

5 RIVERS TRIBUTARY

Summer 2006

Five Rivers Environmental Education Center

(518) 475-0291

www.dec.state.ny.us/website/education/5rivers.html

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Some Pig

All kids seem to love *Charlotte's Web*, the classic children's story by E. B. White, of Wilbur the pig and his faithful friend Charlotte the spider. Even kids who haven't read the book have seen the movie and know that Charlotte is loving, wise and resourceful. To save Wilbur from his fate as bacon, she spins the immortal words "Some Pig" with webbing over his sty, and eventually makes him the world's most famous farm animal.

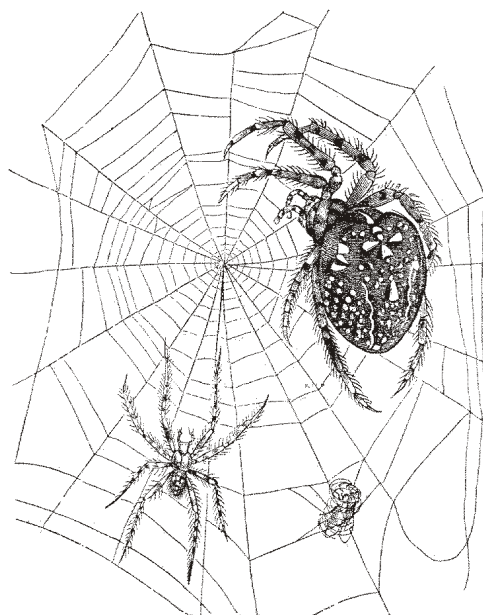
Spiders don't really do that, needless to say. And everyone seems to hate spiders. Most people reach for a can of bug spray at the sight of a spider, or like Garfield, flatten the spider with one stamp. But spiders are common enough in agricultural fields that they seriously reduce the numbers of insect pests. The financial benefit of spiders to pest control is estimated at over one million dollars per year in New York State alone. Spiders eat insects—they're not looking for humans to bite. Dangerously venomous spiders are rare in New York State; few of us will ever even see one.

August is the month of orb weavers, the big, beautiful gold-and-black spiders that

spin round webs in the fields and gardens. There's no need to fear them, they're harmless to people and will help control pests in the garden. To find out more about spiders, join us on a Spider Search on August 22 at 7:00 PM. You might not love every creepy-crawly spider you see out in the meadow—but try to see a little Charlotte in her.

—Anita Sanchez

(Thanks to former Naturalist Intern Andy Fyfe for spider research.)



Five Rivers Environmental Education Center

Summer Program Schedule 2006

Programs are free of charge unless otherwise noted. Dress for the weather! We regret that we cannot accommodate organized youth groups at these programs. Call to make special arrangements.

We welcome those who have any type of physical challenge to all of our programs. If you call ahead to let us know your needs, we will be happy to learn how we can best serve you.

For further information or for pre-registration, call Five Rivers at 518-475-0291. In the event of severe weather, programs may be canceled. Please call the Center to confirm.

Saturday, July 1 *Family Fun:* 10th ANNUAL BUTTERFLY COUNT 2:00 PM

Join us for a close-up look at common butterflies of the Capital District as we continue our annual catch-and-release census. Nets or binoculars are welcome. Call to pre-register by June 28.

Thursday, July 6 *Family Program:* STREAM WALK 10:00 AM

Parents and children are invited to wade our streams and examine their animal life. Call to pre-register by July 3. Materials fee: FOFR members \$3.00/family. Non-members \$5.00/family.

Tuesday, July 11 SQUIRRELS IN OUR BACKYARD 7:00 PM

Chipmunks, woodchucks, and grey, red and flying squirrels are all members of the squirrel family. Join us as we explore some of the behaviors of these fascinating animals.

Thursday July 13 FERNS 7:00 PM

A beginner-level class on the identification of some common ferns along the Vlomankill.

Saturday, July 15 GPS-TREKKING (Global Positioning System) 10:00 AM

An introduction to GPS units for experienced users and beginners. Please call to pre-register by July 13. Our supply of units to borrow is limited--call early to reserve one.

Saturday, July 15 DRAGONS & DAMSELS 2:00 PM

A pond-side observation of dragonflies and damselflies. Bring binoculars or use ours.

Tuesday, July 18 BATS IN FLIGHT 7:00 PM

Join a DEC biologist for a talk on bats, followed by a walk to watch the bats emerge from the "bat barn" and begin their evening mosquito hunts.

Thursday, July 20 FLOWER IDENTIFICATION 7:00 PM

During this adult-level class we'll learn plant family relationships as well as basic principles of identification, and discuss traditional uses for plants, from magic to medicine to food.

Friday, July 21 FROGWATCH 7:00 PM

We'll listen for the deep-throated call of the bullfrog, and search for other wildlife, too.

Tuesday, July 25 VLOMANKILL TRAIL WALK 7:00 PM

Come explore the beautiful, shady Vlomankill trail on a natural history walk that covers the geologic past and the ecology of the present.

Saturday, July 29 *Watchable Wildlife: WATERFOWL* 2:00 PM
Join us on an outdoor survey of our ponds as we take a gander at common ducks and geese.

Tuesday, August 1 FLOWERS OF LAWN AND MEADOW 7:00 PM
Summer is the time for colorful flowers underfoot! On this walk we'll identify some common wildflowers and discuss their natural history, as well as their ancient myths and folklore.

Thursday, August 3 *Family Program: MORNING IN THE GARDEN* 10:00 AM
Explore the wonders of the summer garden. A craft will be included. Call to pre-register by Aug. 1. Materials fee: FOFR members \$3.00/family. Non-members \$5.00/family.

Friday, August 4 FROGWATCH 7:00 PM
Come listen for the deep-throated calls of the grand-daddy of all the frogs, the bullfrog, as well as green frogs and other wetlands wildlife, as we monitor our amphibian populations.

Saturday, August 5 *Family Program: HIKE ON THE NORTH LOOP* 10:00 AM
A 2 ½ mile trek with stops along the way. Wear sturdy shoes, bring water, a snack, sunblock, and a hat. Bring insect repellent, but don't put it on until it's needed. Other things to consider: binoculars, camera, journal, magnifiers, sketch pad, pack. Please pre-register by August 3.

FIVE RIVERS FAMILY CAMP-OUT

Friday, August 11, 5:00 PM to Saturday August 12, 11:00 AM

Picnics - tents - campfire - night walk - early morning bird walk - stream exploration!

This family-oriented overnight program will introduce your family to backyard camping at its best.

When you call to pre-register, a materials and activities list will be sent.

Fee for a family of four (or fewer): FOFR Members- \$10.00, non-members \$15.00.

Each additional person: Members \$2.00, non-members \$3.00.

Saturday, August 12 CHEROKEE LEAF PRINTING 2:00 PM
A traditional Native American craft, using plants to print fabric. Bring a cotton t-shirt if you like; we have some fabric, too. Call to pre-register by August 10. Materials fee \$1.00 per family.

Saturday, August 19 NATURE JOURNALING FOR ADULTS 2:00 PM
Learn how to start your own nature journal and try out some of our drawing materials. If it rains, we'll do some indoor activities.

Tuesday, August 22 SPIDER SEARCH 7:00 PM
A walk to search the meadow for a wild variety of late-summer spiders.

Saturday, August 26 ROGER TORY PETERSON'S BIRDS 9:00 AM
Through his *Field Guide to the Birds*, Roger Tory Peterson launched our national preoccupation with bird watching. Join us on a commemorative field study of birds, the "environmental litmus paper," as we celebrate the date of the late Dr. Peterson's birth 98 years ago.

Thursday, August 29 INSECTS 7:00 PM
By now the insects are abundant and showy--and fun to catch, observe, identify and release! Who can capture the biggest, the most colorful, the most beautiful insects?

LIVING ENVIRONMENT INSTITUTE

Monday August 7 to Friday August 11, 2006

An exciting, week-long teacher and youth leader workshop on environmental science. Classroom discussions and activities will be complemented by outdoor field work. Please call the Center for registration details at 475-0291.

FALL FESTIVAL

Saturday, September 16 Noon-4:00 p.m.

Come and join us for our annual Fall Festival! It's a multitude of activities and hands-on crafts, games, and nature explorations. While you're here, walk the trails and enjoy migrating birds, fall wildflowers, and brilliant foliage. Environmental exhibits and hands-on activities make the festival fun for the whole family.

Popcorn and Cider

Music

Nature Crafts

Silent Auction

Insect Safari

Birds of Prey

Reptiles and Amphibians

Nature Activities

Admission and parking are free!

Staff: Nancy Payne, Anita Sanchez, Dee Strnisa, Craig D. Thompson, Lori Whiting, Kimberly Roberts (SCA), Kitty Rusch (SCA)