Unplugged & Oudoors with EEA
Upcoming Member Trips

Get outdoors on a field trip with fellow EEA members!

EEA is excited to provide opportunities for our members to visit different regions of the state, immerse themselves in the outdoors, and get to know other environmental educators and EEA board members. We’ve scouted some of the best natural spots in the Southeast to visit. Here are three trips that are right around the corner:

**Saturday, May 19th, 9:00am-3:00pm**
**Whitewater Rafting Trip on the Chattahoochee River**
Columbus, Georgia
Rafting, optional zip-lining across the river, and lunch at a café on the waterfront.

**Saturday, July 21st, 8:30am-2:30pm**
**Hiking in Providence Canyon State Outdoor Recreation Area**
Lumpkin, Georgia
Look for the rare plumleaf azalea, *Rhododendron prunifolium*, which blooms in the lower canyon in July and August.

**Saturday, August 25th & Sunday, August 26th**
**Kayak Trip on Nickajack Lake to See Gray Bats**
Jasper, Tennessee
Paddle across the lake to Nickajack Cave to see 30,000 gray bats emerge. Paddle under a full moon back to Shellmound Campground.

The registration deadline for each trip is ten days prior to the trip. Minimum age is 14 years old. Each field trip requires a $20.00 registration fee. This fee includes guide service. You are responsible for your own meals, lodging, and entrance fees. For kayak trips, single sea kayaks are available to rent for $25 a day or $40 for two days. Rental includes kayak, life vest, paddle, and dry bag. Please request a kayak when you register for the trip.

For more information and registration details, visit the [EEA Member Field Excursions webpage](#).
2017 Dragonfly Grant "Garden Trailer Mobile Mural Project" Final Report

by Catherine Reuter
Education and Outreach Coordinator
Walton County Soil and Water Conservation District

The Walton County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) applied for the 2017 Peter Giroux Dragonfly Grant for EE and the Arts and was extremely excited to receive funding for its Garden Trailer Mobile Mural project! Since the project’s completion in March 2018, the mural has been proudly building awareness of soil and water stewardship as it travels around Walton County.

For the last few years, the Walton County Office of the UGA Cooperative Extension, with the support of the Walton SWCD and local non-profit, the Down to Earth Foundation, has maintained a Garden Trailer filled with tools and equipment for community groups to use free of charge. Though the trailer was frequently buzzing around town for events such as school garden workdays and park beautification projects, the unassuming white trailer did little to publicize these events or to promote the trailer as a community resource.

Continued on page 3
So, with the support of the EEA dragonfly grant, the Walton SWCD procured the needed art supplies and partnered with Monroe Area High School art students to transform this blank canvas into a high-profile mobile outreach vehicle that spreads the message of soil conservation as it moves around town. The 2017 Stewardship Theme for the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) was “Healthy Soils are Full of Life,” and this theme was chosen to guide the mural design.

Prior to painting the mural, students in two introductory art classes taught by Mr. Richard Pruett took a closer look at the soil resources they would be portraying. Catherine Reuter, education coordinator for the Walton SWCD, guided students as they examined soil profiles to learn about soil horizons, explored different textures and colors of native soils, and inventoried the tiny organisms, from earthworms to earwigs, living in the samples. These hands-on activities were accompanied by a discussion of the critical importance of soil resources to both wild ecosystems and agriculture. Many students expressed surprise when they learned that an inch of healthy, living soil can take 500 years to form!

After this scientific orientation, Mr. Pruett provided the artistic orientation, guiding students in the elements of good design for a large mural, how to scale up their ideas, and training them in using the materials to execute the mural. Students were eager to break into the enamel spray paints purchased for the project, but first they had to thoroughly scrub and clean the trailer exterior as well as tape over lights and hardware so that the trailer would still be road-worthy once the painting was finished. The final design was a composite of many students’ ideas.

Once completed, the art students had the opportunity to share their work and explain the science behind the different components of the mural as part of a lesson on soil conservation for two Introductory Agriculture classes down the hall. As peer teachers, Mr. Pruett’s students demonstrated their knowledge of the various abiotic and biotic elements incorporated into the mural and their role in making healthy soils.

Already, in the couple of months since its completion, the trailer has been used for over half a dozen community projects around the county, inspiring curiosity and conversations about soil health and stewardship among those who see it. Even when simply parked in the community lot in downtown Monroe, the fine work of our local high school artists shines, helping to bring environmental education to the hearts and minds of our citizens. Thanks Georgia EEA for making this project possible!
LEARNING ABOUT THE NATURAL and human built world begins at birth, if not before. The early childhood years, usually described as including children from birth through age eight, are a time when new experiences build brain connections that form the foundation for later connections. The way we provide experiences for children may open or close parts of the world to them. Saying, “That’s nasty, put that down,” to a child holding a dead insect may cut off an interest in learning about this diverse group of animals. An adult with a strong fear of insects can still support children’s interest by saying, “Put it in a tissue and you can show it to everyone at circle time.” Doing a science demonstration while children watch may make them curious but if they don’t get to handle the materials themselves, their curiosity may not be satisfied. Unless they too get to manipulate the materials in ways they think of to try, they may get the idea that such exploration is not for them.

Do children learn science knowledge and the nature of science from exploring, investigating, experimenting, or in some other way? Early childhood educators may use different words to describe the work their young students do to learn about natural phenomenon, including, “testing your ideas,” “messing about,” “trying out an idea,” “exploring,” “figuring it out,” “experimenting,” and “investigation.” Does the term you use mean the same as a different term used by another early childhood educator? Does “messing about” mean children are “experimenting,” and what do they do, think about, and talk about when they are engaged in these behaviors? How do the words we use describe what we want children to do and learn?

To me, “exploration” is when a child (or adult) has an open-ended experience with materials such as clay, or a phenomenon, such as rain, and is able to work with materials, make changes, and make and record observations. I think of “messing about” in the same way, exploring all kinds of phenomena (the objects, materials, places, living things, and events that a child might explore). “Investigation” is when an exploration becomes focused with the help of discussions with adults and leads to a question, such as, “What will happen if I…?” and children test their answers to a question by manipulating the materials or making additional observations. “Trying out an idea” can be a focused exploration. In experimenting, also known as making a “fair test,” one factor is varied and all other factors are kept the same so comparisons can be made to see if or how the outcome was affected by the differences in that one factor. An experiment might be testing to see which tape will hold a piece of paper on the wall the longest, with using the same kind of paper, the same size piece of tape, and the same wall but only varying the kind of tape—transparent office tape, painters’ masking tape, duct tape, or packing tape.

When I work with children I want them to build their understanding of materials, places, and phenomena by having time to explore and mess about. I work to support their science inquiry about a question by asking what they think and what they will do to find out. I want children to have time to look at their drawings and other documentation, describe their work, and tell what they might do next or what they still wonder. Early childhood science educator Cindy Hoisington says, “Drawing out and acknowledging children’s current ideas made them available for investigation. Children were able to revise their old ideas and construct new knowledge because their ideas had been at the heart of the experience and they had collected the evidence.”
In the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) Position Statement on Early Childhood Science Education the NSTA “affirms that learning science and engineering practices in the early years can foster children's curiosity and enjoyment in exploring the world around them and lay the foundation for a progression of science learning in K–12 settings and throughout their entire lives,” and “recognizes, however, the importance of exploratory play and other forms of active engagement for younger children from birth to age 3 as they come to explore and understand the world around them.”

Here are resources that define commonly used terms to describe children's work in learning about the natural and human built world.

**Exploration—open, focused, and messing about, and investigation**

“Exploratory play is about finding out,” Karen Worth and Sharon Grollman affirm in Worms, Shadows, and Whirlpools; “When it is focused on materials and events—trying to find out how to make something happen—it is very much about science” (page 159). The first-hand experiences in Exploring Water with Young Children (Chalufour & Worth and all, 2005) are described as open explorations that lead to focused explorations as children investigate a specific question or test a single idea. “Inquiry is about questions, but it’s hard for children to ask questions about something if they haven’t had a chance to get to know the thing or the materials or the event…so the first stage in the framework is to engage, notice, wonder and question—it is a time for children to play, to see what they already know, to mess about in a rich environment with little direct guidance or structure” (page 95).

Philosopher David Hawkins borrowed the phrase “messing about” (from a character in classic children's literature) as a way to describe the unguided exploratory work he felt should be the beginning of science learning. Hawkins noted that children with “an insufficient acquaintance” with a phenomenon need to have experiences with the phenomenon before they can analyze their observations (1965).

As their unguided exploratory work develops, children may become interested in a specific question. Investigating a phenomenon to answer a specific question will be more focused than the open exploration that came before. During an investigation, “Your role is to deepen children's understanding by asking probing questions, encouraging children to represent their work, and creating opportunities for discussion and reflection.” (page 9 Grollman & Worth, 2005)

**First-hand exploration and a “fair test”**

The word “experiment” is often used in casual conversation to mean “trying things out” as in, “I think I will experiment with playing soft music during nap time.” In science, “experiment” has a different, specific meaning—to conduct a “fair test” where some factor is manipulated to see how that affects the outcome and all other factors are kept the same. This could be a fair test to see how much water is best for growing bean plants from seeds, using all the same kind of seeds that are planted in the same kind and amount of soil, in the same kind of container, and placed on the same windowsill—the only different factor is the different amount of water given to each plant. The outcome from this test compares the growth of bean plants that received different amounts of water.

Open explorations don't require control of some factors and are not experiments but they are fundamental experiences for building beginning ideas about the natural world. During first-hand explorations of many kinds of materials, situations, and locations, children build on their prior experiences, making observations to answer questions or test solutions to problems, and use those observations to support their explanations. Children may not completely understand the concept of a “fair test” before grade 2.

Continued on page 6
A child’s first-hand exploration of earthworms may lead them to explain, “Worms don’t like the light,” without ever conducting a fair test of this idea. To support children’s understanding of a fair test, we can ask, “What can we do to confirm this idea, to see if earthworms really prefer darkness?” If a child answers, “Because they always go down into the dirt,” my next question might be, “How do you know they are getting away from the light—maybe they just like the way soil feels better than air.” Giving worms a choice between an area in light or an area in darkness (that are otherwise identical in temperature, material, and moisture content) may not occur to children so that fair test can wait for another time. Providing many different first-hand experiences will build children’s understanding of the properties of different materials (matter) and foster their approaches to problem-solving.

**Science and engineering practices—not a single “scientific method”**

In defining eight “science and engineering practices” the *A Framework for K-12 Science Education* (NRC 2012) emphasizes that scientific inquiry is both using skills and learning facts. This foundational document for the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) has this to say about a scientific method:

“…a focus on practices (in the plural) avoids the mistaken impression that there is one distinctive approach common to all science—a single “scientific method”—or that uncertainty is a universal attribute of science. In reality, practicing scientists employ a broad spectrum of methods, and although science involves many areas of uncertainty as knowledge is developed, there are many aspects of scientific knowledge that are so well established as to be unquestioned foundations of the culture and its technologies. It is only through engagement in the practices that students can recognize how such knowledge comes about and why some parts of scientific theory are more firmly established than others.”

The eight practices of science and engineering that the Framework identifies as essential for all students to learn are:

1. Asking questions (for science) and defining problems (for engineering)
2. Developing and using models
3. Planning and carrying out investigations
4. Analyzing and interpreting data
5. Using mathematics and computational thinking
6. Constructing explanations (for science) and designing solutions (for engineering)
7. Engaging in argument from evidence
8. Obtaining, evaluating, and communicating information

Read more about these practices in the NGSS Appendix F – Science and Engineering Practices.

**The Nature of Science (NOS)**

Preparing ourselves to help children understand natural phenomena using science and engineering practices includes learning about the Nature of Science. By developing our own accurate idea of what science is, what types of questions science can answer, and the strengths and limitations of scientific knowledge, we will be better able to help children understand the nature of science. Learn more by reading Appendix H – The Nature of Science in the Next Generation Science Standards, particularly the K-2 column of “Understandings about the Nature of Science” matrix. On the matrix, basic understandings of the NOS are described:
Science investigations begin with a question. Scientists use different ways to study the world.

Scientists look for patterns and order when making observations about the world.

Science knowledge can change when new information is found.

Scientists use drawings, sketches, and models as a way to communicate ideas.

Scientists search for cause and effect relationships to explain natural events.

Science knowledge helps us know about the world.

Science assumes natural events happen today as they happened in the past. Many events are repeated.

People have practiced science for a long time. Men and women of diverse backgrounds are scientists and engineers.

Scientists study the natural and material world.

Like understanding experimentation, understanding the nature of science develops over time. Researchers V. Akerson and L. A. Donnelly ask, “However, what is unclear is whether young children can actually develop appropriate understandings of NOS—are they developmentally ready to conceptualize the ideas that are recommended in the reforms?” (Akerson, Roth, & McDuffie, 2006).

Experiment or Fair Test

The University of California Museum of Paleontology’s “Understanding Science” website is a “fun, accessible, and free resource that accurately communicates what science is and how it really works — and that helps K-16 teachers reinforce the nature and process of science throughout their science teaching.” This is their wording but I fully agree! I find the section “Fair tests: A do-it-yourself guide” especially helpful in understanding that experiments control many factors and compare outcomes between groups. “An experiment is a test that involves manipulating some factor in a system in order to see how that affects the outcome. Ideally, experiments also involve controlling as many other factors as possible in order to isolate the cause of the experimental results.”

In the Science Teacher column, “The Prepared Practitioner: What Is an Experiment?” (2008), Alan Colburn describes experiments being judged on how well the experimenter controls variables. I agree with him that, “As teachers creating informed consumers of scientific information, we owe it to our students to help them understand the varied ways scientists investigate the world.” Our children might not yet be making choices about which vaccinations they need to prevent illnesses, but they are building an understanding of what to base their choices on—someone else’s say-so or evidence from a clear process of collecting data. ✪
Thank you for a wonderful annual conference!

Congratulations to all the EEA, Project WET, and Monarchs Across Georgia award winners!

Happy artists after the plein air painting field trip.

Dissecting a lubber grasshopper at the “Entomology!” Sunday Fun Day activity.

Having fun at the Monarchs in the Classroom Workshop!

Practicing hiding skills at “Ready, Set, Camouflage!”

Creating giant bubbles after learning about animals that use bubbles for survival.

Hooray for a successful conference!

The 2018 EEA Annual Conference & Research Symposium took place March 2-4 at Unicoi State Park in Helen. Over 150 educators attended and enjoyed three days of networking, learning, and fun. Thank you to all of those who participated, and we hope everyone left the conference inspired, energized, and ready to hit the ground running with new environmental education techniques, knowledge, and resources.

EEA would also like to thank the conference planning committee, all of the great presenters and speakers, the wonderful volunteers, and everyone else who helped along the way. Thank you for all that you did to make the conference such a success!

The Annual Conference gives us the opportunity to collaborate, learn, and share best practices to advance the field of environmental education. If you have yet to experience an EEA conference first-hand, we encourage you to save the date for next year’s conference: March 8-10, 2019 in historic downtown Albany, Georgia.

Interested in helping to plan next year’s conference? Contact the Conference Committee at conference@eealliance.org.
An interview with "newish" EEA Member Breanna Walker

Talk about a fun job! Breanna Walker is an Interpretive Ranger for Georgia State Parks. She works at two sites, Florence Marina State Park and Providence Canyon State Outdoor Recreation Area. Working at two very different parks gives her the opportunity to do many different programs. At Providence Canyon, she leads guided hikes that focus primarily on erosion, deforestation, and the impact that people can have on nature. She also offers astronomy programs and a few special events each year, like Women's Wilderness Weekend. At Florence Marina, she has the opportunity to lead guided kayak tours, owl prowls, frog walks, pontoon boat tours for the public and school groups, and Junior Ranger camps. Some of her favorite special events at the marina are Alligator Day and Bird is the Word.

Breanna actually found EEA by “accident.” She had not been at her job long when she decided that she needed to learn more skills, make connections, and grow in this field. She began looking for workshops and events happening in Georgia. As she was searching, she ran across EE in Georgia. From there she learned about the annual conference as well as programs such as Project WET, Project WILD, and Monarchs Across Georgia. After learning about all of these wonderful things happening within the environmental education community, she decided to join EEA, and she attended her first conference last spring at the Gwinnett Environmental and Heritage Center.

By far, her favorite thing about being an environmental educator is sharing her knowledge, not only with younger generations but with people of all ages. She loves talking to children, as well as adults, and showing them a connection to the natural world. Like so many of us, she loves the look that a person will get on his or her face when they learn something new. It is the best feeling in the world when you know that you have shared something with a person that changes their outlook on the earth around them. As Breanna says, "The seeds we plant as educators can grow into beautiful flowers of land ethics, environmental policies, or just general appreciation of plants, animals, and water."

Breanna shared that her favorite quote would have to be from a six-year-old boy that she took on a boat tour last summer. This little boy was amazed by everything he saw and wanted to learn. One of their park volunteers, Mr. Richard, and Breanna were giving the tour, and every time they pointed something out, the little boy would repeat it. At one point, Mr. Richard showed the group a Great Egret and said, “Now, that white bird there is an egret,” and the little boy said, “Okay, got it. That bird is an igloo.” Breanna couldn’t help but to laugh a little. It was the cutest thing, because he was really trying to learn it all.

Continued on page 10
Breanna loves doing, seeing, and trying new things. Some of her current hobbies include crocheting, candle making, writing, and reading. She loves having a good book to come home to after a long, hard day at work. She enjoys hiking, rafting, camping, exploring, and spending time with her two puppies, Cookie and Peanut, and her boyfriend, John.

Breanna has a ton of favorite places in Georgia. Cumberland Island is definitely one of them. She could sit on those pristine beaches all day just enjoying the sounds of the ocean. She also loves a spot at the other end of Georgia, Minnehaha Falls. This is her favorite waterfall, and it has some very special memories for her.

She has only been part of EEA for a little over a year now, but she has met so many wonderful people and has made several new friendships through this organization. She feels that these connections have made her a much better environmental educator. Breanna told me that, "EEA has been a great support system, and that is the greatest thing that a professional organization can be for its members."

See her in action! Breanna will be guiding our EEA member field trip to Providence Canyon on July 21st.

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**MONARCHS**  
**ACROSS GEORGIA**

**SAVE THE DATE**  
**Saturday 9/22/18**

**Pollinator Symposium**

Cost $50 EEA member /$75 non-member

**Topics:**
- Jaret Daniels, PhD - Roadsides and Pollinators
- Jennifer Leavey, PhD - Urban Honey Bee Project
- Tim Spira, PhD - Bees, Butterflies, Birds and more

**Location:**
Monastery of the Holy Spirit  
2625 Highway 212 SW  
Conyers, Georgia 30094  
www.eealliance.org/mag
Conquer the fear of walking through the woods with a curious child

Rachel Carson wrote about the intimidation factor that parents and teachers experience when taking their wards outside for time in nature. So many questions pop up, and when the adult’s answers continue to be “I don’t know,” there tends to be, at the least, an embarrassment factor … or, at the worst, a sense of disaster about the entire outing. This feeling of inadequacy is the inspiration for a new series of books called *Secrets of the Forest* by Georgia naturalist Mark Warren.

Warren’s specialty is survival skills and all its inherent adventures, but he has written these books for all outdoor leaders who would benefit from a solid template for environmental education. Starting with plant study and the uses of wild foods, medicines, and craft materials, these books then delve into shelters (who doesn’t love to “fort up” in the woods), sensory challenges, creating fire the Indian way, stalking and tracking wild animals, cordage making, games galore (from quiet entertainment around the campfire to high adventure in the forest), ceremonies designed to boost self-esteem and to make stewards of the land, and storytelling as a teaching tool. Archery and canoeing are even included and a slew of games for both.

*Volume One* alone contains over 200 original activities. This book begins at the place that Warren considers the foundation of all survival skills: the study of plants. Students learn to create their own Botany Booklets in which they are guided to make drawings of all the features of plant anatomy. His text guides the teacher through every step of the way. Exploration begins at home in the yard and in nearby wooded areas, where the most commonly found plants are covered in the introductory pages. Richly illustrated by pen and ink drawings, this volume also contains more than 100 color photographs of trees, shrubs, vines, and herbs.

The other three volumes average over 100 activities each. Every exercise provides a kind of script for the teacher. When “I don’t know” is the answer by which a teacher must reply to a question, Warren suggests adding this epilogue: “… but let’s find out!”

Warren’s milieu is Southern Appalachia, but the relevance of these books extends much farther. The outdoor adventures he promotes apply to any terrain, and many of the plants discussed are found across the nation. His books are being used by summer camps, elementary schools, scout groups, state and national parks, and colleges. Cornell University (NY) and Young Harris College (GA) have taken the books for their outdoor education curricula.

Warren was Georgia’s Conservation Educator of the Year in 1980, an honor bestowed by the National Wildlife Federation. He hasn’t slowed down since then. These books reflect the lessons he has developed over the 45 years he has been teaching nature to students of all ages. His school, Medicine Bow, lies in the mountains of north Georgia, where he continues to teach the wonders of nature.

Find out more about *Secrets of the Forest*. 
Become a Certified Environmental Educator with ATEEG

WHETHER YOU'RE NEW to the field of environmental education or simply looking to reinvigorate your current teaching, Advanced Training for Environmental Education in Georgia (ATEEG) can provide the foundation, resources, and network to take your career to the next level. Open to formal and non-formal educators across the state, the program helps participants of all backgrounds better measure the success of their programs, expand their knowledge of instructional techniques, and get to know other educators working in the field.

The following course will be held at the Charlie Elliott Conference Center in Mansfield, GA and begin at 1:00 p.m. on Friday adjourning at noon on Sunday.

Core Course 3 (Assessment and Evaluation) - June 8-10, 2018 - Increase skills and knowledge associated with program evaluation including identifying outcomes, data collection methods, and data analysis and interpretation. Register by May 25, 2018.

Join the EEA Board of Directors

DEADLINE EXTENDED! Nominations due May 14.

EEA is now accepting nominations to its Board of Directors. For Term beginning July 1, 2018, we are specifically seeking chairs/co-chairs for the following committees: PR/Newsletter, Member Services, Monarchs Across Georgia, Regional Director Central GA, Regional Director North GA, Regional Director West GA, and Fundraising.

The application for Board terms beginning July 1, 2018 is now open. You must be a current member of EEA to apply. Visit the Board Nomination page of EEA’s website for more information and to submit a nomination.

Empty Spaces & Special Places

by Sonya Wood Mahler

People need empty spaces.
People need special places,
Where we can take risks, use all of our senses, breathe deeply;
Where we can feel close to God.

We are pulled to these places
Because they hold dear memories for us
Or because they allow us to be our best selves
Or because of their absolute beauty.

As much as we'd like to insulate ourselves
From the natural world,
Especially when it is too hot or too cold or too wet, we can't do it.
We are a part of its rhythm.

We get more than just our food and water
And clothing and other basics
From the earth.
We get nourishment for the soul.

If you need stress relief,
Take a walk on the beach this afternoon.
If you need to clear your head,
Go outside and look at the stars tonight.

If you need assurance that the world
Is still functioning as it should be,
Take a peek into a bird's nest.
If you need a miracle, watch the sunrise tomorrow.

We need the world's beauty
To continue our hectic day-to-day lives.
We go back as often as we can to reconnect to the land
And to renew our energy.

What will happen when there are no empty spaces to go to?
When those special places remain only in our fading memories?
Will life be less sweet, less meaningful?
Will we forget who we are?

Global Call for Action

The Global Environmental Education Partnership (GEEP) has announced a global Call for Action for the field of environmental education. Visit www.actnowforee.org to help shape the future and provide feedback on key priorities for the field of EE in the next decade!
The Environmental Education Alliance of Georgia’s mission is to promote communication and enrichment among professionals in the field of environmental education through partnerships, initiatives, and access to knowledge and experiences.

**2017-18 Board of Directors**

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**Save the Date**

**OCTOBER 19-20, 2018**

The Council of Outdoor Learning Presents

**THE OUTDOOR LEARNING SYMPOSIUM**

The Garden School • Marietta, Georgia

ealliance.org/outdoor-learning-symposium

**Shop at Kroger and Amazon, Earn Money for EEA!**

You can now support EEA by shopping at Kroger and on Amazon. Help EEA earn up to $8000 per quarter by signing up for both of these programs below:

Register your Kroger Plus Card
Select EEA as your charitable organization on AmazonSmile.

**We’d love to hear from you!** For comments and article suggestions or submissions, please email news@eealliance.org.

For board member bios, roles and committees, and contact information, visit the Board of Directors page of the EEA website.