



Environmental Education News *Late Winter-Early Spring, 2009*

Contents:

1. PWLC News
2. PWLC Events
3. Other Resources
4. Housekeeping

1. PWLC News

Curriculum Revision

Thank YOU all for your patience, understanding, flexibility, and enthusiasm as we update and revise the PWLC day-use curriculum. This spring we continue informally field testing and implementing lessons by grade level which help support the current MN science standards and provide authentic, experiential, place-based learning experiences (on-site field investigations) using a constructivist approach. Most of the programs are going well although we still have some kinks to work out as we transition through this change. We truly appreciate and need your feedback and specific suggestions – you may contact Molly Stoddard at 218-998-4489 or email her at prairiewet@fws.gov. Each season's lesson plans will be available on our web site by the end of March to further assist you with planning your visits and integrating with your classroom studies, <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/pwlc>. Thanks again for your support!

Yellow Bus Fund Provides Field Trips to the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center

Thanks to funding from the Donald Weesner Foundation, *all Minnesota schools* have the chance to explore a prairie, sample the life of a wetland and discover the beauty of a vanishing landscape. The Friends of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center received a grant from the Donald Weesner Foundation to fund field trips to the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center to learn about prairie and wetland ecology.

Any school or grade is eligible from any part of Minnesota. The funds pay for transportation to and from the Center for both day use and residential visits. For more information, contact Terrie Eidal at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center at 218-998-4481 or at prairiewet@fws.gov

New Personnel

Please join us in warmly welcoming to the staff one new permanent, full-time employee, Dave Ellis; and three new temporary professionals, Ashley Berkler, Shanti Singleton, and Michelle Tice. We are grateful to have them!

- Dave joins us as an Instructional Systems Specialist, leading educational programs and workshops, assisting with special events, and striving to mentor other schools and national wildlife refuges start a Prairie Science Class type of partnership. As a classroom teacher of the Fergus Falls school district, Dave pioneered the Prairie

Science Class at the PWLC over the past six years, growing the partnership from 50, 5th graders per year to 240, 4th and 5th graders. Many more children will benefit from his philosophy and methodology as he undertakes this new mission. We look forward to continuing working with you, Dave!

- Ashley, from Iowa, works in the Student Career Experience Program, a recruitment opportunity of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. As she earns her master's degree in nature interpretation from Stephen F. Austin State University in Texas, Ashley is also gaining valuable work experience not only at the PWLC but previously at DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge (IA). At the PWLC, she assists with web site development, leads educational programs, and revises curriculum.
- Shanti and Michelle are both interns with the Student Conservation Association. Their internships are funded by the Friends of the PWLC. Shanti hails from Washington and Michelle from New Jersey. Shanti's job is to manage the new PWLC greenhouse, and students have already assisted her with planting seeds. Michelle's job is to assist with educational programs, special events, workshops, and projects, and her support has been greatly needed!

Rodent Week

From February 2-20, about 900, K-5th grade students and teachers crawled through the rodent burrow and looked for animals outside that are active in winter (or a suitable indoor alternative when weather conditions required it). Fergus Falls and Breckenridge schools, both public and private, participated. Thank you for celebrating our winter wildlife with us!

2. PWLC Events

Marsh Madness!

Saturday, March 28, 12:00 noon – 4:00 p.m.

Bring your family to this FREE event celebrating the return of waterfowl! Discover the wonders of wetlands through a variety of family activities. This year features trumpeter swans. Families can also crawl through the burrow and meet Puddles, the blue goose for a photo opportunity.

Workshops for Educators

We invite you to join us for one or more of these exciting professional development opportunities this spring and summer!

- April 24 and 25 Prairie Chicken Adventure
- June 8-12 Teaching in the Outdoor Classroom
- July 16 Moths at Midnight
- July 17 MN Odonata Survey Workshop
- July 31-Aug 6 Earth Partnership for Schools Summer Institute for Teachers

For details or more information, please email prairiewet@fws.gov or call the PWLC at 218-998-4480. Or see the Special Events on our web site.

3. Other Resources

Let's Go Outside

Did you know, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has a web page for kids, parents, and educators, encouraging them to go outside and explore? It is updated monthly.

<http://www.fws.gov/letsgooutside>

Families Gone Wild Sweepstakes

Barbara's Bakery, long-time supporter of the National Wildlife Refuge System (of which the PWLC is part) has launched a contest geared towards getting people outside on refuges to discover and experience the remarkable diversity of wildlife and habitats that they protect. The "Families Gone Wild" Sweepstakes encourages people to submit photos and videos from refuges, along with a brief write-up on their experience. The winners, which will be drawn on or about Sept. 18, 2009, will receive an all-expense paid trip to Alaska, where they will visit Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. For more info, please visit <http://www.barbarasbakery.us/alaska>

MN Fish Art Expo

Wildlife Forever, a non-profit multi-species conservation organization dedicated to conserving America's wildlife heritage, is sponsoring the Wildlife Forever State-Fish Art Contest. Young artists create an illustration of any official MN state-fish and a written composition on its behavior, habitat, and efforts to conserve it. Entries are categorized by grade level groups. Educators can use the free full-color lesson plan. March 31 is the contest deadline, with the expo taking place Aug. 1 at the Mall of America. <http://www.statefishart.com>

Wildlife Watch

People of all ages can participate in National Wildlife Federation's "Wildlife Watch" program and search their school grounds or another favorite outdoor spot for wildlife. Download state specific "watch" lists. Then visit the Wildlife Watch community to share your discoveries online, add your wildlife sightings, photos and stories! <http://www.nwf.org/wildlifewatch>

Earth Day Photo Contest

The Institute for Global Environmental Strategies is holding this contest for students in grades 5-8. The theme is Capture Our Changing World. During Earth Week, April 22-29, students photograph something that is changing in their local environment. Submit the photo and explanation. The deadline for entries is May 9, 2009.

<http://www.strategies.org/education/index.aspx?sub=education&sub2=earthday&sub3=contest2009>

Family Nature Club

The Children and Nature Network invites families to join together and form family nature clubs. Check this out: "Nature Clubs for Families Took Kit: Do it Yourself! Do it Now!" It provides inspiration, information, tips, and resources for those who are or might be interested in creating a nature club for families. http://www.childrenandnature.org/pdfs/NCFE_toolkit.pdf

Year of Science

2009 is officially the Year of Science. Discover reasons to celebrate science, from astronomy to zoology, supporting public understanding of the process and nature of science in an exploration of how we know what we know. Monthly celebrations include weather and climate, biodiversity and conservation, and more. <http://www.yearofscience2009.org>

River of Words Annual Art and Poetry Contest for Students

Each year, in affiliation with The Library of Congress Center for the Book, River of Words conducts a free international poetry and art contest for youth on the theme of watersheds. The contest is designed to help students explore the natural and cultural history of the place they live, and to express, through poetry and art, what they discover. Open to any child in the world, from 5-19 years of age. Contact your River of Words regional coordinator for more information. <http://riverofwords.org/coordinators/directory.html>, <http://www.riverofwords.org/>

Wild Gift Wilderness Experience

The Wild Gift is open to all students and young professionals, ages 21 to 30. It provides a compelling experience in deep wilderness and encourages a commitment to a self-designated leadership project that will advance wild lands stewardship and the development of sustainable human community and lifestyle. The 17-month program is provided to Wild Gift recipients at no cost. The most important requirement is a record of accomplishment that reflects leadership talent. Five applicants are chosen each year. Applications are due on April 1, 2009. <http://www.wildgift.org>

4. Housekeeping

Brought to You by...

This seasonal environmental education (EE) e-mail is provided by the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center, managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. If you know of other educators who may be interested in receiving this e-mail, we welcome you to forward this message to them or ask them to send an e-mail to prairiewet@fws.gov with their name, school district, grade level(s), subjects, and city/state. We also welcome your feedback at anytime. If there is something particular that you would like us to share, please let us know. This newsletter is archived with previous editions on our web site: http://www.fws.gov/midwest/pwlc/ee_newsletter.html

Unsubscribe

If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, send a message to prairiewet@fws.gov with "unsubscribe PWLC" in the subject line.