



The Newsletter of Sugar Grove Nature Center

Volume 6, Number 4

October/November/December 2010

Inside:

- 2 General Information
- 3 Musings & Meowings
- 4 Festival News
- 5 Get Involved
- 5 Meet the Interns
- 6 Project WILD
- 7 Program Schedule
- 11 Boy Scout Merit Badge Day
- 11 Maple Sirup Field Trips
- 12 Power of Observation
- 14 The Holidays
- 15 Membership Form

It's almost that time again! The sound of leaves crunching under your feet, a refreshing chill in the air, the unmistakable aroma of fall leaves...it's time for Sugar Grove Nature Center's...

AUTUMN CELEBRATION!

Saturday, October 23, 2010

10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

*Admission only \$3/person,
3 years & under, free!*

*Members are invited to pick up 4 free
activity tickets at the membership table!*



FUN FOR EVERYONE!

Fall Color Walks, Scarecrow Factory, Pumpkin Bowling, Bobbing for Apples, Nature Crafts, Campfire, Blacksmith & Woodturning Demonstrations, Daytime Astronomy, Horse Drawn Carriage Rides, Seasonal Treats & More!

LIVE MUSIC

The Indras will kick out raw, over-the-top rock & roll, rockabilly, and R&B from the 1950s from 10:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

The **Emerald Underground** returns again this year with their presentation of beautiful, upbeat Celtic fusion from 2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

PUMPKIN PATCH

Pumpkins, Pumpkins, and more Pumpkins! Visit our pumpkin patch and choose your favorite to take home and carve.....or stop by and decorate it at the pumpkin salon!



Continued on page 4

Nature Center Staff

Angela Funk
Director

Jill Wallace
*Environmental
Education Specialist*

Randy Carriger
Education & Operations Assistant

Courtney Luensman
Hannah Willams
Interns

Sugar Grove Foundation Board of Directors

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Gary Huppert, *Treasurer*

Craig Alexander, *Secretary*

Tricia Braid Terry

Eric Funk

Richard Park

John Rehtmeyer

Don Schmidt

Eric Vaughn

— NATURE CENTER HOURS —

*Please take note of the following changes in
Sugar Grove Nature Center's hours:*

Winter Hours

Beginning Tuesday, November 2,
Sugar Grove Nature Center will switch to winter hours:

November - March

Tuesday - Saturday
10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

April - October

Tuesday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Saturday, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Nature Center Closed

In preparation of Autumn Celebration:

Thursday & Friday, October 21 & 22

Thanksgiving: Thursday & Friday, November 25 & 26

Christmas: Friday, & Saturday, December 24 & 25

New Years: Saturday, January 1

Our grounds, trails, & Imagination Grove are always
open from dawn until dusk.

HAVE A **WILD** PARTY AT

— THE NATURE CENTER —

Sugar Grove Nature Center is a great place to host a birthday party! We provide the space, tables, and an exciting nature program. You provide the decorations, cake, and guests! Reserve the classroom or picnic shelter for three hours---this allows ample time for setup and cleanup; time to eat cake, open gifts, play games, and have an hour of "wild" naturalist-led activities. The fee is \$50/members, \$75/non-members for up to 15 participants and \$5 for each additional person. Maximum group size is 20 for ages 4-6 and 25 for ages 7 and up. You may choose from a variety of party themes. Reservations are required at least one month in advance. Call 309.874.2174 for more information or to schedule your party!

— E-MAIL ALERTS —

Would you like to receive periodic e-mail updates that include program reminders, local nature sightings, and nature news? If so, e-mail register-sgnc@earthlink.net and include "Nature Alerts" in the subject line.

VISIT US ON THE
WEB OR JOIN US

— ON FACEBOOK —

www.sugargrovenaturecenter.org

The Nature of the Grove is a free quarterly publication of Sugar Grove Nature Center. If you would like to be added to our mailing list, either electronically or by postal service, please call 309.874.2174 or e-mail infosugargrovenaturecenter@earthlink.net.



Musings & Meowings by Daisy Kitty

Dear Readers,

I have always felt that my name fits me purrfectly. The daisy flower is simply beautiful, as am I, and we both bring joy to those we come in contact with. And while I have always considered myself to be an original, I have learned that I am not the only one to be graced with this name! Well, curiosity got this kitty wondering if all Daisys were as wonderful as me. So, in the last newsletter, I put a call out to all of the other Daisys out there. What I found was certainly not a shock. While all are unique in their Daisy-ness, they all possess the "completely lovable" trait. Thanks to all Daisys who responded. I hope I didn't miss anyone! To paraphrase Shakespeare: That which we call Daisy. By any other name would be just as adorable.

Kitty Kisses,

Daisy



Daisy Belle Rexroat



Daisy Hopwood



While not a Daisy, Forty Winks D'Hooge is such a look-a-like, I gave her honorary status.



Daisy Barth



These girl scouts named their whole troop after me: Daisy Troop 1290!



Daisy Poodle stopped in to visit. My apologies, as I do not have her last name.



Daisy Rivadeneryra

Festival News

AUTUMN CELEBRATION (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

STEP BACK IN TIME

Visit a buckskinners' camp and a 1750's trading post. Meet with historical reenactors featuring a cooper, spinner, carver, doll maker, quilter, and more.



ARTISANS & CRAFTERS

Local artisans and crafters will be exhibiting and selling nature inspired jewelry, pottery, carved walking sticks, natural fiber items, photographs, and more!

Visit the blacksmiths and wood turners for hand-crafted items including camp equipment and decorative items!



VOLUNTEER!

Do you enjoy attending Autumn Celebration? Would you like to be a part of it? Volunteers are needed to sell tickets & staff activity booths, among other things. We also need assistance with set-up the week prior to the celebration. If you are interested, contact Angela Funk at 309-874-2174 or sugargrovinc@earthlink.net.

For more information on entertainment, vendors, and an updated event schedule, visit our website, www.sugargrovenaturecenter.org.



HUMMINGBIRD FESTIVAL REVIEW

The Hummingbird Festival & Pollination Celebration was a great success! Over 700 people enjoyed hummingbird banding, butterfly tagging, learning about bees, and other fun events on an absolutely beautiful late summer day. By the time the day was over, 13 hummingbirds had been caught, weighed, measured, and banded: 1 adult male, 6 adult females, 5 young males, and 1 young female. If these birds are caught in the future, either here or somewhere else, banding can provide important information regarding migration patterns and bird health. Thanks to everyone who helped and came out to make this annual event so spectacular!



Get Involved

LOCAL WILD ONES CHAPTER TO START

Why not become a Wild One? Wild Ones is a not-for-profit national organization dedicated to natural landscapes using native plants. "Wild Ones promotes environmentally sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restoration and establishment of native plant communities." Whether you have a yard in the city or acres of land in the countryside, become a Wild One and learn how to incorporate locally native plants into your landscape.

An organizational meeting for a local chapter of Wild Ones is being held on Monday, October 25th at 7pm in the Community Room at the Bloomington Public Library. Wild Ones Rock River Valley Chapter member, Tim Lewis, will be on hand with an informative presentation on "Why Plant Natives." The meeting is free and open to the public. We hope this will be the first of many Wild Ones meetings. Come and learn what it's all about. Hopefully you will become a Wild One, too. For more information about this meeting, contact Sherrie Snyder (sherrie.snyder87@gmail.com), and to learn more about the Wild Ones organization, visit www.for-wild.org.



LITTER COLLECTION



We'd like to give a big thanks to YouthBuild McLean County who spent a day collecting trash from the roads running through Sugar Grove Nature Center property. Over 600 lbs of trash were collected PLUS 13 tires! Also, thanks to Don Owen tire for recycling the tires. We appreciate the hard work that they, and others like them, have put into keeping the area clean and pleasant to visit!

Meet the Interns

COURTNEY LUENSMAN

Hi! My name is Courtney Luensman and I'm a junior at Illinois Wesleyan University. I'm pursuing degree in Environmental Studies with minors in Biology and Economics. My dream is teach environmental sciences in developing nations and I'm excited for my Environmental Education internship here at Sugar Grove to get me started! I look forward to getting to know everyone!



HANNAH WILLIAMS

I was born and raised in Tuscola, IL where I lived with my parents, older brother, sister, and golden retriever. Passion for the environment runs in my family, and I love all of the time that I spent outdoors growing up. I am currently a junior at Illinois Wesleyan University where I am majoring in Environmental Studies and minoring in Anthropology. After graduation, I hope to have a career in environmental activism or field research, ideally working for Greenpeace, and I eventually hope to teach college level environmental studies classes. In my free time I love to travel, read, spend time with friends and family, hike, recycle, laugh, and bike ride.



Educator Workshops

GROWING UP WILD: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

Tuesday, November 16, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Fee: \$30; Lunch included; Registration required.

Co-sponsored by the Environmental Education Association of Illinois. CPDU's available Instructor, Angela Funk.

Formal and non-formal educators will benefit from this fabulous workshop that will give information, ideas, and inspiration on ways to get young children interested in and excited about nature.

Growing Up WILD: Exploring Nature with Young Children is an early childhood education activity guide for ages 3-7 that builds on children's sense of wonder about nature and invites them to explore wildlife and the world around them.

Through a wide range of activities and experiences, it provides a foundation for developing positive impressions about nature while also building lifelong social and cognitive skills. Workshop participants will receive a copy of the guide, which features nature-based activities, crafts, art projects, music, conservation activities, reading and math connections and much more.



FLYING WILD WORKSHOP FOR HOMESCHOOL EDUCATORS WITH NATURE ACTIVITIES FOR YOUR KIDS

Wednesday, December 1, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Fee: Adults: \$25, your children, ages 5+, are free; Registration required by November 5.

Please bring a lunch.

Instructor, Janet Rasmussen



We are excited to invite homeschool educators AND their children to this unique program! Flying WILD is a national program that focuses on migratory birds, and is designed to inspire young people to discover more about the natural world. Adults attending will receive a Flying WILD curriculum guide, instruction on ways to incorporate activities into a lesson plan, and the opportunity to meet and interact with other homeschool educators.

While adults participate in a Flying WILD training workshop, their children will take part in a guided nature activities. Families will gather for lunch together in the picnic shelter.

To learn more about the Flying WILD program, visit www.flyingwild.org

October, November, & December Programs

Your interest may be the deciding factor to run a program! Most programs require advanced registration. Please try to register at least 7 days in advance. Waiting until the last minute may result in a program being canceled due to low enrollment or missing out because it is full.

Funks Grove Stewardship Work Days

Saturdays, October 2, 16, & 30, November 13, & December 11; 9:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Free, No registration required.

Don Schmidt leads a faithful group of volunteers in a variety of stewardship activities every other Saturday throughout the year. Join the group on a regular basis or stop out on occasion to assist with exotic species removal, seed collection, and other projects.

Family Nature Exploration Day

Saturday, October 2; 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Free, No registration required.

Bring the family out for a day of fun at the Nature Center! A guided hike will take place at 11:00 a.m. Stop inside to create a make-and-take craft at any time, and don't miss animal feeding time at 1:00 p.m. Bring a picnic lunch to enjoy in our picnic shelter or on the lawn.

Blacksmith Demonstration

Saturday, October 16; 9:00 a.m. - noon

Free, No registration required.

On the third Saturday of every month, the public is invited to observe local members of the Illinois Valley Blacksmith's Association as they work at the Sugar Grove Forge, across the parking lot from the Nature Center.

Acoustic Irish Music Jam Session

Saturday, October 16; 10:00 a.m. - noon

Free, No registration required.

Acoustic musicians of all levels are invited to join an Irish-music jam session at the Nature Center on the 3rd Saturday of each month, from 10 a.m. - noon. Experienced players will be on hand to lead beginners through a couple of tunes at a slow pace to start, then they will progress to an up-to-speed session of traditional Irish tunes. Listeners (and players) are welcome to come-and-go as they enjoy all of the other activities at Sugar Grove Nature Center. For more details, contact Martha Tyner at mttyner@iwu.edu.

TCAA Public Viewing Session: Perseus Double Star Cluster

Saturday, October 16; 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Free; no registration required.

Don't miss the last astronomy session of the year! The Twin City Amateur Astronomers welcome all ages at the Sugar Grove Observatory to take part in a public viewing session. Each session begins with a short lecture on the featured sky object, as well as other interesting celestial objects that might be viewed that evening. This is followed by a sky tour of major constellations and planets, then viewing selected objects through telescopes. Dress appropriately for the weather. In the event of a cloudy sky, the observing session and associated talk may be cancelled. Call Carl at 309.830.4085 or Lee at 309.824.2804 after 6:00 p.m. to confirm if you are unsure. For more information, visit www.tcaa.us.

Continued on page 8.

Call 309.874.2174 or email register-sgnc@earthlink.net to register.



October, November, & December Programs

Continued from page 7.

Nature Center Closed

Thursday, October 21 & Friday, October 22 in preparation for Autumn Celebration.

Autumn Celebration

Saturday, October 23; 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Fee: \$3/person, Members receive four free activity tickets. No registration required.

See page one for complete information on this fabulous annual event!

Little Wonders: How Seeds Scatter

Wednesday, October 27; 10:00 - 11:30 a.m. OR 1:00 - 2:30 p.m.

(Note: this is the fourth Wednesday of the month instead of the usual third.)

Fee: \$5/child members, \$7/child non-members; Registration required.

Three to five year-olds with an adult chaperone will explore the ways that seeds travel from place to place. You will make a fun craft, have a yummy seed snack, and listen to a story.

Homeschool: Have Seeds, Will Travel

Thursday, October 28; 1:00 - 3:00 p.m., ages 6+.

Fee: \$5/child members, \$7/child non-members; Registration required.

Johnny Appleseed may have carried apple seeds across the land, but what about other types of seeds? This program will explore the various dispersing methods seeds use to create new plants.

Creepy Campfire: A Family Campfire Program

Saturday, October 30; 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.; In case of bad weather, program & snacks will be indoors.

Fee: Free/members, \$3/person non-members; Registration required.

Bring your favorite spooky stories and songs to share around the campfire while enjoying s'mores and hot chocolate.

Family Nature Exploration Day

Saturday, November 6; 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Free, No registration required.

Bring the family out for a day of fun at the Nature Center! A guided hike will take place at 11:00 a.m. Stop inside to create a make-and-take craft at any time, and don't miss animal feeding time at 1:00 p.m. Bring a picnic lunch to enjoy in our picnic shelter or on the lawn.

Boy Scout Merit Badge Day

Saturday, November 13; 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Fee: \$8/scout; Please bring a sack lunch, Registration required by submitting form and payment by November 5. Forms can be found at www.sugargrovenaturecenter.org.

See page 11 for complete information.

Growing Up Wild: For Formal & Non-formal Educators of Early Childhood

Tuesday, November 16; 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Fee: \$30; Lunch included; Registration required.

See page 6 for complete information.

Continued on page 9.



October, November, & December Programs

Continued from page 8.

Little Wonders: Turkey Tails

Wednesday, November 17; 10:00 - 11:30 a.m. OR 1:00 - 2:30 p.m.

Fee: \$5/child members, \$7/child non-members; Registration required.

Three to five year-olds with an adult chaperone will learn all about the bird made famous this time of year. Enjoy a snack, create a craft, and listen to a fun turkey story.

Talk Turkey, Eat S'mores: A Family Campfire Program

Friday, November 19; 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.; *In case of bad weather, program & snacks will be indoors.*

Fee: Free/members, \$3/person non-members; Registration required.

After learning all about turkeys, from the blue and red head to the fanned out tail, head out to the campfire and indulge in s'mores and hot chocolate.

Blacksmith Demonstrations

Saturday, November 20; 9:00 a.m. - noon

Free, No registration required.

See October 16 for complete information.

Acoustic Irish Music Jam Session

Saturday, November 20; 10:00 a.m. - noon

Free, No registration required.

Acoustic musicians of all levels are invited to join an Irish-music jam session at the Nature Center on the 3rd Saturday of each month, from 10 a.m. - noon. Experienced players will be on hand to lead beginners through a couple of tunes at a slow pace to start, then they will progress to an up-to-speed session of traditional Irish tunes. Listeners (and players) are welcome to come-and-go as they enjoy all of the other activities at Sugar Grove Nature Center. For more details, contact Martha Tyner at mtyner@iwu.edu.

Happy Thanksgiving! Nature Center Closed

Thursday, November 25 & Friday, November 26

The grounds, trails, and Imagination Grove will be open dawn until dusk to play and walk off that big Thanksgiving dinner!

Flying WILD Workshop For Homeschool Educators with a Special Program for Your Children

Wednesday, December 1; 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Fee: \$25, Please bring a sack lunch; Registration required.

See page 6 for complete information.

Family Nature Exploration Day

Saturday, December 4; 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Free, No registration required.

Bring the family out for Family Nature Exploration Day! A guided hike will take place at 11:00 a.m. Stop inside to create a holiday craft at any time, and don't miss animal feeding time at 1:00 p.m. Our "Letters to Santa" tradition continues, allowing children to put their wish lists in a special box in the forest for the woodland animals to deliver. See page 14 for complete information.

Continued on page 10.

Visit www.sugargrovenaturecenter.org or call 309.874.2174 for your registration form.



October, November, & December Programs

Continued from page 9.

Little Wonders: Wild Creatures of Winter

Wednesday, December 15; 10:00 - 11:30 a.m. OR 1:00 - 2:30 p.m.

Fee: \$5/child members, \$7/child non-members; Registration required.

Three to five year-olds with an adult chaperone will find out what happens to water in the winter, as it freezes, turns into snow, melts, and evaporates. Create a craft, listen to a story, and enjoy a snack at this fun and educational hands-on program.

Blacksmith Demonstration

Saturday, December 18; 9:00 a.m. - noon

Free, No registration required.

On the third Saturday of every month, the public is invited to observe local members of the Illinois Valley Blacksmith's Association as they work at the Sugar Grove Forge, across the parking lot from the Nature Center.

Acoustic Irish Music Jam Session

Saturday, December 18; 10:00 a.m. - noon

Free, No registration required.

Acoustic musicians of all levels are invited to join an Irish-music jam session at the Nature Center on the 3rd Saturday of each month, from 10 a.m. - noon. Experienced players will be on hand to lead beginners through a couple of tunes at a slow pace to start, then they will progress to an up-to-speed session of traditional Irish tunes. Listeners (and players) are welcome to come-and-go as they enjoy all of the other activities at Sugar Grove Nature Center. For more details, contact Martha Tyner at mtyner@iwu.edu.

Happy Holidays! Nature Center Closed

Friday - Saturday, December 24 - 25 & Saturday, January 1

The grounds, trails, and Imagination Grove will remain open from dawn until dusk.

Experience Winter

Ages 6-8: Wednesday, December 29; 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Ages 9-12: Thursday, December 30; 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Fee: \$12/child members, \$15/child non-members; Registration required.

Don't spend your entire winter break inside! Step into the brisk air to explore, look for animal tracks, learn about snowflakes, take a hike, create a wintery craft, and much more. A lunch of hot dogs over the campfire and chicken noodle soup will be served. Dress for the weather!

Family Nature Exploration Day

Saturday, January 8; 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Free, No registration required.

Start off the New Year with a fun day at Sugar Grove Nature Center! A guided hike will take place at 11:00 a.m., and don't miss animal feeding time at 1:00. Stop inside to warm up with some hot chocolate and create a make-and-take craft.



Upcoming Programs

BOY SCOUT MERIT BADGE DAY - NATURE & SCIENCE IN THE GROVE

Saturday, November 13; 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Fee: \$8/scout (please bring a sack lunch), Registration required by submitting form and payment by November 5. Forms can be found at www.sugargrovenaturecenter.org.

Scouts are invited to take part in this exciting day and earn two merit badges! **Don't miss this opportunity to earn the 2010 Historic Tracking Merit Badge.** All classes will be taught by certified merit badge counselors and upon completion of the program, participating scouts will earn their merit badge. Some topics require that homework be completed prior to attending the event (indicated below with an asterisk). Proof of completion will be required the day of the event for counselor verification. Morning Session (9 a.m.-Noon): Forestry, Bird Study, Tracking-2010 Historic Merit Badge. Afternoon Session (12:30 -3:30 p.m.): Animal Science, Weather*, Tracking-2010 Historic Merit Badge.

Overnight camping is available, but space is limited, so register early. Bring your tent and gear and camp on the lawn. The picnic shelter, campfire area, and outdoor restrooms are available to all campers. The camping fee is \$5 per person.

Registration forms can be found at www.sugargrovenaturecenter.org or by calling 309.874.2174. To register, send in completed form and payment to Sugar Grove Nature Center, 4532 N 725 East Rd., McLean, IL, 61754.



MAPLE SIRUP EXPERIENCE REGISTRATION

Sugar Grove Nature Center is pleased to offer the Funks Grove Maple Sirup Experience to students throughout central Illinois and share this important part of Funks Grove Heritage. The Maple Sirup Experience Field Trip is a unique opportunity for students to actively engage in the production of maple sirup. They will explore its history from Native American to modern times through demonstrations and hands-on activities. The biology of the sugar maple will be covered, and there will be time to explore the Nature Center. Each child will get to tap a tree and take home a sample of Funks Grove's finest.

The Maple Sirup Experience Field Trip is offered to 3rd - 6th grade classes. The four-hour experience costs \$5/student. Our 2011 classes will be held on February 22, 23, 24, & 25 and March 2, 8, 9, 10, & 11. Your field trip can be reserved with a \$100 deposit, beginning December 6.

We have also set aside two days especially for homeschool groups, March 1 & 3 from 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m., and participants should bring a sack lunch. The fee is \$5 per student (for all students over the age of 2), teachers and chaperones are \$2/each. Registration begins on December 6.

Registration by mail is required. Forms will be posted online at www.sugargrovenaturecenter.org December 1.

A variety of other maple sirup programs are offered for scouts, groups, and the general public. They include the popular Maple Sirup Experience Tours, Maple Sirup Seminars, and Little Tappers for preschool children. More information will be available in the January newsletter and online. Be sure to check out these one-of-a-kind programs!



The Power of Observation

"LOOK AT THE FISH! LOOK AT THE FISH!"

Further Thoughts on Learning to Observe

By George A. Farnsworth

"Greetings, O, Unemployed One", yawned the abruptly awakened and irritated Daisy Kitty, as I sat down at the Sugar Grove computer to write my promised article on learning to observe. I inferred that she meant, 'O, Lazy One' since I had missed the deadline for the last newsletter edition. "I think you mean, 'Retired One with Much (uncompensated) Stuff to Do', Your Furriness", corrected I, knowing that one must keep the upper hand with cats if one is to keep the peace.

"As you please", sniffed Daisy in superior tone. "I read your last article and, though amateurishly done, it speaks of an important skill for those wanting to live well in this great world. Clearly humans need to hear more on the topic. So continue on. Maybe some will 'get it' as your females say. We'll see how you do. But kindly tap the keys quietly", Daisy insisted, her meow trailing off into a contented cat-sleep wheeze.

Well, with Daisy looking in the pressure is on. So, an issue late, here's more thought on learning how to observe. The short lesson is that we practice simply opening up to take in the world around us. Let's pick up where I left off in the last article with Professor Agassiz and learn by example rather than by prescription. If you missed that article, you can find it at www.sugargrovenaturecenter.org, under Notices: Electronic Newsletter Available.

Louis Agassiz was a leading Natural Scientist of the 19th century. He was a Harvard and Cornell University Professor of Zoology whose work greatly expanded the knowledge base and discovery methods of the natural sciences of his day. (1)

While some of his theories were controversial, there is agreement that his teaching methods powerfully equipped a generation of fruitful scientists. Agassiz demanded that students from the beginning take charge of their own learning. His simple philosophy of teaching is summed in his constant command to his students: "Go to nature; take the facts into your own hands; look, and see for yourself!"

Many of his students told that whatever their desired field of study, Agassiz first set them down in a lonely room, placing a single fish specimen before them in a metal pan with the instructions to look at the fish and record their observations. Forbidding them to consult references or other students he would leave, promising to return to question them on findings. In the unpredictable returns that followed, the successful students soon learned that the process was the chief part of the lesson. And there they would remain engaged day after day, some times for weeks, with Agassiz appearing always when least expected to interrogate them on their observations. His judgment of their reports at his abrupt departure was always the deflating: "That's not right!" When students asked in bewilderment what they should do next, his response was always: "Look at the fish! Look at the fish!"

Success came when Agassiz was satisfied that the student had moved from simply making a list of facts to setting those observed facts in context, gleaning principles of biology that would apply to their study of all of nature's realm. "Facts are stupid things", Agassiz would say, "until brought into connection with some general law." His students universally testified that this first disciplined development of observation skills powerfully equipped them to study any subject thereafter.

So is it just the sophisticated academic with a powerful mentor that can develop such life-enriching skills? Here following are experiences of others arguing that anyone with interest, energy & commitment can do so.

The Power of Observation

In John Wesley Powell's journals of his exploration of the southwestern US in the 1870s there is an instructive passage in which Powell compares his own abilities to observe with those of some Native men with whom Powell had developed genuine friendships in his trip to map the Colorado River. Powell relates with a note of respect:

"It is curious now to observe the knowledge of our Indians. There is not a trail but they know; every gulch and every rock seem familiar. I have regarded myself on being able to grasp and retain in my mind the topography of a country; but these Indians put me to shame. My knowledge is only general, embracing the more important features of a region that remains as a map engraved on my mind; but theirs is particular. They know every rock and every ledge, every gulch and canyon, and just where to wind among these to find a pass; and their knowledge is unerring. They cannot describe a country to you, but they can tell you all the particulars of a route."(2) Powell's journal entry shows us persons of widely differing personal histories and interests yet equally skilled in learning through observation.

Author Paul Gruchow gives another testimony that anyone with a commanding interest in the world can learn to be an expert observer. In his wonderful book of essays, *Journal of a Prairie Year*, he writes: "I sat one winter night in a town café listening to a pig farmer talk about the surprisingly complex language of pigs. The farmer said that simply from the sound of a pig, one could with experience tell its age, its approximate weight, and what had prompted it to cry out, whether it was being stepped on, or denied mother's milk, or whatever. He and his wife, the farmer said, had once occupied themselves during a long drive in cataloging the number of pig expressions they knew and they had made a list of fifty before their journey had come to an end.

"I (the author) am not a raiser of pigs. I cannot tell one pig noise from another. But I am a walker, and it occurred to me that it can be said in the same sense that the snow speaks. With proper attention, one can learn to tell the temperature of the air, the depth of snowfall on the ground, and the condition of the weather in the preceding week from the sound of snow underfoot." (He continues with a long insight into the nature of snow.) (3)

The farmer and his wife through their passion for and long hours with animals learned the language of pigs. Author Gruchow with equal love for the prairie, in his long winter walks learned the music of the snow.

In the next article we'll come up with some learning assignments, but you can start to 'look at the fish' or get into the 'silences between the leaves' anytime on your own before then.

REFERENCES:

- (1) "Louis Agassiz. Illustrative Extracts on His Method of Instruction with an Introductory note by Lane Cooper".
From: <http://www.fullbooks.com/Louis-Agassiz-as-a-Teacher.html>
- (2) Powell, John Wesley. "The Exploration of the Colorado River and Its Canyons" (Journal entry September 15, 1872, pp299-300).
Published by The Penguin Group, 2003 ed..
- (3) Gruchow, Paul. "Journal of a Prairie Year". Milkweed Editions, 2009. First published by University of Minnesota Press.1985.
- (4) From "Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle... and other modern verse". pg.21
Compiled by: Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, and Hugh Smith. Published by Scott, Foresman and Company. 1966.
Reprinted from author's volume: "The Living Seed". Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., (1961). The poem originally appeared in Saturday Review.

To Look at Any Thing by John Moffitt

To look at any thing,
If you would know that thing,
You must look at it long:
To look at this green and say
'I have seen spring in these
Woods,' will not do-you must
Be the thing you see:
You must be the dark snakes of
Stems and ferny plumes of leaves,
You must enter in
To the small silences between
The leaves,
You must take your time
And touch the very peace
They issue from. (4)

The Holidays are Coming Soon!

LETTERS TO SANTA

Once again, the critters of Funks Grove will be collecting letters to Santa and delivering them personally! Boys and girls of all ages are invited to write their letters to Santa, either at home or at our "writing station" in the Nature Center, and drop them off in a special mailbox located along our Imagination Grove trail. It's not a long walk, just across the parking lot and over the Covered Bridge. The critters of Funks Grove will then promptly deliver them. Be sure to stop in the Nature Center first and pick up some food to offer the animals as a "thank you." The animals will be accepting and delivering Letters to Santa up until Christmas Eve beginning November 25 from dawn until dusk, even when the Nature Center isn't open. Make this one of your Christmas traditions!



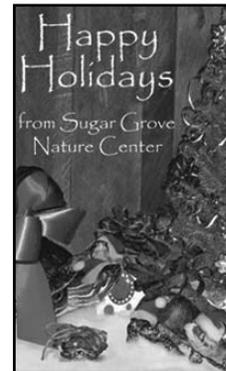


GIVE A NATURE CENTER MEMBERSHIP AS A GIFT

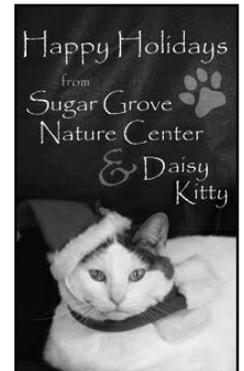
Can't decide what to get the nature lover on your holiday shopping list? How about a Sugar Grove Nature Center Gift Membership? Starting at just \$25 for a family, you'll be giving a gift that they can enjoy throughout the year. Members receive discounts on programs and special events, are able to check out books from our library, and can even receive discounts at other nature centers around the country! Gift memberships will include a gift card of your choice (seen at right). Forms are available online.



Winter Scene



Turtle Presents



Santa Daisy



ROUTE 66 COOKBOOKS FOR SALE

Sugar Grove Nature Center is featured in the new book, *Recipes from the Historic Route 66 National Scenic Byway*. More than simply a cookbook, this book includes 45 sites along Route 66 in Illinois from Willowbrook to Collinsville. Each location highlighted has submitted a recipe or two as well as historic information about themselves, and is accompanied by Charming pen and ink drawings by David Allen Badger. This would be a wonderful gift for history buffs and those who enjoy cooking.



The cookbooks cost \$16 each and are for sale at the Nature Center. We will also have them available at the information table during the Autumn Celebration on Saturday, Oct. 23.



Sugar Grove Nature Center Membership

Become a member of Sugar Grove Nature Center! Your membership supports quality environmental education programs, land stewardship, research opportunities, and so much more! Sugar Grove Foundation is a non-profit organization that receives no tax support. Memberships, program fees, private gifts, and corporate and foundation grant support are the lifeblood of our organization.

All Membership Levels, including **Student/Senior (\$15)**, **Sugar Maple (\$25)**, and **Paw Paw (\$50)**, receive:

- ✿ Discounts on classes, programs, and events
- ✿ Benefit of checking out books from the Nature Center Library
- ✿ Discount at Annual Spring Native Plant Sale
- ✿ Reciprocal membership at nature centers around the country

The Student/Senior level is for individuals. Family memberships begin at the Sugar Maple level.

Higher giving levels:

- ✿ **American Sycamore (\$100)**
All of the above benefits plus a 20% one-time discount at Wild Birds Unlimited in Normal, IL
- ✿ **Shagbark Hickory (\$250)**
All of the above benefits plus two Free Admissions to Annual Autumn Celebration
- ✿ **Black Walnut (\$500)**
All of the above benefits plus a nature photograph featuring the flora & fauna of Funks Grove
- ✿ **Blue Ash (\$1000)**
All of the above benefits plus a NatureScape Backyard Habitat Consultation
- ✿ **Bur Oak (\$5000)**
All of the above benefits plus a guided trail ride through Funks Grove



MEMBERSHIP FORM

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$15Student/Senior (65+) | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250Shagbark Hickory |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25Sugar Maple | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500Black Walnut |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50Paw Paw | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1000Blue Ash |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$100American Sycamore | <input type="checkbox"/> \$5000Bur Oak |

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

- How would you like your newsletter recognition to be worded? _____
- I do not wish to be recognized in the newsletter.
- Please send me newsletters via email.
- Please send me newsletters via US Postal Service.

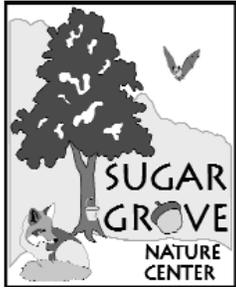
Memberships are valid for one year.

*Membership contributions are tax deductible. Please ask your employer about matching gift programs!
Sugar Grove Nature Center will neither sell nor trade personal information provided by donors.*

**Make checks payable to Sugar Grove Nature Center and return to:
Sugar Grove Nature Center ● 4532 N 725 East Road ● McLean, IL 61754**



Sugar Grove Foundation
4532 N 725 East Road
McLean, IL 61754



*The Nature of the Grove is now
available electronically!
E-mail infosugargrovec@earthlink.net
to be added to the list!*

NON PROFIT ORG
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BLOOMINGTON IL

Nature Center Hours

November - March
Tuesday - Saturday
10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.



April - October
Tuesday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Saturday, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.



Trails open daily dawn to dusk.

Contact us at:

Sugar Grove Nature Center
4532 N 725 East Road
McLean, IL 61754
309.874.2174
sugargrovec@earthlink.net
www.sugargrovenaturecenter.org

Latitude: N 40° 20.893'
Longitude: W 089° 08.007'

