



Founding Director, Dick James.

Tallamy Tapped to Give the Inaugural Dick James Lecture

Founding director. Outstanding teacher. Sharp wit. Leader. Acclaimed meteorologist. Radio and TV personality. Give Dick his due: he was a force to be reckoned with for decades.

To honor his accomplishments and reconnect to his legacy, the Schuylkill Center happily announces the establishment of the annual Richard L. James lecture. This year's inaugural edition will be held Thursday, March 8 at 7:30 p.m. at the Cathedral Village auditorium.

Dr. Doug Tallamy, professor of entomology and author of the remarkable *Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants*, provides a visually compelling slide show of his astonishing research on the critical role native plants play in sustaining ecological communities, even in urban and suburban landscapes. After listening to Tallamy, you'll radically change your home gardening plans.

"In looking for a speaker of Dick's stature," said new director Mike Weilbacher, who worked for Dick here at SCEE in the 1980s, "all of us on staff immediately thought of Doug Tallamy: a great speaker on an incredibly important topic, the preservation of local biological diversity."

Karin James, Dick's widow and former SCEE librarian, and Andy, his son and longtime SCEE land manager, will attend the lecture, Andy offering opening remarks about his dad.

Whether you'd like to celebrate our legacy or learn some great new information, this event is for you. The Dick James lecture is free for members, only \$10/seat for non-members. Cathedral Village is located on Ridge Avenue in Andorra at the intersection of East Cathedral Road. Please park in the St. Mary's Church parking lot alongside Cathedral Village. ■

RSVP by calling the center at 215-482-7300, ext. 110, or emailing us at scee@schuylkillcenter.org.



Dr. Doug Tallamy will deliver this year's Dick James lecture.



enchanted forest gala

Imagine an enchanted evening, sipping cocktails by candlelight and starlight, dancing amid the meadow flowers, and listening to live music as it floats up to the twilight sky. You're invited to an evening garden party and fundraising gala in our beautiful butterfly meadow and greenhouse. Festivities include light refreshments and cocktails, a silent auction, a raffle, a tasting event, and, of course live music and dancing.

Don't miss this magical evening, **Friday, May 11, 6:30 – 11:00 pm**. Tickets are \$60 - \$150. For tickets, program ads, sponsorship opportunities, or to donate to the silent auction, contact Emily Simmons at 215-482-7300 ext. 117.



Director's Cut

Reinventing the Schuylkill Center

Right now, both the Schuylkill Center and its longtime partner, the Green Woods Charter School, are amicably planning the next chapters of their institutional lives.

The charter school, born here on the center's campus ten years ago, is planning on growing to more than 400 students this fall, and ultimately to 675. Since both numbers are larger than SCEE can accommodate, they are building a new school elsewhere, and are deep into designing and seeking approvals for their new building. For next year, their plan is to move to two transitional sites, both abandoned parochial schools.

For SCEE, this means a very new chapter in our storied history. While there is potential to retain programmatic connections to Green Woods, they will be vacating our building, affording us new opportunities in expanding and altering our physical plant. After all, fully half of our building has been used by the school's students for a very long time.

Knowing this sea change was coming, an ad hoc committee has been meeting since fall to look at how we might reconfigure and re-use our spaces: creating a formal environmental art gallery, reopening the large auditorium, reestablishing a laboratory space for college courses, offering a volunteer lounge, expanding the Discovery Center, shifting current office spaces, and more. The committee—comprised of staff, board members, and architects and landscape architects—will be making its recommendations later this spring.

In addition, staff has been intensively discussing and brainstorming programming changes, and as we move through the next several years, you'll see us rolling out a variety of new programs and events. We'll be rebranding some old friends (like Nature for the Young is now Seedlings), while experimenting with innovative new programming—such as the Dick James lecture and Naturepalooza festival described in these pages—that we hope you'll sample and enjoy.

As a center member, your support is critical at this unique juncture in our history. Since the school has been leasing our space for the last decade, we'll have to financially reinvent ourselves too, cutting costs wherever we can (we've already made several key adjustments in our budget), while finding new income streams.

We hope you enjoy and appreciate the changes you'll see as we unveil them; I also would love to hear your thoughts on how we reinvent ourselves. Feel free to contact me anytime. Please know we will need your support as a bridge to a very interesting, very exciting, and (without question) challenging chapter in our history—the reinvention years.

Thanks so much.

Mike Weilbacher
Executive Director

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The Wild Side

Found a Baby Animal? Read This First!

Spring is our wildlife clinic's busy season, as the wildlife baby boom hits, and people bring in baby birds that have fallen from nests or bunnies seemingly abandoned in their backyard. But before you bring us that nest of robins or cottontails, hang on!

The clinic handles over 12,000 phone calls a year, many of which involve questions or concerns about baby animals being orphaned. Clearly, the clinic can't rescue and care for all those babies. "Nor should we," explains clinic director, Rick Schubert. "Baby animals fall out of trees all the time. But that doesn't necessarily mean they need rescuing." The clinic's job is to assess the situation and determine if the animal really is orphaned or otherwise in distress, and talk the caller through the best next steps.

"The rehab and medical work we do here in the clinic may get all the attention," says Schubert, "but most of our work is done on the phone." When taking a call, it's important to ask the right questions: exactly where was the animal found, how long has it been there, has it been handled or fed, what's its physical condition, etc. With this information, the clinic can determine whether or not the animal really does need clinic care and, if necessary, walk the caller through safe handling and transport.

The phone calls are also a critical opportunity for education and outreach. According to Schubert, "it's much easier to prevent a problem than to correct the situation later, in the clinic."

Many baby animals that you might think are orphaned, for instance, really aren't, and would be better off left alone. And what if you've already picked it up, perhaps to



Baby animals such as this owlet are tougher than you may think! Call the clinic before you act.



Found a nest of baby rabbits like this Eastern Cottontail? They may not be orphaned. Mother rabbits spend only about five minutes a day with their young.

check for injuries, or just out of an instinctive desire to care for it? Simply put it back where you found it and let the mother do her job. "The idea that, once you've touched a wild baby animal the mother will reject it, is a myth," declares Rick. "No wild animal will reject healthy offspring just because a human has touched it." (The key word there is "healthy." Some animals will reject sick offspring, and even kick them out of the nest.)

Schubert considers the triage and education aspects of these phone calls so important that he rarely lets clinic volunteers answer the phone. That's a job he reserves for himself and assistant rehabber Michele Wellard. He estimates that he spends an average of four hours a day on the phone. And while it may not be glamorous, that's okay with him, because "we can accomplish more good in less time."

So next time you find an "orphaned" squirrel, rabbit or bird in your yard—or any wildlife in distress—don't hesitate to pick up the phone and call the clinic for advice before you act. That's what we're here for. ■

The Schuylkill Center's Wildlife Rehabilitation Clinic can be reached at 215-482-8217.

The Toads Are Coming, The Toads Are Coming...



After months of patiently waiting, American toads make their springtime debut.

"The toads are coming!" It's a common refrain around the SCEE offices this time of year, although it's a little misleading. Truth is, the toads, (American toads, to be exact) have been here all winter, hibernating under a few inches of leaf litter or dirt on the forest floor, waiting for the right moment. In early spring, when nighttime temperatures consistently stay above freezing, the toads will emerge from hibernation and then they'll get busy, because spring mating season will have arrived.

Males emerge first, and their instincts drive them to seek out a body of water. Hundreds of toads may converge on a shallow pond-like our own Cattail, Polliwog or Fire ponds and begin to sing. The male frog stretches out the pouch at his throat and makes a long, lovely trill. Soon the females arrive in answer to the mating calls, and the competition among the males begins. The males mount the females, making it look as if they're trying to catch a ride, as they vie for the best spot when the female releases her eggs. This all happens in the water so that the jelly-like eggs have a wet environment in which to develop.

A toad's eggs are easily identifiable by the corkscrew shape they maintain in the water. When the eggs are first laid, tiny black specks are visible in the spiral. These specks

soon develop into larger dots that, within about two weeks, will take the shape of small black tadpoles (or "toadpoles," as we like to call them, to distinguish them from the other species of frog tadpoles). These tadpoles will grow and mature quickly, becoming toads within another 6-8 weeks. During this time they are growing legs, forming lungs, and reabsorbing their tails.

A toadlet that is ready to leave the water and head for drier ground is about the size of a dime or nickel. It hasn't yet developed that warty skin that will be a layer of defense. Tiny and vulnerable, it must journey from its aquatic birthplace to find safety and a dry home in a yard or forest. It will be another two or three years before it reaches maturity and returns to the pond in spring to participate in the annual mating season.

All this spring travel-adults moving to and from water to mate, and toadlets leaving their aquatic "nests" for drier ground-can be hazardous.

While many of the Schuylkill Center's resident toads mate in our ponds, many more venture across Port Royal Avenue and Hagy's Mill Road to mate in the Roxborough reservoir. In the

past, hundreds were hit by cars as they crossed the street on dark, rainy nights (their favorite travel conditions). In recent years, however, the Toad Detour has come to the rescue, slowing and diverting local traffic on busy toad nights to help the toads make it safely back and forth. While a separate volunteer group originally started the detour project, it's officially become a program of the center. See the box below to learn more. ■



Toad eggs are interesting, but please don't handle them like this. Leave them in the pond to hatch!



Roxborough Reservoir

TOAD DETOUR

Join the Toad Detour

Volunteer for the Toad Detour to help shepherd hundreds of toads safely across the street as they migrate to and from the Roxborough Reservoir to breed. Volunteers are needed for evening shifts from mid-March through June. You can volunteer for one night, or several—it's fun for all ages.

Come to our Leap Day! Toad Detour Volunteer Orientation on Wednesday, February 29 from 6:00 to 7:30 pm to get started. You'll learn all about toads, toad handling and signing up for shifts.

More on toads! Join us for one of our evening toad walks in the month of March or April. *See the event calendar for details.*

KIDS

Saturdays @ SCEE

Count on us for fun every Saturday, from 10:30 - 11:30 am. Every 2nd and 4th Saturday we gather in the gift shop for story time and games for the little ones. Every 1st and 3rd Saturday we meet in the Discovery Center for a naturalist-led exploration of artifacts, followed by an outdoor walk. We explore different nature themes each week.

Seedlings



New format! Now offered every Monday, alternating weekly between guided nature play and a more structured educational program. Seedlings encourages children ages 3-5 and their parents/caregivers to explore the natural world together. Each Monday offers your choice of a morning or afternoon session. Adult participation and pre-registration required.

Times: 10:30 – 11:30 am and 2:00 – 3:00 pm

\$6 members; \$8 non-members or \$48 members; \$64 non-members for the season

March Winds Blow - Monday, March 5

What's that Smell? - Monday, March 19

Sounds of Spring - Monday, April 2

Sowing Seeds - Monday, April 16

A Rainbow World - Monday, April 30

A Day in the Life of a Frog - Monday, May 14

A Bug's Life - Monday, May 28

All other Mondays through May offer guided nature play. Young children love exploration, and research suggests that unstructured outdoor play is essential to a child's intellectual development and physical and mental health. Come for sunshine, mud pies and old-fashioned outdoor fun!

Spring Break Camp: Climb High!

Monday, April 2 through Friday, April 6,  am – 3:00 pm

Daily: \$45 members and \$55 non-members

Thursday & Friday field trip fees of \$15/child; extended day (8 am to 6 pm) is \$15/day

Students ages 5-12 can spend their spring break exploring the ways in which humans and animals defy gravity. We'll build airplanes, hot air balloons and paper; visit with SCEE's wildlife ambassadors to see how raptors, owls and vultures fly; learn to climb at the Go Vertical Climbing Gym; and travel to Ringing Rocks State Park.

Info & Registration

Email: scee@schuylkillcenter.org

Tel. 215.482.7300 x110

Cold Comfort

by Melissa Maddonni Haims

February 24 – April 30, 2012

Philadelphia-based artist Melissa Maddonni Haims "knit bombs" the Schuylkill Center, enlivening the brown and grey winter landscape by wrapping tree trunks with brightly colored yarn cozies.

Funny, bright and engaging, this installation entices winter travelers to stroll the woods and see them anew. A small indoor exhibit of works created from recycled, reused and reclaimed materials complements the outdoor installation.

Knit or yarn "bombing" has made an international splash in the last few years. The genre blends the crafts of knitting and crocheting with site-specific installation, transforming public objects such as fire hydrants or bike racks into clever street art.

The Schuylkill Center presents Haims' work on its driveway and main trails as a way to literally warm up the woods for trees and viewers alike. ■



Artist Melissa Maddonni Haims installs one of her pieces at the Schuylkill Center.

Opening Reception: Knitty Gritty Day, March 10, 2012

The Schuylkill Center will host a special fiber craft event and opening artist reception on March 10, 2012. Knitty Gritty Day will feature knit and crochet workshops for all ages from 1:00 to 3:00 pm, followed by the reception and tour of the exhibit from 3:00 to 4:00 pm.

Calling All Gardeners 8th Annual Native Plant Sale



Mark your calendars for the last weekend in April. The Spring Native Plant Sale is coming, and it's more than a sale—it's an extravaganza. Friday evening, all day Saturday, and Sunday morning you can choose from a beautiful selection of more than 100 species of native trees, shrubs, vines, and wildflowers.

Friday night is Member Preview Night, featuring first pick from the sale and a happy hour celebration in the new Sensory Garden. We're putting the finishing touches on the garden now, including landscaped trails and wooden trellis fencing, and by sale time many of last fall's plantings should be in bloom.

On Saturday, the plant sale opens to the public and the festivities continue as we welcome everyone to Naturepalooza, our family Earth Day celebration. Also on Saturday, Bartlett Tree Experts arborist Stephen Goin will join us to answer your questions regarding tree and shrub care. The sale closes Sunday afternoon.

Native plants are hardy, require little maintenance, and provide habitat for local wildlife. Many of our offerings are grown right here in our onsite nurseries, and we review all specimens for health and quality. Gardening experts will be on hand throughout the sale to answer all your questions and help you create a sanctuary for wildlife in your own backyard.

For even more advice on native plants and creating a sustainable, eco-friendly garden, check out our workshop series on sustainable gardening earlier in April. Attend the workshops and then come to the sale armed with a plan and a shopping list!

Proceeds from the sale are used to support the Schuylkill Center's on-site restoration projects. ■

Member Preview Night and Happy Hour - Friday, April 27, 6:00 - 8:00 pm
Public Sale - Saturday, April 28, 8:30 am - 4:30 pm and Sunday, April 29,
9:00 am - 1:00 pm

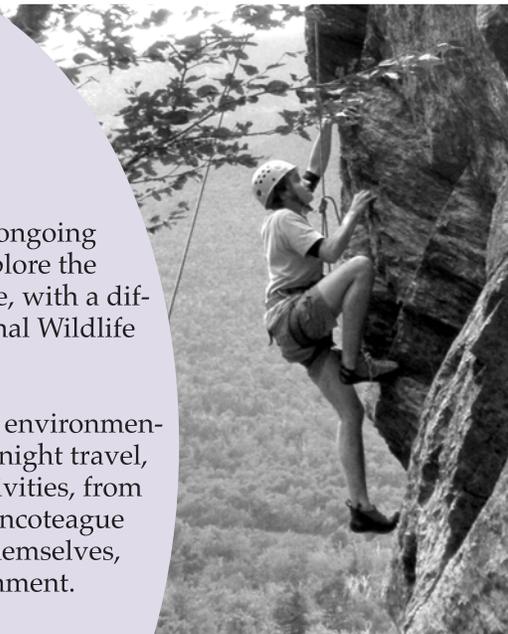


Summer Camp Registration Is Open

Give your child a summer full of discovery and adventure with our 2012 summer camp programs.

Our Nature Ramblers Summer Camp provides children aged 4 to 9 intimate and ongoing access to the center's forests, fields, ponds and organic farm garden. Campers explore the natural world through hands-on discoveries, hiking, art, play, field trips and more, with a different theme each week. This summer's excursions include the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge, Franklin Institute, Philadelphia Zoo and Crystal Caverns.

Our Summer Adventure Treks for kids aged 10-15 highlight personal growth and environmental stewardship through outdoor adventure. Weeklong programs, most with overnight travel, challenge campers to improve their outdoor knowledge and skills in a host of activities, from camping in the Pine Barrens or rock climbing in West Virginia, to kayaking at Chincoteague and horseback riding in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Campers learn more about themselves, strengthen self-confidence, and gain teamwork skills in a safe, supportive environment.



SCEE People

Assistant building manager **Mike Gutmaker**, an invaluable member of the staff after only one year of service, resigned to move south and pursue a certificate in heating/air conditioning. We thank “Goot” for his service; he will be missed terribly, both by us and by our cranky heating system.

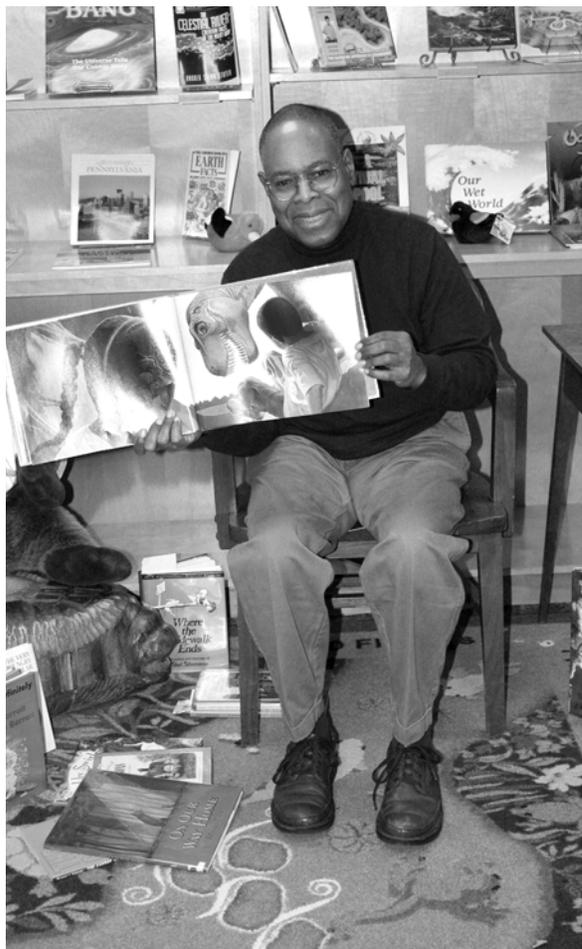
In addition, we were fortunate to have **Ryan Spalding** as an intern in the art department between May and December 2011. A senior at Drexel University, she was extremely helpful in organizing the “Facts and Fables” exhibition while assisting us with graphic design. As she is doing her senior thesis on environmental art, we look forward to continuing to work with her.

At the January annual meeting of the center’s Board of Trustees, the board elected its slate of officers for the 2012 year. Sculptor **Binney Meigs**, son of one of our founders and grandson of another, was elected president for the third consecutive year. Attorney and Mt. Airy resident **Erik Williams** and development consultant **Kathleen Wagner** of Bala Cynwyd were elected as vice presidents. Whitemarsh’s **Steve Kaufman** was re-elected treasurer for the third year, and Chestnut Hill investment banker **Charles T. “Chip” Lee III** was elected secretary.

Philadelphia University biology professor **Anne Bower** was thanked and congratulated for six years of remarkable board service, including chairing the executive director search team, leading the center’s conservation easement efforts that led to the permanent preservation of the center’s 340-acre core campus, and chairing or co-chairing many other committees.

Abington’s **Judy Kruse**, a longtime wildlife clinic volunteer, was also thanked for her two years of service on the board, chairing the clinic committee while serving on the search committee.

Thanks to both Anne and Judy from the entire SCEE community. ■



2011 Winterfest Recap

Our revival of Winterfest proved a fun time for kids and adults alike. Dr. Lisa Chirlian (*below*) of WXPB’s Kids Corner used dry ice and salt to do experiments for her “Chemistry in the Kitchen” show. Joe Hilton (*left*) from the Free Library of Philadelphia hosted storytime in our bookstore. Night hikes, wildlife shows, Kids Corner host Kathy O’Connell and astronomy with Derrick Pitts rounded out the evening.

Photo credit and thanks to Sue Ann Rybak from the Roxborough Review.



NATURE PALOOZA



An early 1980s Earthball party.

Celebrate Earth Day and all things natural at **Naturepalooza**, our new, free family festival. The event, set for Saturday, April 28, happily coincides with our very successful annual native plant sale. Come buy plants and celebrate the extraordinary plants and animals that share our piece of the planet.

Naturepalooza includes something for everyone. Our pavilion stage hosts a rotation of live music, live theater, live animal shows, poetry, very special guests and so much more. Nature walks, an environmental art area, games, story times, and our native plant sale complete the very special event.

“Come anytime, and there will be about a dozen things you can do,” says executive director Mike Weilbacher. “Adults can go on walks and hear engaging talks, while kids can dive into art projects and play games.”

Bring your family and friends to an all-ages celebration of Earth Day.

Naturepalooza
Saturday, April 28, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm
Free