

Blue Ridge

Seasonal newsletter of the
Blue Ridge Outdoor
Education Center
Fall 2005



Blaze

School Roster

Fall 2005 schools include:

Piedmont College, Atlanta International School, Westminster School, Prince Avenue Christian Academy, Davis Academy, Holy Innocents' Episcopal School, Union Grove Middle School, E.T. Booth Middle School, Village Montessori School, Fairstreet Elementary, R.D. Head Elementary, Gatewood School, Sarah Smith Elementary, High Point Elementary, Fair Street Elementary, Cobb County Education Consortium, Bartow County Schools and Oxford College.

They Said It!

Here are some quotes from students this fall...

"Blue Ridge was really great. I wish we could learn this much at school everyday."

"Going in the stream and finding stoneflies was really cool. I learned a lot and had fun."

"I thought it was cool to hear an owl live in person"

And teachers said...

I really appreciated the willingness [the instructors] showed to make changes and their eagerness to accommodate our goals."

—Teacher, Holy Innocents' School

"Predator-Prey! was a great activity to bring about a better understanding of the ecosystem. A great application of the concepts!"

—Teacher, Westminster School

"[The instructors] were wonderful. They were knowledgeable and allowed the children to think and answer, taking them beyond to the point of discovery..."

Another very enjoyable trip."

—Teacher, Village Montessori School

Autumn Night Haikus

by Chris Hartley

The sun sets early.
Mornings are getting colder.
Seasons are changing.

Walking down the trail,
I hear the sound of water.
No, the wind blowing.

Leaves flow down the stream.
A beautiful blanket for
fish to hide under.

We stopped by the bridge.
The water shining with light –
Oh, I see the moon!

An owl calls at night.
Its voice fills the woods with sound.
Someone talk to me!

Walking in the dark,
the moon comes over the ridge
and lights my way home.

The Great Journey

by Kim Wagner

Many birds travel thousands of miles every year in the spring and winter. At first glance it seems the birds are trying to escape the cold weather, but most could easily survive winter temperatures. So why do they travel so far? As snow covers the ground and insects and seeds became scarce, birds move south, where their food is still available.

There are three techniques that birds use to migrate. Basic navigators, such as geese, use physical landmarks to find their way. Coastlines, rivers, mountains, and even constellations all serve as physical landmarks. Many songbirds use physical landmarks too, but they are intermediate navigators. These birds can stay on a constant bearing even if physical landmarks are obscured by clouds or fog.



Rock, Rockity, Rock!

by Jon Doxey

At Blue Ridge, we use an awesome game called "Rock Rockity Rock!" to teach our students the concept of the three main types of rock. The game starts with the teacher in the center of a circle of students. The teacher picks a student and says the name of one of the three rock types: igneous, sedimentary or metamorphic. Then, the chosen student and the two people beside him will act out a movement to represent the rock type *before* the teacher can shout "Rock, Rockity, Rock!"

The movements are...**Igneous:** Because igneous means "forms from molten rock," the person pointed to will make the shape of a volcano and the students on either side will demonstrate the lava flowing down the sides. **Metamorphic:** The chosen student places her hands on her shoulders facing outwards. The two flanking students press their hands against the hands of the chosen person. All three students push to represent the pressure of the metamorphic process.

Sedimentary: To represent the layers of sedimentary rock, the person pointed to will hold his arms horizontal to each other with an arm from each person beside him wedged in between.

Remember teachers, if you see students becoming bored during an earth science class, just say "Rock Rockity Rock!"

Seabirds and homing pigeons are part of the last, amazing group of migrants called advanced navigators. These birds not only have an internal compass allowing them to determine north and south, but they also have a mental map. Experiments have shown that a seabird called a shearwater can find its way to its nest in less than two weeks, even if it has been removed to an unfamiliar location 3,000 miles away!

Director's Niche

by Josh Rood

Everything in nature must find its place in the cycle of things, and being here in the midst of changing colors and migrating birds, Blue Ridge is staying true to form. John DiDiego has passed the torch to me, a former staff member, so that I might find my own niche here as the new director. By definition, a niche (pronounced nich or neesh) is, "the function or position of an organism within an ecological community or the particular area within a habitat occupied by an organism." That organism is me, my new habitat is here in the gloriously familiar piedmont of North Georgia, my function is to ensure that the administration of the program remains consistent with the high quality that you have come to expect from Blue Ridge over the years. I shall continue to align our program curriculum to the performance standards set by the State of Georgia Department of Education. My community is you, the teachers, parents, and Friends of Blue Ridge, who continue to enhance the integrity of environmental education one student at a time.

I appreciate all of you who have welcomed me into this new position, this new niche. As I stretch my wings and learn how to fly, I invite friends new and old to show your support for the positive power of experiential education.



Nuts!

by Nathan Daniel

Leaves are not the only things falling from the trees this season. Nuts are dropping, too! For many of us here in Georgia, nuts are only stony annoyances chucked down from high branches to dent our cars. But for animals of a forest community they are an important food source especially during the winter. In botanical terms, a nut is a ripened fruit with a hard outer wall. Interestingly, when most nuts fall they are not ready to sprout into sapling trees. They require a period of dormancy that is called *cold stratification* in order to begin growing. During the winter months the nut's hard outer coat is softened up by frost, rain and snow so that by springtime the green shoot is ready to push through the shell and grow. Luckily for many forest dwellers, nut bearing trees drop hundreds of their fruits each autumn (sometimes every other autumn). Only a small percentage of these will ever grow up to be a tree. Most are eaten or come to rest in a place where the nut cannot grow--like the sidewalk in front of your home. So the next time you kick an acorn, keep in mind that like the squirrels of the forest, you too may be an accidental farmer sowing the next generation of oak trees.



Meditation Trail Mindfulness

by Ben Bell

One of my favorite spots at Blue Ridge is the Meditation Trail. At the end of this short trail, there is a swing overlooking a gently flowing stream. It creates a tranquil sound while leaves of vivid color gather on the ground. Cardinals, bluebirds and robins can often be heard singing the only song they know. Our two most common butterflies—the tiger swallowtail and red-spotted purple—will sometimes appear, fluttering their wings in unpredictable flight patterns. Stately pine and oak trees stand tall all around, providing nearly constant shade from the sun. At this peaceful spot, flora and fauna combine with the softly gurgling stream to offer the simple pleasure of enjoying Nature's wealth of diverse beauty...one only needs to take the time to be mindful.

If you are considering a trip to Blue Ridge for Spring 2006, **NOW** is the time to call to reserve a date. For a free informational CD, call or e-mail:

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Bulk Rate
U. S. Postage
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You need only to sit long enough in some attractive spot in the woods that all its inhabitants may exhibit themselves to you by turns. ~Thoreau