



AUTUMN 2020 NEWSLETTER



Lone River by Juliana Seedorf

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A Message From the Program Coordinator

As this year has unfolded, there were a lot of twists and turns along the way. However, our mission remains the same: to create young stewards of the natural environment and to inspire others to do the same.

We've been able to successfully launch in-person projects again and while that may look different, it's been a breath of fresh air to get outdoors and enjoy each other's company. How nice it is to see your smiling faces as you show up to dig your hands in the soil on a community garden, asking

questions on a hike, exploring nature trails, paddling along Porpoise Channel, enthusiastically participating in beach cleanups or scanning the area for stranded marine life. I'm grateful to have such wonderful volunteers.

At a time of giving and listing the things we are thankful for it is easy to reflect on the hardship many of us have experienced this year. It might be difficult to come up with something, but nature is always here for us. Continue to leave a sustainable footprint, get outside on a trail

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Volunteers kayaking in Stony Brook Harbor after a cleanup on Young's Island

We Launched a YouTube Page!



When the pandemic first struck in March, I did not think it was going to affect us as much as it has (and still continues to). Upon remaining in our homes, I thought about our programs at Avalon. As time went on, we sought to our creative devices to stay in touch. I was so happy to see that our Zoom sessions and activities from home caught on and many of you were signing in and participating while you stayed safe and sound. My experience as an educator has led me to look for more ways to provide enriching content, maintain community engagement and to increase understanding of the ecosystems around us.

That is how our Nature Initiative YouTube Page came to life! Whether you are learning from home, have a hybrid rotation, or you enjoy all things nature as much as I do, feel free to watch my videos and share with your friends, family or teachers! My goal is for it to serve as an informal educational spot where you can follow on my adventures.

Feel free to email me with any feedback you may have, I would appreciate it!

Access the link here: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMH7FKFxTspWfL66jKmr-cw/>

Project Spotlight

We rolled out a new series this fall called “Hike Long Island” where the goal was for our students to explore new trails from the North Shore to the South Shore. We’ve spotted evidence of glacial erratic and deposits from the last ice age, compared other meadow habitats, talked about succession and the forest environments, looked at watersheds, seen deer rub and observed wildlife! All while socially distanced and wearing masks of course.

Our third hike in the four-part event took place at Uplands Farm Sanctuary and Cold Spring Harbor State Park. The Uplands Farm Sanctuary managed by the Nature Conservancy, has a unique history of being a dairy farm back in 1920-1962. Before then, it was thought that sheep ranching for wool was taking place. We met right near the silos and began our hike around the quiet meadows (formerly cattle trails) of the Daniel P. Davison trail and the West Loop. Our students led the way as they practiced reading the blazes and trail markers. Upon reaching the eastern end of the loop, we took a connecting trail into Cold Spring Harbor State Park.

The Nassau-Suffolk Greenbelt trail extends about 21 miles to Massapequa, which is pretty crazy. We stuck to just the Cold Spring Harbor portion, a little over 5 miles to go out and back. After entering from the trailhead, we quickly experienced the hilly terrain. Up and down, up and down, just like a rollercoaster. On this beautiful day that was rather warm for the time of year, we got some fresh air and hiked in a new place. We chose to do a sit spot at the highest point, a perfect scenic overlook of the brackish Cold Spring Harbor. The water was like glass- so calm and quiet. During these sit spots, we spend about 10 minutes just taking it all in. Often times when we are walking and there is a lot of hustle and bustle, we may not notice but the wildlife have already spotted us and altered their behavior. Birds might stop singing, deer may retreat to the woods, squirrels might race up a tree. The idea is become a part of nature rather than just being in it (something I learned from our friend George Bumann in Yellowstone). Some of us jotted or sketched in our journals, others just sat still and looked out on the water; everyone had their own unique way of feeling connected to nature at that very moment.

We had a vote to follow the trail along St. Johns Pond on our way back. We explored the same trail from a different

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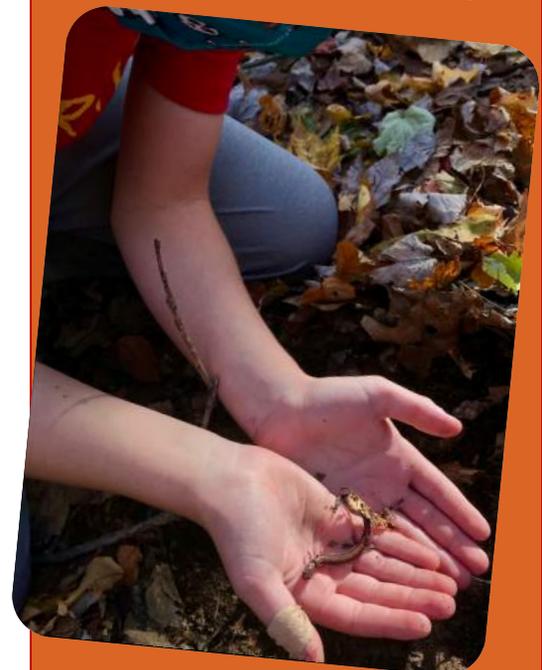
Nature Curiosities

Your questions answered!

Q: Why do some fish (i.e. trout) swim with their dorsal fin out of the water?

A: Trout have what are called rise patterns which can be in the form of a splash, swirl on the surface, a gulp, a complete jump and more. These behaviors all have to do with predation by the trout such as eating an insect, remaining in shallow water to feed for a while (on whatever comes by), expelling air from its gills, or subsurface feeding (creating swirls). -From “Understanding Trout Rise Forms” by Tom Rosenbauer, flyfisherman.com

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Red-backed Salamander at Cold Spring Harbor State Park

A Message From the Program Coordinator (Continued)

safely and comfortably, and enjoy time spent with loved ones. And most importantly, I hope you and your family stay healthy as we approach the holiday season.

Keep on keeping on! And as stated in Jurassic Park, "life finds a way".

Warm wishes,

Kayla

Project Spotlight (Continued)

perspective- I thought it was much harder and hillier from this side!

While we were climbing up a steep hill, or I should say while the students were waiting for me to catch up, one of our volunteers flipped over a rock and low and behold there was a red-backed salamander! How cool since this was a more acidic, dry, mesic environment. You never know what you may find and it was such a fun day! We even got a new president elect while we were hiking in the outdoors away from the screen!

Nature Curiosities (Continued)

Q: Why do bucks rub the velvet off their antlers?

A: Bucks actually scrape the bark on trees to establish dominance and their breeding territory with other males. Males typically shed their antlers following the rut or mating season in late winter (on LI the rut is between October-January) and they will begin growing new antlers from late spring-early fall. As the antlers develop and grow, they become coated with a protective membrane called velvet, containing blood vessels and nerves. Antlers are fragile and delicate during this time (usually summer). By the fall, the deer will either rub off the velvet or it will slough off on its own. The point of this is to keep the antlers polished and they no longer require the protective coating since those antlers are now fully developed (just in time for the next rut). The blood vessels come off also! -"Ecology and Management of White-Tailed Deer in Missouri" by R. Pierce, J. Summers and E. Flinn, extension.missouri.edu



Universal Pictures via Getty Images 'Jurassic Park', 1993.



Winterizing Arcadia, our grow to give veggie garden



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