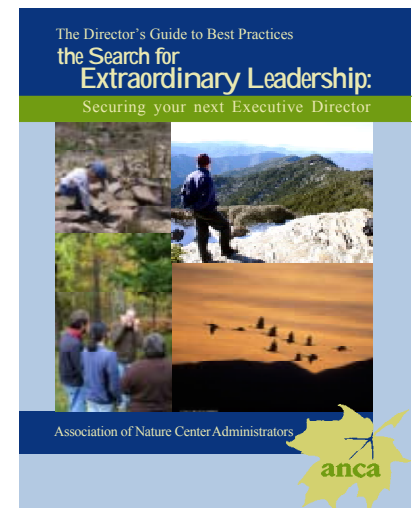
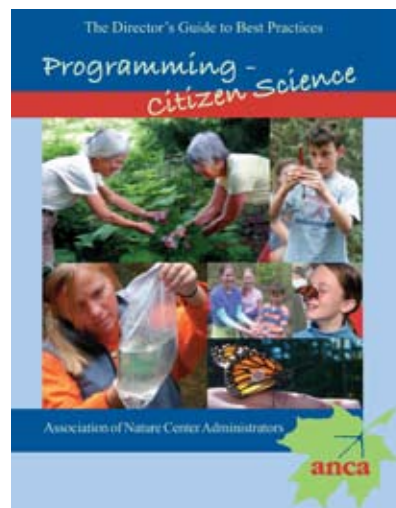
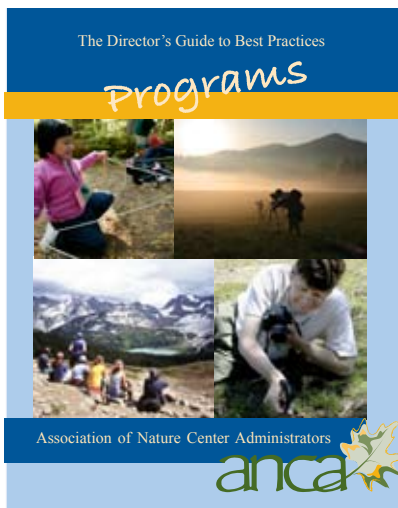
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To find out more about ANCA's Peer Consults contact:

Ann Rilling  
Marketing & Communications Director  
970-375-7090  
[arilling@natctr.org](mailto:arilling@natctr.org)

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