



The Afterglow

The Newsletter of the Nature Camp Foundation

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Counselor Lucy Adams Wins Creative-Writing Award

This May, Lucy Adams, a student at Virginia Tech, won the first place award from the Virginia Outdoor Writers Association for an essay she wrote about her experience at camp in 2008. Lucy, now a junior majoring in wildlife science, is from Ruckersville. We proudly reproduce here her winning article:

Summer of the Rattlesnake

It had been a battle keeping the kid's flashlights off, but we thought that it had been worth the effort. We had wanted them to have the full experience of the woods at night, to be able to see without being seen by all the life around them. We had been thinking in terms of the smaller sorts of wildlife — and by the end of the walk, we'd already caught a brightly colored red salamander and several of the familiar northern duskies. Now, for the walk back, we were doing our best to fully enforce the No-Flashlight rule; perhaps if we were successful we would get the chance to hear a barred owl or other nocturnal bird. That is, if we could enforce silence as well. We were fighting a losing battle on the silence front until it fell all of its own accord at the sound of crackling beside the path. We quickly pointed our flashlights in the direction of the sound — and illuminated the long sinuous body of a fully grown timber rattlesnake. The light from our flashlights reflected off his scales, and we could clearly see a lump in the middle of his stomach where he had lodged his dinner. There was a correspondingly large lump in my throat as we walked on, after standing for several moments in awe.

It seemed as though moments like that, moments where the inner workings of nature were suddenly and unexpectedly revealed, were common at Nature Camp. The year I saw the timber rattlesnake was the year I went back to camp to teach, because I'd gotten too old to go back there to learn. I couldn't bear to be parted from a place I loved so much, and I figured I would somehow manage to develop whatever it was my counselors had that had kept me coming back as a camper for so many years. Never mind the fact that I have a recurring tendency to avoid all person-to-person interactions (too fraught with the danger of awkward silences and social faux pas). I'd deal with that when the time came. Anyway, what I remember most about my counselors was not their social abilities; it was the look on their faces when they were given the honor of catching a hidden glimpse of the natural world. I still remember the glowing look on our ornithology teacher's face when she found a hummingbird nest lodged in the fork of a tree at the end of camp. The branch was mottled with lichen, and the nest itself was not much more than a lichen-colored bump with a hole in it large enough to fit my thumb. Maybe. The whole thing was only visible through a tiny gap amidst the profusion of green leaves. I remember filling with excitement as

Natalie carefully directed my binoculars in the right direction and the little nest came into focus.

When I went back to camp to teach, I taught freshwater ecology. I taught kids that when you turn over rocks in the stream, you are uncovering a whole world full of alien creatures - the larvae of stoneflies, mayflies and caddis flies — little bugs that, if they were magnified to human proportions, would be fearsome dragons and deadly wild beasts. As it is, a mayfly larvae will fit in the palm of your hand, and if you fill the palm of your hand with water, its delicate gills will vibrate quickly back and forth to extract all the oxygen from that water supply. I realized it doesn't take any fine-tuned social graces to place a captured mayfly in the eager hands of a child and to watch his face light up with the same excitement I felt when I finally focused on the hummingbird nest.

I'd gone back to Nature Camp because I couldn't bear to stay away from it, but on doing so I found something as rewarding as discovering a hidden nest smaller than my thumb, or hearing the crackling of last fall's leaves beneath the body of a timber rattlesnake. I discovered the pleasure of listening to the joyful shouts of children who are holding a mayfly for the first time, and hearing gasps of wonder from someone who has never seen a snake in the wild before. I figure that if I can instill that sense of wonder in even a few people, my life will have been worth it.

Living Naturally: Adult Session in August

By general agreement, the Adult Session this August was one of the best in all ways -- lots of new and well-taught activities, excellent weather, and terrific food provided by the dynamic team of Chris Chamberlin and Stuart Ralston (who came all the way from Minnesota) with able back-up from counselors Kim Lanzarotta and Megan McDonald.

The theme was "Living Naturally", kicked off by Flip Coulling with a tour of camp grounds to explain camp's efforts to conserve water and energy, and recycle and compost waste. Most of our favorite instructors were back, with classes like "Living with Fish" (Gerald Pottern), "What Other Planets Tell Us About Climate" (Terry Richardson) and "Foraging for Plant Materials" (Julie Moore). We had lots of new topics and new instructors, too: Leonarda Brunst taught us how to identify fungi, Joanne Hutton shared tips on natural gardening, and Fred Hollen, a local beekeeper, brought a demonstration hive while Doug Woodworth contributed boxes of comb honey from his own hives. Walter Mehring and his class produced biochar and spread it on a test patch of the play field to see if it will improve plant growth. Betsy and David Bangley gave us a fascinating slide show of the solar home they are building in western Pennsylvania, while Megan and Kim offered a slide show of their visit to mine lands, describing the damage to the environment and to human lives from mountaintop removal. Monday morning we had a field trip to a nearby area that was burned in spring 2008; forester Tom Dierauf and other instructors explained the ecologic effects of the fire and the succession of plants that will return.

We're looking forward to next year's session already. The dates are tentatively set for June 11-15 and the theme will be "Shapes and Patterns in Nature". Brochures will be mailed in February to all who express interest, and a version of the brochure will also be posted on the camp web site.

-- Connie Sancetta, Adult Session Co-ordinator

Annual Meeting of NCF Members

The NCF held its annual open meeting for members on May 16, 2009 during Service Weekend. Flip Coulling provided a report from Nature Camp, Inc., noting that NCI has been approved retroactively as a 501(c)3 tax-exempt educational organization by the IRS. Treasurer Chuck Story reported that the Nature Camp Foundation's financial status is more or less back to where it was prior to the capital campaign after the facility renovations last year. Most contributions are typically received in the fall and winter. Investments showed some gains in the last few months. Development Chair Latham Schweitzer Coates noted that the capital campaign raised \$622,000 in pledges and contributions. Contributions were slightly down last year due to economic climate, with some pledges to the capital campaign still outstanding. The Foundation is now moving to annual fund appeals for continued support for camp. Other information from the meeting is reported elsewhere in this newsletter.

NCF Membership Clarified

There has been some recent confusion as to what constitutes a "Member" of the Nature Camp Foundation. As our organization has grown and evolved over the past two plus years, some restructuring was inevitable. One aspect of that restructuring was to redefine how membership works. We are no longer a dues based organization, but one that is supported by an annual fund. Everyone that we have on our mailing list receives the *Afterglow*, which is how we stay connected to our Nature Camp base. **But not everyone that gets the Afterglow is a member of the Foundation with voting rights.** To qualify as a member of the Nature Camp Foundation with full voting rights you must have made a contribution of any amount to the Nature Camp Foundation annual fund, or have given "in kind" by donating services or labour (such as working at service weekends)

Our Living Fossil

Charles Thornton was a man who knew *everything* about rocks. He came to Adult Session at Nature Camp for many years to share his knowledge with all of us. He referred to himself as our Living Fossil, and I guess I thought he'd be here forever. His last lecture at camp was about travertine and tufa. It was preceded by a field trip to a local waterfall that is creating tufa. Unfortunately, he was too hampered by his illness to come to the waterfall with us. Charles also came to every service weekend, and could always be found on the LS porch mending the many screens from around camp. He was a special person to all whose lives he touched.

In memory of him, the Charles Thornton Memorial Scholarship has been created. The scholarship recipient will be chosen by the camp staff at the end of each summer for the following summer. The main criteria for earning the scholarship are a great interest in geology and financial need. The hope is to be able to provide a half scholarship (currently \$350) every summer for a deserving camper. This is where you come in. You can make a donation to the scholarship fund by sending a check to either Nature Camp, Inc. or the Nature Camp Foundation, Inc. Please note on the check that it is for the memorial scholarship. All contributions are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

-- Shirley Napps

Nature Camp Trivia Question #1: Who gave the Lillian Schilling dinner bell to Nature Camp?

Notes From the Nature Camp Historian

For those of you who are interested in participating, the Nature Camp History Project will begin this fall in earnest. Our initial efforts will include cataloging the documents and recordings in the office at Camp, organizing them, and preparing them for inclusion in the Special Collections library at the University of Virginia. Placing the collection in a university archive will serve two purposes: preservation and availability. The archive has the proper climate-controlled environment for preserving documents, and they will keep them organized and available for anyone who is interested to peruse. We hope to keep as much of a duplicate archive as is practical at Camp, but the main collection will be housed at UVA.

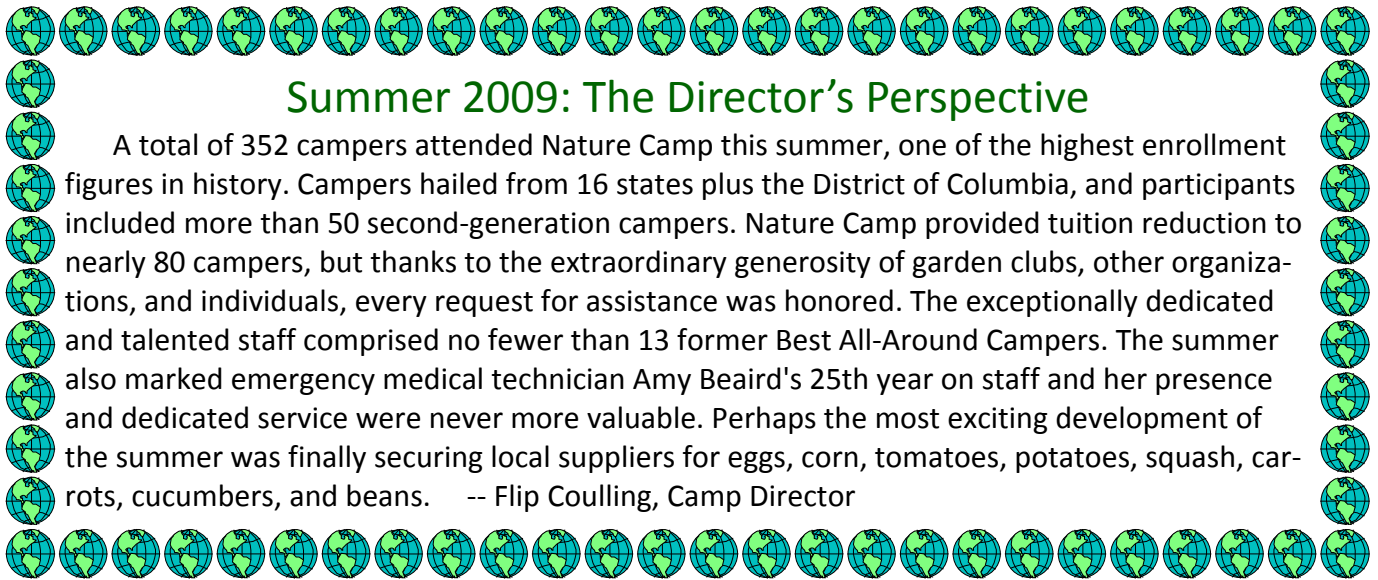
At the moment, I am planning to form a committee to come up with ideas and procedures for collecting desirable documents from former campers, counselors, and friends of Camp. Our primary purpose will be documenting the history of Camp and allowing those who visit the collection to understand the Nature Camp experience from a number of different perspectives. Though we are not yet ready to collect items from the membership at large, it is not too soon for you to check your stash of Camp memorabilia and see whether you have some of the items we hope to include. We would love to have letters to and from campers, report notebooks, old tests, and artwork. We also seek photographs, but we will only be able to accept them if the people in them can be identified at least by group (e.g., Limnology, second session, 1975) and if the approximate dates and locations can be given. Once we determine exactly what items we have in the Camp office, we may also request specific editions of *Woodland Echoes*.

The oral history project, which will be a central element of the documentation effort, is in the planning stages. Our goal is to begin training people this winter or late in the spring, and to begin interviewing as soon as possible after training has been completed. Please *do not* simply go out and record folks, as we want to make sure that all of our recordings are done in a manner that allows us to include them in the archives. If you are interested in being trained to interview, please contact me at hoffmankatie@rocketmail.com. In the next couple of months, we will be posting an "Oral History Candidate Nomination" form on the web site. Anyone who wants to nominate someone to be interviewed may do so. We will, of course, interview as many people as resources allow.

Look for more information on the Foundation web site soon. -- Katie Hoffman, Historian

Orletta Lee Sprouse Beavers, 1926-2009

We regret to report the death of Orletta Beavers, mother of Leigh Ann Beavers and a longtime supporter of Nature Camp, on May 2, 2009. Mrs. Beavers graduated from Ferrum Junior College (as it was then), and also attended Emory and Henry College. At various times she served as President of the Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs, of the Forest Lawn Garden Club and the Dream and Dig Garden Club. She also served as a master flower show judge for the Blue Ridge District of the VFGC and on the board of directors for Nature Camp. Her support for camp still continues: the family requested that all memorial gifts be made to Nature Camp.



Summer 2009: The Director's Perspective

A total of 352 campers attended Nature Camp this summer, one of the highest enrollment figures in history. Campers hailed from 16 states plus the District of Columbia, and participants included more than 50 second-generation campers. Nature Camp provided tuition reduction to nearly 80 campers, but thanks to the extraordinary generosity of garden clubs, other organizations, and individuals, every request for assistance was honored. The exceptionally dedicated and talented staff comprised no fewer than 13 former Best All-Around Campers. The summer also marked emergency medical technician Amy Beard's 25th year on staff and her presence and dedicated service were never more valuable. Perhaps the most exciting development of the summer was finally securing local suppliers for eggs, corn, tomatoes, potatoes, squash, carrots, cucumbers, and beans. -- Flip Coulling, Camp Director

Summer 2009: First Session Perspectives from *Woodland Echoes*

"McCladams, the final frontier, these are the voyages of the USS McCladams Hike. Their ongoing mission, to boldly go where no hike has gone before! First off, we left late.....We summited McClung. It was easy but we needed more. We went down the backside of McClung then through the famous and terrifying Taylor's Hollow. We made it through, without any bee stings. Then we headed for the side of Adams.....Once we made it off Adams we hiked in the woods for about a mile until we found the road. This time Jason, a counselor, broke down and cried because he didn't want to walk back to Camp....It was a long 2-mile walk back to Camp but it was worth it." -- Ryan Neilson, Camper

Astronomy - "We started off making our own observatory, made of trash bags and duct tape, also known as an Astro-blob. Powered by a fan, the blob would inflate and we could climb inside and look at the night sky through a star projector machine....We did research on constellations and presented them in the Astro-blob.....Finally we constructed our very own sundials with nails and wood." -- Everleigh Stokes & Ryan Neilson

Limnology - "We went from the slippery rocks of South River to the concrete ponds of the Montebello fish hatchery, testing stream health and learning about the aquatic denizens around us. We became experts in the field of oxygen testing and rock rubbing." -- Ed Grimes.

Creative Writing - "There is a place that I call home. It is not where I live, but it is where my heart lives. It is where my mind frolics and my senses are at their greatest strength. It is a place that no one can understand until they experience it for themselves. It's where a common interest dwells and knowledge ensues itself upon eager minds. This place holds magic that casts a spell on all who enter. We all are here not just to socialize, find love, or learn. But we are here because we are all drawn back to it. Each year its magic thrives within our hearts and minds. And it calls us back -- to the place... called home." -- Alex Fochtman

Service With a Smile— May 2009

We had a very successful Service Weekend May 15-17, 2009. There were a number of projects on our list and we were able to complete almost all of them. We painted the walls and ceiling in the inner office of the Staffhouse, we resingled another section of the LS roof, we rebuilt



screens, we hung the old wooden Nature Camp sign in the Museum, and got Camp ready for another season. The finish on the new wooden sign was still wet when we left, but Charlie has since mounted it in the same location as the old wooden sign. It now reads "Providing environmental education to young people since 1942".

Eight folks, Flip, Matthew, Dave, Joe, Peter, Walter, Jonathan, and Mike, arrived at Camp on Thursday May 14th to remove the shingles from the roof of the LS. Katie and Maggie also came along to feed the crew when the project was finished. The original shingles that were installed in 1952 were still on the roof. I figure these folks removed between 3 and 4 tons of old shingles and felt in about 5 hours. It rained like crazy shortly after dark on Thursday evening, after the shingles had been removed. The plastic and tarps that had been stretched over the unshingled areas of the roof blew off with the first gusts of wind, and it was raining inside the LS. While a number of us manned mops to dry the floor so it wouldn't swell and buckle, Flip and Matthew went up onto the roof to secure the plastic and tarps. For their bravery and dedication, these 2 fellows deserve the hero awards. It was pitch black outside and they had to wait for the lightening flashes to see where to put the nails to hold the plastic and tarps. Did I mention that it was raining like crazy and everything was very wet? This is the second section of the roof we have resingled and we will continue with the final section in the fall.

Of the 75 folks who attended, 13 had never been to a previous Service Weekend, 5 will be on Staff this summer, and 6 will be campers this summer. In May of 2004, we had 78 folks at Camp for the CD release party. That is the only weekend we had more folks than this past weekend. We have now had 312 folks who have attended at least 1 Service Weekend.

Chuck, Katie, and Nell were chief cooks and bottle washers with help from Cathie, Maggie, Amy KG, Shirley, and others. The meals were, as usual, just fantastic. We sang in the LS after dinner on Friday and Saturday.

A special personal thanks from me to everyone who contributed to "The Star of the Service Weekend" (This was a song composed in honor of Jim and sung by a group of our many talented musicians a clip of which can be heard on the web site). I was really touched. Thank you. - Jim Brooks, Facilities Committee Chair



Actual grass on the Playfield!!!

Answer to Trivia question #1: The Waynesboro Council of Garden Clubs.

Sunday Hikes At Nature Camp



We got lost on the way—twice—while attempting to reach the trailhead for St. Mary’s River Gorge. It was a rather inauspicious start to a great hike. Other hikers scattered in different directions, headed up Mine Mountain, Mt. McClung, December Ridge, McClung/Whetstone Ridge, or off to Narnia. About 70 people braved the iffy weather on Saturday, Oct. 10, to go on Sunday Hikes at Nature Camp. The sky decided to rain on us occasionally, but finally gave up in the afternoon. The fall foliage was incredible, the colors very vibrant. The water in St. Mary’s River was blue and clear and there

were rocks with Scolithus tube fossils everywhere!

Though some folks had to head off right after their hikes were over, most of us sat down to dinner in the L.S., where, in addition to fresh turkey from Joel Salatin's Polyface Farm, we dined on mashed potatoes and gravy, cucumber salad, carrots, lentils, croissants, and apple cobbler with fresh whipped cream. Many, many thanks to Paul Cabe and Leigh Ann Beavers for their exceptional generosity in providing the food and preparing it along with veteran cooks Chris Chamberlin and Jeff Pool. Eight members of this year's staff helped lead hikes and clean up afterward.

- Shirley Napps

Dear Nature Camp Friends,
A special thanks to all who participated in the Ukrops Golden Gift Receipts program. The response was better than last year, and we hope to participate in this program for many years to come. Your contributions helped Nature Camp to have another successful summer. Thank you for your support!
While the current economy may challenge your giving goals, we ask you to consider a donation to the Annual Fund. Every dollar helps! This year, we are pleased to announce that your contribution to the 2009 Annual Fund qualifies you for a drawing at the end of the year for a custom bike (generously donated by former camper Whit Brooks). More details about the bike and how to donate will follow in our November letter. If you have already contributed this year, (either to the annual fund or through your campaign pledge payment), your name has automatically been added into the lottery. And there is no minimum to qualify, as every gift matters!
I would also encourage you to visit the Nature Camp Foundation website at: www.naturecampfoundation.org, which includes details about adult sessions, service weekends and future Nature Camp events. Donations through Paypal are also available on our website under the “support” header. Thank you for your continued support.
- Latham Schweitzer Coates, Nature Camp Foundation Development Chair

NCF Elections Coming Up

It is election time again for the Nature Camp Foundation. This year, the Secretary and Treasurer are up for election and the Development Chair and Volunteer Coordinator are up for appointment. All incumbents are eligible for re-election/reappointment and are willing to continue to serve.

The Nominating Committee consists of Reid Downer, Cathie Maguire Hartley, and Cammie Tuskey Hutton, the Vice President, who serves as the chair of the Committee. The Committee is now finalizing the slate and all those eligible to vote will receive a mailing announcing the slate chosen with a ballot for voting in the coming weeks. Please refer to the article in this issue of the *Afterglow* explaining the NCF definition of membership (which defines who is eligible to vote). The results of this year's election will be posted on the NCF web site in January.

We are always interested in getting more people involved in the leadership of the NCF. If you are interested in serving on the Board or any of the committees (including the Nominating Committee), please contact Cammie Hutton (campbellhutton@gmail.com).



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