



Spring 2008

NOW! News On Wetlands

A Quarterly Newsletter for Educators

Featured Program: A Traveling Trunk

Nature centers, zoos, aquariums, and favorite field trip destinations have reported a significant decrease in school visitation. High fuel costs, increasing liability concerns, and more testing are limiting schools' ability to provide students with field experiences. As an educational provider, Environmental Concern has recognized this trend and has developed a new and innovative way in which to connect students with the environment. The Wandering Wetland Traveling Trunk program helps to

circumvent the current challenges facing today's schools by bringing nature to them. Filled with a beaver pelt, otter, heron and beaver skulls, DVD's, rubber track molds of wetland creatures and numerous other curricular resources, our wetland trunk will provide teachers with materials for experiential learning and structured lessons about the environment. Included in each trunk is a copy of the national curriculum guide WOW! The Wonders of Wetlands, for each

teacher to keep! Each Trunk is available for a two week rental of \$75 plus a refundable deposit. Check out www.wetland.org/education_travelingtrunk.htm. Please call Casey King at (410) 745 9620 to reserve your trunk today!



Wetland Sights and Sounds

To celebrate American Wetland Month, sign up to receive a free interactive newsletter, *Wetland Sights and Sounds*, from the Izaak Walton League of America. Each issue, from mid-March through mid-May will be "full of educational information, pictures, sound bites, conservation project ideas, and links to other resources". IWLA's theme for American Wetlands month 2008 is "Climate Change and Wetlands".

To sign up for Sights and Sounds, visit: www.iwla.org/index.php?id=101 or visit IWLA's American Wetlands Month page at: www.iwla.org/pow/awm

Featured Partner: Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery

Conserving America's Fisheries
Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery (NFH), constructed in 1975, is one of the most recently constructed hatcheries in the federal system and boasts over 100,000 visitors a year. The station produces approximately 1,000,000 rainbow and brown trout annually. These fish are stocked into 100 different public waters in Kentucky in close partnership with the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. Wolf Creek NFH is also working toward the recovery of several endangered species, including the Relict darter, Spotfin

chub and the Barrens topminnow. On April 4, 2007, the hatchery officially dedicated the Wolf Creek NFH Visitor/Environmental Education Center. The facility is the first and only center of its kind in the Southeast Region. Through state-of-the-art exhibits, classroom, indoor theater and gift shop, the center serves as a fun, engaging learning resource for all visitors, especially schools. The center also offers a myriad of outreach programs and workshops (including WOW!, POW! and the annual Catch a Rainbow

Kids Fishing Derby, held the first Saturday in June) and launched a newly created, hands on, curriculum known as the Biologist-in-Training Program, which is designed for hatcheries and tailored to meet the needs of teachers in Kentucky. The facility is supported by the Friends of Wolf Creek NFH, Inc. and a strong volunteer staff.

To Learn more about Wolf Creek NFH, and to see pictures, please visit: <http://www.fws.gov/wolfcreek/>

Dependency Issues

What do snails and hawks and wetlands have in common? Researchers in the Florida Everglades have found that the answer may be each other. There seems to be a complex relationship between the Apple Snail (*Pomacea padulosa*), the Snail Kite (*Rostrhamus sociabilis*), and wetlands.

The Apple Snail, a golf ball-sized freshwater snail, is the largest in North America. Apple Snails have a unique adaptation that helps them survive in wetlands across the tropical regions of the globe. By closing off the opening of their shell with their operculum (part of the foot) they are able to withstand dry periods.

A dry-down, or, period where the water table drops below the earth's surface, occurs naturally within the Everglades. Wetland ecosystems in



Snail Kite with Apple Snail in beak
<http://cars.er.usgs.gov/sofia/applesnail.pdf>

Florida are actually dependent on dry-downs to "oxidize organic materials in the substrate, stimulate seed germination, and increase habitat heterogeneity". However, dry-downs are occurring at a rate higher than normal possibly due to a growing population's increasing demand for water.

Depending on the timing, dry-downs can limit reproduction of the adult snails. Snail Kites, a medium size hawk native to tropical and subtropical lowlands and swamps, depend almost exclu-

sively on Apple Snails for their diet. When Apple Snail populations decline in Florida, Snail Kites must move into other areas to find their food source, often heading south to Central and South America and the Caribbean. A decline in Apple Snails could, in extreme cases, lead to the extirpation of Snail Kites from the Florida Everglades.

Just like every ecosystem in the world, a balance must be maintained for the overall health of the living and non-living components within Florida Everglades. If anthropogenic impacts on the water table continue to cause excessive dry-downs, the Apple Snail population could decline causing the Snail Kites to move into their southern extremes permanently.

UPCOMING WORKSHOPS

MAY

- 3 POW! Blue Bell, PA
- 13 POW! Frederick, MD
- 13 WOW! Newcomb, NY
- 14 WOW! Paul Smith's, NY
- 15 POW! Oxford, NJ
- 16-17 KEGE! Oxford, NJ
- 16 WOW! Stamford, CT
- 16 WOW! Huntington, VT
- 17 WOW! Bridgeport, CT

JUNE

- 6-8 WOW!, WOW! Fac, Wetland Exploration Homer, AK
- 12 WOW! Facilitator Lancaster, PA
- 13 Wetland Plant ID Lancaster, PA
- 13 WOW! Bartlett, IL
- 14 WOW! Facilitator Bartlett, IL
- 15 POW! Bartlett, IL
- 17 POW! Midland, MI
- 26 WOW! Memphis, TN
- 27 WOW! Facilitator Memphis, TN
- 28 WOW! Lincoln, NE

JULY

- 16-18 KEGE St. Michaels, MD
- 17 WOW! Baraboo, WI
- 18 WOW! Facilitator Baraboo, WI

Check www.wetland.org for complete course listings. To schedule a workshop in your area call (410) 745 9620.

