



NEWSLETTER

Pajarito Environmental Education Center

PO Box 547, Los Alamos, NM 87544
www.PajaritoEEC.org, (505) 662-0460
Volume 4, Number 2

Spring 2005

PEEC's Grand Opening Is April 23

A ribbon-cutting, Wise Fool stilt-walkers and giant puppets, a costume contest, door prizes, exhibits, food, a solar circus, orienteering, a geology hike into Pueblo Canyon, and many other activities await the community at PEEC's Grand Opening on Saturday, April 23, from 10:30 to 2.

Our new space is at 3540 Orange Street, formerly L-wing of the high school.

Jim Anderson, Superintendent of Schools, and PEEC's president, Michele Altherr, will officially open the center with a ribbon cutting at 10:30 a.m.

To fit the Grand Opening's Earth Day theme, children are encouraged to dress up as their favorite animals, birds, or plants and receive prizes for their outfits. Masks or cut-outs of various creatures are available at the library (children's section and White Rock), the Art Center at Fuller Lodge, and some businesses around town. For decorating ideas, visit the PEEC Web site (PajaritoEEC.org) and click on the Nature Guide, which describes our local flora and fauna.

Kids may recycle old Halloween costumes or invent costumes made of recycled materials. Decorated masks or cut-outs can be displayed at the PEEC classroom during the day after prizes have been awarded.

PEEC members have been working hard to transform L-wing with displays, paint, and insulation--please come to see the results.

Watch for the April 15 *Monitor* Earth Day tabloid for further information or visit the PEEC Web site at PajaritoEEC.org.

Julia Butterfly Hill to Speak on May 8

As a benefit to the PEEC, Julia Butterfly Hill, renowned leader for the environment, will be speaking in Los Alamos on Sunday, May 8, from 2:30 to 4 p.m. at the Unitarian Church. Her appearance is part of a nation-wide tour.

As a result of her courage and commitment, Julia Butterfly Hill brought international attention to the plight of the world's last remaining ancient redwoods when she climbed 180 feet up into the branches of a 1000-year-old redwood tree to tree-sit. Her direct action lasted 938 days and resulted in a negotiated agreement that gave permanent protection for the tree known as Luna and a buffer zone around it. Her book is currently being made into a film.

A donation of \$5 is suggested for the talk. More information about Julia Butterfly Hill appears on page 5. You may also visit the PEEC Web site (PajaritoEEC.org) or call the PEEC phone, 662-0460.

CALENDAR OF PEEC EVENTS

April 16-24, Earth Week activities all week

April 23, PEEC Grand Opening-- ribbon-cutting, Wise Fool troupe, 3540 Orange St.,

April 30, class on Soil Preparation at Pajarito Greenhouse, 10 a.m., Ronnie Moss

May 7, class on xeric plants at Pajarito Greenhouse, 10 a.m., Ronnie Moss

May 20-22, PEEC camping trip to Valle Vidal led by Dick Opsahl

May 21, Wildflowers of White Rock Canyon, Chick Keller, top of Red Dot Trail, 8 a.m.

Summer Talks, Classes, and Workshops, See flyer at Earth Day or visit PajaritoEEC.org.

President's Message

Michele Altherr

As I approached, I saw the long strip of an old concrete school building sitting in a bowl of crystalline white snow. Tall pine trees hugged the building's backside with pillows of white resting on their limbs. It was soon to become the home of the Pajarito Environmental Education Center.

I waved at a smiling Craig Martin as he departed through the snow to his car. He had just dropped off a group of students from Maryland's Sandy Spring Friends School and Los Alamos High School who, until the snow, were planning to work on our trails for a week. As luck would have it, nature had forced a change in their plans, and Craig rallied them to help PEEC instead. We now had 20 volunteer teens to help us on our move-in day. When I walked in, I saw Chick Keller directing the traffic of furniture and people. In the air I could smell the freshly baked cookies that Yvonne had sent over.

Students who had not previously known each other worked marvelously together to unstack and move the salvaged tables, desks, and file cabinets. Becky and Tom Shankland arrived with the center's first bird feeder, a welcome touch of nature. Soon after, Peter O'Rourke walked in with Janie and proceeded to study the building's "antique" thermostat.

After about three hours, our volunteers had finished the move, and they left to find something fun to do in town. Chick, Becky, Tom, Janie, Peter, and I sat around a long Formica table. We looked around at the building's sterile cinderblock walls, the soiled carpet, and the assortment of chairs that we considered to be an interesting history in plastic chair design, probably starting from the 1940s. And so we wondered at the challenge before us, to change the institutional look of this old kindergarten building into a friendly and fun place to be.

Then Janie said, "Oh look!" We all turned to look out of the tiny slit windows, the only glimpse of nature from inside the building. There indeed was a hairy woodpecker working its way around the trunk of a ponderosa. As often happens when sitting around with a bunch of naturalists, all conversation was diverted to talk of this wonderful bird.

Children were laughing and sledding in front of the building. After all, it was a snow

day, and they must have felt lucky just as we did. Janie said that the woodpecker and children's laughter were good omens. I had to agree. I reflected on what was in my heart, the beauty and joy of people and nature.

PEEC Caldera Young Naturalists Camp

This summer children who have finished 4th, 5th, or 6th grade will have an opportunity to join the PEEC Caldera Young Naturalists Camp and learn about the spectacular natural systems of the Valles Caldera National Preserve. The camp will involve doing lots of fun science in the field.

The sessions will be headquartered at the PEEC and include field trips to the VCNP. There will be two week-long sessions to choose from, July 18-22 and July 25-29, from 8 to 12 daily. The cost for each session is \$250. Group size is limited to 12 students.

Send an e-mail to Michele Altherr <maltherr@cybermesa.com> in order to receive registration materials when they become available in May.

Planting Classes Offered at Pajarito Greenhouse

Master Gardener Ronnie Moss will offer two classes on planting techniques for New Mexico on Saturday, April 30, and Saturday, May 7, from 10 to 11 a.m. The free classes are sponsored by PEEC and are held at Pajarito Greenhouse at 238 Rio Bravo Drive in White Rock. Topics are

- Saturday, April 30 - Soil preparation and enrichment
- Saturday, May 7 - Xeric plant selection

Ronnie created a beautiful xeriscape garden outside her classroom at Los Alamos High School and after the Cerro Grande fire reconstructed her garden on Arizona Avenue.

To find Pajarito Greenhouse, drive through White Rock on Route 4; turn left on Monte Rey North; turn left on Rio Bravo; follow Rio Bravo for a mile or so to the greenhouse.

Mistletoe: Not Always a Problem!

by Bernard Foy

Mistletoe is a parasitic plant that often attaches itself to one-seed juniper trees in our area. A tree that accumulates enough of these leafy green outgrowths (usually found near the tips of branches) can suffer because of losing nutrients and other resources to this sneaky thief.

One of the junipers in my yard seemed to be under mistletoe attack last spring, so I approached with a long rake and started to clear some of the plants away. I started to tug on one of them about 12 feet above the ground when I noticed that some twigs and grassy material were attached to it. Stopping to look more closely, I found the nest of an American Robin built on top of the clump and partially camouflaged by it. Fortunately, I stopped in time to prevent the nest from being torn apart, and left a few remains of that particular clump of mistletoe in place.

I learn slowly, however, and continued removing other clumps in the same tree. I brought down another from a height of about 15 feet and again noticed some foreign material attached. I was puzzled initially, but a few minutes' inspection revealed that this clump contained the beginnings of the nest of a Bushtit, that tiny bird commonly found in pinyon-juniper habitat throughout New Mexico. It dawned on me that I had been seeing a Bushtit flying into this tree quite often in the previous week or two, uttering its frequent sharp chip notes on its way into the vegetation.

The Bushtit nest is an elaborate hanging "gourd-shaped pocket" up to a foot long, made of mosses, lichens, leaves, and grasses, and lined with plant down and wool, according to the *Peterson Field Guide to Birds' Nests*. For such a small and plain looking bird, it is an astonishing construction, many times larger than its architect. This nest had been carefully woven into the branches of the mistletoe clump in a way that provided even better camouflage than usual. I sat holding the treasure in my hands, shattered that I had destroyed such lovely work by an act of carelessness.

Fortunately, the Bushtits managed a new nest in a nearby juniper, and again it was

carefully woven into a mistletoe plant. As for the Robin whose nest I had almost destroyed, she continued to incubate, although with considerably less cover. Unfortunately, she abandoned it a few weeks later, probably because of either predation on the eggs or infertile eggs.

I have learned an important lesson: mistletoe is not altogether a bad thing, despite its reputation as a parasite that can threaten an otherwise healthy tree. Native birds have learned to take advantage of mistletoe, even if we humans have not. Unless that juniper in your front yard is near death, I would recommend leaving the mistletoe alone: wildlife will figure out a good use for it!



PEEC Grand Opening Features Wise Fool Troupe

On Saturday, April 12, for PEEC's Grand Opening, the community will have its first glimpse of Wise Fool, a troupe of stilt-walkers and giant puppets who will appear first at the Smith Auditorium parking lot around 10 a.m. They will come to the PEEC location during the 10:30 ribbon-cutting and activities.

PEEC Winners and Volunteers at Science Fair

Six young people were chosen as PEEC honorees in the 2005 Science Fair:

Samantha Stutz, 11th grade, "Post-Forest Fire Hydrology "

Anna Trugman, 10th grade, "Bird Response"

Lily Fehler, 6th grade, "How Do Beaches Change Over Time?"

Madison Brandt, 6th grade, "Should You Drink or Soak?"

Dennis Trujillo, 5th grade, "Purifying Water"

Nate Clements, 5th grade, "Bending Plants"

In the regional competition, Stutz, Trugman, Brandt, and Fehler also won awards.

PEEC volunteers also helped the endeavor. Diane Noveroske, Bonnie Farman, and Sandy Jennings were judges; Randy Ryti did planning, data entry, and home school contact; Julie Pearson did registration and the awards ceremony; Michele Altherr helped with planning, food, and the awards ceremony.

Wildflower Classes Given This Summer

Terry Foxx and Dorothy Hoard, authors of *Flowering Plants of the Southwestern Woodlands*, are offering two classes on "Wildflowers of the Jemez Mountains" this summer. Sponsored by PEEC, the classes are open to anyone interested. All sessions will be outdoor field trips except the first two, which will meet at the PEEC on Orange Street. These two will provide an introduction to the principles of plant identification.

The first class, "Flowers of Early and Mid-Summer," has five sessions, Tuesdays, June 7, 14, 21, 28, July 12, meeting from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Another session "Flowers of Late Summer and Fall" is planned for late August and early September. The dates for this session will be announced later.

After the opening sessions at the PEEC, field trips to various altitudes and habitats will be organized to follow the flowering seasons of the various life zones of the Jemez region. Emphasis is on teaching students to independently identify all types of plants,

whether trees, shrubs, weeds, or pretty flowers. Students will visit some areas burned in the Cerro Grande Fire to investigate the plants' role in fire recovery.

Classes need a minimum of seven students and a maximum of twenty. The text will be *Flowering Plants of the Southwestern Woodlands* by Foxx and Hoard, available at Otowi Station and the PEEC.

Terry Foxx and Dorothy Hoard have teamed together to teach wildflower classes for almost twenty years. Terry is an ecologist who has experience in botany and conservation ecology, and has taught at UNM-LA, Ghost Ranch, and College of Santa Fe. Besides *Flowering Plants of the Southwestern Woodlands*, she has written *Out of the Ashes, A Story of Natural Regeneration*, and is a well-known storyteller. Dorothy Hoard has written and illustrated several local guides to trails and natural history, including *Los Alamos Outdoors* and *A Guide to Bandelier National Monument*.

Registration forms will be available on Earth Day at the PEEC and at both libraries, Otowi Station Bookstore, various bulletin boards, and on the PEEC Web site (PajaritoEEC.org). For information, contact Terry Foxx (storyteler@comcast.net, 672-9056). For questions about registration please contact Yvonne Keller at 662-7915 or alfanso@cybermesa.com.

Children's Summer Science Workshops Offered

PEEC will have two morning workshops for children this summer:

Rings of Growth No-Bake "Tree Cookies"
Tuesday, June 14, 9-11:30

Discover the fascinating parts of a tree, and learn what a tree cookie is. Take a short hike, and then return to the center to make cookies. For ages 5-8 and their parent partner. \$20 donation.

Owls, Enforcers of Nature's Balance
Tuesday, June 21, 9-12

Dissect an owl pellet and learn about the diet of owls, as well as their role in the ecosystem. For 10- to 12-year-olds. \$20 donation.

Join the Program Committee

The Program Focus Group will meet at the PEEC on Wednesday, April 13 at 7 p.m. We have wonderful ideas to explore for the summer; anyone interested is welcome.

Wildflower Hike in White Rock Canyon

Chick Keller will lead a wildflower hike in White Rock Canyon on Saturday, May 21. Meet at the top of the Red Dot Trail at the wide parking area on Piedra Loop in La Senda at 8 a.m. for a cool early start.

White Rock Canyon has a diverse native plant community. Some 300 species have been recorded on the rocky hillsides and sandy flats augmented by the water courses, springs, and seeps. Most recent years the spring bloom has been muted due to lack of winter precipitation, but this year promises to be different. May 1995 saw a veritable flower garden in the canyon; this year should be the same or better.

We will pass through several habitats from orchids at Pajarito Spring through colorful vetches on gravelly slopes to patches of white (spectacle pod), red (paintbrush), blue (gilia) and yellow in the large sandy flats that are bordered by several riparian fingers (blue-eyed grass and yellow monkeyflower).

The hike down and back is fairly strenuous (about 4 miles), but the pace will be slow. Wear sturdy shoes (running shoes are no defense against cactus spines). Bring sun screen, a hat, two quarts of water, lunch, and snacks. You may turn around at any time, but we expect to be back at the cars by 2 p.m.

PEEC Activities

Jeanne Fair's talk on "Birds as Environmental Sentinels" was a standing-room-only success at the Bradbury Science Museum in March. We took our "Nature Invented It First" interactive program to Pinon's Science Night and to Family Strengths Network's Family Festival. Julie Pearson has taken her "Architecture in Education" program to LAPS classrooms; information on that program will be available at the exhibit tables at the Danny Barnes Earth Day Community Concert on Friday, April 22.

Julia Butterfly Hill's Story

In her early twenties Julia Butterfly Hill visited the giant coastal redwoods of California. She felt an immediate connection to the ancient and majestic trees. Then she learned that only 3% of these thousand-year-old redwoods remained and were unprotected from clear cutting by the logging industry.

Julia knew she needed to do something to save these giants. With her characteristic direct action approach, she sold all her belongings, left Arkansas, and traveled to California. Little did she know when she first climbed into Luna to "tree-sit" for a night that she would stay for two years living in the canopy of the ancient tree. As a result of her courage and commitment, the world became aware of the plight of the last remaining ancient redwoods.

Luna was saved. Tall and stalwart on a three-acre island of uncut forest, Luna stands today amid vast areas of clear cutting, mud slides, and devastated watersheds. Julia continues to fight to protect from logging the last of the ancient redwoods.

This story is found in Julia's book, *The Legacy of Luna, The Story of a Tree, a Woman, and the Struggle to Save the Redwoods*. She also founded The Circle of Life Foundation to support individuals and organizations in creating social solutions that are rooted in respect for the interconnectedness of all life.

Julia will be speaking in Los Alamos on May 8th. PEEC thanks her for her interest in our small organization.



Julia Butterfly Hill, *The Legacy of Luna*

PEEC Camping Trip to Valle Vidal

PEEC members are invited to join a camping trip to the Valle Vidal on the May 20-22 weekend. This spectacular and threatened area near Cimarron, NM, is known as one of the "Ten Best U. S. Campgrounds" (says gorp.away.com) and is famous for its spacious beauty and wildlife, including buffalo. It is now under threat for oil and gas development.

Organizer Dick Opsahl will drive there early on Friday May 20 to secure campsites, so that others may arrive later. Everyone will stay overnight as a PEEC group Friday and Saturday, with hiking during the day and departure on Sunday morning, May 22.

A firm commitment is needed in order to make a meal plan. Kids are welcome, but absolutely NO DOGS. For logistics, contact board member Dick Opsahl at 662-9404 or opsahl@losalamos.com. Sierra Club members are also invited.

Danny Barnes Concert at Community Building for Earth Day

A free Main Street Earth Day concert on Friday, April 22, at 7:30 p.m. features banjo virtuoso Danny Barnes from the Olympic Peninsula in Washington state. Come to the Los Alamos Community Building to enjoy an evening of truly great bluegrass music, sponsored by Gordon's Main Street Concert Series.

PEEC has invited community organizations to set up information tables before the concert.

Barnes is a banjo virtuoso and entertaining showman. Here's what he said about "playing the banjo like an electric guitar" (from www.dannybarnes.com):

"I started on the banjo. As a composer, the banjo is the 'canvas' upon which I work. As an artist, when we decide to put forth an idea, we must consider what format we'll be using. This is a watercolor, this is a pencil sketch. This is a poem. The banjo is more or less my 'medium.' However, I'm not an anachronistic musician. I'm not dressed up like it's 1945, or

something. My work is contemporary. My writing and presentation are of this time period. I'm trying to develop a modern lexicon for the banjo. So that's why you hear that kind of sound in there."

The music of Danny Barnes should be perfectly in tune with Earth Day.

Thanks to Our Friends in the Community!

PEEC is grateful to the following businesses and non-profits for their donations:

- ◇ Dave Fox of CB Fox, a local store that offers super customer service, stunning clothes, furniture, and much more, donated advertisements and posters.
- ◇ Otowi Station bookstore, rich in current books, science and Los Alamos history, and wonderful treasures for children, donated door prizes and is featuring 10% discount coupons that are valid with a visit to PEEC's Grand Opening on Saturday, April 23.
- ◇ Marilyn Warren of Village Arts, a local store that offers friendly and knowledgeable advice on framing and art supplies as well as many unique gift items, donated art supplies and at-cost framing of photo-mosaics.
- ◇ Greenfield Paper Company in San Diego, California donated at cost 100% recycled nature journals for children.
- ◇ McCune Charitable Foundation gave an award to help defray the costs of running a center.
- ◇ Los Alamos Commerce and Development Corporation gave an award to help defray the cost of community Earth Week celebrations.
- ◇ Donations from generous individuals have also been pouring in and will be listed later. But we want to acknowledge two more donors to the Young Scientists dinner, Georgia Strickfaden and Becky Coel-Roback.

Become a PEEC Member--2005 Annual Membership

Kinnikinnick Club

\$10

Kids under 12 join the club and receive a nature journal, magnifying glass, and invitations to Kinnikinnick Club events. What is Kinnikinnick? It is an evergreen ground cover also called Bearberry.

Living Lightly

\$20

Individual

\$30

Family

\$50

All three levels receive the PEEC Newsletter, PEEC Alerts, plus 10% discount on classes and programs.

Non-profit Sponsor

\$50

Newsletter and PEEC Alerts for 3 organization members.

Become part of the PEEC meadow by joining at a higher level.

Sunflower

\$100

Bask in the sunlight of having given to the success of the PEEC when you become a Sunflower Donor.

Above plus canvas shopping bag

Wild Iris

\$250

Cast many hues of happiness among children learning from nature when you become a Wild Iris Donor, named for Iris, the Greek goddess of the rainbow.

Above plus David Muench landscape photo book

Skyrocket Gilia

\$500

Soar among the stars of community leaders by becoming a Skyrocket Gilia Donor.

Above plus private natural history class for yourself and 3 guests.

Wood Lily

\$1,000

Wood Lily Donors are rare and remarkable like this beautiful, endangered plant.

Above plus private half day tour in Valles Caldera for yourself and up to 5 guests.

Send the form below with your check to PEEC, PO Box 547, Los Alamos, NM 87544

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

- Please contact me about volunteering.
- Kinnikinnick Club (under12)
- Living Lightly
- Individual
- Family
- Non-profit Sponsor
- Sunflower Donor
- Wild Iris Donor
- Skyrocket Gilia Donor
- Wood Lily Donor

Besides the rewards of contributing to an effort you believe in, member benefits include interpretive hikes, electronic updates of local natural occurrences and events, and a quarterly newsletter. PEEC is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. Contributions are tax-deductible.

PEEC (Pajarito Environmental Education Center)
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FIRST CLASS MAIL