



NEWSLETTER

Pajarito Environmental Education Center

PO Box 547, Los Alamos, NM 87544
www.PajaritoEEC.org, (505) 662-0460
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President's Message

by Michele Altherr

I looked across at the shining mineral specimens and said to Shari, "If PEEC fails, we'll be sure to return the Ann Kaufman mineral collection to the Los Alamos Geological Society." Barely a moment passed before she lifted her gaze and with firm conviction replied, "PEEC will not fail." As with any new endeavor, doubts lurk behind one's hopes and dreams, yet for a moment Shari's wonderful words cleared the shadows of my thoughts.

This I believe . . . a center such as PEEC is a "natural" fit for northern New Mexico. PEEC's home in Los Alamos is uniquely perched between the sun-drenched Rio Grande Valley and the deep green coolness of the Jemez Mountains. Low and high elevation ecosystems overlap and result in rich diversity and many opportunities for exploratory learning. Our location invites visitors to explore natural open space preserved within the county and to stroll along miles of local trails, something few communities can boast of offering. Passions flourish for those who feel a link with nature, and many want to share their knowledge through programs. Spectacular landscapes and people portend a successful future for PEEC.

This I believe . . . one day I will bring my grandchildren to Los Alamos and PEEC will be a glowing example of community partnerships. The center will be highly efficient and interactive by design. The grounds will include interpretive nature trails, gardens, greenhouse, and observatory. Children will light the inside with their laughter and curiosity. Teachers will interface with the center in order to provide high-quality science programs to their students. Visitors will be pleasantly surprised by the beauty of Los Alamos and the Pajarito Plateau. And the residents will be proud of having made it all possible

And so in this, my last president's message, I leave you my hopes and dreams for the future of

PEEC. October is the time that we pass on the torch to new officers. My term as president has been momentous thanks to the wonderful collaborative group that I've had the opportunity to lead. I'm very pleased that Randy Ryti, a kind and stalwart colleague, will be our next president. He will bring wonderful new strengths to PEEC's leadership position. I look forward to continuing to contribute to PEEC in the area of programs and education.

Thank you one and all for believing in PEEC.

Explor-A-Pond for Kids Saturday, October 22nd, 10 am-3 pm

Join the fun and tromp around the edges of a pond. Meet the critters that make the pond their home. Go still hunting in the nearby meadow and forest. This nature adventure is for kids in grades 4 through 7 and includes a PEEC t-shirt. Kids bring their own lunch, wear boots, and be prepared to get muddy. Drop-off is at the Research Park Pond at 10 am., with a hike back to PEEC, and pick-up at PEEC at 3 pm. The fee is \$30 for the day (\$27 for members). Register at PEEC (12-4 T, W, Th, 9-1 Sat.); call Michele Altherr (661-4237) or Bob Dryja (661-9602) with questions.

CALENDAR OF PEEC EVENTS

October 15, 4th Annual PEECnic, 2-4:30 pm
October 17, Kinnikinnick Club, 4:15-5 pm
October 19, Story Time, Diane Noveroske, 2-3 pm
October 20, LASE Network talk, 6:30 & 7 pm
October 22, Explor-a-Pond for Kids, 10-3
November 2 & 9, Dyeing with Plants, 1-2:30 pm
November 7, Kinnikinnick Club, 4:15-5 pm
November 7, Board meeting, 7 pm
November 19, Board retreat, potluck, 10-2
November 21, Kinnikinnick Club, 4:15-5 pm
November 17, LASE Network talk, 6:30 & 7 pm
December 1, Board meeting, 7 pm
December 5, 19, Kinnikinnick Club, 4:15-5 pm
April 22, 2006, Earth Day, 16-23, Earth Week

Elections at PEECnic October 15

Diane Noveroske, nominations chair, proposes a slate of officers for 2005-2006, to be voted on at the PEECnic. Asterisks indicate the names of those who are to be elected this year (others are continuing in their second year). Nominations from the floor are welcome.

- *President: Randy Ryti
- Vice-president: Chick Keller (to fill out Randy's vacated term)
- *Secretary: Becky Shankland
- Treasurer: Hedy Dunn
- Past-president/Director: Michele Altherr (also education director)
- Director: Peter O'Rourke, completing an appointed term till October 2006
- *Director: Bob Dryja
- *Director: Selvi Viswanathan
- *Director: Kelly Shea

Biographies of new candidates:

Robert Dryja has had an interest in biology since he was a child in the Panama Canal Zone. When he was four years old, he was providing cutting ants with different types of leaves to see if they had a preference. As a teenager he had a pet boa constrictor which he fed hamburger with the help of his mother.

Robert attended Tulane University, receiving both a bachelor and master's degree there. He later attended the University of Minnesota for additional graduate study.

Robert has had a thirty-year career in health care management. He has worked for medical schools, hospitals, and medical group practices throughout the United States. His management interest has been in organizational development. He came to Los Alamos ten years ago to help organize a network of physicians in northern New Mexico. He made a career shift to teach high school sciences full time. He has taught biology, chemistry, and physics for the past four years in Santa Fe and Espanola.

His wife Susan is a kindergarten teacher and his son Steven is sophomore at the University of Northern Colorado.

Peter O'Rourke grew up in Los Alamos and obtained his Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering from Princeton University in 1980. He is currently retired from Los Alamos National Laboratory, where he worked for 30 years in the Theoretical Division on computer simulations of fluid flows.

He has been actively involved in the Los Alamos Pathways Association, where he currently serves as treasurer, and the Los Alamos Bicycle

Subcommittee, where he served for many years as chairman. He enjoys most of the outdoor activities available in the Los Alamos area, but particularly likes hiking and bicycling.

Kelly Shea came to Los Alamos from Alaska, where she worked on grant-writing, membership, and newsletter production for the Kenai Watershed Forum, a non-profit environmental group. She worked on remote-sensing vegetation studies for the National Park Service at the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge and the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park. Earlier she was Outing Club president at the University of Wisconsin.

In Los Alamos she was business manager of the Little Forest Playschool until she began working for Bandelier. She is now working there as a Resource Management Program and Planning assistant, working on environmental assessments. Kelly has a six-year-old son named Drake.

Selvi Viswanathan has a B.Sc. in math, physics, and chemistry from Utkal University in India. She taught science and math for eight years before coming to New York City in 1967. She and her husband moved to New Mexico in 1976. Many elementary schoolchildren enjoyed seeing her model railroad with Indian scenery. After her son Hari was in middle school, she worked in real estate, including being president of the Los Alamos Association of Realtors.

Selvi introduced her son Hari to birds when he was young. He now works in the Environmental Engineering group at LANL, and he has continued to collaborate in building the family's National Wildlife Federation-certified back yard. (Over 100 people toured their yard last summer.) He took many pictures and created the DVD of their backyard wildlife on Barranca Mesa that is now at PEEC.

For Kids: Dyeing with Plants

Come learn about the dyes growing all around you! Two Wednesday sessions at PEEC will be held November 2 and 9, from 1 to 2:30 pm.

In the first session children will color yarn with natural dyes, and in the second session they will do some simple weaving with the dyed yarn.

The teachers are Jennifer Moss and Margaret Blewett. Attend one or both sessions. Pre-register by calling PEEC at 662-0460. The fee is \$8 per session for members or \$10 for non-members. Recommended for children from 5 to 8 years old.

Story Time for Young Children

Diane Noveroske, our Wednesday staff volunteer, will be reading a nature story, "How Jackrabbit Got His Ears," to young children on Wednesday, October 19, from 2 to 3 pm. Kids will also make their own jackrabbit ears. Children and their parents are invited to join in the fun. The program is free.

Wonders of Earth and Sky

In 2006 Earth Day falls on Saturday, April 22nd. The theme for this our sixth year of celebrating Earth Day is "Wonders of Earth and Sky." Some events will be coordinated with Bandelier's 90th anniversary year.

This community event is made possible by friends and neighbors offering programs and events to connect with the yearly themes. We hope to hear from many of you with creative ideas on how to make Earth Day in Los Alamos a great celebration of nature. Contact Michele Altherr (maltherr@cybermesa.com or 661-4237).



Luis Soto, from Honduras, holds a Wilson's Warbler. They are one of the common warblers netted each year by the Park Flight Project at Bandelier National Monument.

Photo by Stephen Fettig

Our Experiences with Birds by Natalia Corrales and Luis Soto

We are biologists in our home countries. Natalia is from San Jose, Costa Rica, and Luis is from Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Both of us are completing post-bachelor degrees in our home countries. Natalia has extensive experience in talking about birds and environmental topics to the public. Luis comes to New Mexico with two winters of bird banding experience. These skills are a perfect match for PEEC's Park Flight program working with Bandelier to educate students and study migratory birds.

On August 1, our arrival in the darkness, just before midnight, hid from us the beautiful New Mexico landscape. Over the next two months we have enjoyed these originally hidden landscapes and many other treasures. Most of these treasures have been birds seen in the hand.

Four birds stand out in our memories, a Sharp-shinned Hawk, Hairy Woodpeckers, Gray-headed Juncos, and Wilson's Warblers. One of the most memorable times was when Luis called, "Steve, Steve, help, we have a hawk in the net!" It was our first experience with a Sharp-shinned Hawk (see photo), a bird that can call anyone's attention.

The next most memorable event was getting three Hairy Woodpeckers in one net and once again, Luis was calling for help! What makes these three woodpeckers so memorable was that they treated everyone's hands as if they were wood. The Sharp-shinned Hawk never hurt us a bit, whereas the woodpeckers drilled into our hands and into our memories.

Having netted over 170 Gray-headed Juncos, these sparrows will forever live in our memories for a long time. Many of the bird-handling skills we have learned, we first practiced on these juncos. Natalia will long remember the moment when biologist Stephen Fettig graduated her to banding other species. At the time Natalia said, "We are getting better, he is letting us do other kinds of birds!"

In Honduras, Luis often sees Wilson's Warblers, but only at a distance. Here in the Jemez Mountains, he enjoyed his first close-up views (see photo). Wilson's Warblers are one of the target species for winter monitoring efforts in Honduras, Costa Rica, and other Central American countries. These warblers breed in many parts of North America and travel all the way to Panama in the non-breeding season. At less than a half an ounce, these remarkable birds make the 2000- to 3000-mile trip between the United States and Central America twice each year.

In less than a month, we will fly thousands of miles, returning to our homes. There is a small probability of finding the same little warblers in one of our countries. Seeing any of our shared migratory birds, however, will make us remember

all the great times we have had in New Mexico banding birds and teaching children about these feathered travelers.



Natalia Corrales, from Costa Rica, holds a Sharp-shinned Hawk. She and Luis Soto, along with others, banded this hatch-year bird as part of the Park Flight program's partnership between PEEC and Bandelier National Monument. The project typically only nets one or two Sharp-shinned Hawks each year.

Photo by Stephen Fettig

News from LASE Network by Gale Zander Barlow

At the PEECnic on October 15, LASE, the Los Alamos Sustainable Energy Network, will be baking cookies with a solar oven and showing a solar fountain.

On October 20 LASE Network's monthly meeting at PEEC features Robert Hockaday talking about new energy inventions. Come at 6:30 to socialize, 7 pm for the program.

LASE has just purchased Energy-10 software and installed it on the LASE Network computer at PEEC. A power point on the Energy-10 disc shows how the program works and the advantages of using it. LASE Network hopes to use this program to educate the public as well as make the program available for the county and the schools to use for education and development of energy-efficient buildings.

Energy-10, an award-winning PC-based design tool, was developed by Douglas J. Balcomb, who worked at LANL. This program helps architects

and building designers quickly identify the most cost-effective, energy-saving measures for small commercial and residential buildings. It can identify the best combination of energy-efficient strategies, including daylighting, passive solar heating, and high-efficiency mechanical systems. Using Energy-10 at a project's start takes less than an hour and can result in energy savings of 40%–70%, with little or no increase in construction cost.

More information on Energy-10 is available on the National Renewable Energy Laboratory site: <http://www.nrel.gov/buildings/energy10/>.

PEEC Gift Shop Invites You!

The season for giving is fast approaching and the PEEC Gift Shop has great items for kids and adults. Support PEEC by stopping by the Gift Shop today!

Show your support for PEEC: Northern flicker drawing on 100% organic PEEC t-shirts: \$11.95 (adult), \$9.75 (child)

Cloth PEEC grocery bag: \$16.95

PEEC decal: FREE

For kids :

Nature coloring books: Large for \$3.95 and small for \$1.50

Nature sticker books: \$1.50

Learn about...Birds, Butterflies, Insects, and Solar System booklets: \$1.50

Guides:

Southern Rocky Mountain Gardens: A Native Plant Selection Guide by Sally Wasowski: \$12.00

Informational booklets:

What Can I Do About... Raccoons, Gophers, Skunks, Coyotes and Cottontails? by Bob Anderson: \$4.95 each

Audubon birds with real songs: \$6.95

Kids' Poetry Anthology: \$5.00

Photomosaics by Kirt Kempter: ordering information available

Wildlife greeting cards by Terry Foxx: \$2.00 (birds, flowers, mammals of NM)

Photos of thin sections of rocks and meteors by Bill Stanbro, prints and cards.

Recycle Your Ink-jet Cartridges at PEEC

While you're visiting PEEC, bring along your empties for PEEC to recycle--good for the world, good for PEEC. You may bring any cartridge that goes with a print head, but put it in a ziploc bag or empty box first.



Members of the Kinnikinnick Club appear to be delighted with their task--digging for worms.

Photo by Michele Altherr

Halloween Is for . . . Skeletons and Skulls

Would you like to contribute to PEEC's educational programs but lack the time to help? You can help by contributing to educational materials that will make our mammal programs hands-on. We are interested in using replicas of animal skulls and skeletons for education.

These are some of the pieces we'd like:

- golden eagle, deer, owl skull: \$100
- bat, snake, toad skeleton: \$50
- bobcat, coyote, beaver, raccoon skull: \$60
- black bear: \$140
- mountain lion: \$170

So when you're feeling in the Halloween spirit, consider buying some skulls for education! Boo! Contact Michele at maltherr@cybermesa.com or 661-4237.

Trek for Trash Gives Awards

Los Alamos was on the list of towns that welcomed the annual Trek for Trash cyclists led by former governor Gary Johnson. At a potluck for them, several community groups and individuals were honored for their work in making Los Alamos more beautiful.

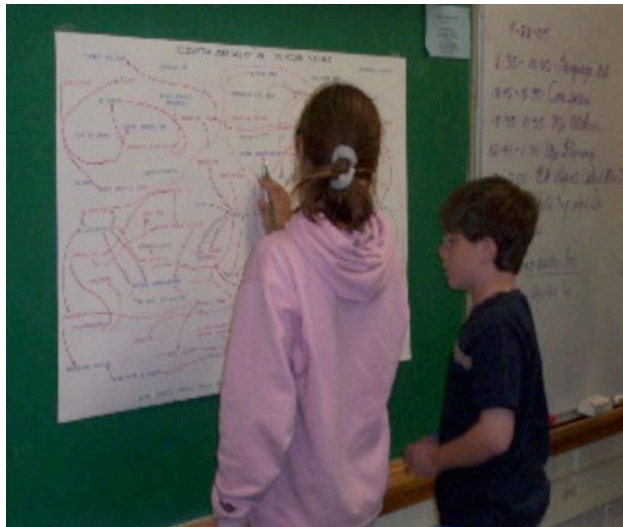
Councilor Nona Bowman led the award ceremony with a nice citation for PEEC and we were also thanked for having donated most of the food for the evening.

Thanks to Wendy Swanson for organizing our food efforts and to the following PEEC members for doing the cooking: Jessie Ross, Selvi Viswanathan, Hedy Dunn, Alice Brock, Wendy Swanson, Diane Noveroske, Becky Shankland, Allison Majure, Debbie Gill, Chris Judson, Shelby Redondo, Judy Opsahl, Cathy Anderson.

Hawkwatch Trip Nets Raptors

PEEC members joined Steve Fettig and our bird-banding interns, Luis Soto and Natalia Corrales, in the Manzano Mountains for a weekend with Hawkwatch at the beginning of October. Randy Ryti reports that the views are stunning and the raptors are plentiful.

Peregrine falcons; red-tailed, sharp-shinned, Cooper's hawks; Northern harriers; and turkey vultures all floated overhead, with some birds being caught in the nets for banding. Many birds swooped down to investigate a planted "owl," giving observers a chance to see the birds up close.



Children trace the web of life in a "Who Eats Whom?" exercise created by Larry Bryant

Photo by Michele Altherr

"Who Eats Whom?" Display Goes to Classrooms

Larry Bryant, a PEEC member who spends his winters as a docent at a nature center in Tucson, created an interactive display for the Pajarito Plateau titled "Who Eats Whom?" Mammals, birds, reptiles, insects, butterflies, and plants all take their places in the food chain.

Children are able to follow the complex web of life by following the lines on the diagram. Photographs of the various species are mounted on another display--just in case you aren't familiar with Abert's squirrel or other local species.

The display has begun appearing in various Los Alamos classrooms to the delight of students and teachers alike.

Scarecrows on Main Street!

Be sure to watch for the PEEC scarecrow on Main Street during the week of October 22 to 29. Our scarecrow, made by the Kinnikinnick Club kids, has "Hike on Over to PEEC" as its message.

Nature Odyssey for 2006

The Young Naturalist Camp for kids in 5th – 8th grades will be returning next summer as Nature Odyssey. Information on signing up will come out this winter. To be on the information mailing list, e-mail Michele Altherr, maltherr@cybermesa.com.

How to Get PEECalerts

PEECalerts are a benefit to our members. If you are a PEEC member in good standing who is reading this newsletter but is not getting our regular PEECalerts, then here is what to do. Send a message from your e-mail account to Randy Ryti, rryti@mac.com. Randy will add your e-mail address to the list and you'll start receiving PEECalerts. If you do not have an e-mail account, you cannot receive the PEECalerts.

If you have information about an event or an environmental activity that is appropriate for a PEECalert, please e-mail your synopsis to Randy. PEECalerts are typically sent weekly on Friday or Saturday for activities in the coming week--PEEC events are always listed.

Summertime Summary

PEEC's first summer was packed with programs for young and old, visitors and residents. Some were part of the Summer Sunday Family Events, some were tours, some were workshops or classes. Here's a partial listing:

- ◇ PEEC Caldera Young Naturalists Camp, with Bob Dryja, Andrea Spence, Ryan Ross
- ◇ "Snakes: A Balance in Our Environment," with CJ Carmen and Jon Ferris
- ◇ Wildflowers of the Jemez, Foxx and Hoard
- ◇ "Fire in the Pines," talk by John Hogan
- ◇ "Who Eats Whom?" talk by Larry Bryant
- ◇ "Amazing Amphibians," with Jim Ziomek
- ◇ "Small Raptors," with the SF Raptor Center
- ◇ "Be Kind to Snakes," with Jan and Richard Macek
- ◇ "Bats in Los Alamos?" with Chris Judson
- ◇ "Volcano Fun," with Margaret Blewett and Jennifer Moss
- ◇ Exploring the Geology of the Jemez, tours with Alexis Lavine
- ◇ Wildlife Backyard tour, with the Viswanathan family
- ◇ "Owls, Enforcers of Nature's Balance," children's workshop
- ◇ Soil Preparation and Xeric Gardening,, classes with Ronnie Moss
- ◇ "Rings of Growth," workshop for kids
- ◇ "Dawn Chorus and the Wonders of Bird Songs," with Steve Fettig

Become a PEEC Member--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)
P. O. Box 547
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FIRST CLASS MAIL