

## **Identifying Common Beach Treasures: Creating a Take-home Guide to Seashell Sunday**

*Emily Cook, Bucknell University*

Seashell Sunday introduces The Wetlands Institute's General Admission visitors to seashells and the animals that live in them, using a presentation style format that highlights local and nonlocal shells, artifacts, and live mollusks. While Seashell Sunday allows for visitors to learn about these shells and their inhabitants, it can be difficult for children to recall specific shell names and distinguish the differences between similar types. This can be discouraging when collecting shells during beach walks. Creating a kid-friendly identification guide to commonly found beach items sparks more engagement and participation from our visitors both during and after the Seashell Sunday program.

The purpose of this project is to enhance the Seashell Sunday program by introducing a new identification guide titled, *Seashell Sunday: Common Beach Finds*. Using Canva, a graphic design software platform, this booklet will be distributed at the end of the Seashell Sunday presentation and be available for download as part of the Virtual Wetlands Experience on The Wetlands Institute's website. The booklet will include photos, names, and descriptions of items commonly found on the beach, including different types of shells, crabs, sea plants, and egg cases. The descriptions and pictures contained within the guidebook will assist children and adults in identifying the differences between similar shells, as well as identifying commonly found items often unknown to the public. This educational resource encourages further self-guided exploration into species that can be found on the beach.

## **What You've Been Wading For: Introducing a New Conservation-themed Programming Day to Complement Totally Turtle Tuesday and Horseshoe Crab Mania Thursday**

*Gregory Maccarone, Rowan University*

Throughout the summer months, The Wetlands Institute offers two weekly conservation-themed programming days intended to educate visitors about Northern Diamondback Terrapins and Atlantic Horseshoe Crabs, both a focal species of *in situ* conservation efforts. Each day includes theme-oriented Creature Features, a special craft, and a hands-on activity during the noon Salt Marsh Safari. To highlight coastal nesting birds, a third pillar of The Wetlands Institute's conservation efforts, fellow Environmental Education Interns Gregory Maccarone and Paige Jarocki have collaborated on separate projects guided by this central theme.

Structured similarly to two existing conservation-themed programming days, Totally Turtle Tuesday and Horseshoe Crab Mania Thursday, implementing World of Wings Wednesday rounds out The Wetlands Institute's conservation-themed educational programming, shining a light on another important area of animal study. In addition to developing the overarching theme from concept to reality, the highlight of the day is the specialty Salt Marsh Safari, which features a unique tool, the Swarovski dG. This device is a combination monocular and camera that captures photos of coastal nesting birds spotted during the Salt Marsh Safari tour. Photos are uploaded to the Virtual Wetlands Experience - Community Showcase for visitors to download, keep, and share with others. Finally, eight (8) alternating bird crafts provide education and enjoyment to children during their visit, including hand wading birds, origami cranes, paper plate birds, birds' nests, cardboard-winged birds, toilet-paper-roll birds, clothespin birds, and craft stick birds.

## **Getting Birdy With It: Introducing a New Conservation-themed Programming Day to Complement Totally Turtle Tuesday and Horseshoe Crab Mania Thursday**

*Paige Jarocki, University of Delaware*

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From mid-June to Labor Day, Creature Feature programs run ten times per week and focus on a different group of organisms every day. Each Creature Feature features both live animals and educational artifacts related to that day's organism or group of organisms. One group of animals not touched upon in a Creature Feature, but extremely prevalent at The Wetlands Institute and surrounding area, are coastal nesting birds. Creating a coastal nesting bird Creature Feature will give the public the opportunity to learn about the birds they see along the beaches and in the salt marsh.

This new Creature Feature focuses on the coastal nesting birds that are commonly found during the summer and is the premiere Creature Feature on World of Wings Wednesday, a new conservation-themed programming day. In efforts to highlight the birds in a more hands-on way, birds included in the Creature Feature will be grouped according to their hunting technique and corresponding prey items. While the use of living birds is not an option for this Creature Feature, to enhance the interactive nature of the program, the presentation will include an interactive PowerPoint Presentation, a variety of bird artifacts and live prey animals available in the Secrets of the Salt Marsh Aquarium at The Wetlands Institute.

## **Conservation Conversation: Creating a Dialogue to Implement Positive Change**

*Kaelin Drey, Stockton University*

Science Feature programs, which occur in the off-season from September-March, engage older visitors in tactile learning opportunities to discover topics concerning wetland and coastal ecosystems. Generally, these programs involve an informative presentation followed by a hands-on activity that encourages visitors to apply what they learn to make a positive difference in their communities. This project showcases a set of two updated Science Features in which visitors can learn about keystone species in need of conservation.

Conservation Conversation, a two-part Science Feature series, will focus on two keystone species present in salt marsh ecosystems, the Northern Diamondback Terrapin and the Atlantic Horseshoe Crab. Created using *Prezi*, an interactive presentation software, Conservation Conversation aspires to influence visitors to create a positive impact on our ecosystems. In addition to the presentations, both Science Features are followed by an interactive activity; a terrapin crossing activity, or a mock spawning survey and reTURN the Favor Walk, respectively. These activities highlight the current conservation methods and practices employed by The Wetlands Institute Research and Conservation Department to address the known and emerging threats to each of these critical species. Learning about the conservation of these critical species will not only spread awareness of the research and conservation at The Wetlands Institute, but also prompt the public to take small steps towards contributing to healthier, more stable wetland and coastal ecosystems.