

Nature Notes

NEWS FROM DURANGO NATURE STUDIES



SPRING 2005

SNOWSHOE PROGRAM THRIVES!

February 9, 8:45 A.M.: Scattered snowflakes swirl from fraying clouds, and a school bus from Aztec, New Mexico rolls up Highway 550 into the San Juan Mountains. Aboard it are 43 fourth graders, their teachers, and parent chaperones, bound for the mountain meadows of Chris Park and a day in the Durango Nature Studies “Surviving and Thriving in Winter” field program.

Four DNS naturalist guides greet the bus upon arrival. Half the students are led to rows of snowshoes, and instructed on strapping the foreign contraptions to their feet. Snowshoes on and divided into two small hiking teams, these students will spend the next hour scouting the woods for animal clues with their DNS guides. Under ponderosa pines heavy with snow, they encounter the leapfrog “hopping” tracks of three vastly different animals: cottontail rabbit, squirrel, and mouse. Along the way, the guides point out the difference in cones, needles, and fragrance between white fir and douglas-fir trees. While the tracks and trees are interesting, the sheer adventure of a snowshoe hike through fresh snow touches the trekkers just as deeply.

Back at base, those students not outfitted with snowshoes follow their guides to impressive

snow trenches, waist-deep from this moisture-blessed winter. Standing on the ledges of their snow laboratory, these soon-to-be snow scientists predict the nature of the snow at intervals descending from brilliant surface layer to ground depth. Predictions made, the students hop into the pits to test their

This was the best field trip ever! The thing I liked the best was learning about the different layers of snow. Thank you for taking the time to teach us how to snowshoe.

Dakota H. – Park Avenue Elementary 4th grader, Aztec, NM

hypotheses, armed with simple

science equipment. Thirty minutes later they emerge with intriguing findings. Thermometer data indicates two warm zones in the snowpack: the sunlit surface (36° F), and ground level (32° F). Surprisingly, a central layer of snow is a frigid 28° F. Light brush strokes over the pit’s vertical face have uncovered a dozen horizontal layers, each now marked by a popsicle stick. Magnified examination reveals each layer’s texture: icy crusts, consolidated snow masses, sticky “snowball snow,” and at ground level,

unconsolidated crystals that remind one student of rock salt. Curiosity piqued by unexpected findings, the snow scientists share a lively discussion with their naturalists. They consider how the earth’s heat migrates upward through the snowpack, altering snow crystals as it goes, and how different snowstorms form unique layers within the snowpack.

The snowshoe groups arrive, rosy cheeked and puffing. After a well-earned snack of hot cocoa and pretzels, snow scientists become snowshoers, and former snowshoers head to the snow pits.

Ninety minutes later, the students are heading home. A world of winter has been opened to them. In one brief morning, they’ve lived snow science and wandered winter woods. But unlike winter’s fleeting snows, their knowledge and memories of this day will endure. Experience inspires!



Bringing Hands-on Outdoor Nature Education to Our Community Since 1994!

DURANGO NATURE STUDIES
Nature Notes · Spring 2005

MISSION

Durango Nature Studies is a non-profit educational organization dedicated to increasing awareness of, knowledge of, and respect for the natural world by providing diverse and hands-on learning experiences for all ages.

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DURANGONATURESTUDIES.ORG

BRINGING HANDS-ON OUTDOOR
NATURE EDUCATION TO OUR
COMMUNITY SINCE 1994!

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Our staff recently unearthed a startling fact: In 1981, American children spent an average of 86 minutes per day outdoors. By 1997, that time had dropped to 42 minutes. Less than an hour! Care to wager how much time today's tech savvy kids spend outside?



Lisa K. Branner

Lisa K. Branner

Many of us can't imagine a childhood without outdoor ramblings - smelling flowers, climbing trees, digging dirt, and chasing bugs. For us, these experiences were a ubiquitous part of growing up. But these experiences weren't just fun; they were formative. Playing in nature helped us build an appreciation for the natural world and develop an understanding of our place within it.

These lessons are as vital for today's youngsters as they were for us. That's why Durango Nature Studies provides outdoor learning experiences to thousands of children in the Four Corners each year, giving them the opportunity to discover and explore the wonders of nature for themselves.

I invite you to join Durango Nature Studies as we do our best to ensure children in the Four Corners spend much more than 42 minutes outside. Your involvement as a donor or volunteer will help ensure the future of nature education in our community!

New & Renewing Donors

January and February 2005

\$1,000 +

Burlington Resources Foundation

\$500 +

Bank of the San Juans • Community Bank Fund

\$250 +

Ecosphere Environmental Services • Kiwanis Club of Durango • Mick Souder • The Wells Group

\$100 +

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Spring 2005 Calendar of Events

Durango Nature Center Workshops

Trail Building with Trails 2000

DNS and Trails 2000 are teaming up to augment our existing 3-mile trail system with an additional footpath that will meander through sage/juniper and rocky arroyo habitat near the northeast corner of the site. This is a great opportunity to help improve the Nature Center and learn about two wonderful organizations at the same time!

Date: Sat., April 2nd, 10 am – 3 pm

Registration By: April 1st, to reserve a free lunch

Bring: Shovel, work gloves

Cost: Free, with our deep gratitude

22nd Semi-Annual Volunteer Naturalist Training

Join more than 265 community members who have learned how to teach in nature with us! Volunteers participate in a 17 hour training, and then lead school children on nature hikes in April and May.

Date: Wed., Fri., & Sat., April 6th, 8th and 9th

Registration By: April 5th (training fills fast, call early)

Cost: Free

Second Annual Weed and Beer Day

Kill weeds, drink beer. DNS once again teams up with local volunteers and Ska Brewing to slow the invasion of noxious weeds at the Nature Center. Volunteer for a day of weed identification, thistle carnage, and a cool brew to wash it down. The more the merrier!

Date: Sat. April 30th, 9:00 am to 1:00 pm, followed by lunch

Registration By: April 29th to reserve a free lunch

Bring: Shovel, work gloves

Cost: Free, with our unending gratitude

Nature Writing Workshop with Ken Wright

Find your voice in nature as local author Ken Wright guides you through the creation process, progressing from nature journal entry through essay development and even on to publication! The late spring landscapes of the Nature Center are sure to inspire. All levels of experience welcome at this fun yet functional workshop. Space is limited to 12 adult participants.

Date: Sat., May 14th, 9:00 am to 3:00 pm

Registration By: May 12th, 12:00 noon

Cost: \$15 DNS members/\$20 non-members

International Migratory Bird Day

Co-sponsored by the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and Colorado Division of Wildlife. Join top bird biologists and bird watchers for this always popular day of bird watching, bird banding, and talks on birds. Learn about bird research techniques first hand and enjoy the opportunity to see these captivating creatures up close.

Date: Sat., May 21st, 8:00 am to 2:00 pm

Registration: Not required, come early for the best show

Cost: Free

Full Moon Hikes

Hiking the Crow Moon at Andrews Lake on Snowshoes

Date: Thurs., March 24th, 6:00 - 8:00 pm

Cost: \$5 members/\$7 non-memb. (includes snowshoe rental)

Hiking the Flower Moon on Animas Mountain

Date: Mon., May 23rd, 8:00 - 10:00 pm

Cost: \$3 members/\$5 for non-members

Hiking the Strawberry Moon at Sand Canyon

Date: Tues., June 21st, 8:00 - 10:00 pm

Cost: \$3 members/\$5 for non-members



**YES! I want to support nature education
in the Four Corners!**



Name _____

Street Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

E-mail _____

Please send me e-mail reminders of upcoming DNS events and news.

STANDARD MEMBERSHIP

- Student \$10
- Individual \$25
- Family \$50

PREMIUM MEMBERSHIP

- Enos Mills Club \$100
- Aldo Leopold Club \$250
- John Muir Club \$500
- Rachel Carson Club \$1000

Please choose one (\$100+ donation only)

- T-shirt (S, M, L, XL)
- Hat
- Mug
- No thanks

CHECK ENCLOSED CREDIT CARD (MC/VISA ONLY)

Please note that DNS loses 3.28% on every credit card membership.

Card # _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

MAIL TO: PO BOX 3808 DURANGO CO 81302

VISIT WWW.DURANGONATURESTUDIES.ORG OR
CALL 970.382.9244 FOR MORE INFORMATION

GOT SPRING
FEVER?

VOLUNTEER TO
TEACH IN NATURE
WITH US!

**SPRING 2005
VOLUNTEER
NATURALIST
TRAINING**

APRIL 6TH,
8TH AND 9TH

CONTACT
JENNIFER AT
382-9244 OR

JEN@DURANGONATURESTUDIES.ORG

FOR MORE
INFORMATION

VALUABLE
VOLUNTEER:
LIZ CAHILL

*Thank
You!*

Special recognition this issue goes to DNS board member Liz Cahill. Liz and her husband Paul retired to Durango in 1992 after selling their successful business in Salinas California. They came for the skiing, hiking and outdoor lifestyle. Liz joined DNS as a Volunteer Naturalist in the spring of 1998 because it combined two things she loves, children and nature. Liz was involved in our land acquisition campaign, which allowed us to purchase our Nature Center, and joined the board of directors in January 2000. Most recently, she has been a tremendous help as board treasurer and volunteer bookkeeper, assuring that the bills get paid. The only thing Liz loves more than the outdoors is her family. She has a son and daughter and two granddaughters.

**SAVE THE DATE!
4TH ANNUAL
EARTH DAY
CELEBRATION**

SILENT AND LIVE
AUCTIONS
BEER, WINE, FINE FOOD
LIVE MUSIC
INCLUDING
DURANGO CHILDREN'S
CHORALE

FRIDAY APRIL 22ND,
6 - 9 PM
BISTRO JP

\$25/PERSON
\$40/COUPLE

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Fun Nature Fact!
A pair of Golden Eagles has returned to Ridges Basin to nest, as they have for many years. They have been observed mating while in flight, and are currently incubating eggs. They will soon be feeding their nestlings jackrabbits and other prey. Two young successfully fledged last year.

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