



2023 Conference Workshops

Note: Workshop offerings are subject to change

Workshop Block A

Videos to Bust Barriers, Push Programs

Learn how to engage your students (or yourself!) with the soil that exists right beneath their feet. How is soil structured? What history lies in the land? How did your soil form, and how can we assess soil health? We will use accessible scientific tools to investigate, get our hands “soily,” and conclude with a lesson on how to create soil pigment paint to contribute to students’ scientific understanding through artistic expression.

Introduction to Hooked on Fishing not on Drugs

Can the experience of fishing really be used to overcome a very serious issue that is affecting our young people today? Absolutely! Join in on the fun and be introduced to The Future Fisherman Foundation’s Hooked on Fishing – Not on drugs program! (HOFNOD). This program is taught throughout the country with the goal of building youths’ outdoor skills.

Supporting Outdoor Learning for All

Come learn about the work being done on The Autism Nature Trail in Letchworth State Park and at The Adirondack Family Camp in Lowville. Both settings specialize in individuals and families facing autism and related disabilities. Our work and specialty focus on autism, challenging behavior, mobility, and communication needs. We have tricks of the trade to share and tools to take away.

Winter Wildflowers

Explore the world of winter plants and see what next summer’s wildflowers will look like. Learn tips for winter plant ID and resources.

Planting seed for a nutritious future

This workshop is an overview of a time-tested nutrition program which is part of the Fresh Air Farm, where participants learn basics of farm-to-plate. Educators will gain insight into tips and techniques for teaching students to conduct positive conversations surrounding food, recognize the importance of good nutrition, and see how to do build a nutritious meal with or without a farm in their backyard. Integrated into learning about nutritious foods, students learn the basics of culinary art. A seasonal snack will be prepared during the workshop.

Workshop Block B

The Incredible Carbon Journey

Looking for engaging ways to teach about Earth's cycles and climate change with upper elementary and middle school students? Join Environmental Educator and Naturalist Lauren Borer from Mohonk Preserve for an introduction to teaching the science of climate change in engaging and hands-on ways. Learn how to teach the carbon cycle to students (youth and adults!) through a carbon cycle game based on the water cycle Incredible Journey activity. Resources for more activities will be available during this session.

How-tos and Tips & Tricks for Starting Your Own Maple Program

Maple is an important agricultural product in New York that is unique to our little piece of the world. Maple-based education programs provide seemingly limitless opportunities for interdisciplinary study and can be a valuable addition to any formal or informal educator's repertoire. However, there can be many challenges to overcome when getting started and the thought of maintaining a maple operation may seem daunting to some. This workshop will give an overview of the basics of starting a small maple operation for education, highlight interdisciplinary opportunities related to maple, as well as provide tips for overcoming hurdles and ideas for turning challenges into opportunities.

Intimate Insects: The Weird and Wonderful World of Arthropod Reproduction

Reproduction: The end goal of most life forms. At its core, a fairly simple concept - until you actually try to get two independent adults of the same species to meet at the right time! This is arguably the single biggest challenge for any sexually reproducing species, and evolution has been working away at it for billions of years. For insects and arthropods, it's come up with some truly bizarre solutions. We'll be looking at some of the strangest in this workshop – and the best way to spark a new passion for nature is to learn about passion in nature!

Building Meaning and Purpose in Interpretive Programs

This workshop will review the National Association of Interpretation's Approach to Communication and discuss how environmental educators can reach their audiences in a more purposeful, engaging, and relevant way. This will be an interactive workshop where participants will be encouraged to share their best teaching practices as well as learn new programming skills together.

Diversity Education In Nature (DEIN), The Earth as a Model for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

This workshop will review the National Association of Interpretation's Approach to Communication and discuss how environmental educators can reach their audiences in a more purposeful, engaging, and relevant way. This will be an interactive workshop where participants will be encouraged to share their best teaching practices as well as learn new programming skills together.

Workshop Block C

Get Grounded!

This workshop will dig into what makes healthy soil and how healthy soil is foundational to our own health. We will look for life beneath our feet. We will explore vermicomposting, look at soil layers, and get our hands dirty with different kinds of soil. Participants will learn not only how to build healthy soil but also how to teach others about it.

Heritage Breed Livestock Ambassadors to Ag Education

This workshop is a case study of how Stony Kill Foundation deepened its historical, environmental, and agricultural mission by expanding its educational programs using Heritage Breed Livestock. Stony Kill Farm has successfully integrated rare breeds of livestock, enabling it to tell the three-century historical and agricultural story of the farm, and to bring the significance and relevance of these animals to the forefront of the modern agricultural movement. The farm has expanded its educational outreach through partnerships with Cornell Cooperative Extension's 4-H program, the Livestock Conservancy, and Breed Associations. Participants will learn about and meet ambassadors from America's first and oldest agricultural breeds: American Milking Devon Cattle, Tunis sheep and Dominique chickens.

NYBG Partnerships Expand Bronx Community Resources

By opening its plant museum to new people in new ways during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Garden increased access and influence reflective of its neighbors in its cultural and outdoor spaces. Children's Education bridges those successes with local schools by providing free STEM programs and professional learning that support students, teachers, and communities in place-based science education that connect to lived experiences, cultural identities, and a sense of well-being. Identify opportunities to strengthen connections between the community in which your institution is located, and the change you see necessary to provide equitable learning experiences that reflect this audience.

Exploring the Night Sky

Exploring the night sky with activities geared toward learning about our night sky can be fun! Participants will explore the moon, stars, and other astronomical objects as we mix in some astronomy trivia too. We'll be spending some time in Sharpe's planetarium to observe first hand the night sky, and view two short films on the planetarium dome. Participants will leave with ideas to share the exciting world of astronomy with their own community and/or program.

Workshop Block D

Educating for Change: Successes & Challenges

Is environmental and outdoor education adapting to meet modern audiences and are we reflective of the audiences we serve? We have been talking the talk, but who is walking the walk? Come prepared to engage in this fishbowl format discussion. We will begin by hearing from peers in our field about the tools or programs they are utilizing to inspire change within their organization, school, or community. Then everyone can choose to participate as we share successes, discuss questions, and hopefully leave with ideas to inspire changes in our communities.

Promoting Leadership Through Ecology Research

Near-peer mentorship has been shown to have significant benefits for mentors and mentees. Project TRUE (Teens Researching Urban Ecology) is an internship program in which students learn how to conduct scientific research while promoting community and fostering professional skills. The program uses a near-peer mentorship model where undergraduate mentors are taught leadership and mentoring skills and utilize them while leading small teams of high school students through developing and conducting field research projects. This workshop will discuss how near-peer mentorship has been integrated into Project TRUE, and how it can be adapted for use in other environmental education contexts.

Bringing Geology to Life

This session will explore how someone who dropped geology in college has gone on to teach thousands of people about one of the most geologically complicated places on Earth. Using the geology of the Finger Lakes we will explore different ways to take complicated topics and make them fun and understandable for a wide audience. Please think about topics that are a little tricky for you to explain and we will discuss as a group possible ways to help make them more understandable.

Schoolyard Soil Ecology

Learn how to engage your students (or yourself!) with the soil that exists right beneath their feet. How is soil structured? What history lies in the land? How did your soil form, and how can we assess soil health? We will use accessible scientific tools to investigate, get our hands “soily,” and conclude with a lesson on how to create soil pigment paint to contribute to students’ scientific understanding through artistic expression.

Workshop Block E

Climate Stories: Using Storytelling to Make Communities More Resilient

This workshop session will introduce oral history methodologies and storytelling strategies to support educators in designing inclusive, culturally responsive, and community-based Environmental Education (EE) programs. Also, it will highlight the significance of interacting with community members and organizations, strengthening the connections, and integrating their voices and environmental justice issues in EE programs. A multi-disciplinary team will share the results of an oral history project aiming to explore flooding effects on socially and economically disadvantaged neighborhoods in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, investigate community resilience, and uncover risk communication methods before, during, and after Hurricane Sandy. This workshop will engage the participants in storytelling activities, explain the procedure/methodologies, and provide practical tips for implementing such activities with students at different grade levels using examples of the stories/narratives of tri-lingual and multi-ethnic urban community members.

Towards Respectful Relationality: Un-settling Outdoor Education

In this workshop by and for Settler educators, the leader will present a short case study of their work co-creating a youth environmental advocacy education program with an Indigenous organization in Oaxaca, Mexico. They will offer lessons learned—both personal and practical—as starting points for hands-on activities in which participants will explore what they might need to learn or unlearn in order to offer outdoor education programs that are culturally relevant and welcoming to Native youth and their communities.

The School Of Rock

Participants will do a rock survey at Sharpe Reservation that can be done anywhere on their school grounds or nature center to see where you fit on the "rock cycle". Get ready to dig down and get dirty.

Practical Puppetry: Teaching Ecology Through Play

Participants will learn how to integrate puppetry and other theater concepts into teaching spaces – no experience needed and on a budget! Use this workshop as a tool to connect students to the natural world through creative play. Receive resources on purchasing materials, designing a puppet theater, writing scripts, and engaging students. Then, put your improv skills to the test by developing and performing a short ecological skit!

Gather Around The Campfire

It's said that human evolution took a big turn with the use of fire. To this day there's something about being around campfire. Come to this fire to share its warmth and glow, explore fire building, share campfire songs and stories, use fire to make something, and eat what it cooks. Yes, enjoy an old-time outdoor ed favorite, a tin foil meal along with an experiment of making a venison stew as natives would prior to contact with Europeans.