

FROM THE FIELD:
kids & birds

page 6

PROFILE:
environmental learning
centers

page 8

FEET ON GROUND:
upcoming happenings

page 11

spring 2017

directions

Journal of the Association of Nature Center Administrators

Join us for ANCA's 23rd Annual Summit!

Maggie Johnston
Education Director of McDowell Programs
Camp McDowell
Nauvoo, AL

from the best nature and environmental
learning centers around the country.
So, what else can you expect?

Kick back. Take your shoes off. Pull up a rocking chair. Watch the sunset across the lake with a cold beverage in your hand.

Take a stroll down a tree-lined path that leads into cool sandstone canyons. Take a dip in our local swimming hole at the creek (or swimming pool). Have lots of good conversation. Paddle down creeks where you might see otters, kingfishers, red-tailed hawks, and the occasional water snake. Each day at Camp McDowell is a new adventure! These are just a few of the deeply southern things we will offer at this year's Summit. We at Camp McDowell are thrilled to host the 2017 Magnolia Summit!

We also want you to learn new ideas and make good connections. This is what the ANCA Summit does best – bring together the most dynamic leaders



Camp McDowell is a camp, yes, but also a 150-room conference center, with 12 lodges scattered among trees and along the banks of Sloan Lake. (Get a sense

by watching the drone flyover *here*.) Our Chef Jeremy and his crew create delicious meals and our on-site farm provides lots of fresh veggies and even pork, rabbit, and chicken.

A few years ago, thanks to the leadership of Mark Johnston, my husband and the executive director of Camp McDowell, we began a capital campaign that lead to building more than 40 new structures including a third dining hall that can seat 600 people, six new hotel style lodges, 10 new camp style cabins, lots more staff housing, and a wonderful new Farm School with barns, gardens, and teaching kitchen.

Camp McDowell is the 1,140-acre home to many

(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.

Serving more than 600 members, ANCA is the leader in the profession.



Rooted in Experience. Reaching for Excellence.

Directions is a quarterly publication of the Association of Nature Center Administrators, distributed to members of ANCA as a membership benefit.

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- 2 **Director's Notes:**
Staff Changes

- 6 **From the Field:**
**Kids & Birds Count with
Nature Centers**
by Tom Rusert

- 8 **Profile:**
**Environmental Learning
Centers**
by Keanna Leonard

- 11 **Feet On The Ground:**
**Recent & Upcoming ANCA
Gatherings**



Director's Notes

Eventful Spring!

Jen Levy
Executive Director
Association of Nature Center
Administrators
Logan, UT

I am delighted to announce that ANCA has a new full-time staff member in our Utah office! Caitlin Fader started in early April as our Marketing and Development Assistant. Caitlin is an early-career professional with a varied background in digital marketing, conservation, and a master's degree in sustainable communities. Caitlin will be guiding the daily operations of our marketing, communications, and development program and is the first person in this new position.

When asked what she most looks forward to in her new position Caitlin says, "I am looking forward to getting to know the people who have dedicated themselves to the nature and environmental learning center profession as well as being able to work with them towards the general missions of environmental education, sustainability, and conservation through excellently serving their management and organizational needs. This position allows me to deepen my knowledge of marketing and development while continuing to work towards some very important large-scale goals."

I am looking forward to working with Caitlin as she develops and implements new strategies including a brand new organizational website. In her first few weeks,



Caitlin has already reached out to several ANCA members who have recently undergone a website re-design, and she is developing a survey to gather data from the ANCA membership to assess their use of our website. In addition, Caitlin is working on strategies for ANCA to be more involved in advocacy and be a voice for the profession in discussions around issues important to our members.

Caitlin joins myself and Taylia Farley, office and membership assistant, in the Logan, UT office. Ann Rilling, who recently retired from ANCA staff, will continue to assist with *Directions* newsletter, graphic design, and other projects as needed.

And in other big news..... registration for the 2017 ANCA Summit is now open! The entire ANCA staff, Summit Committee and our host, McDowell Environmental Education Programs at Camp McDowell, have worked hard to bring you the 2017 Magnolia Summit. I visited Camp McDowell last November and was

(continued on page 3)

immediately impressed with the facility, the staff, and the programming. Read more about our host on page 1 and visit the 2017 Summit webpage for all the information you will need to register and plan your Summit experience.

We have a fantastic group of speakers lined-up for you and, as always, can't wait to hear the ideas that you bring to the table. Our featured speaker, James B. McClintock, will address strategies to communicate climate change, and workshop topics will include capital campaigns, budgeting basics, farm-to-table events, and designing nature-play areas. We will also go in the field to Birmingham to visit urban centers as well as a farm program and The Birmingham Botanical Gardens.

ANCA exists because of and for our members, and we want to make sure we offer Summit sessions that best meet your needs. Please take a few minutes to let us know what topics, skills development, and professional support YOU would like to see offered this year at the Summit. Send me an email with your ideas.

In addition to the Summit, ANCA Regions continue to meet throughout the year for peer-to-peer sharing and networking opportunities. Recently, Minnesota was added as an ANCA Region and the Lee and Rose Warner Nature Center in Marine on St Croix, MN hosted the first ANCA Minnesota Region meeting on April 14th. Twenty-

three participants discussed volunteer management including advertising, recruiting, job descriptions, and staff support. I am grateful to ANCA Minnesota steering committee members Julie Grecian and Pete Smerud for organizing the meeting and for introducing ANCA to the participants. Pete reported that Julie and the staff at Warner Nature Center did a tremendous job hosting and there was a diversity of age and experience, as well as types of centers, in attendance.

We have a goal of adding to our current list of nine active ANCA Regions and one way we are accomplishing this is by establishing region steering committees. The role of the steering committee is to lead the effort in recruiting host sites and program planning, inviting participants, representing ANCA, and facilitating the



Caitlin Fader is ANCA's new Marketing & Development Assistant. Reach out to her about our website, marketing materials, questions about donating, or just to say Hi!

communication and coordination between the host site and the ANCA office. If you are interested in learning more about ANCA Regions or serving on a steering committee, please send me an email. 🌿



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Jen Levy – Executive Director

Caitlin Fader – Marketing & Development Assistant

Taylia Farley – Office & Membership Assistant

Ann Rilling – Communications Specialist

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various programs.

- The oldest of these is Camp McDowell Summer Camp, an Episcopal camp which began on this site in about 1948. This tradition still continues. With the opening of our new facilities at Bethany Village, we have also begun several inclusion camps for children of all types of abilities.

- The McDowell Environmental Center began 24 years ago and has had more than 150,000 students and chaperones come through the residential program.

- About five years ago, we started the McDowell Farm School to teach students more about where their food comes from. We are the first residential farm school in the Southeast and it is taking off.


- Ten years ago, the Alabama Folk School at Camp McDowell began. We host adult classes throughout the year, with professional instructors in arts and music. From oil painting, pottery, and

quilting (with the famous Gee's Bend quilters) to fiddle, mandolin, and banjo classes for all levels!

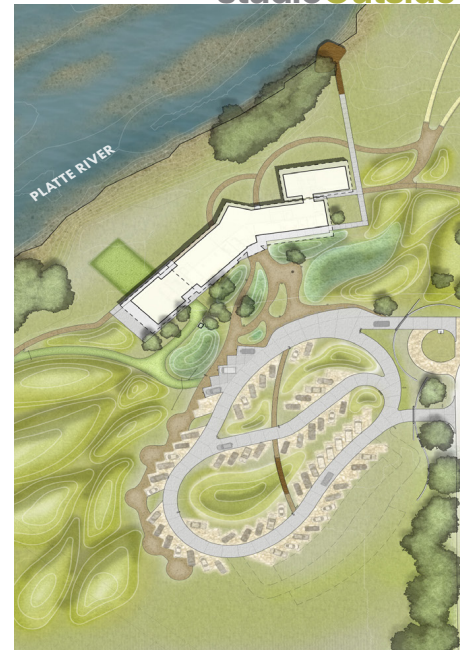
- Our latest educational program is the Magnolia Nature School which is a preschool that partners with Headstart to provide kindergarten readiness in the great outdoors. Our local community is over 60% below poverty, so this enables all children to have this opportunity. This is the first nature-based preschool in Alabama, and the only one we know of that is partnering with Headstart.

- All of this plus 150 hotel-style rooms allows us to host many conferences, retreats, and reunions!

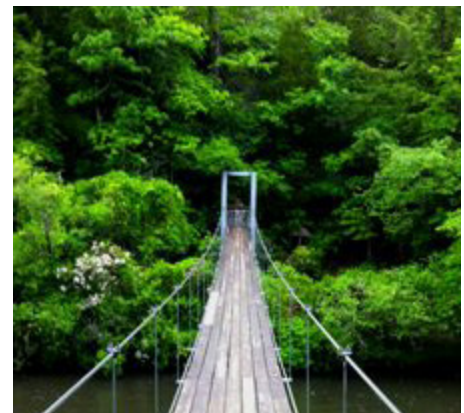
So, come play and learn with us as we gather to enjoy each other and the beautiful warm sunny South in the heart of Alabama. We are a well-kept secret that will surprise you with our beauty and hospitality!

For more information, visit www.campmcdowell.com. 

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From The Field:

Kids & Birds Count with Nature Centers

Tom Rusert
Co-Founder
Sonoma Nature
Sonoma, CA

Often times, experiencing the outdoors is little more than what we scurry through between family activities like shopping, school, and sporting events. To allow time to linger in the natural world is forcing all of us to change the paradigm of creativity. Tom Rusert, co-founder of the *Christmas Bird Count for Kids* noted, “growing up in a family of eight kids in Upstate New York, my parents said we could participate in anything that’s five bucks or less, like baseball, birding and boy scouts.” These days the family menu of activities is vastly expanding and nature is often on the back burner.

Today, in the rural community of Sonoma, located in the center of California Wine Country, without the luxury of a nature center, a movement has hatched. Ten years ago, the local community center and ecology center collaborated with Sonoma Nature, to establish a Christmas Bird Count for Kids (CBC4Kids), which has now evolved into a sustainable citizen science movement with dozens of partners, across the United States and Canada. The CBC4Kids is offered from Alaska

to Florida and throughout every Province of Canada, in more than 150 locations.

The *Canadian CBC4Kids* coordinating partner is the prestigious Bird Studies Canada. Bilingual events in French and Spanish are popping up across North America. The movement is engaging youngsters who are rediscovering nature as “Citizen scientists.”

The traditional CBC established in 1900, was the first of its kind, engaging thousands of

parks, or a local business. Co-Founders, Tom Rusert and Darren Peterie are both catalysts for this type of collaboration, intent on bringing a wide range of audiences, experiences, and demographics to the table. Sonoma Nature’s CBC4Kids Group FaceBook page is loaded with sustainable examples. “It all starts with organizations and parents looking for fun creative ways to connect kids with the outdoors instead of twittering at the shopping mall,”

stated Darren Peterie, co-founder.

The half day experiential event is managed like a recreational game and scavenger hunt. This step by step CBC4Kids Playbook helps sponsors formulate the key elements to ensure fun and success. Nearby diverse birding routes are mapped out starting from the sponsors home base, using

mapping tools. Half-mile routes are checked for safety and timed in advance. The targeted age group of 8-16 can handle a 90-minute team hike with an experienced birding leader. A family member typically accompanies each child. When parents arrive at the event, kids are assigned a team and immediately participate in “Binocular Boot Camp” and basic orientation to birding and team work. With clipboard, bird guides, and a simple common birdlist in



photo by Darren Peterie

Sonoma Valley’s 9th annual CBC4Kids - Binocular Boot Camp, based at California State Parks historic Sonoma Plaza

enthusiastic volunteers every year. Over 600,000 kids first experienced bird watching in Junior Audubon from 1930-1960. Recreational bird watching is growing with the added dimension of science and the citizen science communities working together.

The CBC4Kids encourages a wide range of unique organizations that may include the local nature center, a conservancy, public library, a bird organization, schools, scouts, service clubs,

hand the 4-6 member teams head out to discover and record 10 to 20 bird species in the time allowed. Each team returns to the home base with their discoveries. After a brown bag team lunch, a girl and boy from each group presents their results to the assembled audience. The overall findings are immediately shared and celebrated. To encourage the entire family to stay together, children under seven attend an optional “Budding Birder Camp” based at the event site. A helpful example was filmed at a California nature center by a participant.

It only takes two or three teams to establish a CBC4Kids.

Often, the local bird rescue organization adds excitement to the celebration by introducing the kids and parents to a hawk or owl. The tabulation data is then submitted to Cornell Lab of Ornithology through www.eBird.org.

The nature community finds the sport of birding exhilarating and unpredictable. “Parents often

tell us, that the CBC4Kids has changed the conversation at their supper table and they now have a bird guide, bird feeders, and binoculars at the ready, even in their car” according to Rusert.

Information and support is



photo by Jason St. Sauver

2nd Annual CBC4Kids at Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center in Denton NE

available at sonomanature@gmail.com or the website sonomanature.org. Rusert and Peterie have received the John Muir – Conservationists of the Year Award and the American Birding Association’s distinguished Griscom Award, which was first presented to the naturalist, Roger Tory Peterson. The CBC4Kids has been featured in several national articles like the American Bird Conservancy and NPR’s BirdNote. 



Birding is big fun!

photo by Darren Peterie



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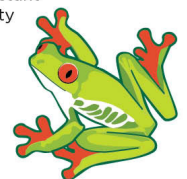
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Profile:

Environmental Learning Camps ~ a different beast

Keanna Leonard
Rowe Sanctuary (retired)
Grand Island, NE

Residential environmental learning camps and day-use nature centers share many of the same challenges, but there are also unique situations that come with operating residential centers. Residential camps have a different set of staffing, maintenance, and risk management issues. They also handle food services, recruiting and preparing participants for multi-day experiences, and developing extended programming. When an organization begins to consider change and growth, it is extremely important that all of these challenges be addressed to help mitigate growing pains.

Tamarack Camps in Michigan, which operates three major camps as well as teen trip programs, was looking to renovate one of its residential camp facilities, Camp Maas. Camp Maas is a 65 year-old seasonal use camp located in the beautiful forested area near Ortonville, Michigan. The camp accommodates well over 1,000 youth summer campers each year. It is also the site for many conferences, corporate seminars, staff trainings, and much more.

Steve Engel, the Chief Executive Officer of Tamarack Camps, along with his staff and board

knew that the aging camp needed to be updated to stay viable. They had dreams of expanding the usage of its year-round facility, but they were not sure how best to proceed. If not handled correctly, they knew that organizational growing pains could cause many unforeseen problems. So, as part of the site plan for the capital and endowment campaign to renovate

declared. “The Consult Team’s diligent work helped us visualize an incredible year-round use, environmentally responsible camp facility that will be the anchor for Tamarack nature programs.”

“But they gave so much more,” he went on to say. “The consult went above and beyond what we had asked them to do. We not only received a vision of a world class

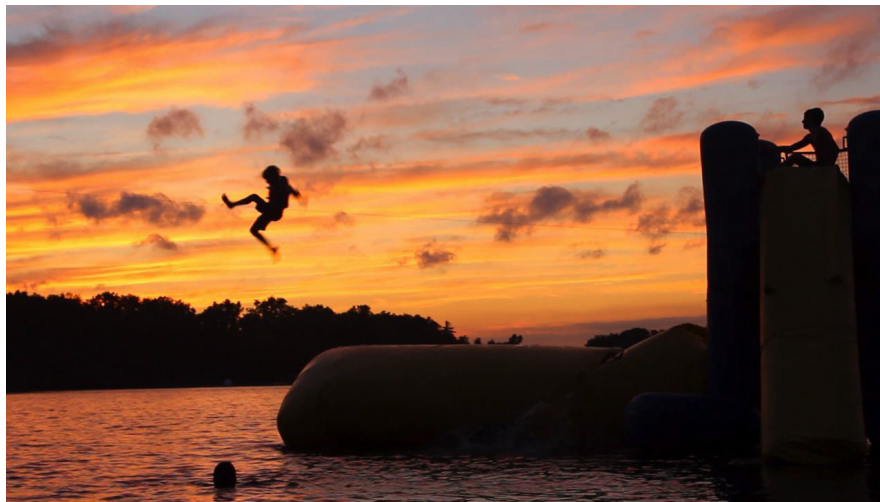


photo by Scott Wasserman

the camp, Tamarack included an ANCA Peer Consult to help them envision a redesigned facility.

“The ANCA Consult Team conducted a careful study of the operations and the programs we offered,” Steve said. “They talked with the staff and board, and toured the facilities. Then the team guided us through a visualization exercise that helped us focus our ideas for the camp. They also encouraged us to visit other year-round residential camps across the country to gather ideas that we could utilize at Camp Maas.”

“What came from that consult was a magnificent vision!” Steve

nature center, the team saw issues that were not even on our radar screen. They helped us reexamine our siloed programs through the lens of Tamarack’s mission and recommended that we look at ourselves as one agency. They

even encouraged us to enhance our food services.”

Steve continued, “ANCA put a lot of thought into picking team members for our consult. Each and every member was highly professional, understood the unique challenges that residential nature centers face, and brought best practices from all over the country.”

“I just have to say it again. When you contract an ANCA Peer Consult, you receive so much more than what you bargained for. It is definitely worth the time and money,” Steve concluded.

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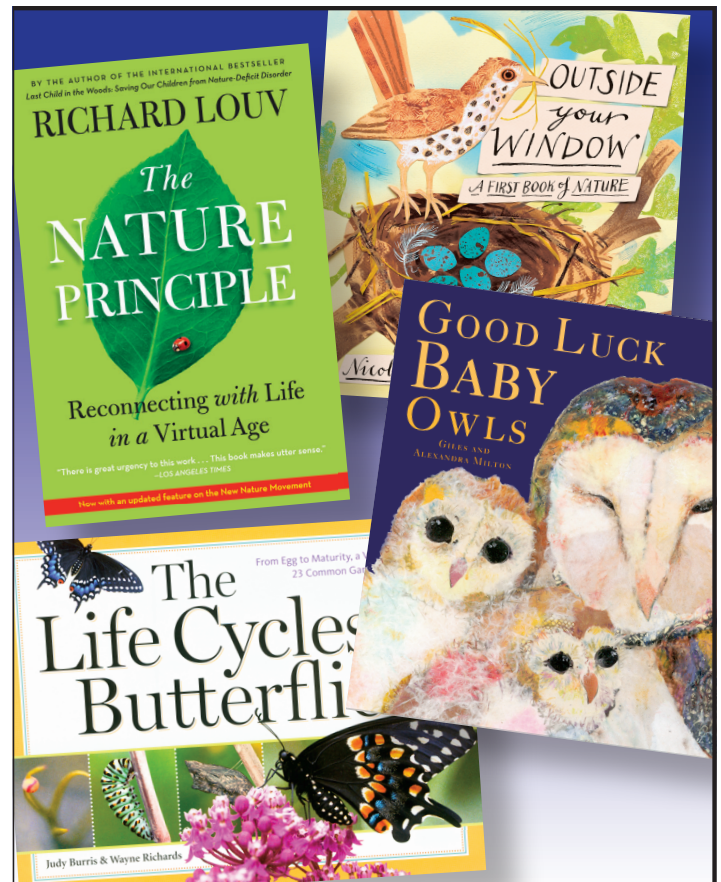
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Feet On The Ground:



Recent & Upcoming ANCA Activities Around the World



↩ The May 5th Florida Region Meeting will be held at Polk's Nature Discovery Center. We will look at roles of nature centers in ecotourism, working with ecotour operators, local visitor bureaus, and trails, with Herb Hiller as a guest speaker, President of St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Alliance. *More details here.*

The Mid-Atlantic Region will meet Sept. 15 at Churchville Nature Center in Churchville, PA. The theme will be *Big 'A' little 'a' Advocacy*. This will be a meeting of both the Association of Nature Center Administrators and the Association of Conservation Executives. ↩



↩ The Norman Bird Sanctuary in Middletown, RI hosted the New England Region meeting on April 13.

The first Minnesota Region Meeting was held on April 14th at Warner Nature Center. ↩



For-Mar Nature Preserve & Arboretum ↩ in Burton, MI, was host to the April 7th Michigan Region meeting.



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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.

To find out more about
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if you're interested in serving on a Consult Team
contact Jen at:

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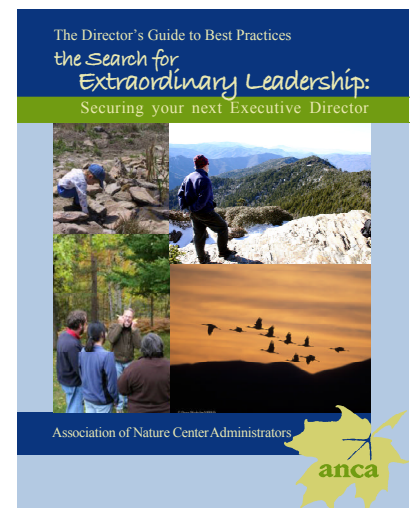
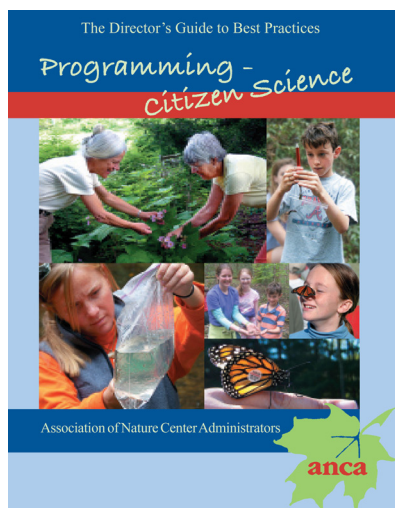
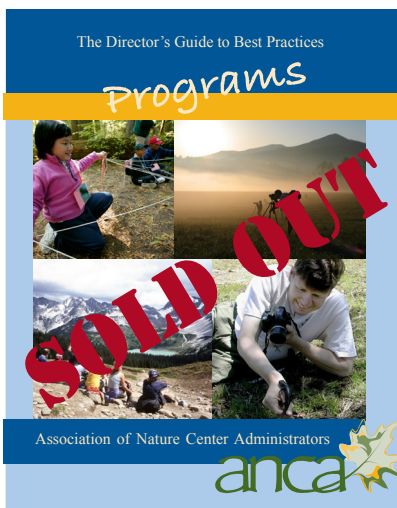
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