



Board Brief

This Place Seems New and Yet Familiar- the 2023 Chesapeake Community Workshop

This March the NAI Chesapeake Community held our first in-person workshop since before COVID. Seventy-one participants from across the community met at the Chincoteague Bay Field Station on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. For those of us on the planning committee it seemed familiar and yet new. The Field Station was our partner and host for the 2020 workshop which was cancelled at the outbreak of COVID. In fact, our workshop was the first for NAI to be canceled that year, just one week before the workshop start date.

This year we had 6 sessions with 16 presentations to choose from. Topics included the Civil War, incorporating NASA science, humor, art, and dance. A little of something for everyone. We couldn't do it without the 15 presenters that generously shared their knowledge and skills. Learning opportunities included a trip to the NASA Wallops Island Visitor Center and the area around their launch pads. While returning to the visitor center we had to pull over and wait while they moved a rocket to the pads. Outside in the parking area we had the Montgomery County Parks Mobile Education Center and the Virginia State Parks Bay Experience Program vehicles on display.

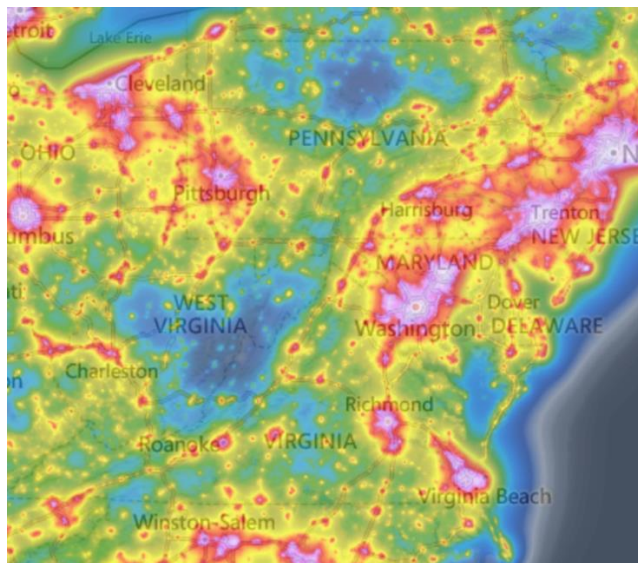
Getting together and networking opportunities are an important part of any workshop. It was great seeing old friends and making new ones. Our community is stronger when we collaborate and support each other. Longer breaks between sessions provided time to talk and to bid on the silent auction. Evening entertainment included a dinner out in Chincoteague, two evenings of social

hours, and the live auction. Claire Thomas stepped in as our live auctioneer and did a fantastic job. We also had some fantastic sponsors whose generous donations allowed us to keep our workshop price low. I can't thank them enough. They are listed in the newsletter. Make sure you check them out.

I'm looking forward to the next Chesapeake Workshop which will be in the spring of 2024. It will be virtual to give the new Deputy Director for the Community time to settle in. Our workshops would not be possible without your support. So how can you get involved? One way is to volunteer to help plan the workshop. Another way is to be a presenter. What are you passionate about? Do you have a really strong program or insight on better ways of doing things? Share your passion. I look forward to seeing you all in the spring or at the National Workshop in Little Rock this fall.

Sammy Zambon

Deputy Director NAI Chesapeake Community



Light Pollution

By Tammy Schwab

Tammy Schwab recently did a presentation at the Regional Workshop on Light Pollution. In case you missed it we wanted to share some resources provided by Tammy.

The blog linked below provides a lot of the same information that was presented. In addition the links are a great resource for anyone who wants to teach others about light pollution.

Interactive online map about light pollution www.Lightpollutionmap.info
Padlet created by volunteers with links to hundreds of articles, activities, and research studies about artificial light at night <https://padlet.com/skymaps01/article-and-resources-dark-skies-and-alan-tn7ormtxyws02sef>

Fairfax county Parks Dark sky information page <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/topics/dark-skies>

Links to educational activities <https://www.globeatnight.org/dark-skies-rangers/>
Link to international Dark sky association for Printable brochures and other resources www.darksky.org

Dark sky patch requirements your Girl Scout council could adopt. [Dark Skies Patch Program Nation's Capital.pdf \(gscnc.org\)](#)

To view the blog post:

[Light to protect the night with responsible outdoor lighting design | Our Stories and Perspectives](#)



What's so funny about moths?

By Ken Rosenthal

There are many theories about humor, about why it exists, how it developed, and why we find something funny. The current dominant philosophical theory of

humor is the Incongruity Theory. In this theory, humor arises from the perception of something that goes against our expectations or observed patterns. I love using humor in my programs, and connecting visitors to nature using absurd and fantastical comparisons is one of my favorite tools.

When I lead programs for children, I often ask questions of my participants to get an idea of what they already know and to keep them involved through participation. If I am not getting as much participation as I would like, I may ask a question and offer funny answers to induce conversation. For example, asking the group what a deer might eat, and then offering them answers like pizza, hamburgers and ice cream. Another example is taking the extraordinary abilities of an organism and placing it in a human context. (Haven't we all considered, at one time or another, how different – and awkward – it would be if humans used scent instead of vision to recognize each other as dogs do?)

Which brings us to moths. How would a human life look through a moth's compound eyes? Or, how would living our life like a moth change into something amusing, or bizarre, or even cringe-worthy? I prefer admiration to imitation – I'm glad I am not 100 times my birth weight and that as a child I didn't defecate with the regularity of a caterpillar. But the Cinereous Mourner might feel differently. Their nestlings mimic megalopygid caterpillars in behavior and shape, so that when their parents are not around the young birds resemble stinging caterpillars instead of a defenseless snack.

Let's circle back around to scent. Most female moths produce pheromones, scents that can trigger attraction in males. A team of researchers studied the pheromones of the Silkworm (*Bombyx mori*). After 20 years they had collected a miniscule 6.4 mg of the substance, yet they had needed a half million female abdomens to accumulate that! Despite females releasing such tiny amounts, males can use their antennae to find females more than 10 kilometers away. They weave back and forth in flight, course-correcting each time they find a trace of pheromones. That is an impressive sense of smell. Imagine trying to find a lunch spot the same way, while driving with your window down. Consider that sensitivity to smell the next time you take out the trash. Or when you go to a garbage dump, public restroom, or candle store.

Then there's feeding. Caterpillars have one job: eating. I find this a laudable goal. Many moths are host-specific in their feeding habits as caterpillars, eating only one type of plant. This specificity in food preference even occurs for other lesser-known delicacies consumed by caterpillars, including other caterpillars, snails, flies, antelope horns, tortoise shells, sloth scat, and the tears of sleeping animals. Imagine paging through that menu. More personally, had I known about host-specificity at a younger age, I might have tried convincing my father I was host-specific to Lucky Charms.

I like to use humor in my programs because I know that humor is something I enjoy and remember from how I spend my free time. An absurd juxtaposition coupling an interesting fact with a good chuckle can create a lasting memory and positive association with the topic you are presenting. That single moment can make a lasting memory that provokes deeper thought, inspires further sharing, and even promote action that leads to preservation of the resource. After all, everyone loves a good laugh.

Ken Rosenthal is the nature center manager at Walker Nature Center in Reston, VA. He presented Bringing the Funny and Moths and Mothing 101 at this spring's Chesapeake Regional Workshop in Wallops Island. He tried to combine the two subjects into one article, and that is how you ended up with what you just read. He can be reached via email at krosenthal@reston.org.



Celebrating Your Healthy Lifestyle During Earth Month
an Interview with Dr. Stacy Beller Stryer- Associate Medical Director of Park RX
America (PRA)

By Jenn Simms

April is a month full of showers and flowers and has been dedicated as “Earth month”. As a naturalist, I love the idea of celebrating the Earth for the entire month. But, finding time to give back to the planet can be tricky, especially when juggling work, family, a social life, and more. How can I contribute towards a self-care routine for the Earth, when I feel pulled into so many different directions?

What if I told you that the Earth had a self-care tip to help us create a healthier lifestyle and all it involved was to walk out the front door?

“Just get outside” is what Dr. Stacy Beller Stryer, Associate Medical Director of PRA, told me to do. She is a board-certified physician whose company’s mission is to decrease the burden of chronic disease, increase health and happiness, AND foster environmental stewardship. How do they achieve this mission? Through prescribing nature. I wasn’t exactly sure what that meant, so I sat down with her to ask a few questions.

1. What does it mean to prescribe nature and how does it work? How can someone obtain a prescription?

Prescribing nature is very similar to prescribing medication for a medical condition but instead of prescribing, let’s say, an antibiotic for an ear infection, we prescribe time outside for conditions such as anxiety, depression, diabetes or obesity, among others. Just like a regular prescription, a nature prescription is very specific, where the outdoor place, type of activity, time and days of the week one goes to this location are all included. Being specific increases the chances someone will fill the prescription and holds them more accountable. Anyone can tell their provider they read about nature prescriptions and want one written for themselves. They might have to give the website, parkrxamerica.org, to their providers if they are unfamiliar with it. Another option is to print out a prescription from the website, fill it out and hand it to a provider who can then continue to write future prescriptions and follow up on a regular basis. I think it would be so helpful to work together to make going outdoors second nature (pun intended), like getting dressed in the morning.

2. Why was PRA created?

It began as a park prescription program to integrate a searchable map to make it easier for providers to find a nearby park or greenspace for their patients anywhere in the country, with thousands searchable by location. However, this was limiting the ability to write prescriptions for two reasons. First, not every park in the country is in our database and second, not everybody has a park close to their home, particularly those living in urban areas and amongst minority populations. We want everybody to have equal access to nature, no matter where they live. So we developed a custom destination, where any natural space can be prescribed, preferably a place that is close, free and where the patient feels safe. Sometimes a patient is unable to go outside for a variety of reasons, so a prescription can even be written to spend time among plants indoors or watching nature and/or wildlife from a window.

3. Your mission supports environmental stewardship, what is one way that someone can develop a nature self-care routine AND give back to the Earth at the same time?

Because we spend most of our time indoors these days, we have lost our connection with our surroundings and the environment. Many studies have shown that spending time outdoors increases environmental stewardship and a connection with the environment. So by merely motivating people to get outside to take care of themselves and their own health, we can increase their care and nurturing of our environment and earth.

And there you have it; thank you Dr. Stryer! We can lower our stress by spending more time outdoors and give back to Earth. As educators, naturalists, and outdoor enthusiasts, together, we can work on a self-care routine for the Earth throughout April, and encourage our park visitors to do the same. But most importantly, we can also work on a self-care routine for ourselves. Learn more at: <https://parkrxamerica.org>

NAI Region 2 Chesapeake Awards 2023

The Outstanding Interpretive Awards for 2023 were presented during the Chesapeake Region 2 Workshop at Chincoteague Field Station in March. Six awards were presented as follows:



Melissa Acuti Boyle—Outstanding Interpretive Manager

In her current role as Chief of Interpretation for the Maryland Park Service, Melissa Acuti Boyle works statewide, leading 76 parks in their interpretive endeavors. She supports a vast array of programs at these parks including Junior and Senior Ranger programs, Create Your Own State Park, Es Mi Parque and many more. Melissa has the significant challenge of training new and seasonal staff in best interpretive practices multiple times a year. She actively mentors younger employees and individuals. Recently Melissa helped to see the completion of the Sandy Point State Park Nature Center which focuses on the interconnection and diversity of the Chesapeake Watershed. The first bilingual nature center in a Maryland State Park, this was a huge undertaking and involved many partner agencies throughout the process. Melissa Acuti Boyle is a brilliant, compassionate and innovative interpretive program manager.



Jennifer Simms—Outstanding Frontline Interpreter

Jennifer Simms has worked in the field of environmental education and interpretation for over 15 years. As a Principal Park Naturalist for Montgomery Parks in Maryland, she uses her vast knowledge of natural history to conduct

programs for a wide range of audiences, engaging them in nature and weaving a conservation message into the programs. A Certified Interpretive Guide, Jennifer reaches out to a diverse public. She is fluent in American Sign Language and presents nature programs to the deaf and hard of hearing. This past summer she conducted a camp for children of all abilities, considering the needs of the individual participants while training the staff and preparing the site for a positive experience. She is also Meadowside Nature Center's Social Media Interpreter, creating content that connects audiences with the Center's ambassador animals and highlights program opportunities. Jennifer Simms uses her knowledge of natural history to create excellent programming and make connections with a wide variety of audiences in a number of different ways.



Jacob van Schilgaarde—Outstanding Part-time Interpreter

Jacob van Schilgaarde is an instructor at Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve, part of Loudoun County Parks, Recreation and Community Services in Virginia. He has a Bachelor of Science degree in Conservation Biology, a Virginia Master Naturalist Certification and experience leading wildlife education programs. During the Covid pandemic, Jake developed interpretive programs that were exclusively held outdoors, including Owling at the Moon, Birding for Beginners and Full Moon Hikes. He has expanded the Full Moon Hikes to include a power point presentation about the wildlife they might encounter and their nighttime noises, added a cultural theme to the hikes using traditional names such as Cold Moon, Strawberry Moon, etc., with the story about those names and used modern technology, bionic

ears, to amplify the nature sounds. Additionally, Jake developed a Junior Naturalist activity which consists of four booklets of various themes related to the natural and historical resources found at the Preserve. Jake leads a variety of programs for different ages, making participants feel comfortable by sharing his infectious passion for nature.



Doreen Widney—Outstanding Interpretive Volunteer

Doreen Widney is a member of the Friends of Smith Mountain Lake State Park in Virginia. She has volunteered over 4000 hours at the Park. She always goes above and beyond what is expected of her and puts the well-being of the Park guests at the forefront of her duties. Doreen has served as the boat tour coordinator for the free pontoon boat guided tours on Smith Mountain Lake, organizing volunteer captains and PDF assistants. She took it upon herself to develop procedures that enhanced boat tour operations. Doreen is always willing to assist with interpretive programs, including Full Moon boat tours, special events such as summer music concerts and school field trips. She is often the first volunteer to arrive and the last to leave. She has delighted guests, both young and old, as Sunny Bunny at the Park's Easter event. On multiple occasions she has provided home cooked meals for the members of the Park's Youth Conservation Corps. Doreen Widney is one of Smith Mountain Lake State Park's most valued and dedicated volunteers.



Ken Rosenthal—Meritorious Service Award

Ken Rosenthal moved to Virginia in 2010 where he became an Interpreter at Arlington County Virginia Parks. He had been active in NAI Region 4 before his move and reached out to the leadership of this region to become a participating member here. Ken has said he likes to be involved because it gives him a better sense of place and a deeper understanding of the organization. Ken served on the Region 2 board for five years as treasurer. He did a great job keeping track of the Region's money and helping other members get reimbursed by national NAI for money spent on the organization's behalf. Ken has presented at many regional workshops, sharing his expertise about the natural world. More than once, he volunteered at the last minute to present a session in place of someone who had to drop out. He has made a point of nominating deserving colleagues for outstanding interpretive awards. And in 2018, Ken was recognized for his excellent work as a Park Naturalist with the Outstanding Frontline Interpreter Award.



Yvonne Johnson—Special Appreciation Award

Yvonne Johnson has led NAI Region 2 as Assistant Director and Director for over six years. She has brought unflagging energy and dedication to the job. Yvonne dove into the administrative tasks, working with both NAI National staff and the Regional board to bring the best opportunities and information to the members. She has done an amazing job in encouraging the board and other members to participate fully and do their best. Yvonne has fostered exciting, educational and fun workshops during her terms. She received a Meritorious Service Award in 2018 for her work as Assistant Director. And although Yvonne's Director's term ended in December, when the new Director was unable to attend this workshop, she stepped up with her wonderful positive personality and her can-do spirit to help bring off this excellent workshop. Yvonne did a tremendous job handling of the difficult times caused by the Corona virus, from dealing with the cancellation of the March 2020 Workshop to transitioning to online activities including the 2022 Workshop. Yvonne has touched the lives of the Chesapeake Region members and helped them become better interpreters, sharing their love of nature and history with their communities.