

# OKAEE News

## Spring is here...and summer's near!

Oklahoma Association for Environmental Education

### 2007 EE EXPO A NATURAL SUCCESS

BY KARLA BEATTY

The Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History was the place to be on Thursday, February 8, 2007 as educators from across the state gathered for OKAEE's 12<sup>th</sup> annual Environmental Education Expo. The theme for the day was "From Dust to Dreams - a Century of Environmental Education in Oklahoma." Over 115 educators attended the conference with 28 receiving Teacher Fee Waivers. Conference participants visited 12 exhibits, the silent auction, and the refreshment table all of which were set up in the Museum's Great Hall.

Claudine Daniel, retired EE Specialist for the US Fish and Wildlife Service, delivered an informative and inspiring keynote address entitled "A Century of Environmental Education...Where We've Been and Where We're Going." Concurrent session presenters represented the Oklahoma Conservation Commission's GIS Program, Oklahoma Climatological Survey, Tulsa World Newspaper in Education Program, NASA Earth Science Programs, Council on Economic Education, and Ag in the Classroom.



Lunch in the Museum's Pleistocene Plaza

OKAEE recognized 3 educators for their excellence in environmental education during the Awards Presentation. The Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Dr. Lois Kruschwitz, Professor Emeritus at OKC University. Amy Stephens, an educator with the OKC Zoo, was named the Outstanding Classroom Teacher and the Outstanding Student was Ron Wagler, PhD Candidate, OSU Environmental Science Program.

Conference attendees enjoyed lunch in the Museum's Pleistocene Plaza around and under the life-size Mammoth statue. After lunch, Museum staff hosted Behind-the-Scenes tours to the Museum's collections. Participants also had the opportunity to view the Museum's current exhibits and visit the gift shop. The conference ended with the door prize drawings for the table decorations from the luncheon, all of which represented one of Oklahoma's many natural symbols. Everyone attending the conference agreed that the 2007 EE Expo was a "Natural" success!



Learning about soils



Ron Wagler, Teresa Randall, and Amy Stephens



In the classroom



Visiting exhibits





## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

BY ROBERT GIBBS

As I write this article for "The President's column", I must reflect back. I served on the OKAEE Board back in the early days of the organization. While I did not hold an office during those years, we all helped shape OKAEE (as do the board members today). While attending this years EXPO I had the feeling of pride, that I played a part in the early years, received an award from OKAEE, and have a part in the future of OKAEE. I encourage all of you that want to help shape the future of OKAEE to consider being on the Board, or participating in the many other ways available. I encourage all to visit the web site over the summer for upcoming events and news. Remember your membership renewal, and encourage your colleagues to join OKAEE.

*Robert Gibbs became the new OKAEE President at the culmination of the 2007 OKAEE Expo.*

# MEMBERSHIP

**Your membership in OKAEE may be expiring at the end of June 2007.**

If so, you will be receiving a message from Karla Beatty within the next few weeks with information on how to renew your membership.

After July 1, 2007 the OKAEE listserv and newsletter will be for members only! The current subscriber list will be deleted and only OKAEE members will be added back. So, if you want to continue to receive and post messages to the OKAEE listserv and receive this newsletter, be sure and renew your membership at

[www.okaee.org](http://www.okaee.org).

## OKLAHOMA SUMMER EVENTS

It's the centennial, and there are a number of "happenings" that might be of interest to anyone who enjoys learning about history, the places around Oklahoma, or someone who just likes being outside. This is by no means a comprehensive list, simply a compilation of events that caught the eyes of various board members. Enjoy, and have a fun-filled summer!



Get outside like these turtles basking at Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge

### May/June

**Selman BatWatch:** sign up for your spots May 25th-June 18th. Spots will fill quickly as it's their 10 yr. anniversary. Details online at <http://www.wildlifedepartment.com/BatWatchWeb/index.html>

### June

**9, 10, 16, 17, 23, 24 & July 16:** Centennial Bison Tours at the [Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge](#). These bus tours depart the headquarters at 5:30 p.m. Reservations are required and \$5 per person will be collected at the beginning of the tour. For more information or to make reservations contact the Refuge Headquarters at (580) 429-3222.

**9:** Dutch Oven Cooking for Beginners at Crow's Secret Nature Center, Lake Thunderbird State Park. The event will run from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Join the naturalist at the nature center to learn how to cook outdoors in a dutch oven just like the pioneers did in the old west. There is an \$8 fee per person. For more information or to register call the Crows Secret Nest at (405) 321-4633.

**15, 16 & August 10, 11:** [Stars over the Wichitas Interpretive Program](#). These two hour programs begin 30 minutes after dark. Participants will meet at the Lost Lake picnic area entrance gate. Participants are limited to 15 per program and participant must be at least 8 years of age. Reservations are required and \$5 per person will be collected at the beginning of the tour. For more information or to make reservations contact the Refuge Headquarters at (580) 429-3222.

**16:** The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife will be conducting the seventh annual Kid's Camp at the [Cherokee Wildlife Management Area](#). The one-day camp runs from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and is for youth 15 and under. For additional information contact Ron Justice at 918-260-8959.

**23:** OKAEE Field trip to Martin park Nature Center. See last page for information.

**23:** Butterfly Count, [Byron Hatchery Watchable Wildlife Area](#), Cherokee, OK. 9:30 am to 4 pm. Bring sack lunch. For more information: (405) 424-0099.

**23:** [Building a Butterfly Garden](#), 8:30 – 11:30am Build it and they will come!" Colorful butterflies will fly to your yard if you follow our simple plan for planting a butterfly attractant garden. Our experts will show you the whole process, from designing to plant selection. Seed starter kit included. Fees: \$10 or \$12. *Registration deadline: Monday, June 18<sup>th</sup>*

### July

**14, 21:** Under Cover of Darkness Tour at the [Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge](#). This bus tour and short walk will depart from the headquarters at 8 p.m. For more information contact the Refuge at (580) 429-3222.

**14:** [Shutterbug Safari](#) (Families): 9-11:00 am Taking that perfect photograph can create a lifelong memory. The OKC zoo is the perfect place to practice your skills. A photography expert will share tips for framing and lighting. Practice your techniques on zoo grounds and with a special animal visitor. Bring your own camera. Fees: \$10 or \$12. *Registration deadline: Monday, July 9*

**18:** [Oklahoma Trails For Educators](#) 9am-4pm. Learn how to use the OKC zoo's newest exhibit, Oklahoma Trails, to enhance your classroom & curriculum. Teachers will get a detailed look at the design of the exhibit, gain ideas and receive take home curriculum. Box lunch included. Fee: \$20.

**21:** [Project WET @ the OKC zoo](#). 9am – 4pm. The goal of Project WET is to promote awareness, appreciation, knowledge and stewardship of water resources through the dissemination of classroom ready teaching aids. Designed for classroom teachers grades K-12, but natural resource professionals, youth leaders, nature center instructors, and other educators who work with students in these age groups will also find Project WET useful. Fee includes a Curriculum and Activity Guide which contains more than 90 hands-on water activities. Includes box lunch. Fee: \$20.

### September

**9, 13, 15, 16, 23, 27, 29, 30:** Bugling Elk Tours at the [Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge](#). Tours will take participants into the Refuge's Special Use Area during the height of the elk mating season. Tours will begin at 5:30 p.m. at the Refuge headquarters located on the west side of the Refuge approx. six miles from the visitor center. Registration is required and a \$5 fee will be collected. Registrations will start August 27 and can be made by calling (580) 429-3222 between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

**14 & 15** [BioBlitz](#): Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge.

**28-30:** [2007 Wildlife Expo](#) at the Lazy E Arena in Guthrie. Bring the entire family and have fun participating in nearly 200 hands-on learning activities about Oklahoma wildlife. It's an outdoor experience where visitors fish, shoot, kayak, mountain bike, see and touch wildlife, and learn about recreation in the great outdoors.

**29:** Project WILD for college credit (with PLT on Sept. 22 and WET on Oct. 20) at the University of Oklahoma, Norman. Class runs from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. For more information or to enroll call Debbie Hubbard at (405) 325-1947.



Owl on display at the 2004 BioBlitz at Dripping Springs State Park

## EE CERTIFICATION

BY TERESA RANDALL

Last November I attended the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) annual conference in Minneapolis, MN. One of the pre-conference sessions covered the heated topic of certification for environmental educators. As of 2006, nine states (NC, MO, KY, TX, UT, PA, CA, GA and MN) had certification standards in place. Certifications are to be developed by each individual state and can be quite varied. Accreditation will be monitored by the NAAEE & they will serve as the granting agency for each state's proposed certification program. Some examples of existing state's program components include: KY—course based, UT—mentor based & a portfolio, TX – portfolio and other specific requirements, and NC – workshops, online courses and a portfolio. At this time our state doesn't have any certification requirement in place and has just begun dialoging about the idea of pursuing certification. There are many questions that need to be answered; first and foremost who would be the state agency / organization in charge of administering the program? Some states used colleges; others used state agencies, while others used their states EE organization (such as this organization, OKAEE). So I'd like to provide you, the member, with some basic information that I picked up regarding EE certification. Below is an article reprinted with permission given by the author Brenda Weiser, Ed.D., Environmental Institute of Houston/UHCL. Brenda was also one of the founding members of NAAEE's Certification Advisory Committee.



Teresa Randall, OKAEE Past President

### EE Certification and Accreditation – YIKES! What's in it for me?

Environmental educators (EE) come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Few EE's have training in both 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 EE 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. According to Webster's dictionary, certification is defined as a certified statement. So if you are certified, you most likely hold a document certifying that you have met specified requirements. However there are many EE's that see the certification effort as a threat to their being. Some frequently asked questions regarding the certification process included: Why would anyone want to become certified? How can certification benefit or harm me? How long will it take? And why would any state want to tackle this task?

There are many 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 & challenge yourself. Once you complete the process others will recognize you as a leader in the field and respect you for your initiative and accomplishment. Next, upon completion of the EE certification program, you can be distinguished from other similar professionals (classroom teacher, 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 that is. 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 new opportunities. Just look to the positive side of certification and do not think about it as another task on the list.

In order for you to receive your EE certification, your state must offer a certification program. There are many reasons why a state might offer EE certification and why would want to obtain certification. EE is not a professional field in which everyone receives the same or even similar training. Some EE's have a degree in education, some in natural resources, some in social studies, and some do not have a degree. Some EE's work in the non-formal sector while others find themselves working in formal education settings. Yet all are environmental educators.

When someone indicates they are an EE, 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, nature resource content, and/or educational issues? Can they explain what environmental literacy is? 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. Therefore if you have an EE certification others know what you know & know what you are able to do.

Building a state EE certification program is not an easy task. North Carolina was the first state to tackle this task in the 1990's. As the field

*(Continued on page 5)*

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matured other states became interested in certification and realized that it was important. With this in mind, the first regional EE certification meeting was held in April 2000. Eleven states were represented with about 35 people in attendance. This meeting focused on what states were doing regarding certification and interest expressed by states. This meeting was the kick off of a new vision and effort within the field of EE. States such as KY, GA, TX and UT began to focus on certification and examined the components that should be included in certification programs. States quickly realized that national EE guidelines could be the guiding document for certification efforts and that programs should be competency based in order to align with current educational reform movements.

At the same time, NAAEE and its state affiliates began to examine EE certification and established the Quality Assurance Team, which was dissolved in the summer of 2004 and re-emerged and was newly named the Certification Advisory Council (CAC). Their task was to identify and describe key components to be used to evaluate a states EE certification program and to develop accreditation steps.

Since 2004 the CAC has developed procedures for NAAEE's accreditation of states EE certification programs. Additionally the CAC established and Accreditation Review Council (ARC) to review applications. Other actions taken by the CAC: who should sit on the ARC panel, how states should submit their application, procedures for notification of acceptance/rejection, the application process, scoring tools, rubrics, appeals process, renewal process, and the agreement between NAAEE and the state's certifying agent.

The CAC recognizes that each state will be different and each may use a different approach to implement their program. A variety of approaches may be taken by individual states. Some states might want to use a combination of different approaches—such as attending workshops yet meeting established criteria while working with a mentor on a portfolio that is submitted to a review panel. However to apply for NAAEE accreditation, all state programs must contain the following: program administration, program operations, program assessment and improvement. These components are currently in draft form. Obtaining certification can vary from one approach to another depending on the state and what approach best fits that state. The CAC acknowledges this and considered various approaches as the accreditation process and requirements were being established.

As an individual you might ask how long will certification take? This will depend on your state's program (remember OK doesn't currently have a program) and you. Most state leaders will tell you the process will take longer than a week because they employ a series of steps that applicants pursue at their own pace. Also most states are looking at the certification process being *voluntary*. Similarly the length of time it takes a state to establish its program components and then submit an accreditation application will vary. The CAC is working on a formal process and it should be ready for the first pilot run by summer 2007. After final tweaking has been done on the pilot, NAAEE accreditation for state EE certification programs will be ready to officially launch.

There are many other issues associated with both certification and accreditation. However one must remember that the intent of EE certification is not to criticize or harm those in the field. But to encourage individual professional growth, gain respect for the field and to elevate the field to a new level. Many EE's have indicated a desire that the profession be more respected. The implementation of a state EE certification program is one step toward obtaining that respect and moving EE to a more esteemed professional level in the eyes of others. Remember accountants, teacher, electricians, forklift operators and financial planners all have a certification process. Why shouldn't environmental education have one too?



Teachers participating in CAB 2005 to advance their EE knowledge.

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# FIELD TRIP TO MARTIN PARK NATURE CENTER

On Saturday, June 23rd OKAEE will host a members-only nature hike and tour of Martin Park Nature Center in Oklahoma City. We will meet at 10 a.m. in the Nature Center and go on a tour of the facilities so that you will know what resources are available at this wonderful park. We will eat lunch down at the creek followed by Melissa Willis and Holli Wallner introducing some lessons that can be adapted to the setting at Martin Park. The trip will be finished around 1 p.m. If you are interested in participating, please contact Melissa by June 18th at [conservationeducator@yahoo.com](mailto:conservationeducator@yahoo.com). Carpools from Stillwater, Tulsa, and Norman may be arranged at a later date. The trip may be cancelled due to lack of participants.



Black ratsnake

Martin Park Nature Center is in far northwest Oklahoma City at 5000 West Memorial Road, on the south side of Memorial between N MacArthur Boulevard and N Meridian Avenue.

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## OKLAHOMA SUSTAINABILITY NETWORK CONFERENCE

BY ANDE REED

The 6<sup>th</sup> Annual OK Sustainability Network (OSN) Conference, “Idea’s to Action: Envisioning the Next 100 Years in Oklahoma” was held on April 20-21, 2007 at the National Weather Center in Norman, OK on the campus of OU. This year’s program proved once again to be a raving success with over 400 in attendance. For the first time the conference lasted two full days rather than one and the conference chair, Jennifer Gooden went a step further and secured donations to purchase carbon credits to offset all the travel of those in attendance including the speakers!

There were four different tracks offered each day with multiple sessions to choose from and they were all so intriguing that it was hard to decide which to join. Friday was geared toward the professional audience and tracks included OK Food and Farming, Energy and our Future, Sustainable Industries and Lean, Mean and Green. Friday’s keynote was “Redirecting Farming from Corporate Agriculture Back to Its Traditional Role in Society” provided by Victor Davis Hansen from the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. Saturday was geared toward community and tracks included The Big Picture, Up Close and Personal, Growing Smart and Ethics and Religion. Saturday’s keynote was amazing learning experience and following there was an additional workshop provided by Dr. Doug McKenzie-Mohr who is an environmental psychologist that practices and promotes community based social marketing. Those that opted to attend the workshop definitely left with new ideas and a new approach to modify people’s behaviors to more environmentally friendly and sustainable.

For more details about the conference or to find a chapter of OSN near you, please log on to [www.oksustainability.org](http://www.oksustainability.org). Presentations from the conference will be added to the web in the coming weeks!

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## MEET OKAEE

Melissa Willis is our part time OKAEE Aide. She is responsible for creating, updating & maintaining OKAEE databases, including the membership roster and conference lists. She attends board meetings and assists with the annual OKAEE Environmental Expo. Melissa has been an OKAEE member since 1998. She graduated with a degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Ecology from Oklahoma State University. She worked 3 years with the Oklahoma Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Research Unit collecting field data on various research projects and 2 years for a conservation district in Oklahoma promoting conservation education.



Melissa and Sam

**Oklahoma Association for Environmental Education**

