



Directions

The digest of the Association of Nature Center Administrators

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Directions is a quarterly publication of the Association of Nature Center Administrators, distributed to members of ANCA as a membership benefit. ANCA 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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Inexpensive Exhibits Enable Hands-On Learning

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The structure of an ANCA Summit generates idea exchange like flowers follow rain. A topic which evolved to an Open Space session at this year's Summit was the need to quickly and inexpensively create seasonal or topical exhibits and hands-on learning materials. I proposed the topic and facilitated that session, expecting a handful of attendees from tiny, struggling centers. We became a crowd, from diverse centers. Here are a few ideas gleaned from Summit 2001, interspersed with personal experience.

Many of us utilize materials and ideas from sources like **Ranger Rick** and **My Backyard**. They're invaluable for project ideas, songs, poems, stories, puzzles, games, posters and small exhibits, made more permanent with a bit of lamination and stuff from any craft department.

Sticker poster books (like "Animals of the Marshes") can be strengthened into longer-lasting, small hands-on exhibits. To protect the stickers for repeated use, laminate them (placing identifying text high on the back along a margin) in the thickest laminating sleeve you can find. Affix a small piece of velcro (or stick-on magnetic strip) to each animal sticker and to each match-up spot on the poster. Fabric stores and hardware stores sell velcro "dots" and tape of various colors in bulk. Craft stores and Wal-Mart sell rolls

of stick-on magnets. File cabinets provide a decent magnetic substrate behind a poster and provide ready access to related items you might need.



Inexpensive specimen containers and viewers are always needed, in myriad sizes and shapes. This need can often be met by using recyclables. Recyclables are an excellent resource for cost reduction and for feeling good about the example we set for those we teach. Clear plastics are a favorite. Those who couldn't afford plastic magnifiers to view pond organisms stretched cellophane wrap around hollow tin cans, holding it in place with a rubber band. Others created terrariums from mountains of discarded clear water bottles. Clear grocery containers holding salads, cakes and pizza may protect nests for pass around inspection, snake skins much too fragile *sans* protection, seeds, and all sorts of other stuff to admire and behold. Tomato baskets with holes along

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Inexpensive Exhibits Enable Hands-On Learning

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the bottom work pretty well for separating seeds from larger pods. A personal favorite is the rubber-capped plastic “test-tube” found on nursery flowers. A dozen red roses sometimes contain a dozen of these handy vials, which unbreakably preserve cut flowers.

At the Children’s Garden in Cleveland, cut wildflowers are displayed with tongue depressors as labels, stuck with the cut flower into a tin can holding rocks and water, completely safe for children to handle. The display case is a used metal cart for flowerpots, just the height for examination by youngsters.

Felled trees and trimmed limbs are favorite materials for making hollow crawling tubes, mushroom-like stools, attractive benches, raptor displays, or sliced thin into nametags, trail markers and honorary plaques. Establishing contact with local woodworking clubs, “shop” teachers, hobbyists, craft clubs, etc. is often the key to skilled volunteer help. A good source for detailed carpentry for some centers has been the local penal colony. Penal workers are said to be faster at project completion than the home handyman who may be distracted by birding walks, attic cleaning, car maintenance and trips to the local shopping mall.

Inexpensive children’s toys provide excellent connections between permanent exhibits and the child’s application of what he beholds. Penitentiary Glenn’s Wildlife Rehabilitation exhibit includes realistic stuffed animals, small cages, a discarded telephone, a doctor’s kit, and tiny shirts that match those worn by the rehabilitation staff. Children call 911, perform surgery, and “do something” about the dilemma of an injured animal. Items found at yard sales, rummage sales and in

forgotten toy closets may trigger creative notions of how children might relate to ideas you wish to present. Adults will learn by watching children play. Often what we need is not more factual learning but stronger connections. The delight of a child is like magic in eliciting emotional connections.

Color printers, scanners and digital cameras allow us to simulate specific environmental details we wish to focus on. A simulation may help the visitor notice the same phenomenon in the wild. An inexpensive, one-inch deep acrylic picture frame (with a background color print from our cactus garden) will hold toy lizards detailed in inexpensive acrylic. Their markings are those of whiptail lizards that inhabit our park. These are swift-moving characters that are frequently encountered but rarely tolerate long glances or portraiture. Our mesquite lizard will likewise be displayed on a real slice of mesquite. He will not creep imperceptibly into a shadow when visitors approach.

Encouraging art and crafts clubs to utilize nature center meeting space provides a source of volunteer talent at many centers for such projects as “lizard detailing.” Periodic “local artist” displays may also foster friendships for subsequent volunteer assistance.



Professionally printed color photos of an intended subject are real treasures. Any published photo cut, copied or scanned into displays should credit the photographer and printed source. Acknowledging the work of the professional who makes a living at nature photography may

encourage various forms of support. Neglecting to acknowledge professional work most assuredly paves the pathway to animosity.

Adding 3-D effects to flat photos can easily be accomplished with the addition of twigs, rocks, plastic creatures and the like, quickly adding a new dimension of interest to exhibits. Foam display boards are a favorite tool of many attendees. Larger lightweight panels from home building supply centers are used by many to create large display panels. Velcro backing is often applied to animal and plant cut-outs to allow repositioning on a display, illustrating habits and activities. Chunks of foam carved to simulate such things as rocks must be painted with a protective cover coat of non-corrosive latex paint prior to any top sprayed enamel.

Interpretation via inexpensive outdoor signage is a big challenge, especially in color. Lamination and computer desktop publishing creates inexpensive signage that may last about a year before the lamination is ugly from wind and weather. Long-lasting print and illustrations are difficult to achieve without professional signage services. Inkjet signage fades almost instantly in sunlight, as do many colored papers. Sun shading lengthens color-life to some degree. Laser color copies last a bit longer. Laser black and white copies with acrylic paint detailing provide further longevity. Photos cut from glossy magazines last longer yet.

Careful lamination to completely seal out moisture is essential. Staples should not perforate paper within a laminated sign. There must be ample margin so the sign can be securely stapled to its post along the outer laminated edges. Many of us laminate almost everything, even inside exhibits, to protect from dirt and grime. Rolls of clear contact paper are handy, as is the local teacher supply store, for laminating larger posters.

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Movable parts and pieces always present maintenance challenges. In too many instances, our society chooses no-fuss nature simulations (TV nature shows, computer simulations, audiovisual presentations) in place of actual visits to natural areas or even “playing” outdoors. Our challenge is to use simulations to encourage greater immersion into the natural world, rather than to provide a “cleaner, more comfortable” substitute. Despite the mess and continual maintenance, most of us would still choose for children to examine a real flower, guaranteed to wilt, rather than the most professional simulation.

A few exhibit forms, widely used in nature parks and zoos, encourage comparison of the child’s body or abilities with those of animals. Some even require little maintenance or supervision once constructed, and can be as inexpensive or as permanent as budgets allow.

A favorite is the wingspan exhibit. These are often painted, nested silhouettes, representing progressive wingspans of locally encountered birds. They encourage visitors to compare arm span with bird wingspan. I’ve made cheap imitations, using magazine picture cutouts of representative birds, spaced from left-to-right according to increasing wingspan along a 12 ft. roll of non-fading colored bulletin board paper, with handprint cutouts in various flesh tones spaced across the paper’s width. I attach any needed wording before laminating the whole exhibit. It rolls up, for loan to local schools and seasonal storage. Children delight in checking the wingspan of the family baby (so birds with short wingspan must be included) and in comparing their arm span on successive visits to see if they’ve grown yet.

Setting or changing the “scene” and adding interest to a subject can be accomplished with some very

simple stitches. Brightly colored, inexpensive fabrics of wildflowers, lizards, butterflies, birds, amphibians and insects add interest as simple window treatments, hemmed to become a tablecloth, adorning an old pillow in a reading spot, or ironed and hemmed as a wall hanging or cover for an open cabinet. Other inexpensive brighteners are bulletin board “trimmers” of realistic insects, birds, shells, flowers, leaves, etc. available at teaching supply stores.

There will always be a need for new and better versions of the inexpensive teaching tricks elaborated here. Permanent exhibits can become dull. They are enlivened by accompaniments that can be inexpensively changed. 🌿

EdGateway Discussion Group

The procedure for signing up to the ANCA listserv on EdGateway has changed. Below are the steps.

- In your browser, go to www.edgateway.net
 - Click on “enter here>>”
 - In the My EdGateway box select “My Profile”
 - Select bullet #2 – registration form
 - Complete the form and submit
 - When the screen returns, select “My Profile”
 - Update your profile
 - When the screen returns, select “My Discussions”
 - Choose “list discussions”
 - Select “ANCA Association of Nature Center Administrators”
 - Choose “subscribe”
-
-

Director’s Guide to Best Practices



The *Director’s Guide* includes chapters on five essential areas: leadership, strategic planning, boards, staff, and fund raising.

ANCA developed this book for busy directors and staff people with many roles and responsibilities. It is a handbook for those new to the profession and will also challenge and inspire the most experienced directors and their staffs. ANCA members have also found it valuable to give to board members, and volunteers.

Directors from 23 states and 40 different facilities reviewed and commented on the chapter drafts and evaluated the book’s effectiveness.

Price of the book is \$60.00 plus \$5.00 shipping and handling.

Send to:
 ANCA
 1000 Aullwood Road
 Dayton, OH 45414
 Or call 1-800-490-2622

MEMORIAL
Dr. H. Lewis Batts, Jr.
May 24, 1922 to October 9, 2001

Erin Smith and Bill Rose
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Dr. H. Lewis Batts, Jr., the first recipient of the ANCA Professional Leadership Award, died October 9, 2001. Dr. Batts was one of the founders and the first Executive Director of the Kalamazoo Nature Center. He was the visionary behind the establishment and development of the Center, one of the early nature centers in the country. During his 28 years as volunteer Executive Director he remained a professor at Kalamazoo College and a renowned ornithologist. He was involved in all aspects of the Center, including designing a comprehensive program of education, research and stewardship. Many staff members who worked alongside him early in their careers have since made significant contributions in the fields of environmental education, environmental advocacy and natural history research.

Batts' reputation as an innovator in his several fields of expertise extended well beyond Kalamazoo and led to his involvement in state and national organizations. In 1967, he and seven other scientists and teachers established the Environmental Defense Fund. He was active with the Audubon Society at all levels, serving as president for the Kalamazoo and Michigan chapters and as a member of the Board of Directors for National Audubon Society. Other board service included Natural Science for Youth

Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, Wilson Ornithological Society, Zero Popu-

lation Growth, Cranbrook Institute of Science, Endangered Species Technical Advisory Board for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Lake Michigan Federation, and was active with a number of other professional, technical and service organizations.

Batts worked with a multitude of mediums to spread his love of nature including writing, speaking, film and photography. He was an internationally recognized nature photographer. Lew Batts shared his scientific knowledge and environmental philosophy with people of all ages and a variety of perspectives.

Kalamazoo Nature Center staff and friends, and his many friends and students around the country, will miss the guidance and inspiration provided by Lew Batts. Those of us who were influenced by Lew will continue the work he began *"to improve and protect the environment for the benefit of people and other living things"*. 🌿

"When we contemplate the whole globe as one great dewdrop, striped and dotted with continents and islands, flying through space with all other stars all singing and shining together as one, the whole universe appears as an infinite storm of beauty." - John Muir

Fossil Recognition
Plaques

Gordon Maupin
The Wilderness Center
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gordon@falcon.stark.k12.oh.us

At the Summit at Lake Erie Nature and Science Center, it was my pleasure to present the ANCA President's Award to Pat Welch for many years of solid service to ANCA. To honor Pat for her years of dedication I wanted her award to be a special tribute. Something out of the ordinary. By fortunate coincidence, I was able to have a unique plaque crafted for this award.

Instead of the traditional engraved brass or hard plastic plate, the President's Award was engraved across fossil ferns. The award looked like a Pennsylvanian coal fossil fern slab mounted on a wooden board with the message engraved in the stone. Indeed, the slab was cast from an actual fossil. The craftsmanship and detail is extraordinary.

As far as I know, it is a unique style for a recognition plaque. I selected it for its powerful nature theme. The cost was competitive with traditional plaques.

Listed below is the contact information.

Scot Stoneking
Rock Solid Design
5632 Butterbridge Road
Canal Fulton, OH 44614

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sstone@ssnet.com

www.angelfire.com/oh2/RockSolid



Open Space: The Final Frontier

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“We need to preserve a few places, a few samples of primeval country so that when the pace gets too fast we can look at it, think about it, contemplate it, and somehow restore equanimity to our souls.” - Sigurd Olson

More and more nature centers are advocating for open space in their communities. The open space trend is national. In the last three years, Americans have passed 85% of their 459 open space bond elections (Land Trust Alliance). In a survey done in March by the National Association of Realtors, 74% of citizens polled supported local government buying land for open space. The vast majority of Americans want to preserve their natural heritage, and are voting for it.

More and more homebuyers are turning away from “ticky-tacky” urban sprawl, and want more nature in their neighborhoods. Developers are discovering that land values increase when greenspace is planned into their development. According to the Real Estate Research Corporation, “There is no greater risk to land values than unrestrained development.”

Nature centers are positioned perfectly for open space advocacy, since they educate the public and value the preservation of natural areas. Conserving open space ensures quality of life, clean air and water, recreation, and economic health. Open spaces along rivers, trails, and greenway corridors can create jobs, enhance property values, expand local businesses, attract new and relocating businesses, increase local tax revenues, decrease local government expenditures, and promote a local sense of community. Supporting such community development helps a nature center move outside of its boundaries, raises a center’s profile as a visionary institution, and furthers

its mission as well. And, partnerships for such community projects can eventually help a nature center in unforeseen ways.

Open space can be conserved through public or private purchase, and with the assistance of land trusts that help families preserve their property while keeping it in the family. The Trust for Public Land, the Nature Conservancy, the American Farmland Trust, and the Land Trust Alliance are assisting local communities and private landowners in conservation efforts throughout the country. This is legacy planning: seeing generations into the future, and acting accordingly.



Certain land trust approaches can offer tax relief. Landowners’ children won’t be so heavily burdened by estate taxes, yet can continue to own and enjoy the land. How? One method is the conservation easement, which restricts future use of the property from some kinds of unwanted development, while permitting continued use for residential, recreational, agricultural, or ranching activities, depending upon the property owner’s wishes.

Folks without heirs have a way of gifting future generations with open

space, or preserved natural areas, by donating of their property to a land trust for protection. They can even bequeath the land to a land trust, receive tax relief, and continue to live on the land until their death (remainder interest). The land trust movement is providing private citizens important avenues of individualized legacy planning, person by person, property by property.

Partnerships between nature centers and land trusts can involve assistance in land acquisition for nature centers, office sharing, and educational workshops. The Schuykill Center for Environmental Education in Philadelphia currently presents a daylong workshop entitled: “The Ecological Enhancement of Urban/Suburban Green Space” with ten different experts speaking on urban ecology, community development, and landscaping. In this way, the nature center becomes an important resource to community planners. What’s more, a nature center can partner with land trusts to provide workshops that focus on both land management and legacy planning for private landowners.

The Land Trust Alliance can be helpful in identifying local land trusts that that operate near your center. All 1,200 American land trusts provide landowners with options that can preserve and protect the special qualities of their property. The Nature Conservancy alone has preserved millions of acres in fifty states, Canada, and Mexico, and is the largest private owner of nature preserves on earth.

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However, most land trusts are small, local concerns.

The Trust for Public Land has shown community leaders that they do not have to choose between economic growth and open space protection, by helping those communities plan open space projects that enhance their neighborhood's bottom line, as well as beauty, health, stability, and quality life. Their assistance with the "Smart Growth Initiative" in Austin, Texas resulted in a national model for using parks and open space as incentives in designing sensitive development. (See *The Economic Benefits of Parks and Open Space*, Steve Lerner and William Poole, through TPL).

Make friends with the folks operating land trusts in your area, and enhance your community's capacity to plan its own legacy.

Helpful Web Sites:

Land Trust Alliance:

www.lta.org

Trust for Public Land:

www.tpl.org/tpl

The Nature Conservancy:

www.nature.org

American Farmland Trust:

www.farmland.org 

Endowment Update

Through your generous support the ANCA endowment fund continues to grow. Recent contributors to the fund include:

Debbi Brainerd
Elizabeth Cheek
Glenn Dent
Kirk Dreier
Annie Guion
Jenny Harmon
David Junkin
Greg Lee
Gordon Maupin
Chris Thayer
Ken Voorhis

If you haven't had a chance to complete your 2001 pledge, we encourage you to send your check today.

If you would like to make a pledge for 2002 call the ANCA office at 1-800-490-2622 or email at lbrown@audubon.org.

ANCA on the Web

Visit ANCA's web site at:

www.natctr.org

Check often, we are continually updating and improving the site.

Calling All Authors!!

If you have a desire to share your ideas and experiences with the ANCA membership. We Need You!!

The best articles come from you - the members. Articles need to be 1 - 2 pages (700 - 1,400 words). Technical language can be used as needed, but, remember your audience may not have your level of expertise in the subject. Fun, light-hearted, and inspirational articles are always welcome as well.

Submit your articles to:

ANCA
1000 Aullwood Rd.
Dayton, OH 45414
lbrown@audubon.org



SUMMIT VIII Lookout Mountain Nature Center – Golden, CO August 22nd – 25th, 2002

The stage is being set for the next annual summit, so mark your calendars now! You won't want to miss it. But, we need your help. If you would like to present a session at the summit we need to hear from you. Sessions take place on Friday, August 23rd and Saturday, August 24th. Please keep in mind that these sessions are facilitated workshops, not lecture presentations. You should have some expertise in the topic and the session should last about 1.5 hours. You are welcome to partner with a colleague.

If interested, send the following information to:

Tim Sandsmark
Greenway and Nature Center of Pueblo
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Phone: (719) 549-2458, fax: (719) 549-2547
sandsmar@uscolo.edu

- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| • Name | • Title | • Mailing Address |
| • City | • State | • Zip |
| • Phone | • Fax | • Email Address |
| • Session Title | • Description | |

These workshops are what make the ANCA Summit such a valuable learning and networking event. We hope to see you there.

ANCA Board of Directors**PRESIDENT****Gordon Maupin**

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Ken Voorhis

Great Smoky Mountains Institute

(865) 448-6709 Fax (865) 448-9250

President's Corner**Gordon Maupin****The Wilderness Center****P.O. Box 202****Wilmot, OH 44689****(330) 359-5235, gordon@falcon.stark.k12.oh.us**

Most members become acutely aware of ANCA activities while attending the Summit or when **Directions** arrives. Increasingly, more members are taking advantage of ANCA's collective expertise through the list serve, EdGateway. Many, however, are unaware of the action behind the scenes that makes the good things happen.

Over the last few months, work on the Summit 2002 has been increasing. The ANCA Board of Directors decided to meet at Lookout Mountain Nature Center in Golden, Colorado and volunteer teams were put in place to make the Summit a reality. Many thanks must go to **Christine Leahy**, Executive Director at Lookout Mountain for providing timely information during the selection process. Thanks also go to Board member **Tim Sandsmark** for serving as our Summit Committee Chair. We are looking forward to another outstanding event.

If there are sessions you would like to see offered at the Summit, please contact ANCA and we'll pass the word on to the Summit planning team. Better yet, if there is a session you would like to facilitate, volunteer! Keep in mind ANCA's long tradition of avoiding straight lecture by designing facilitated sessions to involve participants as much as possible.

**Thanks to all who contributed!**

The big news that I have to report is that we completed the drive to match a \$10,000 endowment fund challenge! The auction at last year's Summit raised an astounding \$7,000. The balance was completed from the ANCA Board of Directors and a mailing to members. Thanks to a couple of major donations, we exceeded the goal and raised just over \$12,000. The most gratifying contribution came from **David and Sandra Junkin**. The Junkins started the endowment fund with an unexpected challenge gift at the Summit held in Jamestown, NY. ANCA owes a huge debt to David and Sandra because his initial gift sparked an ongoing effort to build an endowment fund for ANCA. The endowment has received \$ 81,000.00 in contributions since that first evening in Jamestown.

Finally, I'd like to make a personal observation. Before ANCA formed, nature center directors operated in something of a vacuum. There were good things going on at a lot of places, but communications between centers was hit and miss. There were many good people working in the field, but none of us were as good as we could be. Since ANCA formed and started offering the Summit, I have observed a general rise in the quality of nature center leaders (not to mention my own ability to lead) and in turn, a rise in the quality of nature centers, and in turn, a rise in public attitudes and expectations surrounding nature centers. Witness the number of nature centers who have just completed major capital projects, are conducting major capital campaigns, or are planning for a major campaign in the near future! ANCA is accomplishing its mission to lift the profession. 🌿

ANCA Membership Form

If you would like to become a member of ANCA, please fill out this form and mail it to the address given. Members receive 4 quarterly issues of *Directions*, special publications, and admission to ANCA Summits and workshops. Institutional memberships allow for two staff members to receive benefits. Questions? Call 1-800-490-2622.



Name: _____

Title: _____ Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____

Please check the desired membership level

\$60 Individual

\$90 Institutional

Additional staff member _____

Make checks payable to ANCA and
send with this form to:

ANCA

Aullwood Audubon Center

1000 Aullwood Road

Dayton, OH 45414

Directions

c/o Aullwood Audubon Center

1000 Aullwood Road

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