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winter 2018

# directions

Journal of the Association of Nature Center Administrators

## Toward Mutualism ~ Working Across Borders

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Earth Charter Communities Network  
Clinton, MI  
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Working across borders is imperative for a thriving nature center movement. In addition to the necessity of facing global sustainability challenges as a global community of nature and environmental learning center leaders, international exchange of ideas can prove an inspiring source of education and conservation strategies. ANCA is so fortunate to have had the opportunity to develop such a relationship with a group of Chinese master teachers associated with the Beijing Academy of Educational Sciences (BAES) over the last five years.

It probably won't be a surprise to you, in the nature center world, to learn that such an impactful relationship was inspired by a different relationship between a tiny moth and a shrub.



photo by Gu Jinyu

On a professional development trip to California in 2012, Stephanie Tansey, co-founder of Earth Charter Communities Network (ECCN), a social enterprise dedicated to deepening the dialogue around nature and nature education, and Xue Xue, a Chinese educator saw something that would prove to be, as Stephanie put it, "transformational." At the Nature Conservancy's Irvine Ranch Land Reserve, Stephanie and Xue Xue learned about the relationship between

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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 630 members, ANCA is the leader in the profession.



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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.

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Green jay (*Cyanocorax luxuosus*) near Roma, TX



# Director's Notes

## Requiring Salary Data

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

Happy New Year! Recently I was challenged by ANCA Board Member Jason Meyer to require that all job posts on the ANCA website include salary data. He referenced this *article*. I asked the ANCA Google Group their thoughts and the overwhelming response is we should be posting salaries. I want to share Jason's post. Visit or join our *Google Group* to read the whole thread!

"I agree with everyone else who has said this should be a requirement. Let me tell you about a process we just went through at Blandford Nature Center related to salaries and transparency, and how that now plays out in our job postings.

"On my way to a board meeting early last year, I drove past Burger King, where a high school student could get hired at a higher hourly rate than we were paying some of our employees who hold degrees and have experience in our field. I couldn't believe that Burger King might be my competition when it comes to employees choosing to work at Blandford...or feed their families.

"I took that back to our board and told them that we had to change - we needed to pay employees wages that are in line with our field, and we need to do better than minimum wage, no matter what position. So we undertook a process of looking at salary



surveys from nonprofits our size, and in the fields of environment and education in Michigan. This allowed us to develop good, solid ranges that each position would fall into. What we found was that a high number of our staff, myself included, didn't even fall within the range. We were all below it. That was critical information for our board to see, because it is expensive and stressful to keep hiring for positions that people move out of for better pay, and frankly, we don't want to lose talented folks.

"During the process, we were completely transparent with the staff about the ranges that were being developed. We had run into a situation where we posted a job at a higher pay rate than some of our current employees and it caused some friction. So we made the decision to just lay it all out there - our budget, how salaries impact it, and how we would be paying people more fairly and equitably in the future.

"One of the most uncomfortable parts for me and our Directors was that now the rest of the staff

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would know roughly our salaries, but through the discussions about the roles we each play in terms of span of control and responsibility, it became clear that nobody seemed to have any issues with this. In fact, when all was said and done, I had several staff thank me for the transparency of the project because now they could see where they can go in their careers and what rough salaries might look like - because it matters! Gone are the days where nonprofit employees work for lower pay simply because they get to do something they feel good about. Here are the days where we need to consider our financial futures and whether or not we want to work forever.

“So where are we now? In this year’s budget, we got everyone to at least the minimum of the salary ranges, and often were able to do better than that. We are by no means at the tops of the ranges, but are working on plans and long-range budgets that will move us in that direction. We’ve been transparent about this, too - we still have underpaid employees thanks to budget restrictions, but at least we are working on a fair way of paying people. It took a lot of hard work in the budget and some stretch goals in our fundraising department, but we are committed to this.

“Which brings us all the way back to position postings and salaries - early on in my tenure, we didn’t post salary information. I think this was primarily for two reasons. The first was that we didn’t have a formal structure for pay ranges so it was sort of a free-for-all and maybe we didn’t

want folks to know that. The second was that we were embarrassed by the low pay of some of our positions. But we knew what the right thing to do was - develop a fair salary structure and raise those salaries to a place where we weren’t embarrassed by them. We see our employees as our most important resource at Blandford, and we need to do right by them as much as possible.

“Now that we’ve built the structure, we aren’t going back. Now that our staff KNOW what the range that different positions will pay, there are fewer hard feelings about postings with rates higher than what they are making. They understand why, and they understand where they are on the scale. And they know that I believe that we should keep striving to move people up in pay.

“With that I have one small soapbox to get on - let’s all commit to doing the right thing. Our field needs the best and brightest, and those people often come with student loan debt, families, and no insurance. We will lose them if we don’t step up as leaders and do what’s hard and uncomfortable to retain them. We can’t continue to hope that our employees have the good fortune of being married to someone with a good salary and benefits. We need to provide that ourselves. Will everyone stay? No. But I want to make it as hard as possible for our best employees to leave. And I hope other nature center administrators can find time to reflect on where our field, heck, where our world will be in the future if we don’t find ways to keep the best people in this fight. And we are most definitely in a fight.”



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yuccas and yucca moths. Yucca moths, a species of *Tegeticula* and *Parategeticula* moths, display a relationship of mutualism with many species of yucca in the family Asparagaceae and subfamily Agavoideae. The moth will lay just the amount of eggs a yucca can feed in the shrub's flower while transporting pollen from a different yucca to the new plant ensuring it is pollinated. Neither the moth nor the yucca can produce the next generation without the other. Such a powerful example of balance and mutual benefit between two species planted a seed in Stephanie and Xue Xue's minds.

Upon returning to China, Stephanie recounted this experience to Dr. Jia Meihua, Director of the Beijing Academy of Educational Sciences (BAES), the largest education research institution in China that provides consulting services to government and school managers. Both Stephanie and Dr. Jia saw in it an opportunity to reconnect the teaching of the sciences in Beijing with an ancient Chinese principle for living: humans living in harmony with nature. They agreed that by learning about biological relationships like the moth and the yucca, K-12 students could rediscover and reconnect with nature. However, both Stephanie and Dr. Jia knew this vision needed to be matched with appropriate environmental education skills to reach students in an impactful way.

From her professional development trip to California, Stephanie had seen just the kind of hands-on, place-based education she thought

could help enact reform in Chinese education that would reconnect students with nature. In California, Stephanie had her first nature center experience at the Environmental Learning Center in Newport Beach and Bo Glover, the center's Executive Director and past ANCA President, had lead the way. Stephanie was impressed by the center's collaboration with



*Bo Glover, executive director of the Environmental Nature Center, holds the rapt attention of middle school science students in Beijing.*

the education system and style of education taking place there. She recommended consulting with Bo and soon he was on a plane to Beijing.

Bo's trip catalyzed the learning relationship between ANCA and BAES. His demonstration of hands-on science lessons with middle school students was, according to Stephanie, "historic." BAES master teachers watched Bo show the students how engaging and fun science education can be through an exercise where he demonstrated the sound and effect of erosion by shaking cans with stones inside. The impact of Bo's trip spread beyond just one classroom, as it happened to occur at the exact right time. Just then, Dr. Jia and her master students at BAES had been put in charge of a new push for a major progressive citywide education reform. Place-based and hands-on science

education has been developing in the Beijing educational system ever since.

ANCA has been impressed and delighted to learn about and from the BAES master teacher's leadership of the reform in Chinese education. Each year BAES makes the long trip to join ANCA at our Annual Summit and shares lessons learned with ANCA members. We

see now that there are many commonalities and differences across our nature center communities in the US and China that can help us grow in the future as two parts of the international nature center movement.

**Common Roots**  
The many differences, and similarities,

between Chinese and United States citizens various attitudes and government policy toward nature offer much to explore in moving the nature center movement forward in both countries. Some cultural and political attitudes towards the role of nature in everyday life have similar roots in China and the U.S. Taoism, an ancient Chinese religion where the object is to become one with the Tao or to harmonize one's will with nature in order to achieve "effortless action," Bo found, is still part of wide-spread Chinese culture.

In spite of historical connection to nature, Bo also found a similar disconnect with nature that many people in the U.S. suffer from when speaking to a group of university students. Stephanie points out that connection to nature was ingrained in ancient

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Chinese life when more citizens lived in villages and depended on knowing when to harvest their crops, as was the case for people living in North America thousands of years ago. When industrialization pushed millions of Chinese into Beijing this connection to the land, as in the United States, was lost to a certain extent even though there are cultural remnants like “the Tao.”

### Government Regulation

Although cultural attitudes toward nature in the United States and in China have both been impacted by industrialization, recently government policy toward encouraging connection to nature has diverged. While policy towards conservation and environmental education in the U.S. has been on shaky ground over the past year, the Chinese government has been very pointed about encouraging environmental education. Since 2015 the Chinese government has mandated that every subject area must spend time outside the classroom. In addition, the government provides the venues for experiential learning necessary for this mandate including city and district parks. The governmental support taking place in China may be something that nature center leaders in the U.S. can draw inspiration from.

### Learning from BAES’s Educational Tools for Connecting Students to Nature

At ANCA’s most recent Annual Summit, ANCA members learned about another source of environ-

mental education inspiration from the Chinese Delegation: the 24 lunisolar terms of the Chinese calendar. In developing hands-on science lessons, Chinese master educators have created new projects for students including learning about the 24 terms in China’s 2,500 year-old calendar. Children learn about the origins of the calendar in Chinese culture that was in harmony with the land, about variations in weather patterns and nature across the country, and solar seasons while engaging with the 24 solar terms.



*Making friends from across continents at the 2017 ANCA Summit*

BAES master teachers have designed their lessons around a three-step process: survey, observe, and practice. First, teachers lead students through a survey of information about the Chinese calendar including its history, story, formation, and activities and customs related to it. Second, teachers encourage students to observe climate characteristics, agricultural production, folk activities, and dietary characteristics in nature during particular solar terms. Finally, the students engage in several traditional activities related to the solar calendar like making lanterns, doing calligraphy, and making LiXia dogs from sticky rice among many others. See the BAES masters educators 2017 Summit presentation [here](#), watch

a video about the solar terms [here](#), and read more about each term and the activities the BAES educators paired with them [here](#).

Many ANCA members who attended the Chinese Delegation’s presentation at the Summit were inspired by how a calendar based on solar seasons, or on other variations in nature, could be used to connect people with nature. One idea that emerged at the Summit was to use the solar calendar as a tool to teach across borders connecting North American’s experience with nature to our counter-

parts across the ocean in China. Both continents have a long history of a people tied to the land through widespread agriculture. The Chinese solar calendar has its counterparts in many solar calendars that Native Americans have used for centuries in North America. The Chinese Delegation of master teachers

has started to put the history and science behind such a calendar to use re-connecting children with nature in China. How can ANCA leaders work with these tools of more naturally connected cultures all over the world in our environmental education efforts at our nature centers? How do we use them to point to similarities and differences in cultural connections to nature globally? What advantages does the local to global connection offer moving forward in the nature center movement?

### Working Across Borders: Co-Developing Tools to Connect with Nature

We are looking forward to con-

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# Profile:

## What's Changed & What's Stayed the Same: ANCA's Second Generation of Nature Center Leaders

Nancy Patterson  
Manager  
BLM Campbell Creek Science  
Center  
Anchorage, AK

It's crisp – barely 9 degrees along Campbell Creek. The distant, weak sun barely rises over the horizon at a 12-degree angle. Hoarfrost coats the intimidating spikes of devil's club and rings birch branches in a crystal halo that sparkles on the snowy Salmon Run trail.

Ten intrepid hikers, including families with young children, join us for a winter hike. True to our Alaskan philosophy, they've chosen to "go outside often and in all kinds of weather." This group has donned a variety of sub-Arctic winter gear: Patagonia outerwear, Skhoop puffy skirts, Xtra Tuff boots, mukluks, hand-knitted woolen hats, and extra-long winter beards. We venture out to soak in the scarce vitamin D and absorb concepts of outdoor gratitude on this hour-long interpretive hike.

Interpretation is a new concept for our BLM Campbell Creek Science Center (CCSC) staff. We're more accustomed to squirrely and exuberant fourth- to sixth-graders than sharing thematic messages for general audiences. But, we are also continual learners, and that

means we try out different skills to engage all learners in outdoor experiences.

Like many nature centers around the country, BLM CCSC is located on the first natural area near an urban center. In our case,



photo courtesy of Campbell Creek Science Center

it's 730-acres of public land that bridge the wild of Alaska and the most diverse town in America: Anchorage. For many of Anchorage's urban and global youth, going to the BLM CCSC is the first time they will see a salmon creek, walk in the forest, and put formal education concepts (like STEM) into practice with field studies.

BLM Campbell Creek Science Center turned 21 in 2017. Children have changed. Fidget spinners and iPhones compete with interpersonal experiences. The online world is more tangible and yet isolating

than the physical one. The need to create outdoor connections for all ages and backgrounds of learners has become more acute.

Not only have children changed, but so has the field of nature center administration.

Emerging nature center administrators often have degrees in business, non-profit management, and marketing as opposed to backgrounds in natural resources. ANCA's *Blue Ribbon Report* describes an evolution between emerging and seasoned nature center leaders, where emerging leaders are focusing increasingly on concepts such as collaborating with the larger nonprofit network, developing programs for all ages of learners, connecting field research with education, and

expanding beyond school programming.

As a second-generation nature center administrator and the second federal manager of the BLM Campbell Creek Science Center, I identify with the findings in the *Blue Ribbon Report*. My professional skillset includes work in interpretation, human resources, administration, outdoor recreation, public affairs, customer service, and social science research. I speak three languages. I have advanced degrees and certificates

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in facilitation, leadership, and nonprofit management. I am a member of professional organizations that provide support and insight which further enhance my effectiveness.

In contrast when Dad (Rich Patterson founding executive director at Indian Creek Nature Center and one of ANCA's founders) first started as a nature center director, there were few professional development resources. "I had to figure it all out myself," he said recently. Thank goodness he and the founders created ANCA.

But, do all those professional skills and experiences make me qualified to lead a nature center? They certainly help, especially as I work with colleagues to lead change, design Citizen Science projects, incorporate Social Emotional Learning, and develop strategic partnerships. I think being connected to our natural and cultural heritage and being curious, caring, and interested in the world around me matters a great deal more.

I remember a childhood spent exploring the oakland savannah and tallgrass prairie of the Indian Creek Nature Center in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. There, I witnessed the revolution of cropland back to prairie, restoring streams, zero-waste buildings, prescribed burns, butterfly gardens, playing in dirt, and building it from the ground

up. On summer vacations, I read every interpretive panel and attended Junior Naturalist programs at Custer State Park in the Black Hills of South Dakota. How exhilarating to spend half a day away from parents, breathe in the butterscotch smell of ponderosa pines as I learned about fire succession, and joyfully pledge to take care of the natural and human world. As an adult living abroad and in



photo courtesy of Campbell Creek Science Center

the Intermountain West, I learned how connected people are to their living environments around the world.

I think about this on that frosty morning on Campbell Creek as I listen to one of our naturalists describe the beauty of a birch burl, the hidden significance of macroinvertebrates, the power of the sun to brighten the world. Those 10 explorers nod their heads and shout out their favorite things about being outside: Sledding! Trees! Bicycling! Spending time with friends and family! It may be cold, but the smiles on their faces warm up every participant on this hike.

I think about how the groundwork laid by the first generation of nature center administrators cre-

ated a map for this generation to read. Paired with life experiences and diverse job skills, we're continuing their work and venturing into different territory to develop the role of nature centers in this new era.

I think about this on a recent trip home as I watch kids dance around the Indian Creek Nature Center, much as I did when I was their age. In each of us, young and old, there is a curious explorer waiting to find their own place in the world. Nature centers bring that spark to light.

In the Foraker Nonprofit Management Certificate, my teachers described that the second generation of managers, the ones after the founders, have a challenging job. We're managing complex administrative and societal change while also honoring and growing from the foundations our founders and predecessors created.

The world is changing daily and it can be tough to follow in the footsteps of giants. It's overwhelming to know how to begin. But as Dad says, "We went into this business because we wanted to change the world."

And so, we will.



Nancy Patterson

# From The Field:

## Cultivating Community

Glenna Holstein  
Branch Manager  
Urban Ecology Center at  
Menomonee Valley  
Milwaukee, WI

The biological definition of “community” is pretty simple – look it up and you’ll usually find something like “a group of interacting species living in the same place.” The societal definition of community is similar: Google will tell you that it’s “a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common.”

As nature centers, we tend to do a pretty good job of trying to understand, preserve, and enhance the biological communities we find near and around our centers: after all, most of our centers were created for just that purpose. Things can become much more challenging, though (and much more interesting!) when we turn our focus to the human communities that surround and interact with our centers.

What is our role in understanding, preserving, and enhancing those communities? I believe that is one of the most important questions facing nature centers today, and I think centers around the world are coming up with really interesting and wonderful answers to it: back at the ANCA Summit in August, we had a great dialogue on this topic and it was amazing to hear the variety of approaches people are taking.

I work at the Urban Ecology Center in Milwaukee, WI, and we

describe ourselves as an “environmental community center.” I deeply appreciate that categorization because, for me, what drew me to this field was equal parts love for nature and love for people, and I think the Urban Ecology Center positions itself at a really energizing intersection of the two.

We have three centers in three neighborhoods within the city of Milwaukee, and each center focuses very specifically on their unique neighborhood. Our doors and our programs are open to people from all neighborhoods, of course, but we focus our school programming on schools within a two mile radius of each center, and we tailor our after-school and public program offerings to the varying interests we find in each neighborhood. We also intentionally make our centers free to visit, and try to make them feel like the “living room of the neighborhood” (in fact, as I write this article I’m sitting in our center’s living room while some kids from our neighborhood are playing with our board games next to me!)

So, coming back to that question of “what is our role as nature centers in understanding, preserving, and enhancing our human communities?” – it’s no coincidence that “understanding” comes first. I believe it’s critical to us as nature centers to truly meet people where they are, in terms of ecological consciousness. Different people definitely have different experiences, different interests, and experience different



photo courtesy of Urban Ecology Center

barriers to enjoying and caring for the natural world, and as nature centers we have to understand those differences and adjust our approaches accordingly. There’s no one right way to learn about your community, but asking questions and listening are key. At the Urban Ecology Center, we meet with liaisons from our community schools twice a year, we host periodic community forums to invite people to give us feedback, and we have community advisory committees for each branch to help us really understand the nuances of each of our neighborhoods. Some of the best ideas for programming and outreach (and even our building designs!) have come out of

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these conversations, and we find, not surprisingly, that when people feel heard and valued, they like being here more!

As for “preserving” our communities, that’s a really interesting question. In the land stewardship context, you could describe preservation as making sure native plants and animals have a chance to thrive, and I believe it’s important that we think similarly about our human communities: making sure that the gifts our communities already have are honored and that our work as nature centers helps them thrive. I’m particularly conscious of this as a white woman working in a community that is majority people of color. It is all too common in the nonprofit sector, particularly the environmental field, to have a bunch of white folks swoop in to communities of color with “all the answers” and then wonder why no one wants to learn what they have to teach, rather than honor the huge amounts of wisdom, creativity, and experience that already exist within a community and work together to build programming that is relevant and meaningful. At the Urban Ecology Center, we are constantly learning in this area, and we have found that some of our most successful programs and events have come through partnerships with community members or community organizations: build-

ing on what is already strong in our neighborhood.

And what about “enhancing” communities—that may be the biggest and most important challenge of the three. Living as I do in a city plagued by segregation, disparity, and systemic violence, within a country that feels paralyzed by political polarization, sometimes I find myself wondering, is this “nature in your neighborhood” stuff really that important? Is it that relevant in a



Happy campers from Urban Ecology Center’s *Young Scientist Club Family Camping Trip*

city whose deepest needs center on healing segregation and disparity? In the end, I do think that answer is “yes,” for two reasons. The first is common ground. As a society, we tend to silo and section ourselves in a way that makes it extraordinarily difficult for us to see across the racial, economic, and political divisions we create. At the Urban Ecology Center, we see our work as building common ground (sometimes literally!). Nature is a place where everyone can find something to enjoy. Using what we learn from community forums and conversations with neighbors, we try to create spaces

where people who have different experiences can thrive together, and build something together. After all, you don’t have to agree on everything to be awed by the magnificent quiet after a fresh snowfall in the park. The second reason I think this work is important is a really basic one: love. Life in all its forms – plant, animal, human, black, white, brown – is sacred and precious, and our survival as a society, and as a species, depends on us truly taking that belief as

our centering tenet. We cannot make this world better if we don’t believe that the whole thing is worth loving!

As we steward our natural areas, striving to understand, preserve, and enhance them, we must work just as hard to be stewards of our human communities. When we are successful in this, the results can be incredible. People begin working and playing

together across boundaries, enjoying and caring for the natural world. When we do our work well, our (human) communities become more than just “a group of people living in the same place.” There is another definition of community, which is something like, “a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals.” This is the kind of community that we have the potential to build, as nature centers (or “environmental community centers”!), and it’s the kind of community that we will want to have, to build the world we need for the future. 🌱

tinuing to develop a relationship of mutualism with master educators from BAES and ECCN. Mimicking the kind of sharing and benefiting the yucca and the yucca moth exemplify in this relationship will be instrumental in learning how to address opportunities and challenges the nature center movement faces and presents in each country. Creating resources that connect communities across borders will help all of us grow global sustainability as an entire ANCA network.

Help us learn across borders! We have set up a Google Forum Topic around just this titled: "Learning Across Borders" where we would love to hear your ideas for using solar calendars as a teaching tool at your centers. After attending the 2017 Summit, Ms. Jinyu Gu, a BAES master teacher recounted, "we learned that we should use various ways to guide students to love nature for example, through observing." If you have any information about all the different methods you use to engage different kinds of students at your center, please also share that on the Google Group with Ms. Gu. Finally, please share any lessons you have learned across borders that have impacted you and your center. Thank you for working towards mutualism with us!

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# Feet On The Ground:



## Recent & Upcoming ANCA Activities Around the World

### November 1, 2017 Fall ANCA Board Meeting:

During this meeting, the ANCA Board ratified the ANCA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement which can be found on ANCA's website! Please let us know what suggestions and questions you have. We will continually work towards these three pillars of nonprofit best practice.

### December 31, 2017:

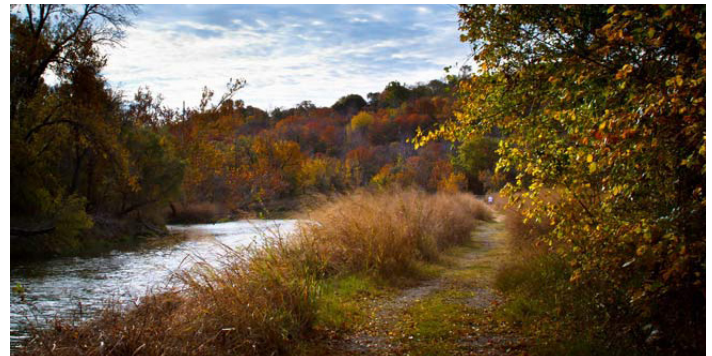
You responded to the call and helped ANCA reach our Fiscal Year Annual Fund Half-Way goal of \$25,000! Thank you!



### September 19-23 Dream Big Summit:

ANCA's Dream Big Summit in McAllen, TX at Quinta Mazatlan World Birding Center. Come network and learn from 150-200 of your peers at ANCA's 26th Annual Summit. This year we will be in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas in a 1930s Spanish Style Revival Style Mansion turned World Birding Center that protects 20 acres of the area's Tamaulipan Thornforest and 230 species of birds and butterflies!

### October 14, 2018 Mid-Atlantic Region Meeting on Citizen Science: Location TBD



### ↑ March 1-2: Texas Region Meeting:

At Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge in Fort Worth, Texas. Get ready for an evening networking social on the night of the 1st and a day-long meeting filled with learning opportunities on the 2nd.

### ↔ March 6-10 Professional Leadership Institute:

Grow your organization, network with colleagues, prepare for challenges, and focus your vision at the Professional Leadership Institute (PLI) at the Delaware Nature Society. Scholarships available!

### ↔ April 12-13 Colorado Region Meeting:

The first Colorado Region Meeting at Lookout Mountain Nature Center in Golden, CO!



### ↑ May 11, 2018 Michigan Region Meeting:

Hosted by Blandford Nature Center in Grand Rapids, MI.

## coming up in 2019

- **January 18-22, 2019 RELC Gathering:**  
The Residential Environmental Learning Center gathering in Finland, Minnesota at Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center.
- **August 20-24, 2019 ANCA Summit XXIX:**  
ANCA's 27th Annual Summit in Cincinnati, Ohio at the Cincinnati Nature Center.

# Sharing Best Practices:

## Get Outside & Stay Connected!

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

I can go an entire day not stepping outside other than getting to work – not a best practice. We believe strongly in the value and health benefits of nature but often need a reminder to get outside ourselves! We need to stay connected to our missions.

I asked the ANCA Google Group, “How do you stay connected to nature and to the mission. I am especially looking forward to hearing from executive directors, managers, and others who find themselves at their desks ALL DAY. Do you still teach at your center? Do you walk the trails? Interact with visitors outdoors? Spend time exploring with your staff?” Here are a few responses, I hope you are inspired to try a few.

Several members said they schedule themselves to lead programs throughout the year. If a program staffer is sick, use it as an opportunity to fill in. Susan Westhoff of the Leslie Science & Nature Center said, “I love these moments and feel it helps me better understand the reasons people come to our site...”

Bob Mercer, retired from the Silver Lake Nature Center said, “We had volunteer work days once a month where volunteers worked

*on our trails and I spent the whole day with them. I accepted any opportunity to work with interns or university students who wanted to learn about the grounds.”*

Other members reported taking meetings outside. Trail meetings on foot or snowshoe allow discussions without the distractions of being in the office. Todd Nivens of the Waskasoo Environmental Education Society, Kerry Wood



Nature Centre said, “My programming staff are all paddlers. We launch kayaks and spend a couple of hours each week de-briefing, planning, and problem-solving... We’ve also have full staff meetings using two rafts lashed together.”

Jennifer Hunt from The Oakland Nature Preserve said, “I walk all of our trails weekly to keep up with maintenance needs.” Jessica Kester of The Allegheny Land Trust adds, “I also add in my staff observations deliberately when they’re teaching outdoor programs.”

Betty Brennan from Taylor Studios said, “Even though not at a nature center we also preach and believe in the value and health benefits of nature... I also live on a farm and have horses. I walk to the barn twice a day, there is

*maintenance of fences, care of horses, ... This gets you outside EVERYDAY. So, there’s the cure - get farm animals.”*

Raja Byrnside of The Nature Center at Shaker Lakes said, “Our staff started Wednesday walks where some of the educators and admin/marketing staff can get out on the trails to see what is happening. This is a little more challenging in winter so often people just eat lunch in one of the classrooms that has windows and faces the bird feeders.”

Marisa Oliva of the Edinburg Scenic Wetlands & World Birding Center said, “I plan and design new structures for our grounds with the maintenance staff. Then I check on the progress frequently. It thrills me to see ideas come to life in these natural settings.”

Louise Shimmel of Cascades Raptor Center offers this advice, “I would love to still do some programs, but we have a good staff of five plus some trained volunteers who do the bird and visitor interactions or programs. So really it’s up to me to get on my feet and out the door. And I don’t do it often enough. Thanks for this shot in the arm, Jen!”

The ANCA Google Group is open to everyone, not just ANCA members, and is easy to join. If you’re not already participating click the Google Group logo and join the discussions. You have a lot to gain and to give! 🌿

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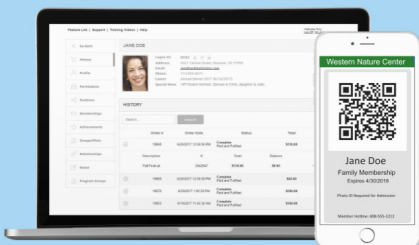
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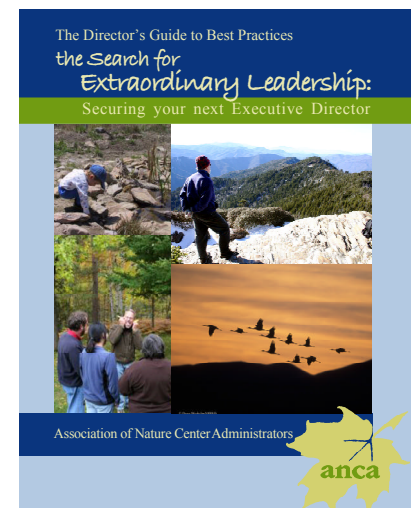
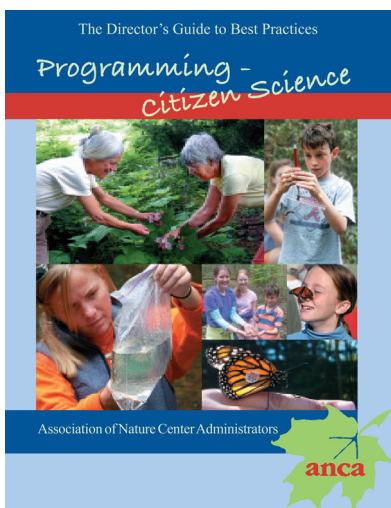


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