

directions

Journal of the Association of Nature Center Administrators

A Naturalist in China

Taoism & Environmental Education Combined

Bo Glover
Executive Director
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In Taoism the object of spiritual practice is to become one with the Tao — to harmonize one's will with nature in order to achieve "effortless action."

When I stepped off the plane in Beijing this past November, I had no clue what the Tao was nor was I too keen on being a follower. I left for China with an itinerary provided by Earth Charter Communities Network but I hadn't really looked at it too closely.

I knew I was to speak at a couple of universities in Beijing,



The Sichuan Province Land Trust Reserve offers protection to giant pandas, as well as golden snub-nosed monkeys, takin (a goat-antelope found in east Asia), Asian black bears, musk deer, porcupines, and many bird species.

I knew I had a bicycle date with a teacher named Mrs. Dong, and I knew The Nature Conservancy wanted to learn from my experi-

ence, in of all places, a giant panda preserve. I knew I had important places to go and important people to see. Little did I know what REALLY awaited me...

Earth Charter Communities Network (ECCN) is a social enterprise organization that uses dialogue to help design and develop lifelong sustainable lifestyles in both formal and informal settings. Its mission is to help people create dialogues with

(continued on page 4)

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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.

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2 Director's Notes:
RELC Gathering
by Jen Levy

10 From the Field:
StoryWalk®
by Amy Yeakel

12 Profile:
Explore the OC
by Bo Glover

13 ANCA Nature Center
Leadership Award
Nominations
Nomination Deadline:
April 1



Director's Notes

RELC Gathering

Jen Levy
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I just returned from the Residential Environmental Learning Center Director's Gathering at the Cuyahoga Valley Environmental Education Center in Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Ohio. ANCA has helped support RELC meetings since their beginning in 1996. The RELC Gathering, offered biennially, brings together executive directors and education leadership staff from residential environmental learning centers from across North America. These centers share the unique challenges of running residential programs including finding, training, and retaining staff; recruiting and preparing participants for a residential experience; keeping budgets vibrant during challenging times; program evaluation; and serving quality meals.

The annual ANCA Summit focuses on sharing and learning about best practices and acknowledges that the participants are the experts. RELC follows suit with a culture of sharing, learning from peers, and fostering a strong network. One unique aspect of the RELC Gathering is that the sessions are all organized using the Open Space format. This format allows for participant input in planning the sessions and it guarantees the conversations are both of current interest and on target. Open Space works by allowing participants to suggest topics for discussion and a flexible format appropriate to a gathering of peers.



This year's event was no exception, and the first night was spent planning the agenda for the next two days. In the end, the schedule was filled with topics important to the participants regarding the theme of *Current Issues Relevant to Directors of Resident Environmental Learning Centers*.

Open Space works best when you have a mix of both veteran professionals and new administrators (and all in between) who bring experience and expertise to the table for discussion. Through this process, everyone has the opportunity and responsibility to take the lead to insure the sessions are successful.

The four principles of an Open Space Meeting:

1. Whoever comes are the right people.
2. Whatever happens is the only thing that could happen.
3. Whenever it starts is the right time.
4. When it is over, it is over.

Lastly, the Law of Mobility states that if persons find themselves in situations where they are neither learning anything or

(continued on page 3)

contributing anything, they are responsible for moving to another place, for example to another session.

I sat in on several of the sessions and was impressed with the depth of knowledge of the participants and the different facilitator styles that were demonstrated. Throughout the meetings, one person at every session took notes and we have created an RELC page on the ANCA website where everyone can access these notes and other shared resources. You can find the page under the Services tab at www.natctr.org.

A next step for ANCA is to determine how best we can support the RELC community in addition to assisting in the planning and coordination of the biennial gathering. On our last morning in Ohio, we held a meeting at breakfast to make plans for the 2015 RELC Gathering and to gauge interest in assembling a RELC Collaborative Planning Team. Several centers expressed interest in hosting the 2015 Gathering. The group decided that the next host is the Pocono Environmental Education Center in northeastern Pennsylvania. PEEC is a private 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and is the education partner of the National Park Service in the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. This unique public/private partnership has served the education com-

munity for more than 40 years. Approximately 24,000 people visit PEEC annually.

In the meantime, the Planning Team will look at some of the suggestions that came out of the meeting including the need for national research on the impact of residential programs and the possibility of a best practices monograph. In addition, we would like to investigate the power of collective impact and the ability to work collaboratively to approach big funders as a unified voice for get-




Corky McReynolds leads the group through Open Space Planning.

photo by Ken Voorhis

ting kids outdoors and connected to wild places.

One great example presented at the meeting is The ELLMS Project (Environmental Living & Learning for Maine Students). The ELLMS Project is a collaboration between five residential environmental learning centers in Maine committed to engaging Maine students in understanding the environment by living what they learn. You can check them out here, www.ellms.org.

I want to thank Stacey Hefernan and the entire staff at the Cuyahoga Valley Environmental Education Center for the fabulous job they did hosting this event. I really enjoyed spending time with the RELC crowd and learning about their programs. 



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nature and with their community. The organization offers courses in global citizenship, dialogue skills, and sustainable living for graduate students at Beijing Normal University. They provide docent-led community nature programs in Beijing's Olympic Forest Park, educational consulting for The Nature Conservancy's Sichuan Panda Preserve, and they recently launched a Sustainable Education Travel Program in collaboration with organizations in Orange County, California. I found myself as the willing "test case" for the Sustainable Education Travel Program.

The first Chinese person I met was on the airplane going to Beijing — a four-year old girl. We gazed out of the plane window together and saw a snow covered Siberia for the first time. We were the only people on our huge 747 marveling at the landscape. We both agreed it looked cold. I was reminded that there are huge expanses in this world that are still mostly uninhabited by humans... for good reason. Beijing will remind me of the substantial impact humans are having on our Earth.

ECCN's International Director, Stephanie Tansey, who recently published the book *Recovery of the Heart: Dialogue with People*

Working Towards a Sustainable Beijing, met me at Beijing Capital Airport. As we headed for my hotel on the campus of Beijing Normal University, the sheer number of people overwhelmed me. There were more people walking, pedaling bikes, driving cars and scooters, and riding taxis and buses than I ever could have imagined. The scale of Beijing is beyond my comprehension.



Students at Beijing Number 5 High School getting first-hand (and a first time) experience with a traveling naturalist program.

After a late night walk taking in the sights and sounds of Beijing, I began my next morning by packing for Sichuan Province and awaiting an escort to my first speaking engagement at Beijing Normal University. The speech went very well and focused on the history of nature centers in the U.S., the development of my nature center, the role of ANCA, and the back-to-nature movement to reconnect children to the outdoors. The translation went smoothly and the resulting dialogue with the attendees was inspiring. I know that the disconnect to the natural

world in the U.S. is a concern, but I was alarmed to discover that many Chinese do not know how to connect at all!

That evening I was invited to an art exhibit sponsored by The Nature Conservancy (TNC). A Chinese woman played beautiful music on an instrument called a guqin while the artist, Yu Lanying, displayed her inspiring work of underwater scenes depicted in

Chinese ink on rice paper.

En route to the exhibit, I was informed that Beijing has five ring roads, the One Ring Road being defined by surface streets around the Forbidden City. The rings are concentric circles that were built to encircle the city as it grew.

The outer fifth ring now encircles 20 million people. I had no idea which ring or connecting road we were traveling on most of the time, but each was filled with vehicles that put Los Angeles' rush hour to shame.

On every excursion I was given the honorary seat of "shotgun." At first the roadways appeared to be mired in mass chaos, but eventually I began to see that they had a flow. My guides wisely assured me that this mass of honking people-movers maneuvering

(continued on page 5)

inches away from other vehicles and pedestrians were “following the Tao.” I was assured that I would understand if I too learned to follow the natural flow.

I woke up the next morning to a blizzard. My flight with Stephanie to the Sichuan Province was delayed and I had an opportunity to connect with loved ones and friends online. The Internet in China is a real challenge with poor connections and Chinese government restrictions. Eventually the roads and runway were cleared of snow and our flight to Mainyang was rescheduled.

The drive to The Nature Conservancy’s field offices on switchback mountain roads was an experience I won’t soon forget. Villagers, dogs, drying corn, chickens, scooters, rocks, busses, police checkpoints, toll gates, and military personnel with Uzis were all just part of the Tao.

The mountains and rivers of this region are just beautiful. I explored the river before my presentation to TNC staff and found my rock. I find a rock to bring home with me everywhere I go. It’s funny how I always know just which rock is mine – my special connection to the earth. I wish everyone felt it.

The Nature Conservancy’s Sichuan Province Land Trust Reserve is located in Pingwu County — one of the most important remaining pieces of giant panda habitat left in the world. The reserve is putting into practice cutting-edge methods of land conservation for China, and it will be the biggest, best-supported exam-

ple of such a strategy in a country where protecting natural resources is of global importance.

The Pingwu County Land Trust Reserve, as it will be called, connects several existing nature reserves that need well-guarded buffer land to keep out poachers. It will provide a crucial refuge for a number of important species, including giant pandas, and will help create new career opportunities for the local people. Most importantly, it will be the prototype of an innovative new model for protecting land in a country where conservation is not a top priority.

I presented my program to TNC staff, and afterwards I had the pleasure of dining with additional staff, botanists studying the region, and a family of four traveling the world while volunteering.

The TNC staff has little experience with how to run a nature center, but they do have passion. I provided them with a mini-consult and was proud to put my ANCA peer consult experiences to good use. Such excitement lies ahead for them as they plan the direction of this beautiful and sacred land!

In the morning, I hiked with Jimei Wang, project coordinator of TNC’s Sichuan Program and Stephanie along a small stream coming off a mountain. The trail began in an area historically used to grow medicinal plants, and made its way up a small canyon. We discussed possible program themes for educational tours, and general administrative items. I tried to relay to her that the vision will not become a reality without a strong leader – and that she must

(continued on page 6)




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I drank from a mountain stream for the first time in a long time. Who'd have thought it would be in China?

After lunch we went with TNC staff to visit Community 2, one of four communities in a small Chinese village near the reserve. We drove four kilometers up a road to a farming community of 90 people that was rebuilt after a devastating earthquake that hit the region in 2008. We parked in front of the home of a 72 year-old man who invited us in to get warm around some burning embers in a small bowl shaped vessel. A TNC intern translated as we learned of his life in the village.

The community of these small villages is being lost because young people move to the city seeking jobs and a more adventurous life. The village is left with a senior population with very few families. Village children attend boarding school starting in elementary school. The poverty is difficult to imagine. He spoke of wild pigs, monkeys, and bears and how the government has banned the villagers from hunting the pigs that destroy much of their crops.

While we learned of village life, TNC staff investigated some recent mudslides that occurred above the village. They suspect that the mudslides are due to the excavation of 10,000 year-old underground logs being dug up by villagers to sell to the timber trade.

The price paid for these ancient logs approaches that of gold. The drawback is that it loosens the hill-sides and creates mudslides that destroy the fields of the village below.

We stopped at a Homestay on the way back. A Homestay is a village home that is used to house visitors to the region. We were invited inside and offered raw peanuts, wild kiwi fruit, and tea. Jessie, a young American boy from Colorado, was staying at the



The Nature Conservancy is helping launch China's first Land Trust Reserve in Sichuan Province's Pingwu County — one of the most important remaining pieces of giant panda habitat left in the world.

Homestay with his older sister and parents. Jessie showed me around. The family had two pigs, chickens, beehives, and a fish farm for a river species that sells for \$100 a pound. Unfortunately, the fish farm is not very successful. In the kitchen, behind an impressive three-wok set up, the Homestay mom prepared a dinner of dumplings, steamed bread, and parts of animals that probably should not be eaten.

The scenes I experienced at the villages were unlike anything I have ever seen. Poverty was

evident but they were surviving on the land by farming terraced fields that provided them with sustenance. Corn is grown to feed pigs. Rice and other vegetables are grown for daily survival. What surprised me was the way that the villagers treated the land that seemed to provide them with everything. Quaint village farms were reminiscent of littered free-ways. Garbage was everywhere. I wanted to grab a trash bag and clean the landscape but I knew

they would take that as a sign of disrespect. Little did they know that I took their treatment of the land as a sign of disrespect.

The mist-covered mountains of Sichuan Province were one of the most

beautiful scenes I have ever seen. I did not look forward to returning to the mega city of Beijing.

The man who drove us back to the Mainyang Airport was the most aggressive driver I have ever ridden with. Taoists avoid abstractions of reality and strive to see things as they are in the given moment. In this moment I was bit nervous!

After returning to Beijing, I walked for nearly three hours along busy streets, by shops and

(continued on page 7)

China (continued from page 5)

high-rise neighborhoods. As I was learning to be part of the flow, I stumbled upon the outdoor recreation section of the city and went into several shops.

During my urban walking adventure I was invited into a school called Misiyu Children Logical Thinking House by a Chinese lady who turned out to be the principal. I tried to communicate with the teachers but had better luck with the students. The first thing they noticed was my blue eyes. I asked their names expecting difficult-to-pronounce Chinese names, but instead was told Mary, Jack, Lilly, and other very American first names.

The principal phoned someone associated with the school and asked if I would please speak to them. The woman on the other end (who I think was the school's English teacher) asked who I was and what I was doing in China. She relayed this information to the principal, and I was offered a job to teach English at the school!

I continued my walk past a nice park and shop after shop of street vendors selling vegetables. I stopped to observe a crowd of men huddled around a game board strewn with 3-inch diameter disks covered with Chinese symbols. The board had various lines connected to make several shapes. I was told later that they were playing Chinese chess.

After taking several wrong turns into dead ends, I found myself recognizing shops I had visited earlier in the week. I was craving a cup of coffee and went into a restaurant touting western

food, coffee and wifi. Little did I know I was to become a restaurant consultant and make a lifelong friendship with the owner.

It is funny how many people wanted their picture taken with me. I enjoyed the interactions and often asked for a picture with them in return. This is what took place at Aidebao Western Food and Coffee. A good cup of coffee is hard to find in China so I walked in without too much anticipation. The staff sat right down at my table and began to try to have a conversation. It was difficult. Pictures were, of course, taken. The owner then introduced himself as Li Qiang. He was a young guy who really did a great job with the interior decorating. I was very comfortable and let him

(continued on page 8)

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know I liked his place and coffee. He eventually brought out a computer and launched a program that translated typed conversations into English and Chinese. We talked late into the evening.

He told me that Americans come into his restaurant, look at the menu and leave. I looked at his food descriptions within the menu and decided he needed help. “Chopped meat in casing” did not whet my appetite and I thought that maybe the simple word “hotdog” might serve him better. I asked if I could take a menu with me and return the following evening with suggestions. He gladly accepted and refused payment for my coffee. Thus began my restaurant consultation gig.

I woke up the next day and took a bus ride, subway, and walk to meet with Stephanie and Peng Zhao, the Sichuan Program Director for The Nature Conservancy on the other side of Beijing. The mass of humanity on the subway was unreal. Dialogue with Peng was productive and the suggestion of providing internships for TNC staff in the U.S. was well received. The Nature Conservancy has such an amazing opportunity to affect real world change in China!

Later we were off to the Forbidden City. Its scale is hard to imagine. “Beautiful,” “opulent,” and “grandiose” do not do it justice. A meal at a Chinese Muslim

restaurant ended the tourist phase of my day. It was time to get back to my new restaurant consultation job. I met with Li and discussed my suggested changes, including adding the restaurant’s history and philosophy to the menu.

The next day was spent bicycling through Beijing with Mrs. Dong, a high school master teacher and Qi, a staff member of



Bo Glover with his new life-long friend Li Qiang after enjoying a meal of “chopped meat in casing” (i.e. hotdogs).

ECCN. It was by far my favorite way to travel through the city. We stopped at shops and scenic areas as well as visiting the Guo Shoujing Memorial. Guo Shoujing was a famous Chinese scientist who studied water conservation, astronomy, surveying, calendric systems, and algorithm in the late 13th century. We visited Duck Island, had lunch, bought a teacup, and then headed to Mrs. Dong’s school, Beijing No. 5 Senior High School.

We toured an area in the school’s courtyard where the school hopes to create a nature center. A terrific opportunity! I would love to continue to help with that project. I gave my nature

center presentation to the school’s Eco-club and other invited students who spoke English well. One of the students I spoke with truly “got it.” She questioned the Chinese education system, which is based on standardized testing. She questioned the wisdom of learning everything from a book. We talked about how a person can read every book there is about

fixing a motor, and take test after test, but until they actually turn a wrench with their own hands they cannot call themselves a mechanic.

She truly desired the hands-on experience that we, as nature centers, all provide. I wanted to take her right into the outdoors and have her experience the natural world firsthand. Instead, after my presentation, I did one of my nature center’s

Traveling Naturalist programs – this was definitely our most distant school to date! We did various geology lessons and it was terrific watching the students experience a hands-on program. We talked about the layers of the Earth using M&M’s. We observed erosion by shaking rocks in a can and excavated “minerals” from a chocolate chip cookie. Many of those students have since emailed me. They recognize the issues, but do not know how to act.

The next day I was taken on a tour of Olympic Forest Park by ECCN staff and docents. I was impressed with park’s sustainable

(continued on page 9)

practices and native plantings. I played feather hacky sack with the person guarding the greenhouse, and talked her into letting us in. I observed Mrs. Dong give a tour, visited the underwater garden, and watched a child emulate me as I picked up litter.

That evening we traveled to the town of Shang Di to speak to community members about building their own nature center. It was wonderful to see real interest and participate in dialogue with an invested community in Beijing. My translator for the evening was a tea master. At his home after our gathering, I learned about and bought some organic tea gathered from 500-600 year old trees and an eight-year-old named Sunny taught me to make dumplings. She was a tough critic!

On Sunday I visited Stephanie's house for a meeting of Earth Charter Communities Network and Chinese master teachers. The dialogue centered on the triple bottom line: economic prosperity, environmental justice, and social equity. I explored Olympic Park's "Birds Nest" and "Water Cube" – site of the 2008 Olympic Games. I visited several teashops and ended my evening having dinner at Li's restaurant. It was by far my best meal in China. I enjoy his conversation and treasure my new friend's company.


Meals were adventurous for me and definitely did not consist of much "western food." They were a communal experience and I had no idea what I was eating most of the time. To protect my appetite, I asked what I had eaten only after

the meal was finished. Warm water is always served so that you know it was safe to drink because it had been boiled.

On my last night I once again gave my nature center presentation, this time to post-graduate students and professors at Capital Normal University. I said goodbye to my good friend Li. He thanked me for my assistance with his menu and gave me a teapot and a figurine of a Chinese cabbage that turns color when placed under hot water. We drank tea and talked all night. I will miss him most of all.

By the end of my stay, I had learned to follow the Tao. I will always remember the feeling of when I became part of the natural flow. Earth Charter Communities Network is having an impact in China. I was honored to have been asked to visit and help in some

small way. I truly hope I was able to assist them in finding a connection to the natural world and developing a vision for the roles of nature centers in China. Imagine the impact of 1.3 billion nature-connected Chinese.

ANCA has a tremendous opportunity to expand its outreach and has a role to play in the development of nature centers internationally. It is as natural as following the Tao. 

Bo Glover is past president of ANCA and executive director of the Environmental Nature Center where he has served for 18 years. He and his staff have developed an exciting mix of educational programs that provide quality education through hands-on experience with nature.



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From The Field:

StoryWalk® ~ Squam Lakes Natural Science Center

Amy Yeakal
Education Program Director
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Holderness, NH

What? Tear apart a book and post it along a path? Why would you want to do that—seems too simple and not very interesting.

These are sometimes the first responses to a StoryWalk® discussion. However, the simplicity of StoryWalks® is what makes them so compelling and wonderful. In our screen-addicted, over-scheduled society, families don't take all the time they should to read or go for a walk. StoryWalks® combine both these much needed activities in a low-cost and loved experience.

The StoryWalk® Project was created by Anne Ferguson of Montpelier, VT and developed in collaboration with the Vermont Bicycle & Pedestrian Coalition and the Kellogg Hubbard Library.

Now their work has spread and many communities and organizations are sponsoring StoryWalks®.

This article outlines our experience at Squam Lakes Natural Science Center (SLNSC) with StoryWalks® and will hopefully serve as a planning guide for many more!

SLNSC has hosted a StoryWalk® for three years. The genesis of the project was when SLNSC joined forces with the Holderness town library and the town recreation department. The project advances the mission of all three

organizations by including nature stories and information, reading, and activity. Additional benefits include community strengthening, connecting the three organizations more deeply, and having the townspeople see the cooperation of the three institutions.

We chose to arrange our walk on an open field of SLNSC property, while some others choose to post the story on tree trunks in a

unteeer who created a birch arbor with the word StoryWalk® across the top to serve as a clear entrance. Additionally, a local, independent bookstore donated the copies of the books.

You need a minimum of two copies of the book so that you can dismantle the book, laminate the pages, and be able to display the pages in appropriate, chronological order. Depending on the location of your walk it may be subject to vandalism or wear and tear. We have not had to replace any pages but you may want to consider having replacements laminated and ready. We have also made certain that there is always a sign showing current sponsors and the names of the collaborating partners.

During the first year, we chose to prepare a book for the month of July and then a second book for the month of August. We have since chosen to do one book for the month of July.

There is a wonderful amount of StoryWalk® information on www.vtbikeped.org.

The Holderness collaborative is proud to have added our own touches to the original StoryWalk® concept. One such example is that we have the SLNSC summer interns read the books and develop short actions that are engaging and match the storyline. We then print these small actions on a bright colored circle, laminate them and add



photo courtesy of Squam Lakes Natural Science Center

Donated, hand-made entry sign with opening day StoryWalk® events in background.

forested area. We allow the grass to grow tall but mow an irregular, meandering path to walk the story. Challenges with this are the hot summer sun and the fading book pages that result. We have found that about a month is as long as the books can remain before they are simply too faded.

For the initial start-up we secured funding through a local bank to pay for the materials and labor. We chose to make sign posts (18 plywood rectangles on 4x4 posts stained by a volunteer). We were also able to find a local vol-

(continued on page 11)

StoryWalk® (continued from page 10)

them to the story. For example, we ask the reader to walk like a bear for the Blueberries for Sal StoryWalk®. These items have become known here as the “pink dots” and really add an additional dimension to the walk.

We open each summer StoryWalk® with a two hour open-house style event. The attendance at this event has been on the rise over the past three years and is currently around 60 people. We arrange the opening event so that the Holderness recreation department day campers are able to attend. The event includes a craft (completely planned and implemented by volunteers), the walk itself, and a snack associated with the story. For example, when we did Blueberries for Sal we served blueberries and the craft was to make a little blueberry bucket.

We also try to connect the story to a sense of place by featuring New England focused books or local authors. Thus in summer 2012 we added a book signing to the opening event which was very well received. In addition, we always make sure the StoryWalk® book is carried in our gift shop. We also mounted a mailbox near the entrance with a sign indicating we would like feedback. We keep a simple guestbook allowing people to respond to their

experience.

The public just adores the StoryWalk®. A particularly high use time is from 4PM to 6PM just before families go to dinner in town. Additionally, it is often grandparents bringing their grandchildren for a summer evening walk.

StoryWalks® are simple yet accomplish so much by encouraging reading, nature curiosity, activity, family engagement, and community building. Perhaps you will consider a StoryWalk®

for your center’s next adventure! 🌱



photo courtesy of Squam Lakes Natural Science Center

Example of SLNSC sign posts made by staff and the laminated book pages. Note the “pink dots” with extra activities.

Amy Yeakel, is the Education Program Director at the Squam Lakes Natural Science Center (SLNSC), Holderness NH. She has served in this position for over 12 years. Amy has served as President of both the New Hampshire Environmental Educators and New England Environmental Education Alliance. She is associated with the North American Association for Environmental Education, Association of Nature Center Administrators, and is assisting in the leadership effort for NH’s environmental literacy plan. She is currently working regionally on a diversity project through NAAEE and the eeCapacity project. Amy has also taken a lead role in the formation of Blue Heron School, a nature-based preschool at SLNSC.



photo courtesy of Squam Lakes Natural Science Center

View of SLNSC StoryWalk trail through the field with families enjoying the story.

Quotes from the SLNSC StoryWalk® comment box:

“My favorite part was watching (ok, and jumping along) as the boys (4&7) were fireworks. It was also very cool to be read to.”

“We’re summer visitors at Squam Lake—our children are grown—and the grandchildren haven’t arrived yet—but we enjoyed it thoroughly—even without the company of children (we’re 53 and 60!) Thanks for the lovely StoryWalk!”

“Every year I come here, I ask to go on the StoryWalk. So much fun!”

“I feel like a little kid but it was very fun. I did it three times.”

“beautiful walk... beautiful day... GREAT STORY!!! THANK YOU!! We loved the little activities, movement, and reading... the best!!”

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Environmental Nature Center
Newport Beach, CA

Sometimes I find myself taking it all for granted. But then I talk to someone who is miserable at his or her job, or who doesn't even have a job... and I remember how lucky I am. I have an amazing career as the director of a nature center!

I go to work every day where I'm surrounded by trees and animals and wonderful like-minded people. I can take a break and walk along a path by a stream, blast rock n' roll in my office, have lunch next to a waterfall, or listen to the laughter of children just outside my door.

And if you're reading this, you're lucky as well, because you're an administrator at a nature center too!

One of the best ways to remember how good you have it – and be inspired to make “it” even better – is to share your time and expertise with your peers. There is no better way to do that than by attending an ANCA Summit! I've attended the past 15 ANCA Summits and now I'm thrilled to be hosting this year's Summit at my own stomping grounds – the Environmental Nature Center in beautiful Newport Beach, California.

I hope you will join us for the Surfs Up Summit, August 21 – 24, 2013. Connect with your peers and learn cutting edge methods from leaders in the nature center profession. Rediscover your love for your profession, rejuvenate your spirit amongst like-minded people, and gain fresh perspective by seeing your center's concerns from a new angle.



The Sinks is an iconic geological formation often compared to a mini-Grand Canyon.

But this article isn't about workshops or speakers (that will come later, I promise)... it's about the FUN you will have! So definitely plan to come early and/or stay late! There are multitudes of extraordinary places and thousands upon thousands of acres of wonders to be explored.

Orange County, “the OC,” is a great place to rejuvenate your mind, body, and spirit. Orange County is home to Disneyland, LOTS of amazing places to shop,

and 40 miles of beaches where surfing is a favorite pastime.

Southern California is also a global biodiversity “hotspot” and Orange County is “a hotspot within a hotspot,” with more native plant species per square mile than Yosemite National Park. There are tens of thousands of acres of wild, open space in Orange County, and we will help you explore them on a variety of awesome field trips. All of these unspoiled natural areas are just a short ride away!

Experience part of Orange County's National Natural Landmark, the Irvine Ranch Conservancy. The tour will include a stop at The Sinks, described by some as a “mini Grand Canyon,” and Dripping Springs, a lush natural spring and fern grotto.

Ride the Catalina Flyer on a voyage across the Pacific Ocean to arrive at Avalon, Catalina Island. On a private

loop tour of the island, participants will view bald eagle nests and search for the Catalina Island Fox.

Hike along Trabuco Creek to find a hidden tributary where a perennial waterfall awaits worthy adventurers. Splash through the flowing creek, climb over large boulders, and balance on fallen tree trunks.

Visit “Surf City USA,” Huntington Beach, to learn some “totally

(continued on page 13)

rad” tips from a surf instructor, and then grab a board and hit the waves! A paddle out away from the shore always means a good chance of seeing dolphins or sea lions.

Enjoy a whale-watching cruise and experience the sight of pelagic birds, dolphin megapods, and the largest animal on the Earth – the blue whale.

The host site, the Environmental Nature Center, is like a “sampler platter” of California nature, with

a fascinating combination of 15 California native plant communities (ranging from desert, to oak woodland, to fresh water marsh, to redwood forest). Workshops will be held in and around our LEED

Platinum certified learning center.


So next time you find yourself taking your job for granted, play your favorite song as loud as you can on your office computer – because you CAN - then go online and register for the 2013 Surfs Up Summit where you will find



A perennial waterfall along Trabuco Creek, the site of one of the Surfs Up Summit field trips.



photo courtesy of Catalina Island Chamber of Commerce

critical professional growth opportunities as well as refreshment for your mind, body, and soul. This is a Summit you won't want to miss! We'll inspire each other, and remind each other how inspiring we all really are. 


Bo Glover is Past President of ANCA and Executive Director of the Environmental Nature Center where he has served for 18 years. He and his staff have developed an exciting mix of educational programs that provide quality education through hands-on experience with nature.

2013 ANCA Nature Center Leadership Award

~ nominations now being accepted ~

- ~ Do you know someone who has demonstrated best practices in administering and leading a nature center?
- ~ Have you been mentored by a fellow nature center administrator?
- ~ Have you or your nature center benefitted from the local, state and/or national contributions of a peer in advancing the mission of nature centers?
- ~ Why not nominate them for the ANCA Leadership Award?

YOU can help recognize the next recipient of the ANCA Nature Center Leadership Award
Submit a nomination today!

Click here  to learn more and download the nomination form.

Nomination Deadline: April 1st




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ANCA offers consulting assistance to nature centers and other environmental education organizations at very reasonable rates.

The cost includes transportation, lodging, and meals for the team, plus a \$3,250 fee that goes toward supporting ANCA's professional services. Our board of directors and members, provide these services with no personal financial gain, while you gain the advantage of advice and guidance from some of the profession's most respected and experienced leaders.

What can be covered? Well, just about anything involved with planning, funding, and operations.

Some topics include:

- Assistance with long range and strategic planning
- Review facilities and trails
- Program evaluation
- Personnel & human resources issues
- Fundraising and fiscal management
- Green building
- Exhibits
- Starting a center
- Organizational structure

Join the Team!

ANCA's Consult Services are a success because of it's members' participation on Consult Teams. Please consider sharing your experiences and lessons learned.

Consult Team members donate their time but all expenses are paid. Participating in a Consult is a great way to see other parts of the country, learn about other nature centers, and take home valuable knowledge for your own center.

So don't delay!!!

PLEASE fill out the skills survey in the Member's Section on ANCA's web site at www.natctr.org.

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

Ann Rilling
Marketing & Communications Director
970-375-7090
arilling@natctr.org

ANCA Membership - a Great Investment in the Profession

Who Should Join ANCA?

The Association of Nature Center Administrators is intended to serve professionals who provide the vision and leadership to carry out the development and administration of an environmental learning center's mission, goals, and objectives.

Although most members are center directors, other senior staff will find it valuable for their own work and career development.

Membership Benefits

- Quarterly Issues of *Directions*
 - electronic or hard copy versions
- Special Issues of *Directions*
 - topics focussing on relevant issues
- Discounts on Publications
- Discounted Summits and Workshops
- Reciprocal Admissions Program
- Membership Guide
- Networking with Nature Center Professionals
- Free job postings on ANCA's web site

Membership Categories

- Individual \$70
- Institutional \$110 (benefits for 2)
- Graduate Student \$25
- Emeritus \$50 (retired from the profession)

Business Membership & Summit Sponsorship

The ANCA Business Membership and Summit Sponsorship Programs allow businesses to be part of the ANCA community on many different levels.

ANCA also offers additional advertising and p.r. opportunities for those with products and services of interest to the nature and environmental learning center profession.

Please contact Ann Rilling, Marketing & Communications Director for more information:

arilling@natctr.org
970-375-7090

Membership Forms & more Information at: www.natctr.org

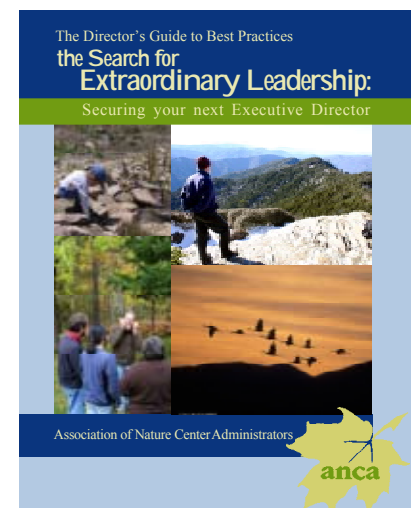
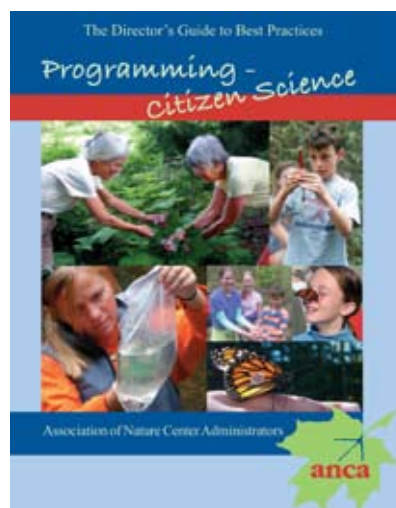
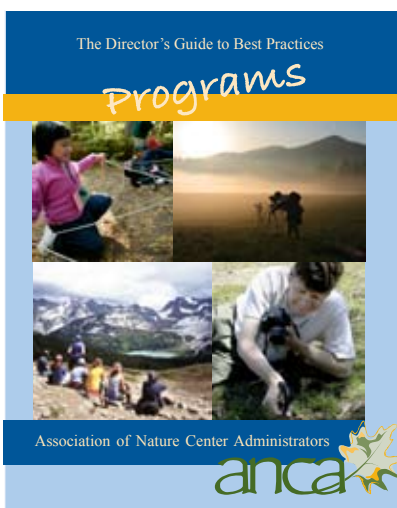


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