

NORTH CAROLINA Naturalist

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On the cover:

Native to the Deep South, the red swamp crayfish has invaded waterways throughout the world. Photo by Jim Page

Special EVENTS

**FIRST FRIDAYS
AT THE MUSEUM**
Open until 9:00 p.m. Free

**NATURAL HISTORY
HALLOWEEN**
Saturday, October 27
Noon-4:00 p.m. Free

NC HERPS
Saturday, November 3
10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Free

**FRIENDS OF THE MUSEUM
HOWL-IDAY
MEMBERS NIGHT**
Friday, November 30
5:30-8:30 p.m.

**FIRST NIGHT AT
THE MUSEUM**
December 31
2:00-5:00 p.m.
Children's Celebration
6:00-10:00 p.m.
Evening Events

ASTRONOMY DAY
Saturday, January 19, 2002
10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

GROUNDHOG DAY
Saturday, February 2, 2002
11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. Free

**REPTILE AND
AMPHIBIAN DAY**
Saturday, March 16, 2002
10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Free

919.733.7450
toll free: 877.4NATSCI
TTY (hearing impaired):
919.715.6464
www.naturalsciences.org

ADMISSION IS FREE.

MUSEUM HOURS
Monday-Saturday,
9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
Sunday noon-5:00 p.m.

NOT JUST FOR KIDS Expanding Our Circle of Learners

By Miriam Sauls

The folks gathered at the Garner Senior Center are a spry bunch. Their reflexes prove to be particularly quick when Linda Saah introduces them to a Madagascar hissing cockroach. But the seniors soon warm up, and Saah—with her infectious enthusiasm for natural history—has them actually leaning toward the roach to hear its distinctive hiss. Saah tells them the sound is a defensive strategy to ward off predators.

The table full of animals is an integral part of this Museum outreach program for special populations. Last up is a small black rabbit. Saah explains that this rabbit is a domesticated variety belonging to the rabbit order Lagomorpha. Final strokes of the silky black fur and a round of applause end the hour-long program.

Such programs travel to Scout meetings, community centers, street fairs, libraries, prisons, and workplaces, in ways that greatly expand the reach

Linda Saah uses snakes and turtles to inspire interest in natural sciences at the Garner Senior Center. (RIGHT AND BELOW)



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of informal science education. In some places the rabbit is introduced as a *conejo*. Recently the *conejo* was the star attraction at Spanish Storytime, as Gabriela Hogue, native Spanish speaker and manager of the Museum fishes collection, read *El Conejito Andarín (The Runaway Bunny)* in Spanish to an excited group of parents and children. She shared natural history facts and posed questions to the children, which they answered in their best Spanish.

Many of these children live in bilingual homes, and their parents welcome the chance to participate in Spanish-language programs. English-speaking parents bring their children simply because they want them to be able to communicate with the growing Latino population in North Carolina.

“Our mission is to serve the state, and that means the whole state,” says Museum Director Betsy Bennett. “As a result, we provide more than 500 community outreach programs each year. We go to the far reaches of the state, literally from Ranger to Rodanthe, and to populations that are traditionally underserved,” she says.

And that means trying to reach people who might not think to walk through museum doors for any number of reasons. “Some people may typecast natural science museums,” says Roy Campbell, director of exhibits. “They may see



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them as a place they will visit once when they are kids, maybe with a school group, and once more for nostalgia's sake with their own kids."

Campbell and Jeff Williford, director of marketing, think in terms of audience diversity when they book traveling exhibits, in order to serve those who fall outside the norm of museum-goers. They wanted to attract adults interested in space exploration with this summer's "Hubble Space Telescope" exhibit. Williford hopes that artistically inclined folks—who might not think of a natural sciences museum as a venue for art—will attend an exhibition of top wildlife photography from London's Natural History Museum, coming to the Museum this spring.

Young singles and working couples are drawn to the Museum's expanded evening programs. The Museum is open the first Friday evening of every month from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m. as part of Raleigh's First Friday gallery walk. Williford says, "We try to draw in the 20 and 30-year-olds with offbeat programming like classic sci-fi movies. We screened *It Came from Beneath the Sea*, (the one about the giant octopus that tore up San Francisco), when the "Extreme Deep" exhibit was here. We average around 450 people on those evenings, and they take time to explore exhibits while they're here."

Other groups that receive tailored programs are citizens with disabilities. Visitors on Deaf Awareness Day found interpreters at all program areas in the Museum. The Museum has a special text telephone so people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can call and get information on programming. Adaptions to the Museum's Web site will allow better access to Museum information to people with sight impairment, using software that translates Web text into spoken words.

The Museum works with the North Carolina Rehabilitation Center for the Blind to serve its



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clients' needs. "We brought in a group of visually impaired teens and let them touch alligators, snakes, and furry mammals," says Lisa Lowrance, curator of the Museum's special populations programs. "Their faces would light up as they felt the different textures and associated them with the animals."

Lowrance initiated the special populations program two years ago. In addition to identifying the needs of diverse groups and launching appropriate programming, her job includes helping to secure funds for programs in Spanish. Her goal of translating existing program scripts into Spanish requires time and money.

Science in Spanish

Spanish programming is good news for Robin Imperial, library assistant at East Regional Library in Knightdale, who attended a recent Spanish Storytime. She needs science programs in Spanish that can be delivered at her library. "We just don't have the resources to create new programs or the staff to deliver them in Spanish," she says. "This is a godsend."

Luisa Price presents Spanish Storytime at the Museum. Science programs in Spanish serve a growing number of people.



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Hands-on learning enhances programs for visually impaired participants.

Libraries and clubs

The Museum is expanding the Museum in the Libraries program as well, developing additional natural science exhibits, videos, and hands-on programs that will rotate among libraries in rural and inner city areas of the state. On the drawing boards are horticultural therapy for seniors and at-risk youth and expansion of Scout leadership programs in the natural sciences.

North Carolina middle school girls have their own programs at the Museum. The need is clear, according to Barbara Beaman, coordinator of classroom programs. "Our culture sends out a message that girls should be more interested in fashion than science," says Beaman, who works with the Girls in Science Statewide Project. "We have an antidote to that message: give girls exciting hands-on science experiences in a safe nurturing environment, with women scientists as mentors and leaders." The Museum offers Girls in Science Clubs in selected counties and two summer Ed-venture camps for all rising seventh graders: one in the mountains and the other at the coast.

Information Highway

Interactive technologies allow Museum educators to offer natural science programs in special classrooms all across the state. The rooms, equipped with realtime two-way audiovisual connections, are linked to the North Carolina Information Highway. People of all ages come to these classrooms, located in high schools and community colleges, and get more than a lecture. They get a chance to interact with real objects and find answers to their questions.

"Each site is supplied with materials from the Museum, so there is interaction with things the students can touch, like skeletons or fossils," say Liz Baird, coordinator of distance learning. "Our

program lets us reach students in distant counties who would never be able to come on a field trip to Raleigh. Long before the first wire was ever pulled in our new facility, we began developing plans for this program. It's one of the most exciting things I've ever been involved in," says Baird, a veteran classroom teacher herself.

Cameras capture the action in the Windows on the World Demonstration Theater at the Museum, and a wide screen projects images of participants in off-site classrooms. As many as four sites participate at once, so the screen splits into four sections and all the participants are visible to the presenter and to each other. They ask questions just as in a traditional setting. Someone requests a closer look at a specimen, and the camera zooms in.

"In fact," says Baird, "with the camera you can see things that you would never believe. We can bring in a whelk egg case and see the little whelks that are the size of pinheads. The kids are thrilled. They don't hesitate to ask us to turn the snake over so they can see its underside or the turtle around so they can see its tail."

Baird plans to expand the popular distance learning programs as funding becomes available. The Museum has delivered more than 80 distance programs for schools and 15 for other public groups, and demand continually exceeds supply. Plans include a monitor and sound bubble outside Windows on the World that would allow Museum visitors to participate. A roving camera that moves through Museum exhibits would greatly extend the range of experience for distance participants.

Like the senior citizens in Garner who need a



LIZ BAIRD

little time to warm up to the cockroaches, the kids sometimes start out being timid around the cameras and microphones. But the distance dissolves as they are captivated by the frogs, snakes, and turtles. As one kid exclaimed, "I've never been so close to a flying squirrel before!" Never mind that the squirrel was 300 miles away. "Now that's successful outreach," says Betsy Bennett. 🐿

Middle school girls get first-hand experience in testing river water quality in the Girls in Science Statewide Project. (ABOVE AND BELOW)



LIZ BAIRD