



Connecting People with Nature

The National Wildlife Federation will inspire, empower and connect people to take action to conserve and restore wildlife and the natural world.

As America is becoming vastly richer in its cultural and racial diversity, we will need to draw more kinds of people into the conservation movement. One-in-four U.S. residents are from non-Caucasian backgrounds and a wide range of cultures, but, in the next decade, this ratio will increase to one-in-three. Forty years from now, a full majority of U.S. residents will be from diverse cultures and racial backgrounds.

NWF is committed to reversing nature deficit in our children, engaging residents from all backgrounds and making conservation tangible and achievable for all Americans. In 2005, we involved millions of members, friends and viewers in our efforts to connect people to nature. Here are some highlights.

Addressing 'Nature Deficit' in the Next Generation

Keeping people connected to nature over a lifetime will be ever more challenging because children spend minimal time playing outdoors. In 2005, NWF began researching and developing a new NWF Green Hour™ outreach and education program (for launch in 2006) designed to inform parents and caregivers of the risks of too much indoor time and to encourage young people to spend an average of one hour per day playing creatively outdoors in green, natural spaces. In addition, NWF's Green Hour Forum Web-log reports on recent findings, and the latest on research and trends in conservation's battle with nature deficit. www.nwf.org/greenhour/

To highlight available close-to-home outdoor fun, we conducted the NWF Great American Backyard Campout on August 29, involving over 32,000 people at some 3,300 separate locations across America in a major overnight family camping event. The second annual campout, coming in the summer of 2006, will be bigger and better, encouraging more people than ever to spend time outdoors connecting with nature. www.backyardcampout.org

Creating Earlier Foundations for Wildlife and Conservation Literacy

NWF is committed to reaching children at the youngest possible age when their interest in animals and wildlife is at its highest. We support and nurture that interest through a range of online activities, school programs and our highly popular children's magazines—*Wild Animal Baby*®, *Your Big Backyard*®, and *Ranger Rick*®. Unlike television, which psychologists label as a passive and mind-numbing medium, magazine reading is dynamic and interactive. NWF's publications engage nearly 2.5 million young readers every month. In 2005:

- NWF's *Your Big Backyard* magazine (for ages 3–7) took the top honor Golden Lamp Award at the annual competition of the Association of Education Publishers (AEP) and was named best educational periodical in the nation. *Ranger Rick* has had this prestigious honor twice in past years and did not compete in 2005.

The majority of U.S. children are beginning to suffer from 'nature deficit disorder' as they now spend an average of 6 hours and 20 minutes per day on the computer and watching television.

Campus Ecology in Action

For more than a decade, National Wildlife Federation's Campus Ecology Program has been helping transform the nation's college and university campuses into living models of an ecologically sustainable society, and training a new generation of environmental leaders. Here (top), students from Manhattanville College spend the day cleaning up a campus stream and wetlands. And (below) Middlebury College students strapped "Save Winter Carnival" and "Slush Sucks" signs to their backs and rode their bikes from campus to the college's Snow Bowl, raising awareness of the connection between global warming and potential threats to Vermont's ski industry. NWF's support and recognition of wonderful projects like these are generously supported, in part, by the Keneda Sustainability Fund of the Tides Foundation and member campuses.



- Our preschool focus with *Wild Animal Baby* was given a boost when it too won a 2005 AEP award for best visual story for children as well as the development of a new DVD video of an animated feature series with our partner Sun Woo Entertainment.
- NWF's Access Nature® program is designed to increase accessibility for special needs children to nature education. The Program's interactive **Happenin' Habitats** on-line learning program won the AEP award for best science education website. Moreover, the Happenin' Habitats Program was featured on the popular *Zoom* PBS series in 2005, providing exposure to millions of viewers. www.happeninhabitats.pwnet.org/index.php
- NWF supported **Katrina Relief** by distributing nearly 50,000 children's magazines to young people in shelters in the hurricane stricken region.
- NWF teamed up with store-brand peanut butter producer Carriage House on a special promotion focused on nature education. One million jars of store-brand peanut butter featured a special sticker offering a three-month subscription to *Ranger Rick* or *Your Big Backyard* kids' magazines. Nearly 3,000 of these offers were redeemed by kids and families who now spend time learning about wildlife and nature through NWF publications.

Gerry Bishop

Editorial Director, Ranger Rick, Your Big Backyard, and Wild Animal Baby



Gerry Bishop says that what he enjoys most about working as editorial director of NWF's children's magazines is "being able to share my own love of nature and outdoor discovery with a million or more kids each month."

An avid kayaker and nature photographer, Gerry thinks that today's children need to spend more time outdoors to discover the "joy and grounding that nature provides." If they don't experience and learn to appreciate nature "they won't really care."

Gerry's career with NWF began more than 30 years ago in San Francisco when he was asked to write and photograph a story about John Muir. The following year, he was hired as an associate editor of *Ranger Rick*. Today, Gerry manages all three children's magazines, sometimes contributing his own photography.

Supporting Wildlife Education in Schools and On Campus

NWF is committed to making wildlife conservation tangible and scientifically relevant to children and young adults through schoolyard habitat programs, their associated curricula and through its popular Campus Ecology Program.

The **Schoolyard Habitat Program**® reached over 2,300 certified sites in 2005 and supports learning and nature connection in some 2 million students annually. This year more than 300 educators were trained on implementation of the program which is designed to create on-site, outdoor learning labs on or near school grounds. Over 3,000 students participated in the actual creation of the new schoolyard habitats in 2005. www.nwf.org/backyardwildlifehabitat/programoverview.cfm

An important study by Texas State University at San Marcos found that students who participated in the Schoolyard Habitat Program had significantly higher scores in Texas standardized statewide mathematics tests. The most significant score increases were among under-resourced African American and Latino students.

A number of entire school systems in Texas, Michigan (including Grand Rapids) and other states have adopted schoolyard habitats as a system-wide strategy. The NWF **Campus Ecology Program**® surpassed 220 campuses during the year, including many major state universities, and was honored with its first-ever state system-wide registration when all 29 Massachusetts state universities and colleges enrolled in the program. www.nwf.org/campusecology/index.cfm



Creating a More Diverse and Equitable Conservation Future

NWF's support for engaging young people from diverse cultural and racial backgrounds is evident in many of its programs but particularly through its youth development and school-based programs. The NWF Earth Tomorrow® high school youth development program engaged over 600 students in schools in Atlanta, Detroit, Houston and Seattle. More than 120 of them participated in the intensive NWF residential summer institute designed to provide them with leadership development skills, hands-on conservation experience and the opportunity for peer-level discussions with adult role models working professionally in conservation.

The Earth Tomorrow-related NWF Alaska Youth for Environmental Action (AYEA) started in Anchorage and extends to some dozens of tribal communities across the state. With about 100 youth participating in 2005, the focus was on developing greater knowledge of how wildlife and habitats in America's most frigid state could be affected by global warming. This year's students created their own web log. www.ayea.blogspot.com

In the Rocky Mountain region, NWF focuses on Native American connections and trained 100 tribal educators in Schoolyard Habitats reaching over 3,000 students. Southern Ute Indian Academy in Ignacio, Colorado, was certified as NWF's 2,338th Schoolyard Habitat. What makes this certification special? The school is the first tribal school in the nation to be so recognized. Ten more tribal schools have now initiated schoolyard habitat projects.

Increasing Personal Actions for Habitat Restoration

NWF has a long-standing commitment to making habitat creation and/or restoration human in scale. NWF's signature program on this subject is its Backyard Wildlife Habitat Program™ with its supporting corps of Habitat Stewards volunteers.

In 2005, property owners added 11,000 new backyards to our list of NWF-certified habitats. This brought the overall number of certifications to 56,000 and brought the number of backyard habitat acres to over 100,000. www.nwf.org/backyardwildlifehabitat/

NWF's corps of volunteers, our Habitat Stewards Network, expanded to 2,000 people and provided 300,000 hours (equivalent to 150 fulltime workers) of hands-on assistance and training support for NWF's Backyard and Schoolyard Habitat programs. www.nwf.org/volunteer/habitatsteward.cfm

NWF's book *Attracting Birds, Butterflies and Other Backyard Wildlife* by NWF's David Mizejewski won the prestigious Benjamin Franklin Award through the Independent

Mary Dalheim

Editor, Your Big Backyard and Wild Animal Baby



Mary Dalheim has always been interested in children, science, and journalism. She used to be a nursery school teacher and also taught kids in the 5th and 7th grades. She often integrated science and nature topics into her lessons, finding that "kids were awestruck" and really enjoyed the process of discovery. "It was the easiest way to get kids excited about learning," she says.

Many ideas and activities in *Your Big Backyard* and *Wild Animal Baby* come directly from kids. NWF receives several hundred letters each month from children asking questions about nature, which are the basis of the staff's brainstorming on intriguing and educational topics. "I have never been around such a great group of creative people," she adds.

"It is a privilege for our staff to be among the first to introduce nature to children." The magazines help instill a lifelong love of nature. "If you start at the beginning with kids, they will always have that foundation of love and respect for the environment."

Frogwatch USA

A volunteer based monitoring program, Frogwatch USA began in 1999 and is now a partnership between NWF and the United States Geological Survey (USGS). Volunteers across the country record information about breeding populations of frogs and toads at wetland sites. The program has been instrumental in collecting desperately needed data on amphibians and raising citizen awareness about species and habitat declines.



Publisher's Association's 2005 book-of-the-year competition in the category of gardening and agriculture.

This year NWF entered in a partnership with Discovery Communication's cable network Animal Planet to produce a daily TV show called *Backyard Habitat*. Produced by Rivr Media, makers of the acclaimed *Trading Spaces*, the show receives millions of viewers per month and encourages people to certify their own backyard through NWF's wildlife habitat certification program. For more information about the show, please visit www.animalplanet.com/backyardhabitat

Outdoor Skills and Volunteer Habitat Science

NWF encourages people of all walks of life to engage in simple science-based observations of wildlife and environmental impacts on them. For example, NWF has enjoyed a partnership with the U.S. Geological Survey in the operation of a citizen science program called **Frogwatch USA**. Recognizing how much the overall health of frog and toad communities can tell wildlife experts about the health of natural systems and their vulnerabilities, NWF rebuilt the program online to make it more accessible to volunteers who wish to help with this growing national program.

www.nwf.org/frogwatchUSA/

In addition, we held "bio-blitz" events that are 24-hour citizen-science, biological inventories of all the living organisms within a certain radius. The stellar event this year was a look within a 20-mile radius of the Colorado State Capital Building. This event involved over 30 organizational partners in the Denver metropolitan area and involved 1,000 volunteers in an assessment of over 15,000 acres.

Global Warming Education and Student Action

NWF education and outreach efforts are made even more challenging by the need to educate people about the impact of climate change on wildlife. In a major addition to and refocusing of NWF's popular Campus Ecology Program, a prestigious council of advisors—including researchers, educators, and business and government leaders—assisted NWF with an examination of how to focus future campus efforts on a Campus Climate Challenge. This challenge will target a 30% reduction in campus greenhouse gas emissions over the next fifteen years. As part of its effort to strengthen research and understanding of the need for



The Stephensons certified their yard on Animal Planet's *Backyard Habitat* TV show.

Diana Blank



Diana Blank credits National Wildlife Federation for helping to introduce her family to the natural world. Fifteen years ago, she took her three children to an NWF Family Summit. That experience demonstrated to her the value of spending time and exploring together the wonders we are working to protect.

"It's so important to reach young people to develop in them an environmental ethic," she says. Diana is one of NWF's biggest supporters of our Earth Tomorrow program, a nationwide network of high school students and educators who tackle environmental problems through community action. Diana has also recently supported projects bringing protection to Okefenokee and Arctic National Wildlife Refuges.

She believes that finding ways to get teachers and students out to view wildlife will help them learn first-hand why protecting these special places is so important. "Our world is becoming a busier, noisier place and nature offers the peace and tranquility that we need in our lives. Kids today are so immersed in technology; nature provides the balance that is critical to their mental and physical wellbeing, that's why I'm an environmentalist."

improved education on climate change on campuses, NWF launched a new Campus Climate Campaign web log. www.campusclimatecampaign.blogspot.com/

We also developed a joint project with the WeatherBug desktop application for a wildlife-based version of the popular desk-top application that is carried by 20 million web users a year. NWF also has a new online **Global Warming Quiz** designed to help people assess their own household and professional impact of greenhouse gas emissions. Check out: www.GlobalWarmingQuiz.com.

Partnership with Anheuser-Busch Adventure Parks

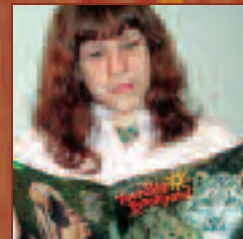
Visitors of the Anheuser-Busch Adventure Parks can now learn how to support wildlife by providing habitat right in their own backyards.

The Anheuser-Busch Adventure Parks—which include Busch Gardens, SeaWorld and Discovery Cove—are strong supporters of NWF’s Backyard Wildlife Habitat (BWH) program. Each park has committed to featuring a demonstration site that teaches visitors about the BWH program and how to enjoy and protect wildlife at home. In 2005, Busch Gardens Tampa Bay and SeaWorld Orlando were certified as official BWH sites and opened to the public. The sites show visitors a variety of ways to provide the four elements vital to wildlife survival—food, water, shelter and places to raise young—in their own backyards.

“Dedicating space to these backyard wildlife habitats aligns perfectly with the long-standing conservation commitment of my family and this company,” says Virginia Busch, president of the SeaWorld & Busch Gardens Conservation Fund. “For more than 100 years, protecting natural resources for future generations has remained a core mission throughout our operations—every day and at every facility. These habitats are just one way we hope to inspire a similar conservation ethic among the millions of park guests who visit us each year.”

The SeaWorld & Busch Gardens Conservation Fund also supports Frogwatch USA, NWF’s frog and toad monitoring program that trains volunteers to monitor amphibian populations across the nation. The fund’s support has enabled NWF to significantly increase the number of volunteers and streamline the volunteer training process.

April Astor



April Astor, a wildlife enthusiast and a senior at American University in Washington, DC, is an emerging leader in the conservation movement.

In January 2006, April attended Women for Sustainable Development (WSD): Building Future Leaders, a three-day conference run by NWF’s Population & Environment Program. At the conference, April took part in leadership building initiatives learning about the connections among population growth, wildlife and international development. After the conference, each participant is asked to develop an action plan for a campus or community outreach event.

“I now feel that I am part of a network of young women that will soon have a positive impact on the environment both locally and internationally. Participating in WSD has prepared me to begin making changes and thinking about these weighty topics in constructive ways. After my experience last weekend, I can’t wait to start on my own event and reach out to others on these issues!”

Majoring in print journalism and minoring in biology, April found that NWF is a great fit with her goals as she prepares herself for a career in wildlife writing. In addition to participating in the conference, during the first semester of her senior year, April interned with NWF’s magazine *Your Big Backyard*. She is currently researching the effects of population growth and development practices in Central and South America and their relationship to migratory birds that you find in your backyard.