



Summer 2012 Newsletter

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Dear Friends of BackYard Nature Center - teachers, school officials, New Trier Township village park district partners, FPDC partners, Chicago Wilderness friends, service-minded and faith-based organizations, volunteers and contributors.

Welcome to BYNC's Semi-Annual Newsletter

BYNC is so proud of our growing number of partners, learning participants, and volunteers, and the wonderful educational and stewardship "connections" that are continuing to make an impact on the hearts and minds of children and adults, and the health of our natural habitat. We want to share our exciting news with you - our friends.

Breaking News...

BYNC was just notified by the Chicago Wilderness Planning Committee that the "Science Curricula in Nature: The Model and the Practice," presentation proposal, submitted by BYNC, has been selected for a 75-minute session at the 8th Biennial Congress of the Chicago Wilderness, scheduled for November at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The selection process was highly selective with over 70 proposals submitted.. [Read on!](#)

NTHS Learns "In the Field"

In the 2011-12 academic year, over 550 biology and geoscience students from New Trier High School did course lab work in the nearby Watersmeet and Skokie Lagoons forest preserves. This was the result of BYNC, with the assistance of Robyn Ward, Coordinator of Science at NT, introducing the Science Curricula in Nature Program (SCN). By "connecting" ecologists (Eileen Sutter and Karen Glennemeier) with 9 NTHS teachers, development of site-specific lesson plans gave teachers the tools they needed for students to do their study work "in the field." A truly remarkable experience that will be continued for many years!



The outdoor laboratory experiences included: (1) Identification and analysis of trends (over a 4-season period) of plant species and interactions of biotic and abiotic factors, (2) Plant diversity survey, (3) Native and invasive plant species investigation, (4) Topography of the Skokie Lagoons and New Trier Township, and (5) Porosity and permeability of soil.

BYNC 's Science Curricula in Nature Program and NTHS were included in a 6-page article in the *Quintessential New Trier* magazine authored by reporter and Northwestern professor, Abigail Foerstner.

Glencoe's 7th Graders descend on the Lagoons

Five yellow school buses pulled into the Erickson Woods Forest Preserve (Skokie Lagoons) parking lot at 9am on May 16th. One hundred and seventy 7th grade students descended with their backpacks and writing pads all ready to start another day of school. But on this day, the classes would be held in the woods!



BackYard Nature Center - a non-for-profit organization that connects children and adults with the wonders of nature - and the Glencoe School District planned and put into operation a day of science and service at the nearby Skokie Lagoons. Daniel Kielson from BYNC; ecologist Karen Glennemeier; and Catherine Wang, Neil Courturier, and Kiim Dawn from the Glencoe School District met both at the School and the Lagoons to design the Science Curricula in Nature Program (SCN). Four stations, each 50 minutes, were developed: tree identification, sedge quadrat analysis, invasive species study and service (pulling garlic mustard), and buckthorn cutting and burning.

It was an impressive undertaking, the weather very cooperative, the children enjoying a "school day" and lunch outdoors, but perhaps most memorable was the pile of 52 garbage bags filled with the invasive garlic mustard piled by the side of the parking

area and ready to be picked up by the FPDCC. The May 16th date was actually the "rain day" make-up day from the previous week.

Truly a wonderful day of learning and stewardship ... and right in their own backyard! Thanks to Heidi Kiesler and Emily Kofman from BYNC, Howard Ebner, a Glencoe resident, and the many teachers from Glencoe's Central School, all of whom played a major role in making the day a most memorable one.

BYNC's First Corporate Service Day: Patch.com

On April 11th, 15 editors and staff members of patch.com, an online community newsletter, came to the Skokie Lagoons for a corporate service day. The group enthusiastically spent the day cutting buckthorn, taking photos for their respective editions, followed by a well-earned, delicious hot dog roast. Please note, a hot dog roast is a favored activity after a long couple hours of stewardship, and what better way to put those buckthorn ashes to work!



Welcome Marie Murphy (Avoca)

School to BYNC

Marie Murphy School in Wilmette joined the list of schools that have been "connected" to nature by BYNC. On April 16th, Board member, Daniel Kielson met with an 8th grade class and discussed the history of the Skokie Lagoons and the destruction caused by invasive species, especially garlic mustard and buckthorn. Two days later the 20-student science class, with teacher, James Gravagna and parent, Lily Kamanski Bradford, arrived at the Lagoons with "attack mode" in their eyes. By the end of the morning the large black garbage bags, full of garlic mustard, were piled by the parking entrance on Tower Rd.



Butterflies, Butterflies

BYNC is so proud to be a part of this partnership, with the Glencoe Park District Early Learning Director, Heather Burns, and Cook County Forest preserve educator Karen Holmes to hold the Bring on the Butterflies program. Karen began this interactive and educational event at the Glencoe Park District Takiff Center with an informative presentation on all things butterfly.



After the presentation, twenty or so pre-school and kindergarten age children along with their parents moved from station to station learning about butterflies through creative projects and make believe play. Please visit our website to learn about a fun craft idea to make a butterfly at home, or in the classroom.

Sacred Heart School - 5 Consecutive Years!

Sacred Heart Catholic School in Winnetka achieved a milestone with the longest tenure of participation with BYNC. For the 5th consecutive year, the School's 2 fifth grades had a full morning learning about the Skokie Lagoons and taking part in a stewardship project - cutting and burning buckthorn. And of course, the hard work was followed up with a well-deserved hot dog roast.

New BYNC Board Member and Intern

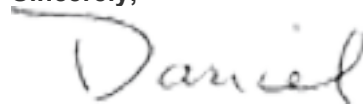
We are excited to welcome Iliana (Lily) Kaminski-Bradford from Wilmette, to our Board. Lily joins with a great deal of experience in working with nonprofit organizations, village government and the corporate world. Also, Emily Kofman, a New Trier student, is working as an Intern for BYNC. Her role will involve the BYNC's technological functions (i.e. its website) and developing an

expanding partnership with NTHS. Emily has already made her presence felt by leading one of the four stations in the Glencoe School District's Science and Service Program at the Skokie Lagoons.

BYNC Board Members Shine Again

On March 10th at the Brookfield Zoo, two of our Board Members, Dave Kosnik and Daniel Kielson were recipients of the 2012 Grassroots Conservation Leadership Award. This award was given for their leadership and service in helping preserve the Sedge Meadow area of the Skokie Lagoons. This 13-acre area is very special as favored by breeding and migrating birds. Throughout the year extensive observation is carried out by highly knowledgeable bird monitors.

Sincerely,



Daniel Kielson, President
BackYard Nature Center



BackYard Nature Center
Connecting children and adults to the wonders of nature

