



# The Newsletter of the Environmental Education Association of New Mexico

## EE CONNECTIONS

Vol. 17, No. 1: Spring 2009

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**EE Certification in New Mexico?** EEANM has a small grant through the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) to explore the possibility of starting a program in New Mexico to certify environmental educators. Meetings to learn more and give input have already been held in Albuquerque, and three more are planned in Santa Fe, Farmington and Mesilla. For more information, contact EEANM Statewide Coordinator, Barbara Garrity (page 3). The following is an article reprinted with permission. Note: While Brenda's article supports such a program and they have one in her state of Texas, EEANM has not decided to pursue such a program and is open to and soliciting opinions from New Mexico environmental educators.

### EE Certification:

#### "Why do we need it? What's in it for me?"

by Brenda G. Weiser, Ed.D.

Environmental Institute of Houston/UHCL



Environmental educators come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Few environmental educators have training both in the content areas such as science, geography, or social studies and in the pedagogical areas such as teaching styles, learning styles, or assessment. Many states have examined their environmental education programs and have realized their state EE efforts need to be strengthened from within. One approach is through certification.

Certification is not a new term. It has been around for a long time. If you are certified, you most likely hold a document certifying that you have met specified requirements, such as for teaching or accounting. However, there are many environmental educators that are uncertain about what certification might mean for them and their states. Some frequently asked questions regarding the certification process include: Why would anyone want to become certified? How can certification benefit me? What barriers to my career does certification pose? How long will it take? And, why would any state want to tackle this task?

There are many reasons why a state might offer environmental education certification and why you would want to obtain it. Environmental education is not a professional field in which everyone receives the same or even similar training. Some environmental educators have a degree in education, some in natural science or resource management, some in social studies, and some do not have a degree. Some environmental educators work in the non-formal sector (museums, zoo, botanical

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# EEANM *PRESIDENT*

## Message from the President:

*Christy Tafoya*



Welcome to spring and to a busy time for environmental educators and outdoor classroom providers! EEANM has many exciting projects coming up, particularly our work with Project Learning Tree—aligning programs to benchmarks and standards and providing outstanding teacher training in coordination with Jean Szymanski of the US Forest Service.

We are also looking forward to a fun and integrated outdoor classroom experience at Buena Vista Elementary School in Alamogordo this spring. Through a Statewide Outdoor Classroom grant, we will be coordinating a schoolyard habitat project, teacher training, service learning projects, and evaluation.

Keep your eyes open for our report on environmental education certification as well. Our Statewide Coordinator, Barbara Garrity, has been hard at work polling environmental educators and teachers throughout the state to determine if our profession needs a certification track.

Our board has been busy and I'd like to welcome our newest and enthusiastic board members, Elizabeth Barriga, the Water Conservation Coordinator for the City of Gallup, as well as Steve Blake, a science and anthropology teacher at the Aldo Leopold Charter High School in Silver City.

Finally, a sad farewell to our longtime board member Kim King Wren, environmental educator extraordinaire, who has left her home at Sevilleta Wildlife Refuge and Socorro to take a new position at Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge in Illinois. We will miss you Kim!

Many more things to come, but those are the highlights. Thanks as always for your hard work!

-Christy

## Youth Conference on the Environment

Albuquerque's Youth Conference on the Environment was held April 7, 2009 at the South Broadway Cultural Center. The event is sponsored every year by a grant from Lockheed Martin, and coordinated by Sandia National Labs and EEANM. Katrina Wagner, Environmental Outreach Coordinator at Sandia is the lead planner. The event targets high school

students and draws 125-150 per year. This year the theme was reduce, reuse and recycle. The student planners from Del Norte High School's Earth Club offered a fashion show with their Thrift Town purchases. The students experienced three workshop activities that reflected each of the day's themes. EEANM worked with Michael Goss, a teacher from Lowell Elementary school, to teach the students basketmaking from reused drip tape from Erda Farms Community Garden. The baskets were donated back to the farm to be used for carrying vegetables or sold for fundraising. Other presenters offered water conservation and recycling workshops for the students. Information booths were set up at lunch and students had an opportunity to visit them before ending the day with a group wrap-up.



*Mr. Goss teaches reuse.*



*Albuquerque High students wrestle the drip tape into a tote bag.*

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## Holy Shift! New Mexico Birds Movements Reveal Global Warming Threat

Dedicated Audubon Volunteers Document Trends

Forty years of data compiled from Audubon's citizen scientists clearly reflects that New Mexico is witnessing ecological disruption as a result of global warming. Audubon's findings have been compiled into the National Audubon Society's *Birds and Climate Change Report*, which documents a trend of northward and inland movement of North American birds over the past 40 years.

In New Mexico, many birds that commonly winter here are declining in numbers and show that their range is retracting north. For example, the Pygmy Nuthatch's average range has shifted 265 miles to the north, with a 90 percent decline in its New Mexico population.

Additionally, New Mexico is now seeing birds that were never seen here before and birds that historically did not move northward from the south. For instance, twenty

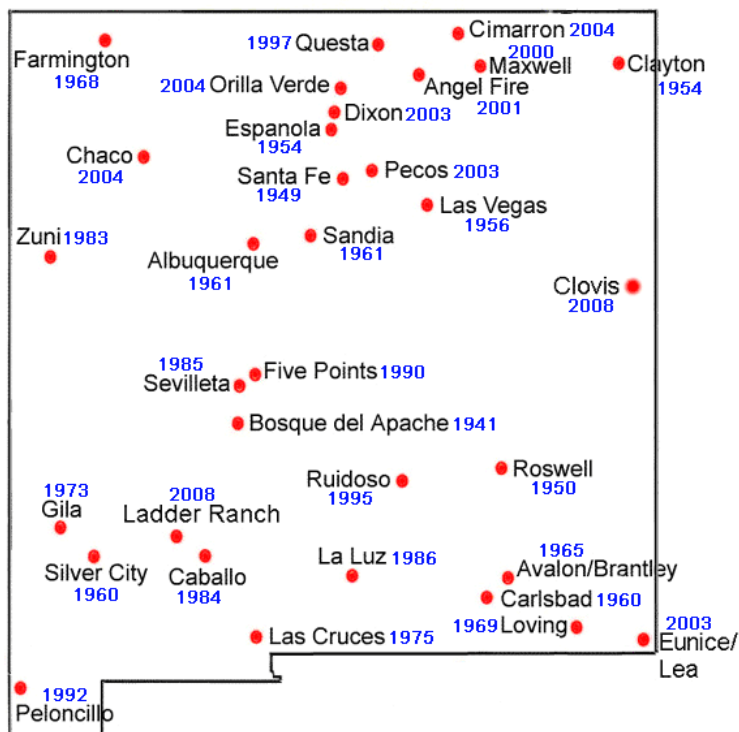
years ago it was unheard of

to see the Common Yellowthroat wintering in New Mexico, but now these birds winter regularly in Las Cruces and sometimes up the Rio Grande corridor towards Albuquerque. Audubon's report documents the 109 mile northward movement of the Common Yellowthroat and an increased occurrence in New Mexico since 1968.

Dedicated volunteers, known as citizen scientists, have contributed their time and efforts in bird watching to collect the data reflected in the study. During the Christmas Bird Count, groups of volunteers visit and revisit sites where they have surveyed bird sighting for years.

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) may be the largest, and longest running wildlife survey used to assess continental patterns of distribution and abundance, of any class of animals in the world. Currently, more than 2,000

New Mexico Christmas Bird Counts with Year of Inception



Cedar Waxwing

counts are conducted annually during a three-week period between mid-December and early January, with the participation of over 30,000 volunteer observers across the country.

“This Audubon report on birds and climate change shows that the effort and time of volunteers spent watching, listening and recording birds continues to be critical to scientists in identifying habitat changes. Now, all New Mexicans need to take immediate, concerted action to stop global warming and protect birds and our environment,” emphasized Karyn Stockdale, director of the Audubon Society’s state office.

Here are some more specifics for New Mexico birds that are good indicators of changes due to global warming. More information is needed for many other species.

- American Tree Sparrows are a good example of a species whose southern range is reached in New Mexico and numbers of these birds are dropping off dramatically. In the last two decades, their presence on CBCs in the southern half of the state has dropped off and they are now considered very rare in that area.
- Birds such as the Steller’s Jay, Cedar Waxwing, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and Townsend’s Solitaire have all have shifted their habitats northward (up to 265 miles north) with declining populations in New Mexico, although their populations may be increasing in other states.

Cedar Waxwings are nomadic birds in winter; notorious for being all over the place one year and not to be found the next. Still a decline over a 40 year period may well be an indicator of global warming.

You can read the full report and its findings on the Audubon website at: <http://www.audubon.org/news/pressRoom/bacc/pdfs/Report.pdf>

Or better yet, visit [www.birdsandclimate.org](http://www.birdsandclimate.org), an Audubon-linked site we’ve created containing a petition that you can sign about global warming, an interactive quiz, and information about Dr. Greg Butcher’s educational webcast describing his findings in the report.



*Common Yellowthroat*

Individual participation in “citizen science” allowed us to see these disturbing trends and it is going to take citizen action to find the solutions to this climate crisis. We hope that you will get involved!

*Audubon New Mexico’s mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems in New Mexico, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth’s biological diversity. Audubon aims to enhance the knowledge of New Mexico citizens to make informed decisions about the protection of wildlife and to empower them to be active stewards of the planet. For more information, call (505) 983-4609 or visit <http://nm.audubon.org>.*

## Mary Erwin Receives her EEANM Outstanding Educator Award

By Kimi Scheerer

Congratulations to Mary Erwin, a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher at Albuquerque Public School's Bandelier Elementary and 5 year Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program (BEMP) site representative at the Rio Grande Nature Center State Park, for receiving the Environmental Education Association of New Mexico's (EEANM) Outstanding Environmental Educator Award for 2008! Mary received her well deserved kudos and plaque at a high energy, kid-frenzied and fun-filled ceremony at Bandelier Elementary on Friday, May 8<sup>th</sup>.

Mary, a classroom teacher of 17 years, spearheads a variety of activities at Bandelier Elementary designed to get students involved and connected to their community. For the last five years she has been a site director for BEMP at the Rio Grande Nature Center. Every third Tuesday of the month she takes her third grade class into the bosque to collect and analyze scientific data that helps to monitor the health of the ecosystem. Mary said, "I

have seen and studied how helping kids to understand the connections within and among the different aspects of the natural community helps them to connect their knowledge, habits, and behaviors to the natural world."

This past year, with legislative funding sponsored by Senator Cisco McSorley, she helped to organize a school wide Outdoor Garden at Bandelier, linking kids with the staples of their environment and diet. Future plans include for a large-scale composter and rain harvesting technology. "My best days teaching are usually spent outdoors and I feel very lucky to work at something that I believe is changing the world for the better. Not too many people can say that about their work!" Mary enthused. Mary truly is an inspiration to both her students AND her colleagues.



*EEANM President Christy Tafoya, Bandelier Principal Glenda Armstrong, Mary Erwin, EEANM Vice President Kimi Scheerer, and New Mexico State Senator Cisco McSorley after the ceremony. Photo by Barbara Garrity.*



*Mary Erwin with current and former students that attended her award ceremony.*

*Photo by Barbara Garrity.*

## Leopold Education Project Training in Silver City

By Jean Szymanski

One hundred years ago this July, Aldo Leopold started his career with the Forest Service in Arizona and New Mexico. Some of that time spent in the Gila National Forest was instrumental in Aldo submitting a proposal to create America's first wilderness area—the Gila Wilderness.

Therefore, it seemed fitting that the facilitator training for educators on the Leopold Education Project (LEP), be held in Silver City and the neighboring Gila National Forest. The LEP came out of the essays in Leopold's "Sand County Almanac," which records observations and events throughout the seasons. By means of 21 essays, this section chronologically guides the reader through the months of the year and describes Leopold's activities at his Wisconsin farm.

Thanks to the efforts of Dana Vackar-Strang, Randall Davey Audubon Center and state LEP coordinator, Colleen Welch, New Mexico Game and Fish, and Jean Szymanski, Forest Service, Southwestern Region, eleven educators gathered to learn about Aldo Leopold and his land ethic through experiencing several of the activities in the Leopold Education Project curriculum.

The group spent time outside helping participants "read the land" through outdoor explorations on tracking animals in the snow, predator/prey relationships, stream health related to the aquatic insects living in it, and how history can be written in trees.

Participants also had time to review the LEP guide and choose activities they would use in their classrooms. It was time well spent to be outside, slow down and observe and reflect on why our natural and cultural environment matters.

For more information on the Leopold Education Project, please contact Dana at [dstrang@audubon.org](mailto:dstrang@audubon.org)



*Participants at the workshop.*

*Photo by Deb Thrall.*

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*Environmental education  
projects are my favorites.*

**EDITORIAL  
SERVICES**

## News from the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE)

*Dr. Deb Thrall, Member, Board of Directors of NAAEE*

One of the greatest rewards that I've experienced in my role as a board member for NAAEE is meeting new environmental educators as I travel around the United States. I have been pleased to be able to represent NAAEE as an ambassador at 4 state conferences during this past year!

My first conference was in Utah last fall at a migratory bird center, Indiana in November focusing on Arts and the Environment, Iowa in January in a blizzard where a field trip included my first experience in ice fishing and Pocatello, Idaho in March working on statewide organizational development and Green Schools. My keynote addresses focused on the importance of NAAEE in capacity building, their role in getting national certification for EE and the new NCATE standards for Universities...and of course our upcoming conference "The Power of Partnerships - Creative Leadership in Environmental Education" in Portland, Oregon October 7 - 10, 2009.



I have found that EEANM shares fundamental missions with these states with a focus on a strong EE leadership, quality EE programs and a vision of a more environmentally literate citizenry.

- ♦ Utah - to provide statewide leadership to expand the quality, scope and effectiveness of EE.
- ♦ Indiana - to work cooperatively to promote opportunities that will educate, motivate, and inspire the citizens of Indiana to conserve natural resources and meet the needs of our society while maintaining a healthy environment now and in the future.
- ♦ Iowa - to provide educational pathways to enable Iowans to make responsible environmental decisions. ICEC strives to ensure a healthy environment in Iowa by improving environmental literacy.
- ♦ Idaho - dedicated and committed to the advancement of EE in Idaho. We provide, support and promote education about the environment to clarify our understanding of the world and our roles in it.

To further these goals for all of us, advocacy was also a big part of what NAAEE does and I am pleased to report that for the first time in 9 years the office of at EPA is in the President's budget! According to the National Environmental Education Act appropriations report, the President's budget includes a Fiscal Year 2010 amount approximately matching the historical mark, \$9.038 million. Now, instead of starting at \$0 and asking Congress for \$9 million, we are starting at \$9 million and asking for \$14 million! NAAEE has, with a number of allies, gathered very good House and Senate support for a \$14 million appropriation!!

## **ECO-ED** *The Listserv for New Mexico Environmental Educators*

If you haven't signed on to the eco-ed listserv, you are missing out on a great form of communication regarding environmental education in New Mexico. Signing up is easy; just go to our website at [www.eeanmorga](http://www.eeanmorga) and follow the instructions.

Problems? contact Barbara Garrity, (505) 715-7021 or [garrity.barbara@gmail.com](mailto:garrity.barbara@gmail.com)

*(Continued from page 1)*

gardens, etc.) while others find themselves working in the formal education setting. Yet all are environmental educators.

When someone indicates that they are an environmental educator, individuals within our own field often wonder what is the background or training that this person brings to the table. Do they have a strong background in environmental issues, natural resource content, and/or educational issues? Can they define environmental literacy? Do they know why Tbilisi is important to the field of EE or the history of environmental education? Can they write a lesson plan, talk to educators about educational issues, or explain how EE can be used to enhance their state standards? By implementing a state EE certification program, these questions can be addressed, creating a baseline of knowledge and skills for people who complete the program. Therefore, if you have an EE certification, then others know what you know and are able to do. There are many other reasons why you might want to obtain your EE certification. First, professional recognition and growth – as you go through your state's EE certification program you should learn something new and challenge yourself. Once you complete the process, then others will recognize you as a leader in the field and respect you for your initiative and accomplishments. Next, upon completion of the EE certification program, you can be distinguished from other similar professions (classroom teachers, nature interpreters, etc.). You can say with pride that you are a professional environmental educator. Also, as you work toward your certification, you can build professional contacts, which can lead to new and exciting opportunities. You never know who might be looking for a new employee or might know someone who is looking for one. Finally, you may have the opportunity to work with other leaders in not only your state, but also on a national level – once again, providing you with new opportunities. There are several ways a state can approach certification:

- ♦ Experience based. Through this process, the candidate would participate in workshops, attend presentations, or visit leading environmental centers or parks. During this time, the individual would record what they did and the number of hours attended.
- ♦ Criteria based. With this approach, a state would establish specific criteria that would be achieved through written assignments, tests, video recordings, or the submission of documents such as lesson plans.
- ♦ Course based. A state would design a series of in-depth courses that provided the background necessary for candidates to demonstrate a set of competencies.
- ♦ Mentor based. The candidate would work with a mentor who would guide the candidate through activities designed to show expertise in EE.

A variety of approaches may be taken by a state to implement an EE Certification Program. In fact, a state might use a combination of the different approaches – attending workshops yet meeting established criteria while working with a mentor. Thus, obtaining certification can vary from one approach to another depending on what approach best fits a specific state.

How long will the certification process take? This will depend on your state's program and you. Most state programs involve a series of steps that applicants pursue at their own pace over a period of time. There are many other issues associated with the EE certification process. However, the intent of EE Certification is not to criticize those practicing EE, but to encourage individual professional growth. Many environmental educators have indicated a desire that the environmental education profession be more respected. The implementation of a state environmental education certification program is one step toward obtaining that respect and moving environmental education to a higher professional level. Remember, accountants, teachers, electricians, hairdressers, forklift operators, and financial planners all have a certification process. Shouldn't environmental education have one too?

FREE!



FREE!

## national **get outdoors** day

**Saturday, June 13th  
10am - 2pm**

**At Tingley Beach**

More information available at  
Tingley Beach  
or [cabq.gov/biopark](http://cabq.gov/biopark)

- Climbing Wall
- Junior Rangers
- GPS/Orienteering
- Fishing Clinic
- Guided Bosque Hikes
- And so much MORE!

**Outdoor FUN for the whole family!**

On-site registration for drawings

For special assistance in visiting the BioPark, please call 311 locally or (505) 768-2000 (NM Relay or 711).  
Rebecca Houtman, Tingley Beach Curator (505) 248-8514  
[www.nationalgetoutdoorsday.org](http://www.nationalgetoutdoorsday.org)



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# WORKSHOPS

## Project Learning Tree and Project WET for College of Education Faculty

One effective way to help equip teachers to teach environmental education to their students is to reach them when they are studying to become teachers. The teaching faculty at teaching colleges was the target market for this workshop offered at the University of New Mexico in April. Seven professors and two students who are now doing their student teaching, attended the workshop organized by Barbara Garrity, EEANM Statewide Coordinator. EEANM teamed up with Al Stenstrup, National Education Director for Project Learning Tree, Bryan Swain, New Mexico Project WET Coordinator, and Matt Cross-Guillén, Educational Outreach Coord. For Bernalillo County Envir. Health, to offer a joint workshop of Project WET and Project Learning Tree. Dr. Quincy Spurlin, Professor of Science Education at the University of New Mexico, helped with logistics and recruitment. Teaching faculty attended from UNM, Northern New Mexico College, and College of Santa Fe. The professors will implement the training by training their students in the use of these curricula. Funding was provided by the American Forest Foundation and the Environmental Education and Training Partnership (EETAP).



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## CHECK ONE OF THE MEMBERSHIP TYPES

☐ Limited Income/Student Membership.....\$10.00

☐ Individual Membership.....\$25.00

☐ Organizational Membership.....\$50.00

(Allows for 1 voting member and 2 general members)

Name and **email address** of voting member

Names and **email addresses** of 2 additional newsletter recipients

**ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION  
ASSOCIATION OF NEW MEXICO**

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