

*Of Note:*

- Be sure to check out our Save the Date section for our Spring 2014 Regional Workshop.
- Get your registration in for the National Workshop if you haven't already done so. Regular registration closes on October 10

*Individual Highlights:*

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## Director's Note

Hello Region 2 Member,  
I hope you are enjoying your summer and all of the adventure it holds. As interpreters we have the wonderful opportunity to be engaged in connecting individuals with the incredible resources at our sites—what a privilege! To aid in this effort, we have shared a few summer camp and summer program ideas with you to aid you in your adventures.

I would also encourage you to save the week of **March 11-14<sup>th</sup>, 2014**, for our Region 2 Spring Workshop. "**Westmoreland, Watermen, and Wildlife: Bay Stories – Interpreting Our Shared Heritage**," is shaping up to be an outstanding week. Held at Westmoreland State Park on the beautiful Northern Neck of Virginia, we will feature the renowned storyteller/herbalist Doug Elliott, dinner at Stratford Hall, bonafide Oystermen, great offsites, and so much more! Stay tuned in the weeks to come...

Continue to be safe as you share your stories this summer!

Linda Bailey  
Director  
Region 2

## From the Editors Desk

Are you going to the National Workshop? We had a great response last year to our request for your contributions for our workshop edition of the newsletter that we decided to let it be a special edition this year. If you are going to the workshop, we would love to have you share your experience. Take your camera and send us your submissions after the conference. We'll be looking for pictures, articles, tidbits of great interpretive techniques you've learned and anything else from the workshop, off-site sessions or pre-workshop that you would like to share. Please send your submissions to [ChesapeakeChat@gmail.com](mailto:ChesapeakeChat@gmail.com) by November 15.

## Becoming Naturally Dramatic

### Tips and advice for naturalists and park rangers doing campfire skits

Even at the creation of the National Park Service in 1916, ranger-led campfire programs were already well established at public camp grounds and environmental education areas.

Drawing on an age-old tradition of telling stories and gathering with friends around a crackling wood-burning fire, fireside environmental education programs are a well-established activity across national, state, and many local parks and preserves.

Performing skits around a campfire, whether at a summer camp or doing interpretive programs at a national park, can aid in creating a valuable and memorable experience for campers. In some ways, it resurrects a long-lost tradition of people gathering over a bonfire cooking food and telling stories of their lives. In our rushed and noisy lifestyles, conversation and song over an open fire can provide us a calming relief from the increasingly repetitive structure of our working lives. For many youth, fireside programs can provide a new (and perhaps frightening) experience for "city-slicker" children that have yet to become acquainted with and connected to the forest at night.

Skits can add a sense of comic relief in new situations, or the

skits themselves can be used to teach people about nature in an entertaining way.

Yet many naturalists that I have encountered have had little to no theatrical experience, and they are often required to or choose to perform skits at an interpretive program or a summer camp. Learning and practicing some of the fundamental techniques of the performing arts could perhaps improve the quality of a camp program, providing a more enriching experience for program participants.

In traditional performing arts programming, actors and actresses are usually on a stage. However, they are not in an arbitrary location on the stage. In fact, there are different sections to a stage, and where the actors are positioned can matter a great deal. For example, there may be a clump of actors on **stage right** while another set of actors are positioned at **stage left**. This often means that

two separate scenes are going on simultaneously or that there is some sort of disconnect between the performers. If most of the action is taking place at **center stage**, this usually implies a climactic moment in a drama, or at a time when there is one scene occurring with performers interacting all together. The audience's perspective is limited to the confines of the seats in the theatre, and all of the events that

take place on the stage are occurring facing the audience. Finally, the **backdrop** provides additional scenery and blocks the backstage area, thus confining the performers to three "walls". Because the artists are performing in a theater or other closed facility, and due to the fact that not every audience member has a front row seat, actors and actresses have to exaggerate their facial expressions, voices, and movements. This is so that everyone in the theater can see, hear, and interpret what is going on in the production. The bright lighting can also overexpose the actions on stage, and exaggerated movements can help alleviate those affects. (If you watch old movies from the 1930s, you'll notice that the movie stars "overacted" some of their roles by talking with too much expression or making large grins. Movies during this era were new, and most of the actors had performed in theatrical settings and were still getting used to being in front of a camera.)

An additional consideration that actors and actresses must take into account in a live theater performance is to avoid **upstaging** the audience, or facing the backdrop when your audience actually needs to hear or see you. This is a frequent mistake among novice performers (and is a nearly

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perpetual mistake among environmental interpreters who are doing campfire skits). Clearly an informal outdoor setting at a campground or a nature center woodland area does not merit all of the intricacies or the long hours of rehearsal time like that of the performing arts into an interpretive program - but a consideration of some of them could benefit your program.

Interpretive skits can encompass a combination of formal theatrical performance techniques but with emphasis on improvisation. The purpose of most skits in context of a nature education program is to convey some meaning about nature or to provide humor and entertainment at a summer camp. Thus, it can be easy to dismiss using professionally developed theatrical techniques.

However, by following these guidelines "borrowed" from the world of theatre, your interpretive skits could become more meaningful and memorable to your visitors:

- **Avoid upstaging yourself**

When you turn our back to your audience, people can no longer hear you, nor can they make out your facial expressions. This can result in visitors not

understanding what is going on, or missing the punch line. Be sure you are ALWAYS facing your audience. This is especially true when you are outside, as the acoustics are not going to carry your voice as easily. I've seen too many times where naturalists turn the other way and then the adrenaline of the audience dies out.

- **Make big faces**

As mentioned above, folks in a theater are a good distance away from you, and they'll have troubles seeing your face. This is even more the case when outside near a dimly lit campfire. Yeah, you'll feel funny and awkward doing it, but if you don't, people will miss out on important moments in your skit (one time the punch line for a humorous campfire skit about two people hiking in the woods looking at animal scat didn't catch on because no one could see the look of disgust on the character's faces when one of the actors pretended to eat some of the droppings).

- **Project your voice**

Perhaps there are some older people sitting in the back of the auditorium who are hard of hearing. Or perhaps it's a windy evening outside by a roaring bonfire. People need to hear

you. Shout it out if you have to, even if your scene is one that is supposed to be calm or quite.

- **Plan out your program**

You need only a few minutes to decide on a plot, agree on who plays what role, and stick with the plot that you make up. Deviating from the routine or going off on your own tangent can ruin the skit because your other actors won't know what you're trying to do.

Stick with the "script."

- **Utilize stage positions**

This can help break up the scene if there are two different events going on at once. It can also force you to stay in front of your audience, since most outdoor sites don't have the "walls" that a traditional stage would have.

You may need to plan out where stage right or stage left is when planning your program. Be sure to not perform too far from your audience, and imagine there is an invisible "backdrop".

How much effort you want to put into your acting skills for a skit is up to you, but even interpreters who are drama novices can benefit from using some of the theatrical techniques presented here. Now go gather some kindling and let the show begin!

*Alex Palmer*

## "Camping Day" at Summer Camp

Get campers excited about backyard or state park camping adventures with the following activities:

### **Tent Set-Up**

Using inexpensive small pup-

tents, have teams practice setting up tents, then playing in them!

### **Sleeping Bag Relay**

In two lines, campers must unroll sleeping bag, lay down, hop up, reroll and tie! (For safety, do NOT

use bungee cords.)

### **Camping Box Guess**

Place a bunch of camping items on a table. Cover with a cloth. Get campers in small groups of

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2-3. Uncover items for two minutes, then cover back up. Kids have one minute to write down everything they can remember! Items could include: table cloth, pot, matches, fire starter, rope, cup, plate, silverware, flashlight, candle, water bottle, spatula, knife, sunscreen, bugspray, soap, towel—have about 25 items.

### **Fire Building**

Review campfire building as follows: Clear area of flammable debris in 3-foot circle; Have water bucket on hand for extinguishing fire; Collect tinder, kindling, and fuel wood; Demonstrate building teepee, log cabin, and/or lean-to fire; Have groups try building and lighting their own fires (with supervision, of course). Use fire for roasting, etc. Extinguish until embers are cool enough to handle. After fire is out, remove ALL TRACE of its presence – “Leave No Trace.”

## **Camp Ideas**

### **5-Minute “Water Clock”**

Get campers excited about conserving water by making a “5-Minute Water Clock!” Designed to drain water in approximately five minutes, it’s simple to make. Using a push pin, make ONE hole in the bottom of a clear, 9oz. plastic cup. Make two holes on opposite sides of the cup top with a hole punch and attach a string for hanging on shower faucet. Decorate cup with colored Sharpies. You’ll have to try one out to get the timing right, then

NOTE: May use alternate heat source such magnesium bar and steel striker; Cottonballs with Vaseline make great fire starter!

### **“Burn the String Race”**

This fun competition gets groups thinking about the importance of proper fire building! Set up two fire stations, each with a cotton string tied about 18” above (use two sticks on either side of firepit. Get campers into two teams (ours enjoy boys vs. girls!) Each team scours nearby woods for tinder, kindling, fuel wood. On “Go!” they build then light fire, trying to be the first to burn their string! SAFETY is of utmost importance. We have a NO running/fast walking rule in entire area.

### **Roasted Dough Boys**

A different twist to the standard s’mores is roasted “Dough Boys!” Mix Bisquick with water in a bowl. Make balls of dough. Roll into

hotdog shape and wind around end of ½ inch thick stick or wooden dowel. Slowly roast over embers. Slather with homemade butter (see below), brown sugar, jam, cinnamon. A delight they won’t forget! Homemade BUTTER: Pour heavy whipping cream in plastic jar with lid. Shake vigorously for 15 minutes. Pour off buttermilk. Add a dash of salt to butter fat = delicious!

### **Hiking Sticks**

Collect downed sticks about 1” in diameter. Give campers sand paper. Drill holes in pole for attaching leather lacing (handles). Give feathers and beads and they will amaze you with their creativity!

-Linda Bailey

make a 5-minute “Fill Line” on each cup.

Tell campers to fill the cup at the start of their shower, hang it, then when the cup is empty after about five minutes, their shower time is also gone!

### **Water Relay (Follow Up Activity)**

RELAY RACES are always a hoot! Play “Water Relay” by putting two, equal size, small berry picking-type buckets at one end of field. Place two large

buckets and two cups at opposite end (about 25 feet away). Get campers into two groups. Begin relay with first in each line filling their cup from large tub then running to small bucket and dumping the water in! Runners return to their line and toss cup into large tub for next person in line to retrieve. Have teams cheer their crew on! Team to fill their berry bucket with water to the TOP first, wins!!

-Linda Bailey

## Summer Programs

### “Stars, Stories and S’mores!”

A great summer campfire program. While the sky is darkening, get them focused on the heaven close at hand...frogs and bats! Incorporate:

- **S’more Roasting** – Use 4-foot dowel rods for roasting – keeps people back a bit from flames. Give a time limit so you can begin your program.
- **Frog Chorus** – give everyone a sound to make from Green Frog (ga’dunk) to Bullfrog (VA-rooom!) to trilling of toads. Have everyone click two stones together for Cricket Frog call. Try it all together and you have a beautiful sound...not so unlike mother nature herself!
- **Bats Above Us!** – Look overhead for bats. Ask for 6 foot tall Dad to come up front. Ask how large world’s biggest bat is. Have man hold end of string, then stretch it the length of his 6-foot arm span. This is the wingspan of the largest flying fox from Asia. Smallest bat is the penny-sized Bumblebee Bat. Sing “Bats Eat Bugs!” Have kids toss in other critters...Frogs eat Bugs! Birds, Spiders, Fish, Some People, etc.! They will love it. Trying shouting “Hello” across a lake to hear the ECHO come back. Discuss “Echolocation.”
- **ECLIPTIC** – looking beyond bats to sky, search for

planets, moon, sunset – they all follow path called “Ecliptic.” Use arms to have group show location of cardinal directions.

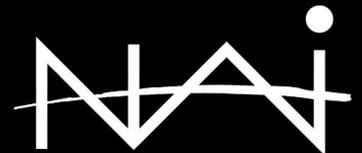
- **Planets, Moon, Stars** – Do a little research to learn what you are looking at.
  - **Moon** – “If the light’s on the right, it’s getting bigger each night.” Helps recall if the moon is waxing (increasing) or waning (decreasing) in size.
  - **Venus** - often very bright “evening star” in West just after sunset. Similar size to Earth with heavy, poisonous atmosphere. Planet Order: My Very Eager Mother Just Served Us Nachos!

- **Arcturus** – Handle of Big Dipper “Arcs to Arcturus” #4 in brightness. Look up Chicago World’s Fair 1933 for fascinating story behind the star.
- **Antares** – Old, dying, super giant red star in heart of “Scorpius” (slayer of Orion— look up story). Located along ecliptic, so sometimes confused with Mars. 700x larger than our sun and will one day go supernova!

Add your own guitar stories and other bits and pieces such as “How Coyote Scattered the Stars,” or “Coyote Places the Stars” and you’ll have your group enthralled!

## 2014 NAI Chesapeake Region 2 Workshop

Save the date  
March 11-14, 2014



Westmoreland  
Watermen &  
Wildlife

Bay Stories - Interpreting Our Shared Heritage

## Calendar of Events

Tuesday September 10, 6-8 pm,  
\$20 per person

**Live Hawks in Flight Workshop at White Clay Creek State Park, Newark DE** – Just in time for the fall migration, we will cover basic hawk identification and see live, up-close raptors that demonstrated the body shape and flight of the different hawk groups. Includes a moderate hike up a hilly path. Park entrance fee in effect. Call [\(302\) 368-6900](tel:3023686900) to register.

Visit [www.destateparks.com/wccsp](http://www.destateparks.com/wccsp) or <https://www.facebook.com/White.Clay.Creek.State.Park> for more information.

Monday, September 16, 2013,  
10:30am – 2:30pm, Little Bennett Regional Park, Clarksburg, MD

***This program is now full with a waiting list.***

**Meadow Ecology** – Uncover the intricacies and importance of meadows as you stroll the trails of Little Bennett Regional Park with Stephanie Mason, Senior Naturalist, Audubon Naturalist Society and Cathy Stragar, entomologist and naturalist. Meadow programs bridge the gap between traditional summer and fall programs and this is a great habitat to emphasize the basic ecology of food webs, energy transfer and the larger idea of interdependence. Follow trophic interactions between producers and consumers, energy transfer and the ephemeral nature of this habitat. We will look and listen for meadow plants and their resident consumers, from invertebrates to

birds **to herps** and explore their natural history. As always participants are encouraged to share what they know and bring resources pertinent to this activity (field guides, hand lenses, binoculars). [for additional information see Region 2 website]

Monday, October 7, 2013  
10am- 2pm  
Riverbend Park, Great Falls, VA

**Fungi Identification** – Explore a whole new kingdom -- fungi. These organisms, which are more closely related to animals than plants, play a key role in our environment. Although fungi may appear small, they are mighty! Fungi facilitate not only decomposition but also plant growth, fermentation and sometimes mind control!

This Beltway Chapter session will be led by mycologist Dr. David Farr. Dr. Farr is retired from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in Beltsville Maryland. He worked on plant pathogenic fungi for 30 years. Dr. Farr has also taught the Mushroom Identification course through the Audubon Natural History Program.

To register, please contact Beltway Chapter Co-chair Alonso Abugattas at:

[aabugattas@arlingtonva.us](mailto:aabugattas@arlingtonva.us).

The session is limited to 20 participants. Bring a magnifying glass, a bag lunch, field guides,

paper bags and pocket knife. Carpooling is encouraged.

Tuesday, October 8, 6-8pm, \$20 per person.

**Owls of Delaware Workshop at White Clay Creek State Park, Newark DE** – Have you ever wanted to see our local owls up close? In this workshop you will get to hear vocalizations, explore adaptations and best of all get to meet a few different local owls up close. Includes a moderate hike up a hilly path. Park entrance fee in effect. Call [\(302\) 368-6900](tel:3023686900) to register.

Visit [www.destateparks.com/wccsp](http://www.destateparks.com/wccsp) or <https://www.facebook.com/White.Clay.Creek.State.Park> for more information.

Monday, December 9, 6-8:30pm,  
Riverbend Park, Great Falls, VA  
(Rain date: Tuesday, December 10)

**Astronomy** Delve into the wonders of the night sky with naturalists, Jennifer Soles, Arlington County Parks, and John Callow, Fairfax County Park Authority.

Be sure to check the Region 2 website for more information on these and other upcoming opportunities in interpretation ([www.interpnet.com/2](http://www.interpnet.com/2)).



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Under Dr. Farr's guidance, we'll examine fungi indoors and outdoors. Meet at the Riverbend Park Nature Center. Participants are encouraged to collect and bring in mushrooms for identification. Please collect the stem and the cap, if possible bring it in with the substrate it's growing on. Store picked mushrooms in wax paper or paper bag in the refrigerator.

After lunch, we'll head down Georgetown Pike to Scotts Run Nature Preserve, one of only a few nature preserves in the Fairfax County Park Authority's holdings. It is a remarkable place of rare plants and splendid beauty. There we'll search for additional specimens and apply what we've learned.

To register, please contact Beltway Chapter Co-chair Alonso Abugattas at [aabugattas@arlingtonva.us](mailto:aabugattas@arlingtonva.us). The session is limited to 20 participants. Bring a magnifying glass, a bag lunch, field guides, paper bags and pocket knife. Carpooling is encouraged.

Riverbend Park, managed by the Fairfax County Park Authority, is tucked away in a remote river setting. The park has over 400 acres of forest, meadows, and ponds. The park's Nature Center is located at 8814 Jeffery Road in Great Falls, VA. For more information see the park's website: <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/riverbend/>

Directions to the Riverbend Park Nature Center: Take Exit Beltway Exit 44 (Georgetown Pike, Route 193) west to right on River Bend Road to right on Jeffery Road. Proceed 1.5 miles to the Nature Center entrance.

# Submitting Material for the Chesapeake Chat



**NAI Region 2:**  
 Delaware  
 District of Columbia  
 Maryland  
 New Jersey  
 Pennsylvania  
 Virginia  
 West Virginia

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We're on the Web!  
 See us at:  
[www.interpnet.com/2](http://www.interpnet.com/2)

The main articles and the "Tips and Tricks" section will be theme-based for each edition so if you have something to contribute short or long refer to the table below for upcoming deadlines and themes. Submissions for other sections can be sent at any time but if it fits in with a particular theme send it by that edition's deadline otherwise it will be used for a future edition.

may be sent in the body of your email or as an attachment.

If you have any suggestions for a theme for future newsletters, please send your suggestions or requests. Themes can be anything related to interpretation that would be of interest to the region.

Newsletter submissions including calendar items should be sent to:

[ChesapeakeChat@gmail.com](mailto:ChesapeakeChat@gmail.com)

Pictures should be submitted as an attachment to your email. Other materials

	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Theme</b>
Fall Newsletter	October 15	Partnerships
Special Workshop Edition	November 15	National Workshop
Winter Newsletter	January 15	Tips for encouraging teachers to book fall trips/programs
Spring Newsletter	April 15	
Summer Newsletter	July 15	

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