

FRIENDS of COEO NEWSLETTER

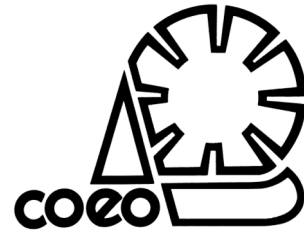
The Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario

www.coeo.org

Editor: Grant Linney

May 4, 2009 (National Luke Skywalker Day)

... you know ... "May the forth be with you!"



Please consider the environment before printing this newsletter.

PAUSE FOR THOUGHT

*Why are we always taking sides on this planet?
There are no sides on something that's round.*

Source Unknown

BOYNE RIVER NATURAL SCIENCE SCHOOL

Please note that the Request for Expressions of Interest concerning the future of this former Toronto District School Board outdoor education centre has been delayed until late this month. Details will be released in the June 1st edition of this electronic newsletter.

CALLING ALL BOREAL CANOEISTS

The Ontario Boreal Futures Coalition recently launched an effort to secure legislation for the far north tomorrow. Part of the effort is a new website, complete with a narrated aerial flyover and great info. On it you will also find a scrapbook function that allows you to post a photo and story about your great times in the northern boreal. You can find it at: www.borealopportunity.ca. Please get involved: the Coalition is planning to build a scrapbook of experiences that we will present to the Premier in June so getting stories and pictures up early is key to the effort.

CANADIAN CANOE MUSEUM: A Place to See Canada by Canoe

Greetings to COEO members and fellow outdoor experiential educators across Ontario. The Canadian Canoe Museum opened a new exhibit on April 15th called Treaty Canoe, involving a 3.5m canoe made of parchment on which are transcribed portions of some of the original treaties between First Nations and the Government of Canada. The canoe was created through a participatory process led Windsor Artist, Alex McKay. Unlike most of the other canoes in the CCM collection, this one floats not on water but on culture, on a layer of reference which surmounts the physical fact of its materials. Treaty Canoe is stimulating much productive discussion. Besides the exhibit itself, which will be on display for the next

12-15 months, we're very excited about a new program created by the Education Team here at the museum that invites visiting students to engage in a simulated treaty negotiation. The simulation is proving to be a powerful experience for all who participate.

Treaty Canoe is on loan to us for the duration of this exhibit and is but one example of the way in which the story of Canada is carried by the craft and artifacts in the Canadian Canoe Museum. Among the most prominent items from our permanent collection on display here are giant west coast dugouts like the 16.4m Salish racing canoe that was reputed never to have lost a race before being retired in 1970. On the other end of the scale is a tattered old canvas-covered wooden frame kayak that was made by survivors of the sinking of the German battleship, Bismarck, at a prisoner of war camp in Northern Ontario. And amongst models and smaller artifacts in the collection, like our hand crafted Beothuk canoe from Newfoundland is an exquisite replica of a bark North canoe made of pure silver that belonged to Sir George Simpson, one of the most colourful characters from the fur trade. Each of the 600+ canoes in this amazing collection has a story that, in sum, paints a unique portrait of this country from sea to sea to sea. If you're a member of COEO, then you've probably at least heard about the Canadian Canoe Museum--many of you I hope will have been here.

What you might not know is that this institution is a not-for-profit non-governmental organization that must raise \$750,000 each year to look after the collection, to mount regular new exhibits, and to develop its award-winning education programs. While I am pleased to tell you that after some significant financial ups and downs over the years, the museum is on a stable fiscal footing and aspiring to move one day to a new purpose-built facility on the water here in Peterborough from which national outreach initiatives can be mounted (such as our satellite exhibit which is opening this month at Pier 21 in Halifax), in order to realize these future plans, we must broaden and strengthen our base of support. To this end, I am inviting you to explore our new website and consider making a donation or, better still, to join the museum so that you might receive the benefits of membership which include (in addition to discounts at our new on-line store, admission to events, and our quarterly newsletter) the powerful satisfaction of being part of the team of supporters helping to build this unique Canadian cultural institution which invites people from across this great nation and from around the world to "See Canada by Canoe."

Visit us at www.canoemuseum.ca. You can do everything you need to do right online. Check out Treaty Canoe. Become a member. Make a donation. Sign up for our email newsletter. Spread the word. Or drop me a line with questions or comments or just to say hello.

James

James Raffan, PhD, Executive Director

The Canadian Canoe Museum

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P.S. National Canoe Day is June 26th. Help celebrate the canoe as a Wonder of Canada! Find out how to join the party at www.nationalcanoeday.net.

UPCOMING P.D. OPPORTUNITIES:

ADVENTUREWORKS!

www.adventureworks.org

877-311-5683

Course Name	Date	Location
Special Events		
Tips & Tricks with Facilitation <i>Jennifer Stanchfield</i>	November 13, 2009	Norval Outdoor School, Norval ON
Teachable Moments <i>Jennifer Stanchfield</i>	November 14, 2009	Norval Outdoor School, Norval ON
Program Leadership		
Facilitating Adventure-Based Learning	Oct. 19 &20, 2009	Canterbury Hills, Ancaster ON
Ropes Course Certification		
Low Ropes Facilitator (Level One)	May 6-7 June 3-4 Sept 30-Oct 1, 2009	Canterbury Hills, Ancaster ON
Low Ropes Facilitator (Level One)	June 3-4, 2009	Camp Trillium Rainbow Lake, Waterford
Assistant High Ropes Instructor (Level One)	May 6-10 June 3-7 Sept 30-Oct 4, 2009	Canterbury Hills, Ancaster ON
Climbing Wall Facilitator (Level One)	June 19-21, 2009	Canterbury Hills, Ancaster ON
Ropes Course Instructor (Level Two)	May 6-10 June 3-7 Sept 30-Oct 4, 2009	Canterbury Hills, Ancaster ON
Ropes Course Instructor (Level Two)	June 3-7, 2009	Camp Trillium Rainbow Lake, Waterford
Ropes Course Instructor (Level Two)	June 17-21, 2009	Camp Sunrise, Burnaby, B.C.
Re-certification (Levels One & Two)	May 10 June 7 October 4, 2009	Canterbury Hills, Ancaster ON
Re-certification (Levels One & Two)	June 3-7, 2009	Camp Trillium Rainbow Lake, Waterford
Re-certification (Level Two)	June 21, 2009	Camp Sunrise, Burnaby, B.C.

For more information please check out our website, or to register for any upcoming training courses, please contact monica@adventureworks.org

WORTH REPEATING: **ROBERT BATEMAN on CHILDREN & NATURE**

The following piece is written by Robert Bateman, perhaps Canada's most famous living artist, and a passionate advocate for connecting children to nature. Mr. Bateman recently mailed this to me, after we met at a B.C. conference on children and nature that was held in early March. If you are interested in reading some of Robert Bateman's other opinion pieces, go to: <http://www.batemanideas.com/>

On Oct 13, 2008, a 15 year-old boy named Brandon Crisp walked out of his house because his parents had taken away his Xbox video game. After a three-week search, his body was finally found. The Nov. 19, 2008 issue of the NY Times described the huge increase of medications that are prescribed to young people. Parks and natural areas that once rang with the shouts of children are now devoid of kids. Change has been happening to society and it does not look good for our future.

From the beginning of time we have been connected to nature. We, of course, are literally nature's children but, for the first time in history, that connection threatens to be broken by the majority of an entire generation and perhaps generations to come. When I read Richard Louv's landmark book *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder*, I was surprised at how insidious and widespread the problem had become. I guess that I was living in a bubble. My family and friends were out in nature all the time. I was shocked to learn that perhaps the majority of mothers were afraid to let their children outside to play. Since reading the book I have been including issues in Louv's book in my lectures. The feedback is always one way. Most children are not playing by themselves out in nature. Almost all outside activity is adult-supervised. Soccer moms are a relatively recent phenomenon but adult supervision seems to be essential nowadays. One person described these diamond shaped yellow road signs which say "Slow – Children Playing" as being out of date. They should now read "No children playing." *Last Child in the Woods* cites recent research at Harvard and numerous US, Canadian, British and European institutions. The findings are that if children play in nature, (I don't mean organized soccer or cement playgrounds), climb trees, build forts and dams in creeks and go exploring, here is what happens: they have less obesity, less attention deficit disorder, less depression, less suicide, less alcohol and drug abuse and less bullying and higher marks. If one was to make a list of the main problems facing that age group and indeed any age group, it would be the same list. And nature is free. I grew up in the city of Toronto. My buddies and I had bicycles and public transportation. We had no problem getting into nature every weekend and holiday and even some days after school.

The fear of letting young people play out in nature is tragically misplaced. Over 95% of harm done to kids by an adult is by someone the family knows, the father, the uncle, the man across the street. It is highly unlikely that a dirty old man will be lurking behind a bush in a bit of nature for months waiting for a luckless victim to possibly pass by. At any rate, the normal thing is for kids to play in groups. This of course should be encouraged, as there is certainly safety in numbers.

ROBERT BATEMAN on CHILDREN & NATURE

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So, which holds more serious risk for young people? Obesity with its early onset of diabetes, possibly early heart disease, being medicated for ADHD and depression, committing suicide, falling into drug and alcohol abuse, or, on the other hand, playing out in nature? What about Internet predators and bullying on line? Those are dangerous and deadly issues and they are not uncommon. Let us worry about risks, but real risks not bogus ones. Just think about that list of issues and how expensive they are to society in medical costs, policing, the justice system and jails. Society would save money if schools and families put greatly increased resources into the nature-child connection.

Children's brains have been invaded by an alien. This alien goes by the name of electronics. It comes in the form of large televisions, computer screens, Nintendo, Game Boy and all the way down to cell phones and text messaging. My Orwellian fear for the future is that this generation will view all phenomena including human relations as information on a screen. I hasten to add that I am not referring to all of the younger generation. I know hundreds of kids to whom these fears do not apply. However, there is an increasing number of kids living in a virtual world. The virtual world is by definition not the real world. When this screen-trapped generation grows up, how will they vote? What kind of parents will they be?

Nikko Tinbergen, a bird behaviour scientist, did a study of herring gulls. He created large dummy gull eggs and placed one in a simulated nest beside a real nest with eggs. When the parent returned she would see the spectacular artificial egg which outshone her own smaller, eggs and would try to brood the fake egg even though it was awkward, and therefore she let her own eggs die. This phenomenon is known as super-stimuli. I also heard that potato beetles, although they thrive on a diet of potato leaves, have a passion for petunias. The catch is, petunias are poisonous to the beetles. But if given a choice, the beetles will go for the petunias and die. The obvious moral to the story is that we are confronted with super stimuli constantly, especially young people. Many of the choices we are given are bad for us and for society but we pick them anyway because our inner weaknesses are stimulated by outside forces to do so. For at least a million years humans have been hard-wired for stimulation of the brain with serotonins, dopamine and other pleasure-inducing chemicals. The adrenalin-inducing risks in killing large mammals to bring home the bacon, or fighting enemy clans to protect the family had a powerful evolutionary function. We don't need to do this very much in the 21st century so youth turn to risky sports, risky behaviour and computer games to feed their brains with the Paleolithic rush. The needs to have sex and devour calories have obvious evolutionary advantages in perpetuating the species. The 21st century result of this hard wiring is pornography, unwanted pregnancies and super-sized gluttony.

I remember giving lectures back in the 1960s describing a new species that was being created, particularly by TV. I called this species *Homo sapiens teenager consumerensis*. They were trained to require special food, drink, clothing, music and so that set them apart from adults. Using human vices such as greed, lust and an attraction to violence, the promoters of the products turned the young people into market targets. Unlike all previous generations of young people, their main role in society was to be self-

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indulgent. This process was a great commercial success and continues today with even more expertise and intensity. I remember saying back in the 60s that in the future some of the parents' ideas of family values will be based on the cartoon the Flintstones because these children were raised by TV. Well, it is now the 21st century and those TV kids are now parents or even grandparents. This may at least partially explain the parents' alienation from nature. Their "natural" or unnatural tendency is to encourage their offspring into the video world. This screen world is designed by some of the smartest most creative minds on the planet. They know all the hot buttons and super stimuli for each age group. Most kids don't have a chance of resisting. If they do resist they are branded as uncool. Recent studies have shown that constant and intense engagement with electronics is rewiring the children's brains. Addiction is a real possibility. Even sweeter, sexier, faster stimuli are required to keep up the enthusiasm and sell the product. How will it all end? Will it ever end? How can going for a walk in the woods or watching a turtle ever compete with this gigantic juggernaut?

In my opinion, this issue is more important than the economy that has its downs and also its ups. Or terrorism, which is a police matter and does not really affect most humans. E. F. Schumacher said that the real problems facing the planet are not economic, they are not technical, they are philosophical. Which kind of philosophy will these screen world young people have when they are building future families, communities, and nature? Will they care about endangered species? Or ecosystems, when they can call up virtual spotted owls on the screen? We must rebuild the nature-child connection. We must bring the boots back into the bushes. It is essential for healthy bodies, minds, spirits and society.

It has been said that the average North American young person can recognize over 1,000 corporate logos. However, they don't know the names of their neighbours of other species ... even 10 common trees and birds. I was once asked what my one wish for young people would be. I replied that every Canadian (in fact, North American or world) youth would get to know the names of their wild neighbours ... maybe 20 to 50 of them. If you can't name someone or something, how can you care about them or it? This is why we founded the Robert Bateman *Get to Know* Program which uses an annual calendar contest and several other school-based initiatives to encourage thousands of Canadian youth to get outside and "get to know" their wild neighbours. In partnership with Scouts Canada (who is trying to revive its connection to nature roots), Get to Know is endeavouring to get a million Canadian children to have meaningful experiences in nature by 2011. You can learn more about the Get To Know Program, which is also expanding to California this year, at www.gettoknow.ca. The organization Earth Rangers is combining the power of entertainment and children's natural bond with animals to engage and motivate millions of children to adopt sustainable practices. Earth Rangers' website is earthrangers.org "inspiring children with a lasting passion to build a better future." The Children Nature Network (www.cnaturenet.org) provides a critical link between researchers and individuals, educators and organizations dedicated to children's health and wellbeing. Their *Leave No Child Inside* Campaign is being launched in numerous North American communities.

ROBERT BATEMAN on CHILDREN & NATURE

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There are fledgling movements springing up all over the place. Some schools and boards are encouraging nature study and field trips. All of these efforts, however, are like the little Dutch boy with his finger in the dike striving to hold back the aforementioned juggernaut of commercialized youth culture. The efforts to bring kids back to nature will have succeeded when once again the parks and meadows and woodlands ring with the sounds of young people enjoying themselves in nature (without adult supervision) during most of their leisure hours. Computers are, of course, necessary in the modern world, but we need a balance. More time in nature would obviously benefit adults as well.

Because the cost of the social ills brought about in part by the *nature deficit disorder* are so high, it would pay society to greatly increase budgets for outdoor education. Back in the 1970s when there were slightly higher budgets, my wife Birgit and I would help to lead weeklong canoe trips organized by the high school where we both taught. We would see misbehaving "yahoos" (usually boys) be transformed into helpful and caring individuals by the end of the trip.

I have no doubt that many of society's expensive ills would be alleviated if every high school child spent a week in nature every year. Two weeks would be better. Other projects could be initiated. Teacher nature clubs could be organized in which perhaps like-minded teachers from a given district could get together for half a day each month to do some nature exploring. If the teachers don't feel it in their hearts they can never convey the enthusiasm for nature to their students.

Family nature clubs could be organized on a similar basis ... perhaps half a Saturday or Sunday each month. If families are involved then transportation and liability issues should not be a problem. Although my parents were not naturalists, we drove to a bit of nature and went for hikes every Sunday afternoon. One half day spent out in nature seems like a reasonable proposition for families. The benefits would be well worth it. If young people spend around 40 hours per week gazing at some screen, surely they could spend 2-3 hours a week out in nature.

There is a movement spearheaded by the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia to create gardens in school grounds. This will be a safe and economical way to get children outdoors and engage them with the realities of the natural world. Our local elementary school on Salt Spring Island could not afford a manufactured playground at first. So the children played during recess and lunch hour in the neighbouring woods. They played tag in the bushes, climbed trees and got muddy in the little creek. Then the money for the playground and "jungle gym" was found. After that, the children's behaviour deteriorated. There was more quarreling and bullying. Nature really works wonders.

This problem is so large that it needs addressing on many fronts by governments, school boards, schools, NGOs, individual families and by the kids themselves. Where there is no will there is no way but, as the more optimistic saying goes, "where there is a will, there is a way."

SPIES WANTED ... a.k.a. "PLANT WATCHERS"

My name is Bond. James Bond. ... Well, er ...

My name is Plant. Robert Plant. ... Well, er ...

*Actually, we're looking for conscientious and diligent **plant watchers**.*

(And, they can't know that you're watching them!)

For more info, read what follows ...

Spring is here, the bird migrants are coming through, and flowers and early spring leaves are popping up everywhere! I am sure you are as excited as I am to spend more time out there and watch things change after our cold winter.

I'm writing because, as coordinator of the PlantWatch Program, I need your assistance to get this important phenology monitoring program blossoming here in Ontario. For those of you who have not yet heard of PlantWatch, it is a nation-wide program of the NatureWatch series that relies on volunteers, or "citizen scientists" to record flowering times of certain plants and report to researchers through the internet or by mail. The plants chosen bloom every spring, largely in response to rising temperatures. With the information collected from citizen scientists' to-date, it has been found that some species are flowering almost a week earlier than they were a few decades ago!

Ontario has the lowest number of PlantWatch participants across all other provinces and territories! We need your help to monitor plants and assist us in assessing how climate change is affecting blooming times across Ontario. Please pick a plant, pick a location and start recording and reporting data!

Everything you need to know can be found at www.plantwatch.ca including a list of the 22 plant species being monitored here in Ontario. If you have any questions at all please contact "M" (*a.k.a. Natalie Iwanycki*) at niwanycki@rbg.ca or by phone at (905) 527 1158 ext 238. Natalie is known to the public as the Herbarium Curator & Field Botanist Program Coordinator (*what a convoluted title for a Chief Spy!*) for PlantWatch Ontario. Her base of operations is the Royal Botanical Gardens in Burlington ... clever, very clever ...

ABOUT THIS ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER

For consistency, the COEO electronic newsletter is published on the first of each month. Friends of COEO can receive this newsletter free of charge however, as non-members, they will not receive the outdoor education job postings or parts of the resources sections. The newsletter will also arrive a few days later.

Anyone having an item of interest to outdoor & experiential educators and desiring publication in this newsletter needs it to submit to the editor at least two days before the publication date. If your organization wishes to post information (e.g., job postings, notice of upcoming events), it needs to be an organizational member of COEO.