



Newsletter Fall 2006

Sheldrake Environmental Center

685 Weaver Street—Larchmont, NY 10538



Open to the public from dawn to dusk, entrances are at 685 and 687 Weaver Street in Larchmont and on Pinebrook Boulevard in New Rochelle.

From Executive Director Marie Venezia

Do you remember your first experiences with nature? I can still feel the prickly grass on my cheek and elbows as I rolled down the hills at the park with my dad standing nearby when I was about five, and the cool breeze from the weeping willow in my Aunt Fran's backyard. I remember how the leaves on the ground were cool and wet against my ankle soon after falling and started crunching underfoot a few weeks later as I walked to school. Most of us have vivid childhood and favorite family memories of playing in or exploring the outdoors. Want to make memories for your family? Go for a walk in the woods! No need to wait for a day that your kids or grandkids don't have a soccer game or to take a long car drive, Sheldrake is minutes away. Come often. Watch a leaf fall; walk along Goodliffe Pond. Nature will have a different show with each visit.



Bird Blind at Goodliffe Pond

(Continued on next page)

Have You Wondered? by Mary B. Davis, Program Director

When we think of fall, most of us picture the blazing red and yellow colors of the changing leaves. It reminds us that winter is coming and that we need to get out our sweaters, put on our storm windows and make sure there's antifreeze in the car. But, have you ever stopped to think how amazing it is that plants and animals know when it's fall and time to get ready for winter? Each plant and each animal has devised its own adaptations to survive the changing seasons and in the natural world, preparation for winter is what fall is all about.

What triggers this preparation process? To find out what is happening on the earth at this time of year, we need to look up into the sky – strange as that may seem – because it is the length of daylight, more than anything else, that signals fall to both plants and animals. Every year, the autumnal equinox occurs on September 22 or 23. At this time, the sun crosses the celestial equator, an imaginary line through the sky, and appears directly above the equator. When this happens, day and night are of approximately equal length everywhere on earth and this marks the beginning of our fall. In the northern hemisphere, as we start to tilt farther away from the sun, each day gets a shorter amount of daylight and everything – from the tallest tree to the tiniest insect – “knows” that shorter days means it's time to get ready for winter!

Some of the plants' and animals' preparations are obvious and easily observed, but some aren't. Have you ever wondered...

Why do deciduous trees lose their leaves?

The leaves need water to make food for the tree. In climates like ours, this becomes a problem in the winter. In freezing temperatures, tree roots may be unable to soak up the gallons of water the leaves need in order to make food. Also, if there were water in the leaves, freezing temperatures would kill them. Without water and leaves, a deciduous tree would not be able to make its own food and would soon die, so it just sheds its leaves and “shuts up shop” for the winter. Most conifers are a different story. Many have narrow, needle-like leaves with a tough, waxy coating that protects them from freezing and from the drying effects of cold winter winds. Also, their flexible branches make it easy for snow and ice to slip off without breaking them.

Upcoming Programs

Sheldrake's Fall Festival

Sunday, October 15, 1-4pm

An afternoon of family fun!

An Exhibition of Natural Science Art:

Invasive, Native, Rare and Endangered

October 15—December 15
by the Greater NY Chapter of
the Guild of Natural Science
Illustrators

Twelve-session Volunteer Environmental Educator Course

See page 5 for more info.

Stop Global Warming Conference

Thursday, October 26
at the NY Power Authority
Headquarters

For more info contact Tony at
tonyg@agsac.org.

NYLCV's Annual Dinner Honoring Sheldrake

Friday, October 27, 6pm

For tickets call
212-361-6350 ext. 204.

Veteran's Day Vacation Club

Programs are available for
children ages 4 to 10.

Card Making with Cindy

December 2

Let's get ready for the
holidays!

(Continued on next page)

From Executive Director Marie Venezia (Continued from previous page)

Need another reason to put on your walking shoes? A new Cornell University study reports that if you want your children to grow up to actively care about the environment, give them plenty of time to play in the "wild" before they're 11 years old. This study looked at a broad representative sample of urban adults and examined individuals' pathways to environmentalism.

Nancy Wells, assistant professor of design and environmental analysis in the College of Human Ecology at Cornell reports "When children become truly engaged with the natural world at a young age, the experience is likely to stay with them in a powerful way -- shaping their subsequent environmental path."

Sheldrake fall programs are underway. Naturalist Cindy Polera is introducing SheldraKids ages 4 and up to the wonders of nature, Environmental Educators are leading school groups and scouts, and Program Director Mary Davis is preparing for this year's Volunteer Environmental Educator training program.

Sheldrake is *your* local environmental center. Explore. Have fun. Make memories together with your family this fall.

I'd love to hear from you,

Marie



Environmental educators Mike Merigliano, Elaine Weiss and Jenny Geer rekindle and renew curiosity with natural world analyzing stream samples.

Have You Wondered? (Continued from previous page)

Unlike deciduous trees, most conifers don't drop all their leaves at once in the fall, but little by little throughout the year. They do, however, go through a dormant stage during the winter when growth nearly ceases.

Where do chipmunks put their nuts?

Chipmunks live in underground burrows with many entrances and exits and several "rooms". During the fall, they gather nuts, seeds and berries, cramming them into their cheek pouches. This cache of food will help to get them through the winter days of ice and snow. They pile it all up in one "room", cover it with leaves and use it as a bed to sleep on. That way, they can have one of my favorite things - breakfast in bed! A separate room is created for their bathroom. Chipmunks are not true hibernators. In contrast to true hibernators, their temperature, heart rate and breathing remain normal and they nap through the winter, waking up to leave their burrows on warm days.

Why do squirrels move to a new nest in the fall?

Gray squirrels have a summer home and a winter home, just like some of us do, or wish we did. A squirrel's leafy summer nest sits out on a branch, allowing the cool breezes in, while a winter home is in a hole in a tree. Often lined with bark and soft plant fibers to provide insulation, this nest protects the squirrels from ice, snow and the chill winds.

Where do the leaves go?

Each year an average of 3,000 to 5,000 pounds of leaves, small twigs, bark and fruit accumulate on one acre of forest floor. The leaves decompose or break down into simpler materials. If this didn't happen, the pile of leaves would be so high, we wouldn't be able to walk through the forest. The rate of decomposition varies according to factors such as moisture and the kind of decomposers, such as earthworms, millipedes and sowbugs in the leaf litter. In this area, about 10 years is needed to decompose one year's leaf litter. Since no leaf-blowers are used in the forest, all the nutrients of the decomposed leaves are absorbed by the trees and other plants and used again...nature recycles and nothing is wasted!

What happens to the butterflies?

Some migrate, some over-winter, and some die after ensuring the next generation by laying their eggs. Most of us have seen the orange adult Monarchs migrating in the fall. The Black Swallowtail, on the other hand, spends the winter in the form of a chrysalis. Some butterflies even over-winter as adults. On a sunny, winter day, surprising as it may seem, you may come upon a delicate creature with velvety brown wings edged in gold, flying about. This butterfly, called the Mourning Cloak, seeks out a protected spot (perhaps under a rotting log, or in a hollow tree) as its home for the winter. Then, it "sleeps", only to come out and forage occasionally on a nice day. Watch for them!

The crisp air of fall makes it a great time to go for a walk! Why not come to Sheldrake and look for some of the changes that take place at this time of year?

One Generation of “Sheldrake Friends” Meets and Connects with Another

by Amy Bisignani, Scheduling Coordinator

To express fascination with creatures such as wolves, some portray them in beautiful paintings to exhibit, whereas some make and wear wolf masks so that they may “exhibit themselves.” Such is the case of those whom the staff of Sheldrake Environmental Center likes to refer to as “Friends of Sheldrake.”

Virginia Bishop, art student of Pat Sutherland’s class at the LSC, has painted two stunning portrayals of wolves in their natural habitats: **Orion’s Watch** and **Salute to the Moon**. During the month of June 2006, Sheldrake exhibited these two paintings along with other nature de-

pictions by Vincenzo A. Sperandio, Norma Perciasepe, Ada Weiner, Norma Manno Luther, Angela Forenza, Gladys Parker, Eligia Dundee and Lorraine Roxbury, other art students of the Larchmont Senior Center.

To honor the seniors displaying their lovely renderings of the natural world, Sheldrake’s staff held a reception on the afternoon of June 12, 2006 under the gazebo at Sheldrake. Anna Danoy, LSC Director, and Beverly Nolan, LSC Program Coordinator, accompanied the seniors. Among the event attendees were the Town of Mamaroneck Supervisor Valerie Moore O’Keeffe and Councilwoman Phyllis Wittner. Others

pleased to celebrate with the seniors were Sheldrake Board Members Suzanne Frank, Alison Lowy Dopsch, Dorothy Rainier and Lee Bloom. Lee Bloom was especially pleased as he got to share the history of Sheldrake with the seniors. But, the list of guests does not end here! The seniors were most flattered when surprise guests came personally to express their feelings about the artwork. Children from one of the nature classes taught at Sheldrake by Naturalist Cindy Polera, immediately after visiting the exhibit, came to meet the seniors and let them know how exciting it was to see the paintings, in particular the ones of the wolves. The *SheldraKids* brought along the wolf masks they had made so that they could pretend to be wolves. It was truly an amazing experience for me to observe two distinct generations of “Friends of Sheldrake” as they shared with one another their common passion for nature.

Sheldrake is often misconceived as a venue primarily for children. The truth is there is something here for nature lovers of all ages, from age-specific youth ecology programs to family events such as the annual seasonal festivals to art exhibits by area seniors or other artists in the community. So, if you love nature, next time get together with the **whole** family and head over to Sheldrake. Anyone of any age can be a “Friend of Sheldrake.”

Fall Programs Bring Many Returnees to Sheldrake

by Cindy J. Polera, Environmental Educator

I am excited! School is back in session and that means that I get to come back to Sheldrake. Besides being able to spend time in my favorite place (outdoors), I have the honor of sharing and exploring nature with children. Many children have become repeaters in the programs I have taught over the years at Sheldrake. Children who started in the Mommy and Me program at 2 years old came back at 3, signed up for the Pre-K Nature drop-off program a year later, and attended the After School Nature Clubs starting at kindergarten going up to the 3rd grade (so far!) It has been a welcome challenge to develop new programs for these SheldraKid returnees. A few kids

are qualified to run a program or at least assist!

Some kids are new to the area and to Sheldrake. It is gratifying for me to show them the trails and the water and to watch them get excited over the creatures we meet along the way.

It also gives me the opportunity to expose new children to the wonders of the outdoors and to our local watershed and its inhabitants and I get to do what I love most.



Sheldrake Environmental Educator
Cindy J. Polera

Unexpected Outcomes by Janet Beal, MCDC Teacher

The Mamaroneck Schools Foundation grant providing Sheldrake nature walks and programs to the pre-schoolers at the Mamaroneck Child Development Center has come to an end. Two years of regular visits to Sheldrake gave children new access to natural beauty and outdoor activities we hope they will continue to pursue in elementary school. Our children visited a farm this summer

and by the pig-pen encountered a woman exclaiming over the family of baby “squirrels” she had just discovered. One of our children motioned for me to bend down and said quietly “chipmunks” as he walked past me to investigate the cow-paddock. A nature program teaches you all kinds of things—including a certain tactful patience with adults!



Two generations of Friends of Sheldrake get together: the members of the Larchmont Senior Center and SheldraKids.

Stream Monitoring at Sheldrake*by Jenny Geer, Sheldrake Naturalist*

For Sheldrake's environmental educators, summertime is usually quiet time. School's out, which means no class trips to lead at Dog Beach or around the Reservoir. But this summer a group of us found a new project to work on -- as volunteer stream monitors for Westchester County. The "stream" we monitored? Our very own Sheldrake River.

From June through September, our team met weekly at the bridge below Goodliffe Pond. Using equipment provided by the County, we took samples of the water and conducted a variety of chemical tests and physical tests. We measured nitrates, dissolved oxygen, conductivity, pH, turbidity, alkalinity, salinity and phosphates. We also recorded the stream's flow and depth, and examined the different forms of animal life found in the streambed.

Why did the naturalists decide to participate in the testing?

"I wanted to find out more about the water quality of our own stream, and be able to use that when we teach the children," said team member Elaine Weiss.

"I wanted to learn something new," added naturalist Mike Merigliano, "and I've definitely done that."

All the naturalists were excited to be able to contribute to an important environmental study in our local

Garden Harvest by Janet Beal, Garden Volunteer Coordinator

Thanks to truly memorable (!) spring and summer weather and a rabbit-invasion of ravenous proportions, this year's Sheldrake Community Garden harvest was the lowest in many years. In spite of obstacles, the Garden Group still managed to provide the Larchmont/Mamaroneck Food Pantry and several community residences with a taste of summer—tomatoes, potatoes, collard-greens, and small amounts of eggplant, squash, lettuce, and onions.

Hard work was made easier by the wonderful help provided by Head of Town Conservation Liz Paul, Rye Neck neighbor Casey Haviland (who chose the Garden as her community-service pro-

ject) and assisting dad Greg Haviland. All three can take credit for pulling more than their weights in weeds, and we are truly grateful.

By the Fall Festival on Sunday, October 15th, the Garden will have been put to bed till spring with the help of Group members, volunteers from St. John's Episcopal Church, and other helpers. Preparation for spring, however, begins in the fall, including additional rabbit-proof fencing for the walled greens bed. As we say in the Garden, "let me tell you about next year." Even better, find out for yourself! Call Sheldrake at 834-1443 to volunteer at the Garden—we'll be glad to see you.

community. Even more, it was great to work closely with fellow naturalists on a new and different venture. The complete stream monitoring team included this writer as well as Jane Caro, Mary Davis, Barbara Hicks, Mike Merigliano, Jackie Merker, Marie Venezia, Beatrice Weinberger, and Elaine Weiss.

How did our stream do? It's a little early to tell – later this year Westchester County's Department of Planning, which runs the Citizens' Volunteer Monitoring Program, will issue a report on the results for all of the streams being monitored around the county. When we have the data we plan to publicize it to the community, post it at the Center, and also use it in our educational programs. Stay tuned! For more information on the Westchester County stream monitoring program, contact Susan Darling, Westchester County Office of Planning, at

sad8@westchestergov.com, or visit the project website at <http://cvmp.westchestergov.com/cvmp/>.



Jenny Geer, leading the stream monitoring efforts

Who's at the Feeders? Leave Us a Note! by Janet Beal, Board Member

To the right of the Potting Shed picture-window hangs a clipboard which serves as a quick way to record the "traffic" you see at the bird-feeders. Especially in spring and fall, you will see travelers as well as permanent residents, as migrating birds follow their traditional paths through our area.

Even if there seems to be nothing new, please take the time to record your observations, including date, kinds of birds you see, and your name or initials. This helps Sheldrake keep track of avian visitors and changes in bird populations. Naturalist Cindy Polera assures us that even sparrows and mourning doves count, and it's all right if we're not quite sure how many we've seen.

It's okay to put down birds you see on other parts of the property, too. After all, if you've slogged through mud to track down a new and interesting hawk, you'll want to share the discovery before your shoes dry! And the board is a great place for questions—check back a week or so later, and you'll probably find another birder's answer to your puzzling. Bird-charts on the walls and books in the bookcase by the door will get you started on identifying birds. Add what you learn to our clip-board! Thanks!



YOU CAN BE AN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATOR!

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"It has been more exhilarating than I had ever imagined. I'll never forget our lesson at the pond. There I was, a middle-aged woman jumping up and down at my discovery of a dragonfly in the nymph stage. Did you know that they breathe under water for a time before they grow wings?? Amazing. I have become totally aware of my surroundings wherever I am and see nature in a whole new light. I now understand how much there is to learn and observe. I can't wait to share my enthusiasm with children from the elementary schools" said **Jackie Merker, Volunteer Environmental Educator** about her experience in the Class of 2006 Volunteer Environmental Educator course.

portunity to join a group of like-minded people who want to make a difference in our community. Beginning in October 2006, Sheldrake Environmental Center will offer a course for those wanting to become volunteer environmental educators.



The twelve-session course will consist of a combination of ecology and teaching techniques and will be taught by Mary B. Davis, Director of Environmental Programs at Sheldrake, as well

as guest instructors. Volunteers taking the course will be trained by participating in hands-on activities and outdoor explorations. Classes will start on October 19th and will meet on Thursday mornings from 9:30 to 11:30 am. Trainees will observe veteran naturalists in the field. Upon completion of the course, graduates will lead pre-trips in the local elementary schools and field trips at the Larchmont Reservoir, the Sheldrake River Trail and Dog Beach. Benefits include contributing an important service to your community, continuing education through refresher classes, and being part of a group of people who share your environmental values and goals. These classes are free, but there will be a modest fee for materials. For more information call Mary Davis at (914)834-1443.

Do you have an interest in the natural world? Would you like to learn more about it and share your enthusiasm with children? If so, you have an exciting op-

COMPUTER SUPPORT NEEDED!

We are looking for volunteers to help us update the Sheldrake website. Please call (914) 834-1443 for more info.

All profits from bird seed sale help support Sheldrake Environmental Center.

Type	Size	Price	Quantity	Total Price
Black Oil Sunflower	20 lbs.	\$13		
	40 lbs.	\$25		
Hulled Sunflower	5 lbs.	\$8		
	25 lbs.	\$33		
	50 lbs.	\$60		
Safflower	5 lbs.	\$5		
	25 lbs.	\$24		
	50 lbs.	\$46		
Millet	25 lbs.	\$13		
	50 lbs.	\$22		
Birdwise Blend	20 lbs.	\$16		
	40 lbs.	\$30		
Patio Mix (no mess)	5 lbs.	\$8.50		
	20 lbs.	\$31.50		

Type	Size	Price	Quantity	Total Price
Thistle/Nyjer	8 lbs.	\$12		
	25 lbs.	\$33		
Woodpecker Mix	4 lbs.	\$8		
	20 lbs.	\$33		
Cardinal Blend	4 lbs.	\$6		
	20 lbs.	\$24		
Orange Suet Cakes	12 cakes	\$24		
Peanut Suet Cakes	12 cakes	\$24		
Pure Suet Cakes	12 cakes	\$30		
Cracked Corn	25 lbs.	\$11		
Hopper Mix	20 lbs.	\$20		

Subtotal
 Donation to Sheldrake
GRAND TOTAL

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email address _____

Deadline for orders: Tuesday, October 23rd, 2006
Pick-up days: November 2nd - November 4th
Pick-up location: Wild Bird Center
 400 Central Park Ave. in Scarsdale
 Make your checks payable to Sheldrake Environmental Center.

Mail to:
 Sheldrake Environmental Center
 685 Weaver Street
 Larchmont, NY 10538
 Any questions? Call Amy Bisignani at 914-834-1443.

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Phone: 914-834-1443
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Email: sheldrakecenter@verizon.net



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Come enjoy the fall at Sheldrake !

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Birthday Parties

 We offer many of our exciting programs as birthday parties for children of all ages! Let us plan a party  designed especially to meet your child's interests.

Sheldrake Environmental Center is a non-profit organization whose mission is to inspire environmental awareness and action in the community and to preserve, protect and enhance local environmental resources. Participation in our ecology programs not only teaches ecological concepts to the members of the community but also enables them to become effective stewards of the natural world.

Thank you to all our members

Sheldrake relies on memberships, donations and program fees for 80% of our operating budget. Please consider becoming a member at a higher level or sending us a donation in honor of a birthday, an anniversary, or in memory of a loved one.

Thank you to all our area business partners/corporate contributors

Con Edison, Pfizer, Inc., IBM Corporation, Unilever Corporation, Gary Ptak, LLC, La Renaissance French Pastry, Turquoise, Smith & Hawken, Larchmont Nursery, Dunkin Donuts, Aroma Coffee Roast, Stop & Shop, Cherry Lawn Farm, Super Frosty Ice Cream, Cookies By Design, Village Bagels, Simply the Best, Earthrise and PNT Marketing Services, Inc.

(We sincerely regret any omissions in our listing. Please let us know so we can correct for next time.)

Board Members: Suzanne C. Frank, President; Peter Goldberger, Vice President; Robin Kriesberg, Vice President; Janet Beal, Secretary; Kathy Savolt, Treasurer; Lee H. Bloom; Linda Degenhardt; Alison Lowy Dopsch; Carol Casazza Herman; Jackie Lorieo; Margaret Merigliano; Steve Mitsch; Dorothy Rainier; Philip Schriver; Bob Wirsneck; James G. Johnson, Jr., Honorary Director.

Administrative Staff: Marie Venezia, Executive Director; Mary Davis, Director of Environmental Programs; Amy Bisignani, Scheduling Coordinator.

Environmental Educators: Sandra Blanco, Jane Caro, Margie Cohen, Marjorie Edelman, Jenny Geer, Mary Gillick, Barbara Hicks, Gail Koller, Yolanda Leggette, Pat Martin-Moser, Kathy McCarthy, Margaret Merigliano, Mike Merigliano, Jacqueline Merker, Alice Model, Anna Paret, Cindy Polera, Dorothy Rainier, Shelley Volk, Lorraine Walsh, Beatrice Weinberger, Elaine Weiss.

Caretakers: Paul Degenhardt, Mike Orchanian.

Sheldrake is looking for a few talented and conscientious board members.
Make a lasting difference in our community!