

Autumn Outdoor Conference Schedule

7:00 – 8:15 Pre Conference Tours

8:30 – 9:30 Welcome/ Announcements and Breakfast

9:30 – 11:00 Session I

11:15 – 12:45 Plenary Session: Weaving Inspiration/Exhibits/Lunch

12:45 – 2:45 Session II

3:00 – 4:30 Session III

5:15 – 6:30 Post Conference Tours

Session I 9:30 – 11:00

From Imagination to Connection: The Art of the Upcycled Journal

Brent Deisher, Morristown Beard School

My 8th grade students make upcycled journals. They use it for a 9-week study called the Solo Sit Spot. Also, we spend the first six weeks of the school year outside by learning how to identify trees and completing a transect study. Students learn innovation, observation skills, classification, biodiversity, and invasive species.

Exploring Fungi and Lichens in the Outdoors

Dorothy Smullen, New Jersey Audubon

Observe fungi and lichens on a trail walk, and learn how important fungi are in forest ecology. Check out the diversity of bark lichens and what they tell us about air pollution.

Physics in Nature

Tom Sheppard, Hunterdon County Division of Parks & Recreation

Through the use of practical experiments and participation from the group, we will look at and experience various forces of nature. The group will have to anticipate what will happen prior to each activity and then figure out what actually happened. Each force will be explained and how it occurs in and can affect a natural setting.

The AmeriCorps NJ Watershed Ambassador Program: 17 Years of Inspiring Watershed Stewardship

Kim Cenno, NJDEP AmeriCorps NJ Watershed Ambassador Program

This workshop will provide an overview of the AmeriCorps NJWAP, including history, framework and mission. Presenter will also highlight some of the outstanding accomplishments (projects) completed over the years and share a few alumni success stories. Finally, participants will “sample” an interactive watershed presentation.

Making connections between Citizen Science projects and your school or program.

Kelly Wenzel, New Jersey Audubon

We will learn how to collect and input data for an established Citizen Science project. We will then go beyond just collecting data for a large, online project by using place-based learning to help students answer “So, what now?” and allow them to use their data to inform, educate and advocate.

Are You Cut Out for Nature Carving?

Sondra Flite

Carve a linden leaf out of basswood (linden); learn about stop cuts, following the grain, honing knives, types of wood, and two big concepts: lessons should meet curricular standards, and everything is place-based. Tools will be provided but participants may bring their own X-acto style knives or carving tools.

Healthy Soil is for the Birds!

Becky Laboy, Ocean County Soil Conservation District

The success of bird species is dependent on both living and non-living components that work together to create sustainable habitat. Join me on a nature walk as we explore this web of life, including healthy soil, compatible native plants and local birds.

The Science of Color

Pat Heaney, Woods & Waysides International and

The Watershed Center – Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association

Combine science and art as we explore the color spectrum, learn how scientists use colors as indicators, make dyes and inks from plants and animals and solve a mystery in this multi-hued session.

In Celebration of Insects

Jeff Hoagland, The Watershed Center – Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association

What is an insect and how do we tell them apart? Catch and meet a variety of insects in the wild to learn the answers to these questions and learn firsthand about adaptation, metamorphosis, morphology, taxonomy and data. Collectively we will celebrate the insect world, designing new insects, crafting poems and tagging and releasing monarch butterflies.

Exploring Pond and Stream

Rick Lear & Eric Gehring, Middlesex County Office of Parks and Recreation

Search for macro invertebrates, fish, and amphibians in this hands-on and hands-in session. We'll explore pond and stream ecology and if conditions allow, assess the health of the local stream using macro invertebrates. Bring an old pair of sneakers or boots to get wet!

Branching Out with Project Learning Tree

Pam Zipse, Rutgers Urban Forestry Program of NJAES And Tanya Oznowich, NJ Department of Environmental Protection

Venture out on a tree identification and forest ecology walk that will include stops along the way to participate in Project Learning Tree (PLT) activities. Learn how to use i-Tree, a free software program from the US Forest Service, to assess, enhance and monitor trees and their ecosystems. This workshop qualifies as the hands-on component of the new NJ PLT Blended Workshop. You will be provided with a code for an online workshop to complete your PLT certification.

Circus Science

Tina Notaro, Stockton University Juggling and Circus Arts Club

Run away and join the circus to learn all about how you can bring the exciting world of circus arts to your classroom. Topics such as the hydrologic cycle, properties of water, and Newton's laws of motion become fun and engaging lessons when the circus is in town; no clown makeup necessary. Juggling, a balancing act, and giant bubbles will be the main events for this whimsical, wondrous workshop!

Purifying water in the wild

Zachary Tyler Weintraut

By 2025, two-thirds of the world's population may face water shortages. Learn how to safely test and purify drinking water in the wild using various filtration, distillation, heat, UV radiation and chemical techniques.

Identification of plants and their medicinal uses.

Daniela Shebitz, Kean University, School of Environmental and Sustainability Sciences

Through this workshop, participants will learn how to identify some of the native and non-native plants of Duke Farms and be introduced to some of their medicinal uses.

Making Connections: Supporting NGSS Learning in an Informal Setting

Christa Wood, Somerset County Park Commission

Creating Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) connections come instinctually for informal educators once they are comfortable with the new 'vocabulary'. The NGSS is about hands-on experiences, being observation oriented, and using critical thinking skills in problem-based-learning; things informal educators do naturally. This session is designed for informal educators specifically.

Invasive Biology and Its Cascading Impacts

Paul Kurtz, New Jersey Department of Agriculture

Join us for an update of invasive species in different ecosystems across the animal kingdom. We will discuss colonialization and global economies and how these human actions have led to unwanted pests in the rural, suburban and urban landscapes of the United States. It will also address the response to non-native threats and the opportunities for new jobs in science for future students.

Project BAM!: Inspiring Students to Participate in Ecological Studies

Nicole Esposito and Eric Jackson, Cora Hartshorn Arboretum and Bird Sanctuary

Project BAM! (The Project for Biological Monitoring and Assessments) is a volunteer citizen science program designed for students between 9th and 12th grades. This workshop will illustrate how students who are actively engaged in community volunteer and citizen science programs positively impact their communities, strengthen college applications, and learn skills they will need in any profession.

How did you get those cool artifacts?

Kristen Volpi and Erin Rounds, Woodford Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge

Ever wonder how to whiten and clean that skull/bone you found? Or maybe how they those bird wings still hold their shape? Jealous of all those other educators with cool nature artifacts? Learn the process of permitting, preserving, and acquiring unique artifacts, with a hands-on walkthrough!