

Modernizing the Bev Henry Salt Marsh Rubbing Trail: Using Riddles and Clues to Educate on the Salt Marsh

Hannah Delahaye, Towson University

In part, The Wetlands Institute's mission is to promote the appreciation and understanding of wetlands and coastal ecosystems through educational programming. With thousands of visitors coming to see what The Wetlands Institute has to offer, there are times when people may struggle to learn within large group settings, specifically children or others with shorter attention spans. Currently, visitors of all ages can take self-guided or guided tours along our Salt Marsh Trail to learn more about wetlands ecology. One such tour, The Bev Henry Salt Marsh Rubbing Trail, is a self-guided children's activity featuring 12 rubbing tile stations that allow children to create a unique crayon rubbing of a Northern Diamondback Terrapin, while exploring the salt marsh.

This project is aimed at creating a more modern interpretation of the Salt Marsh Rubbing Trail. The original Salt Marsh Rubbing Trail questions have been converted into more challenging riddles and/or clues that participants must solve to get to specific locations around the property. At each location, they are rewarded with a lock box containing one of 12 tiles needed to make a complete photograph, which when combined together will highlight an animal species important to The Wetlands Institute's research and conservation efforts. These photographs will rotate monthly from June – August, encouraging repeat participation. By revitalizing the Bev Henry Salt Marsh Rubbing Trail in a more modern, interactive, and engaging way, children will be able to see everything The Wetlands Institute has to offer, while learning new and interesting things about the salt marsh.

Integrating Inclusivity: Captioning Educational Videos for The Wetlands Institute

Fiona Buck, Stockton University

Education is an integral part of The Wetlands Institute's three-pronged mission focused on research, conservation, and education. At The Wetlands Institute, there are three main education videos used during programs and/or broadcast in different exhibit spaces throughout the building and on the Virtual Wetlands Experience portion of the website. These videos include the *Secrets of the Salt Marsh* video shown as an introduction to our General Admission Salt Marsh Safari Program; the *Terrapins in the News* video shown on loop in Terrapin Station; and the *Secrets of the Salt Marsh Aquarium* video shown on loop in the Secrets of the Salt Marsh Aquarium. As an organization, we believe that all aspects of our public education programs should be accessible to all and strive to increase the accessibility of our programs as the need arises.

With a focus on physical accessibility to the marsh and building, the lack of closed captioning on media shown to the public is often overlooked since it is not a necessity for hearing people. This project focuses on increasing the accessibility of The Wetlands Institute's programs and displays for members of the deaf, deafened, and hard of hearing communities by using *Final Cut Pro*, a video-making software, to add closed captioning on the three aforementioned educational videos. The closed captioning on videos will not only aid people who are deaf or hard of hearing, but also anyone who may not be able to hear the videos because of noise levels from surrounding visitors or proximity to the sound output.

Marine Debris: How Does Our Trash Affect Marine Life?

Julia Dahms, Eckerd College

The Wetlands Institute offers a variety of year-round programs that focus on many aspects of the salt marsh habitat. In some of these programs, it is easy to get caught up in the excitement of interacting with wildlife. However, learning about human impacts on the surrounding coastal ecosystem is crucial to taking measures to protect the animals we know and love. One man-made problem affecting local ecosystems is marine debris, and the best way to address this issue is through public education.

There are two components to this project. The first component is a tri-panel poster that will go behind the Aquarium Teaching and Touch Tank in the Secrets of the Salt Marsh Aquarium, highlighting the causes and effects of marine debris. The second component is a revamp of the Marine Debris Science Feature, which includes hands-on activities throughout the presentation. The marine debris poster display will tie the animals that the public sees in the Aquarium to the threats that these animals face from littering, while the Science Feature will provide additional information for older kids and adults to dive deeper into the subject at hand. Created using *Prezi*, an interactive presentation software, the Science Feature includes information and games that keep the public engaged, touches more on the types of marine debris in the ocean, and dives deeper into new topics such as microplastics. Together, both components emphasize ways that the public can take small steps toward preventing marine debris and contributing to a healthier coastal ecosystem.

Art is All Around Us: Identifying Patterns and Colors at The Wetlands Institute

Hannah Drahusz, Millersville University

When guiding families down The Salt Marsh Trail it is challenging to maintain a child's focus, particularly among adolescents who seek a sense of independence and excitement. All children have a natural inclination to ask for identification of different animal tracks, eggshells, plants, and birds. This project is dedicated to using art to engage children with the environment and answer their commonly asked questions about the salt marsh. Art is very important for developing children. Being able to identify colors, patterns, or markings on plants and animals develops their cognitive connection skills and enhances their knowledge of nature. The ability to connect concepts one might learn here at The Wetlands Institute to everyday life shows high executive function, thus creating a successful learner, student, and child.

The components of this project include an interactive booklet that is easy enough for children to understand and complete independently, but also has factoids and immersive patterns and colors to help them understand the salt marsh flora and fauna. Inside the packet, there are small facts about the animal or plant they are looking for, a map that guides them along the trail, and artistic drawings for them to complete at each stop along the way – thus connecting the fact to the art they are creating. Overall, the booklet, holding impactful knowledge they learn, will not be as easily forgotten as lectures during the Salt Marsh Safari Tours due to the inclusion of independence, art, excitement, and science.