

GROUP EDUCATORS IN ACTION

GROUP EDUCATION: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE



Photo credit: Anita Wright

Group ForThe East End has been teaching schoolchildren about the local environment for quite a long time: since 1985, to be precise. With such longevity, on several occasions young teachers have shared with us their memories of Group education from times when they were students!

Through the years, wonderful working relationships have been established with a number of East End schools and teachers. For instance, this is the twelfth successive year that Group educators have taught Amagansett students in the field. For other schools – East Hampton Middle, John Marshall Elementary, Montauk, Sag Harbor Elementary, Southampton Elementary and Intermediate, and Springs -- the string of consecutive years that we have taught environmental lessons approaches or even exceeds two decades. We are thrilled to continue these worthwhile collaborations.

Similarly, in recent years the Group has been excited to initiate new educational relationships with other East End schools. The current academic year marks the fifth year in a row that we will be guiding sixth-graders from

the Eastport South Manor School District on field trips to the ocean beach, and the fourth consecutive year that we will be teaching Aquebogue second-graders in the classroom. Additionally, this is the third straight year that we are teaching multiple lessons in the classroom and field with East Quogue Elementary School, and the second successive year of environmental education in the classrooms of Westhampton Beach Elementary School. All of these programs have become treasured additions to Group education.

Likewise, the 2016-17 school year has become especially noteworthy because of the Group's new collaboration with the Remsenburg Speonk Elementary School. During January and February, five-session "Mad Scientists Clubs" were conducted after school with two different age groups. In February and March, kindergarten, first-grade, second-grade, and third-grade students enjoyed classroom lessons on animal adaptations and wildlife migration. And in April and May, fourth-graders, fifth-graders, and sixth-graders will visit coastal sites to explore the estuaries of Shinnecock and Peconic Bays. Group educators are absolutely delighted to weave these programs into our schedule!

- Steve Biasetti



Photo credit: Anita Wright

COMING SOON: ANOTHER SUMMER OF FUN!



Photo credit: Anita Wright

Every summer since 1991, Group For The East End has offered a Summer Field Ecology Program for children. This year we will be conducting four outdoor sessions throughout eastern Long Island, accommodating two different age groups: PONDHAWKS (ages 8 to 10) & TERRAPINS (ages 11 to 13). The South Fork sessions will cover an area spanning from Sag Harbor to Napeague, while the Western sessions visit locations from Riverhead to North Sea.

Through the years, children in our summer programs have had the time of their lives! Hermit crab races, skipping stones, catching estuary creatures, building rock cairns, making nature crafts, competing in team scavenger hunts, biking along forest trails, paddling through salt marsh creeks, barbecuing at the beach... Is it any surprise that numerous children participate in the program for three or four or five years in a row?

Space is currently available for each of the four sessions: South Fork TERRAPINS (week of June 26th), South Fork PONDHAWKS (week of July 10th), Western PONDHAWKS (week of July 24th), and Western TERRAPINS (week of August 7th). But be forewarned: sessions often fill to capacity by the beginning of May.

If families are interested in any of these sessions, or have general questions about the Group's Summer Field Ecology Program, please contact Steve Biasetti at 631-765-6450 ext. 205 or sbiasetti@eastendenvironment.org.

GFE Summer Field Ecology Registration Form

Child's Name _____

Date of Birth _____ Gender _____

Parent/Guardian _____

Mailing Address _____

City & State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ Cell _____

e-mail _____

I am registering for:

PONDHAWKS (ages 8 to 10)

____ July 10 - 13 (South Fork)

____ July 24 - 27 (Western)

TERRAPINS (ages 11 to 13)

____ June 26 - 29 (South Fork)

____ August 7 - 10 (Western)

All sessions are \$400 per child (\$350 for GFE members and returning program participants). Please inquire about discounts for multiple siblings.

I am paying by: CHECK VISA MC AMEX

Credit Card #: _____

Security Code: _____

Expiration Date: _____

If paying by check, please make payable to
"Group for the East End"

Please send registration form & payment to:

Group for the East End
P.O. Box 1792
Southold, NY 11971
ATTN: S.F.E.P.

or fax registration form to: 631-765-6455



PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



Photo credit: Anita Wright

Collecting fall leaves for leaf rubbings.



Photo credit: Stephanie Sforza

Happiness is a box turtle at Downs Farm Preserve!



Photo credit: Anita Wright

Sorting through animal specimens during a Taxonomy lesson.



Photo credit: Anita Wright

Students mix it up in the after-school Mad Scientist Club!



Photo credit: Jessica Kennelly

Sixth graders from East Hampton and Amagansett explore the marsh.

WHAT'S THAT?

Along with the return of red-winged blackbirds, the chorus of spring peepers, and the lengthening daylight hours, the emergence of Skunk Cabbage from the late-winter ground reminds me that spring is not too far away!

The first part of Skunk Cabbage to pop from the earth is called the spathe, which is brownish-purple and sometimes streaked with yellow. Inside the spathe is a cluster of yellow flowers. Skunk Cabbage can sometimes be seen pushing up through snow and ice because of its ability to produce heat by using enzymes and oxygen to break down stored carbohydrates. The temperature inside the spathe can be maintained at 20 degrees warmer than the outside temperature. In a sense, the plant thermoregulates, much like mammals do!



The flowers also produce a foul smell, often compared to the “skunky” smell of rotting flesh. Although this may not remind humans of the sweet smell of spring, the inside of the spathe is a warm, welcome attraction for the first pollinating flies and other insects of the forest ecosystem in late winter and early spring.

After pollination, the flower forms a brownish-purple fruit head, and the spathe withers away. Bright green leaves now grow around the fruit head, and when crushed, the leaves emit the same foul smell as the flowers did. The fruit of Skunk Cabbage is an important food source for many birds, including wood ducks and pheasants. The leaves, on the other hand, are toxic to many herbivores.

It might be a good time to head out to Big Reed Pond in Montauk and walk the Blue Trail, a beautiful loop that winds through low-lying red maple swamps. These wetlands are perfect habitat for Skunk Cabbage, a true harbinger of early spring.

- Anita Wright

Young Naturalist Program Registration Form

Child's Name _____
Date of Birth _____ Gender M ___ F ___
Parent/Guardian _____
Mailing Address _____
City & State _____ Zip Code _____
Phone _____ Cell _____
E-mail _____

I am registering for:
_____ Monday – Thursday, July 17-20
_____ Monday, July 17
_____ Tuesday, July 18
_____ Wednesday, July 19
_____ Thursday, July 20

Camp runs from 9 am to noon each day.
The session is \$175 per child (\$50/day). Please inquire about discounts for multiple siblings.

I am paying by: ___CHECK ___VISA ___MC ___AMEX

Credit Card #: _____

Security Code: _____ Exp Date: _____

Please make checks payable to
“Group for the East End”

**Please send registration form & payment by mail,
fax or email.**

Group for the East End
P.O. Box 1792
Southold, NY 11971
ATTN: YNP

fax: 631-765-6455

SWING INTO SPRING AT DOWNS FARM PRESERVE CELEBRATING OUR 4-YEAR ANNIVERSARY!

The days are getting longer and the temperatures are getting warmer! Spring is coming alive at Downs Farm Preserve and we have A LOT planned for you! We're introducing two new monthly programs, environmental movie night and an environmentally-themed book club for adults!

We'll be hosting our 4th annual Earth Day Celebration on Earth Day! Bring your family and friends to join us at the preserve on Saturday, April 22 from 10am-2pm, as we celebrate and cherish Mother Nature. There will be guided nature hikes, nature arts & crafts stations, garden plantings and much more!

This summer will be our 3rd year running the Young Naturalist Program at Downs Farm Preserve! During the week of July 17th, children ages 5-7 years old will explore all that nature has to offer, while building a wholesome relationship with the outdoors. If your youngster is a nature lover, contact Jessica Kennelly for more information - but hurry as camp fills up fast! See page 4 for Young Naturalist Program registration form.



Volunteer Highlight



Group for the East End would like to give a huge thank you to Pamela Heidtmann, for all the wonderful, passionate work she put in this year. She volunteered for several beach cleanups, our monthly bird feeder watch and sorted marine debris, to name a few. Pamela also created this breathtaking Osprey sculpture from marine debris that she and other dedicated volunteers collected this past fall. The sculpture is on display at Downs Farm Preserve for the whole community to enjoy! Enter the raffle for a chance to name the Osprey. These are just some of the highlights of what this spring at Downs Farm Preserve has to offer. Please visit our website, groupfortheeastend.org, for additional fun, knowledgeable programs and explorations provided by GFEE at Downs Farm Preserve.



Photo credit: Jessica Kennelly

- Jessica Kennelly



Downs Farm Preserve wish list: we are looking for nature themed books and movies, watering cans and arts & craft supplies. If you would like to make a donation, please contact Jessica Kennelly at 631-765-6450 ext. 215 or jkennelly@eastendenvironment.org. THANK YOU!



WATCHING WILDLIFE WITH CARE

What do you mean: "I can't see the owl?" It's that small dark dot in the snow, just to the left of the shrubs. See it? No? It's just about dead center in the middle of the photo. Any luck now? Okay, I admit that this wildlife photo is not very good. In fact, the most obvious creature in the picture is the human in the lower right-side corner. I used the shot to make a point.



Photo credit: Steve Biasetti

I recently traveled to the northern reaches of New York State, in part to track down a pair of Great Gray Owls that had been seen there reliably over the previous three weeks. My goal – to get good looks at the birds -- was easily attained when I got there. I simply found the crowd of roadside birdwatchers. Naturally, there were a lot of excited people in the crowd. I was thrilled, too, to see these largest of North American owls so far from their usual hunting grounds.

The initial view was of a bird about 100 yards from the road. This scenario worked out fine, with the crowd of observers spread along the street and a reasonable distance from the bird. Unfortunately, when the second owl was spotted on the other side of the road, a subset of the crowd decided that they were not close enough to get a good photograph. In their zeal to snap a shot of "magazine cover" quality, they ignored the negative impacts that they would impose on their subject. Over the next ninety minutes I watched with deepening concern as each owl was flushed from its roost, flew to a distant perch, and then was inevitably disturbed from that spot as well.

If this episode was an isolated incident, I suppose it wouldn't have been as troubling. But in recent years there have been too many instances in which I've seen a Harbor Seal or Snowy Owl or Peregrine Falcon get agitated into action by persons approaching them too closely. In many cases, the encroaching observer was trying to get a photograph, although overzealous wildlife-watchers were the cause of disturbance in some situations as well.

My point is simple: we need to make every effort to be as unobtrusive as possible while observing wildlife. The American Birding Association provides a succinct Code of Ethics for birdwatchers. I made a slight adjustment in the Code's language in order to apply it to all creatures: "[T]o avoid stressing [wildlife] or exposing them to danger, exercise restraint and caution during observation, photography, sound recording, or filming." I can think of numerous situations on Long Island in which restraint and caution should apply – turtles digging nests, owls roosting, foxes at their burrows, seals at rest... I may be "preaching to the choir" here. But together we should spread the message: mediocre photographs of wildlife are just fine!

- Steve Biasetti

Exploring the East End

Join Group for the East End staff on one of our many explorations this Summer! For a complete list of events or to reserve your spot on any of these explorations, please visit the "events" page on our website: GroupfortheEastEnd.org.

APRIL	Bird Feeder Watch Downs Farm Preserve Cutchogue times vary Jessica Kennelly 2 - 8	Environmental Movie Night Downs Farm Preserve Cutchogue 6:30 to 8pm Jessica Kennelly 3	Storytime Downs Farm Preserve Cutchogue 11am to 12pm Jessica Kennelly 4
Courtship Flight of the Woodcock Bridgehampton 7 to 8:15pm Steve Biasetti 8	Family Full Pink Moon Hike Downs Farm Preserve Cutchogue 7:45 to 8:30pm Jessica Kennelly 11	Full Moon Hike Downs Farm Preserve Cutchogue 8:45 to 9:30pm Jessica Kennelly 11	Fourth Annual Earth Day Celebration Downs Farm Preserve Cutchogue 10am to 2pm Jessica Kennelly 22
Searching for Seashells Hampton Bays 10 to 11:30am Steve Biasetti 23	Downs Farm Book Club Downs Farm Preserve Cutchogue 6 to 7pm Jessica Kennelly 27	MAY	Storytime Downs Farm Preserve Cutchogue 11am to 12pm Jessica Kennelly 2
Shore & Wading Birds of Shinnecock Bay Hampton Bays 10:30 am to 1pm Steve Biasetti 6	Environmental Movie Night Downs Farm Preserve Cutchogue 6:30 to 8pm Jessica Kennelly 8	Family Full Flower Moon Hike Downs Farm Preserve Cutchogue 7:45 to 8:30pm Jessica Kennelly 10	Full Flower Moon Hike Downs Farm Preserve Cutchogue 8:45 to 9:30pm Jessica Kennelly 10
Songbirds on the Move Downs Farm Preserve Cutchogue 9 to 10:30am Steve Biasetti 21	Downs Farm Book Club Downs Farm Preserve Cutchogue 6 to 7pm Jessica Kennelly 25	JUNE	Environmental Movie Night Downs Farm Preserve Cutchogue 6:30 to 8pm Jessica Kennelly 5
Family Full Strawberry Moon Hike Downs Farm Preserve Cutchogue 8:30 to 9:15pm Jessica Kennelly 9	Full Strawberry Moon Hike Downs Farm Preserve Cutchogue 9:30 to 10:15pm Jessica Kennelly 9	Storytime Downs Farm Preserve Cutchogue 11am to 12pm Jessica Kennelly 13	Downs Farm Book Club Downs Farm Preserve Cutchogue 6 to 7pm Jessica Kennelly 22



KIDS FUN PAGE

Nature Weaving!



This craft and many more can be found in the book, "A Little Bit of Dirt" by Asia Citro.

Materials

* Sticks * Yarn * Hot glue

*Objects for weaving (feathers, sticks, flowers, vines, leaves)

Directions

1. Hot glue the sticks together in whatever shape you'd like to create (make sure to have the ends of the sticks overlapping).
2. Wrap yarn around the corners to make sure they stick together.
3. Tie a knot with the yarn at the top corner of your shape, keeping tension in the yarn. Slowly wrap around the whole frame, leaving space between each yarn wrap. Tie a knot once you're finished with the whole frame.
4. Go on a hunt for natural objects to weave!

Steve Biasetti

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