



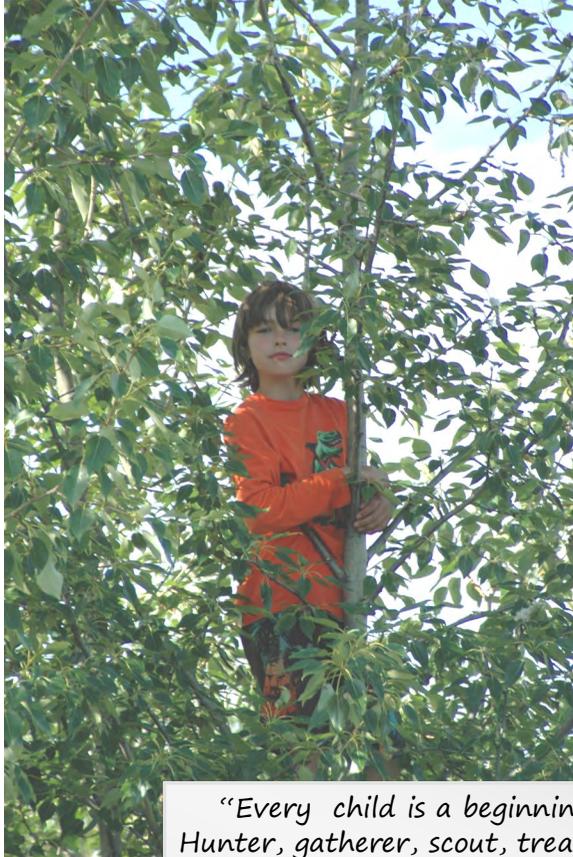
Wrangell Institute for Science and Environment

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WISE Newsletter: Volume 11 Winter 2013/2014
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WISE TALES 2013



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“Every child is a beginning explorer naturalist. Hunter, gatherer, scout, treasure seeker, geographer, discoverer of new worlds, all these are present at the child's inner core, rudimentary perhaps but straining for expression. Through time immemorial children were reared in intimate contact with natural environments.”

Edward O. Wilson

Presidents Message

Dear Friends of WISE,

As I sit watching the November sun linger on the horizon at 3:30pm, I wonder where to begin and tell the WISE 2013 story in a short amount of space. So much has happened - very sad times, happy times, and times of inspiration. Losing our former Executive Director, Bruce James, to cancer in June was very difficult and heart wrenching. But what he gave to WISE and left with WISE and its participants, partners, and friends was the teachings of his deep respect, love and caring for the earth. His inspiration and guidance will always be with us.

Nurturing connections with the earth and instilling respect for the natural environment through the tools of knowledge leads to wise decisions throughout life.

Robin Underwood made a smooth transition to Executive Director in January. We are so grateful for her 'jump right in' attitude and professional leadership. Without skipping a beat she made sure the programs were filled with participants, and gave them the same enthusiasm and care. She has completed the Foraker Certificate in Nonprofit Management thanks to a scholarship from the Foraker Group and a grant from the Alaska Community Foundation. We feel this training will add much knowledge to her repertoire and keep WISE moving in the right direction.

Our VISTA volunteer and Development Director, Matt Morse, has been working diligently on upgrading our web site and developing ways to increase funding for our programs. His support is much appreciated.

At a recent Board meeting Robin tasked us with renewing our memories of why we are connected with WISE and its mission. The consensus was: nurturing connections with the earth and instilling respect for the natural environment through the tools of knowledge leads to wise decisions throughout life.

Students have said going through our program was a life changing experience. Students have participated in our programs throughout their school years and then

worked in some capacity for WISE. WISE students have gone on to major in biology, teaching, or some other outdoor career. This is our greatest reward.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,



Janelle Eklund, Board President



2013 Programs

Ice Fishing Day in early April brought happy crowds to Silver Lake for a perfect day of fishing, sunshine, food, and friends. Underwater camera and sonar set up through holes in the ice gave a window into the aquatic world.

WISE teachers travelled to schools in the Copper Valley and Valdez throughout the spring for **In-Class Science Lessons**, giving students hands-on chances to experiment and learn.

At **Earth Discovery Day** in May, 120 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students took a break from reading, writing, and 'rithmetic, and instead slayed mammoths, journeyed to the stars, designed radical new fish, and flew with raptors.

Our **Science Lecture Series** included arctic archaeology, bats, local hydrology, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park history, Yup'ik storyteller Jack Dalton, birds of prey, and a portable planetarium.

Copper River Stewardship Program in early May led 10 high school students from communities throughout the watershed on a journey of

"From this experience I plan to take on life with a new attitude... I have conquered Willow Mountain, and now I know that I can conquer anything."

Megan, Copper River Stewardship Program

discovery. Their multimedia trip journals and reflections can be seen at the WISE website.

Our **"Take it Outside"** partnership with the Glennallen Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management led to 7 **youth hikes**, an overnight **Aquatic Ecology Camp**, and a massive **Public Lands Day** cleanup at the Copper River



Bridge near Chitina.

The **Copper Country Discovery Tour** gave visitors a chance for an up-close and personal experience exploring the unique ecosystems of the Copper River Valley.

Our summer guide also led a series of weekly **Naturalist Walks**, a chance for locals to learn and explore.

The **Willow Creek Research Project** had another successful year, hiring two student interns and gathering data on the health of our local watersheds.

WISE once again assisted with **Project Healing Waters**, a fly fishing excursion for wounded veterans and their families at Tangle Lakes.

In July, we hosted a **Wild Plants Workshop** with author Janice Schofield. 20 students spent a rewarding weekend identifying, harvesting, and preparing wild plants for food and medicine. Learn more and try a recipe on page 8.

"Thank You for the Changing Seasons Program. My favorite part was when we did the bird watch. I liked using the monoculars. I liked the Great Horned Owls"
Arthur, Changing Seasons Participant

We helped organize several volunteer **Invasive Weed Smackdowns**, pulling hundreds of pounds of White Sweet Clover.

We had wonderful help at our **Changing Seasons** program for 2nd and 3rd graders BLM Campbell Creek Science Center guest educators. Students used monoculars to identify birds, acted out the winter adaptations of the boreal forest, honed their observation skills, and gathered subsistence foods.

In October we helped a group of students travel to the **WILD10** conference in Spain. Story on page 9.



Pitching in to make things happen



Ruth McHenry volunteers not only for WISE, but for a wide variety of organizations, from the public library to Copper Country Alliance, a grassroots conservation group. She spent a morning in June with the Copper River Stewardship Program students, first watching waterfowl on Kenny Lake, then

discussing conservation issues while leading a hike down to the Tonsina River Bluffs. In September, she helped Changing Seasons students learn to use binoculars and identify songbirds. Ruth says “Some of the work is tedious, but so is achieving almost anything, like learning to play an instrument. And then you have good moments, like seeing a young person’s grin when first looking at bright colors on a bird through binoculars.”

Ruth is one of many volunteers who help WISE, enriching our educational programs with unique skills and perspectives. They help turn office tasks like preparing this newsletter mailing into an enjoyable social occasion.

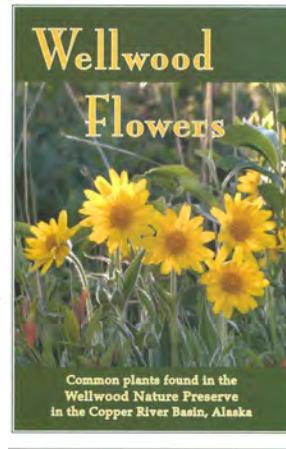
“There are things I care about so much that I cannot NOT volunteer. I am very impressed with our Copper Basin youth. They aren’t jaded. They are open to new experiences. They appreciate nature. They pitch in to make things happen.” Ruth McHenry



Getting up close with nature

“helping people connect with nature is very important to me...I enjoy helping them slow down and get up close with nature, look at and learn about details” Cara Wardlaw-Bailey, WISE Staff

Cara Wardlaw-Bailey has joined the WISE staff for the last 3 summers as Naturalist and Tour Guide. She leads groups of travelers on our Copper Country Discovery Tour, introducing them to the wonders of our landscape, and charming them with recitations of “The Spell of the Yukon.” She also led weekly naturalist hikes, and assisted with other programs. Cara has a special interest in botany, and is the author of “Wellwood Flowers,” a guide to common flowers in the Copper River Valley, which is being sold by WISE.



Leadership



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"The good things WISE is doing make this valley a richer place to live. I like that we are helping people, reaching out to visitors, and maintaining the health of our ecosystems." Gay Wellman



Gay Wellman

Founder, board member since 2001.
Education specialist for Alzheimer's
Resource of Alaska.



Mark E. Johns

Joined Board in 2013
Native Village of Kluti-Kaah
Environmental Coordinator



Alex VanWyhe

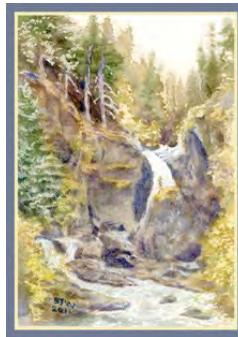
Joined board in 2013
Past Intern and Program Participant
Student at University of Alaska
Fairbanks

Sharing a Vision



Beryl Wardlaw's watercolors tell the story of her deep love for the natural world. She and her husband Victor Bailey teamed up to design and print a series of art cards for WISE, generously donating their time, talents, and equipment. Each of the 15 cards includes carefully researched historical and natural history facts. The couple also assisted with our new book, "Wellwood Flowers," providing photographs, doing layout and proofs, and even producing the book in their home print shop. Victor volunteered to print this newsletter!

Beryl and Victor support WISE because they have seen the value of outdoor education, especially when they were homeschooling their own daughters. Beryl used her skills as an amateur botanist to integrate nature into every aspect of their lives. "They learned very early what baneberries look like!" says Beryl with a laugh. Later, they took on projects such as assisting with the herbarium at Campbell Creek Science Center in Anchorage.



"I like the idea of being connected with nature. It is something we are a part of, instead of a green wall in the background."

Beryl Wardlaw, WISE Donor

Notecards may be purchased by calling the WISE office. Images are posted on our website.

Following trails, Finding dreams

By Robin Underwood

At Earth Discovery Day in May, a group of teenagers led a station teaching safe and responsible ATV use. It was awesome to see the younger students paying rapt attention to the message, and also the messengers. Wearing helmets, boots, and other safety gear keeps you safe. Avoiding destruction of trails, damage to streams, and impact on wildlife keep the land safe.



4-H Club members Cassidy Somerville, Riley Somerville, and Cody Brown at Earth Discovery Day 2013

One of the teachers was Cassidy Somerville, who grew up at a salmon hatchery in Prince William Sound and in a cabin at Kenny Lake, Alaska. Now a student at University of Alaska Southeast in Juneau, her dream is to work as a youth counselor and wilderness guide, taking troubled teens on healing backcountry trips. During her elementary school years, Cass enjoyed WISE's Changing Seasons Program, "It was a chance to be outdoors and didn't feel like

school, but we were learning about everything I was interested in."

In 2011, Cass got her first "official" job, working for WISE as a student intern with the Willow Creek Water Consortium research project. It was the first year of the project, and she enjoyed the challenge of helping design the research and procedures. That fall, she helped with an aquatic ecology field trip for local junior high students, teaching them how to use flow meters to take stream measurements. "It cemented the idea that I wanted to be outdoors, and I enjoyed seeing how younger kids thought about things."

"Go outside every chance you get! There are so many jobs that let you be outside. If you're interested, look for opportunities."
Cassidy Somerville

The next summer, Cass headed off for more adventure, this time as part of a SAGA Americorps team, camping and working outdoors for two months. They worked in McCarthy, Copper Center, Nabesna, Denali, Indian, and Kenai Fjords, doing everything from invasive weed control to campground construction to culvert maintenance. It was a chance to experience a wide variety of work, and also get in great shape. At one assignment the team hiked up a mountain for several hours each day to the work site.



Working on the Willow Creek Research Project

WISE is proud to be giving young people like Cassidy Somerville chances to find and pursue their dreams.

Serving the Copper River Basin

Reflections of a VISTA Volunteer

By Matt Morse

Through my work for WISE and AmeriCorps VISTA, I've gained invaluable skills and experience in web design, database creation, fundraising, and non-profit work. As a part of this community, I've been a librarian, a coach, and a race director. I've been driven mad by the mosquitos and amazed by the mountains. I've experienced the coldest, darkest, and brightest days of my life (literally). But in April 2014, my year of serving WISE and the Copper River Basin will come to an end and I'll head back home to Illinois.



The job, though, is not finished. AmeriCorps VISTA projects take three years to complete and are intended to alleviate poverty. There's still a long road ahead and organizations like WISE are doing their part through education.

In early 2014, WISE will be recruiting another VISTA to carry on Matt's work. The position comes with a living allowance, training, and scholarship funds. The VISTA works in capacity building for WISE, helping grow the organization to better serve. Please call the office if you or someone you know is interested in this opportunity.

Ways to give

DONATE using the attached envelope, on our website, or by calling or emailing the office. We can accept credit cards, and help design a bequest or monthly giving plan to meet your needs. If you'd like to donate to a specific project, please request a **Gift Catalog**, or check it out on our website.

Give to the **BRUCE JAMES MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND**, which will be used to pay tuition to WISE programs for needy students. Bruce's memory lives on in the programs he developed, and the students whose lives he touched.



PICK.CLICK.GIVE Alaska residents can choose to give part of your permanent dividend to charities you choose when filing online. Join the 37 generous individuals who pledged a total of \$2225 to WISE in 2013.

GOODSEARCH If you research and shop online, consider signing up as a WISE supporter at www.goodsearch.com. At no cost to you, the site makes a contribution to your chosen organization based on your searching and shopping.

PURCHASE a book, notecards, or a T-Shirt. Products can be seen at www.wise-edu.org, and purchased by emailing or calling us at the office.

VOLUNTEER your time, skills, or knowledge. We can use teachers and helpers at programs, folks to lend a hand in the office, consultants for legal, financial or scientific questions, bakers of cookies, and much more. We also need dedicated people to serve on our Board of Directors and Advisory Board. Please contact the office if you'd like to become a WISE volunteer.

Wild Plants Weekend

By Janelle Eklund

The one lane gravel/muddy road was full of potholes filled with lingering snow melt that any car would hesitate to go through. But go through we did and as the five cars with twenty-one of us pulled up to the Matt and Judith Lorenz 'homestead' we all stepped lightly from the vehicles. You see, the ground was a carpet of medicinal flora that would rev up the heartbeat of anyone interested in plants.

"...Plants like fireweed, plantain, yarrow, were there for the picking. With our bags and baskets full we headed back to the hall to make our concoctions and recipes ...lotions, salves, herbal oils, teas, pesto, sauerkraut, salsa, crackers, lasagna, and wild herb patties."

Janice Schofield's plant workshop had begun the day before (July 12) at the Kenny Lake Community Hall. She taught us to appreciate not only indigenous wild plants but also those we were more familiar with and considered by some an invasive.

From the time you stepped from the car at Matt and Judith's place it was virtually impossible to keep from stepping on pineapple weed (chamomile) and chickweed. We were instructed to take scissors and clip off the tops of the chickweed and those beautiful sweet delicious yellow heads of pineapple weed. Plants like fireweed, plantain, yarrow and others were also there for the picking.

With our paper bags and baskets full we headed back to the hall to make our concoctions and recipes that were included in our handouts. With the pineapple weed we tried three different methods of extraction for tea: Cold water, hot water and boiled water. They sat

overnight and the next day when we tried them, they each had a slightly different flavor - or intensity of flavor.

Out of the chickweed some of us made chips. Other plants like leaves of chiming bell, plantain, etc. will also make great chips. After the class I made chips with lettuce and nasturtium leaves and flowers - mouth watering! Cumin was a herb I tried on nasturtiums and, because of the peppery flavor of the leaves, this gave it a delicious taste.

With other plants we gathered we learned the medicinal properties and made lotions, salves, herbal oils, teas, pesto, sauerkraut, salsa, crackers, lasagna, and wild herb patties. And then we feasted and gave thanks for this wonderful workshop taught by the author of 'Discovering Wild Plants', Janice Schofield. We have asked her to come back next year and are still waiting in anticipation to hear if her schedule allows it.



Janice Schofield (center) wears heavy gloves to demonstrate harvesting Devils Club stalks.

Chip recipe: This works with any wild or garden leafy edible plant. Put the clippings/leaves in a big bowl. Sprinkle with a few drops of extra virgin olive oil, sea salt, pepper, garlic, parmesan, and/or whatever spice suits your fancy. Toss to coat with the seasonings. Dry in dehydrator or warm oven. Enjoy.

WISE would like to expand our offering of similar classes for adults. Please let us know if you have an idea for a topic or instructor.

Student activists get inspired in Spain

By Hazel Underwood

It's not every student that gets to say they spent ten days exploring the streets of Salamanca, Spain and sharing one-on-one moments with conservation leaders from around the world. WISE and Gen Wild assisted in efforts for 11 American students, including three from the Copper Valley, to make it an incredible reality in October.

WILD10 is the longest running conservation conference in the world, held every four years since 1972. One of their goals was to light a passion for conservation efforts through the youth of the world. Judging from the enthusiasm of the students after this life changing experience, it's clear that this goal was more than achieved!

The adventure kicked off when the plane touched down in Madrid, Spain, on October 5th. The first two days were spent in a massive auditorium, listening to presentations from all over the world. Each speaker, many of whom spoke their native tongue, shared information about current events and conservation issues in their area.

On the fourth day, they became a truly active part of the congress, sharing the projects they had worked on all summer. Of the 11 students, each had a unique project on conservation. There was a photojournalist, a researcher of urban wildlife, and even an environmental rapper.

Jacob Jones worked independently on his video project about invasive plant species in the Copper River Valley. He is mainly concerned about the oxy daisy and white sweet clover, whose presence in Alaska could have long-term detrimental effects on the ecosystem. While sharing his project, Jacob met a conservationist from Germany, where, ironically, the oxy daisy is a protected plant. Jacob plans to continue

"Each presenter spoke with enthusiasm about their projects and the way it is making the world a more wild and natural place; I was filled with this sense of pride and joy to be part of it all." Sammie Ellsworth, WILD10 Participant

his project in the Park by organizing programs for kids to learn about, and pick, invasive plants.

Sammie Ellsworth and Trevor Grams teamed up on a video project outlining

climate change's effects on glaciers in the Chugach. Their goal? To raise awareness of the issue of climate change, and how it is affecting our local glaciers in an astonishing way. Sammie hopes to soon implement a statewide project of her own, starting with Worthington Glacier. She wants to install signs displaying the rate that the glacier has melted so far, so that we all realize just how fast it happens.

The students explored the city of Salamanca, attending various lectures. There they met passionate people from all over the world who were striving to preserve the wild places of our planet. Sylvia Earl, the first woman to dive to the bottom of the Mariana Trench, presented her legacy.



Overall, the World Wilderness Congress can be summed up in these passionate words of Sammie Ellsworth:

"The congress was absolutely life-changing. If I had to describe it in one word it would be 'inspiring'. Meeting these world leaders, freedom fighters, photographers, artists, and so many more made me realize that there IS so much more."

Celebrating our valued partners

After every WISE event, once the van is unloaded and the raingear is hung up to dry, my first and favorite task is the writing of the Thank You notes. First because it is so important, favorite because it is a heartfelt reminder that we could not do this alone.

WISE was founded as a “bridge” organization, bringing together community groups and individuals with a common goal. We are incredibly fortunate to be part of a community which values cooperation and sharing.

Partners share equipment, resources, facilities, staff and volunteers. They offer advice, critique constructively, listen, mentor, inspire, stand by us when we meet challenges, and join the celebration when we succeed.



Education Partners

Copper River School District
Prince William Sound Community College
University of Alaska Fairbanks
Valdez City Schools
Campbell Creek Science Center

“If you want to travel fast, walk alone. If you want to travel far, walk together.” African Proverb

Government and Tribal Partners

Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Alaska Department of Natural Resources
Americorps VISTA
Cooperative Extension Service
Kenny Lake Soil and Water Conservation District
Mount Sanford Tribal Consortium
Native Village of Gakona
Native Village of Kluti-Kaah
US Bureau of Land Management
Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve

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Ahtna Heritage Foundation
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Copper River Watershed Project
Copper Country Alliance
Copper Valley Community Library
The Foraker Group
Kenny Lake Public Library
Prince William Sound Science Center
Project Healing Waters
Wrangell Mountains Center
Willow Creek Water Consortium
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