

Bringing the Wetlands Back to Wetlandia: Designing Posters to Educate the Public on Marsh Ecosystem

Heather Bariso, Stockton University

Every day, The Wetlands Institute's Education staff conduct Salt Marsh Safari interpretive tours which offer an insightful look into the ecology and species located around the marsh. During this tour, local flora and fauna species are pointed out and the public is given the opportunity to experience the marsh ecosystem up close. Depending on weather, as well as other accessibility factors, it is sometimes difficult for visitors to see all of the creatures discussed during the tour.

Unlike plant species, salt marsh animals can be elusive and often tricky to spot, this project aims to bring our most common marsh animals inside The Wetlands Institute for identification and education, and seeks to revitalize a popular education space known as Wetlandia, which is located off the Marshview Hall and adjacent to the covered back deck. These project goals are achieved through the creation of two large 4'x4' educational posters featuring the most commonly seen animals in the marsh ecosystem, both above and below the waterline. One poster features terrestrial marsh creatures and the other features aquatic marsh creatures. These posters include names and educational facts about each animal and are intended for usage in Wetlandia as either wall, floor or table posters. Additionally, a Food Web Matching Game supplements these posters to give guests a hands-on experience which allows them to link the animals on the posters to how each one interacts with another. Together, these components bring the Salt Marsh Safari tour inside in a fun and engaging way.

The Original Environmentalists: Learning about Lenape Culture, Traditions, and History in New Jersey

Grace Fanning, The University of Pittsburgh

The Lenni-Lenape were the native people of New Jersey, however their history is often erased and forgotten due to colonialism. The indigenous people of New Jersey lived here for thousands of years before colonists arrived. The Lenni-Lenape were both agriculturalists and hunter-gatherers, cultivating the land with deep respect, generation after generation. The Lenape believe that humans have no right to own the land as any one person- rather the earth is a gift that we must share and show dignity to all living things. Rather than overharvesting or overhunting resources, the Lenape preserved the land for future generations.

In the off-season, from September-March, Science Feature programs offer older children and adults a guided look at interesting subjects related to coastal ecosystems. These programs typically involve an informative presentation followed by a hands-on activity which helps participants grasp the subject material. This project will create a new Science Feature so that members of the public can learn about Lenape culture and practices and what happened to the indigenous people of New Jersey. In addition to the presentation, visitors are invited to participate in a tracking and identification game, to test the knowledge of local species of plants and animals. Learning about the Lenape culture will not only provide the public with a new perspective of American history, but it may also alter views on how we treat the land in a fast moving, ever changing world.

I'm Hooked: Creating a Video for the Secrets of the Salt Marsh Aquarium

Olivia Hogan, Eckerd College

The Secrets of the Salt Marsh aquarium is a popular attraction at The Wetlands Institute. With well-attended programs such as A Night at the Aquarium and Aquarium Feedings occurring weekly during the summer season, a large portion of guests visit the Aquarium. Since these Aquarium visits are popular and crowded, lots of information must be provided in a short period of time. Enhancing the audio and visual components of an Aquarium visit allows The Wetlands Institute to reach even more guests during their visit, as well as enhance the atmosphere of the Aquarium.

Final Cut Pro, a powerful video editing software program, allows multiple clips of The Wetlands Institute's aquatic organisms to be combined into a video for public education. A Day in the Aquarium is a fifteen minute video that showcases sophisticated video editing techniques and shares information about local species through narration, while providing pleasant background music as visitors enjoy the exhibits. The videos length reflects the average time a guest spends in the aquarium and the attention span of our youngest visitors. Through this video, the audience can get a closer look at local aquatic organisms and be exposed to events and behaviors that might not have occurred during their visit. This video project spreads knowledge and appreciation for our local marine life.

Getting Up Close to the Fish Hawk: Revitalizing the Osprey Learning Station

Callie Knudson, Unity College

The salt marsh ecosystem provides the perfect place for diverse wildlife spanning from terrapins to crabs to shorebirds. One of these shorebirds is the Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*). Also known as the fish hawk, the Osprey is a master at catching fish and navigating the marshy terrain. For over fifty years, The Wetlands Institute (TWI) has been "promoting [the] appreciation, understanding & stewardship of wetlands and coastal ecosystems". As part of fulfilling this mission, live-stream cameras were introduced and attached to an Osprey nest on TWI's property. This allows for the public to get up close and personal with these large birds. The public can view them either on our website or in The Marshview Hall. The Osprey cams are a highlight of every visit to TWI and this project aims to enhance that encounter.

The Osprey Learning Station is designed to build an interactive education experience with unique posters, crafts, and activities based on the season. Year-round, two large posters will explain why the Osprey sits atop of the food chain, as well as current threats facing their survival. In the spring, the Learning Station demonstrates nest making with a hands-on nest building activity. The summer brings new chicks and a unique age-based guessing game, and, in the fall, the public can learn about the amazing feat of migration. Lastly, winter features an Osprey reading activity and bird bookmark craft so children can take home their own osprey experience. This project strives to showcase the importance of these magnificent birds.