



A publication of the
WINNIE PALMER NATURE RESERVE AT SAINT VINCENT COLLEGE

Nature's View



A Student Perspective

By Andrew Smith, Saint Vincent College
Undergraduate Student

Located adjacent to Route 30 and a stone's throw away from the striking sculpture of Saint Vincent College's founder, Boniface Wimmer, is approximately 50 acres of land where students, families, and community members can go to relax, research, and explore. I have been spending time working and interning at the Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve since my freshman year at Saint Vincent College. Now a senior, whether walking from campus, by way of the trails, or driving down Walzer Way, the big red barn and rolling landscape always reminds me that each day at the Reserve, I will encounter a new task in a constantly changing environment.

Allow me to rewind and explain how I began my residency as an intern at the Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve. In 2011, I was offered a position as an intern with Mrs. Beth Bollinger, the Environmental Education Coordinator at the Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve. Through this internship, I was able to assist with the wetland sampling and testing of the Monastery Run Improvement Project as well as help out with the day to day activities at the barn and the programs that take place there. It seemed like a great gig for a freshman environmental science major. This opportunity not only gave me a chance to work in my prospective field and allowed me to live on campus for the summer, but it introduced me to a whole new realm of possibilities and experiences at WPNR.

To this day I am so thankful to have been given this opportunity. During that summer, and each semester since then, I go sampling with Ms. Beth and spend the rest of the time at the Nature Reserve, preparing for programs, assisting with the Nature Explore camps, caring for our resident animals, counting bees for the pollinator project, gardening, landscaping, and so much more.

The new aspects that are put into place by the staff all over the Reserve offer a tremendous opportunity for families and community members to enjoy and revel in. The gardens are constantly updated and cared for, the new Children's Garden and play areas are continuing to expand, and the children's programs are always being improved to provide the best possible experience to each and every child who walks through the door.

Just as the landscape has grown over these years, so has our family. The Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve and the surrounding landscapes have grown into a place where people can explore, relax, play, study, and gather. During my four years as a member of the WPNR family, I have witnessed this plot of land far exceed the image that Winnie Palmer had imagined and gained an intimate look into how the Reserve grows and changes, not only seasonally, but day to day. I am honored to be a part of the growth of such a wonderful place.



Andy riding his bike at the Nature Reserve.
Photo: Angela Belli

The Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve at Saint Vincent College

744 Walzer Way
Latrobe, Pennsylvania 15650
Phone 724-537-5284
Fax 724-537-5286

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Director: Angela Belli
angela.belli@email.stvincent.edu
Coordinator & Newsletter Editor: Beth Bollinger
beth.bollinger@email.stvincent.edu
AmeriCorps Member & Newsletter Editor: Allison Petris
allison.petris@email.stvincent.edu

Website:

www.wpnr.org

Hours:

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Contributors to this Issue:

Angela Belli, Allison Petris, Andrew Smith, WPNR Staff
Photographs: Allison Petris, Angela Belli

Establishing a Landscape for Nature Discovery

by Angela Belli, Director

Six years since Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve opened its doors to the community, the Reserve's landscape has evolved into a unique space for exploration, discovery, and nature adventure. From tree stands, lawns, gardens, fields, and trails to the Reserve and all that is enclosed by the area's busy roadways it continues to house life of all kinds. We have worked with the good and bad of nature and continue to expand the grounds into an ecologically sound area for research, education, recreation, and wildlife.

The once old farm fields have been crafted into various ecosystems that countless students from Saint Vincent College have studied. Natural wetlands that border Saint Vincent Drive continue to be protected



Wetland Boardwalk

and have been enhanced with a boardwalk that connects visitors to Monastery Run and the mitigated wetlands at Saint Vincent College. Birds of all kind visit these areas which are now great spots for

amateur ornithologists, such as Dr. Jim Kellam's Ornithology class. Bat houses hang from a nearby tree, and soon, wood duck boxes will be visible through the cattails to attract unique waterfowl to this wet area.

The trails take visitors alongside overgrown fields, now shrub thicket areas and fields of flowers and native grasses. This area is a great habitat for many small mammals and ground nesting birds. Fawns have been spotted bedding down in the fields; fox have been spied walking into thickets; and goldfinches feasting on seeds in both areas. Plans to continue the creation of successional demonstration areas exist. Fields will be maintained to encourage growth of native flowers and grasses while limiting invasive plant communities. Thicket areas will be maintained by removing stands of sumac and cut periodically to promote the establishment of this scrub shrub habitat.

This past year, the Reserve was given a Bird Habitat Certification from the Audubon Society of Pennsylvania. We will be enhancing tree diversity for both bird and mammal species. These plans include enhancing the variety of shrubs, hardwoods and pines that are sources of food, shelter, and nesting spots. Already placed throughout the Reserve are bluebird nesting boxes, bird feeders, and water holes to encourage these winged visitors. Bird blinds, binoculars, avian hotspot guides, and the habitat trek allow children and adults to easily find the areas where they are most likely to see some fascinating birds flying, perching, or singing.

As a Nature Explore Certified Area through the National Arbor Day Foundation, we have taken nature play and discovery to a whole new level.

Children can dig in the dirt pit, search for treasures in the sand, or create art with sticks and rocks. Climbing, swinging, or balancing under the pines, children can learn how animals of all kind move and hide.

A pond provides visitors a dip net to capture, view, and release aquatic creatures. Keeping up with the changing habitat of the pond, a few carp will be added into the pond to eat and control the Chara pond weed that flourishes. The play areas at the garden will soon include a native grass and flower maze alongside a new nature putt-putt golf area to create a special area for nature fun and recreation.

Nature has changed the landscape at Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve since it was established with the assistance of creative staff and volunteers. Many projects have created the tools necessary for nature to blossom into a habitat for many and place of wonder for all ages to explore. This has not come without planning, funds, patience, and creativity. We will continue to work with the landscape, not fight it while we learn how it naturally develops. The challenge for us ahead is finding the balance between habitat conservation and recreational use as we educate visitors that utilize the Reserve and all its resources.



Ecolearning Platform



WINNIE PALMER NATURE RESERVE CALENDAR

Registration forms and additional information are available on the web site (www.wpnr.org) and at the Nature Reserve. **No phone or e-mail reservations will be accepted.** ALL EVENTS ARE HELD AT WINNIE PALMER NATURE RESERVE UNLESS INDICATED.

Special Programs at the Reserve

TINY WONDER TIME - Tiny Wonder Time is an hour of nature play for children ages 2-4 on the 3rd Wednesday of each month. Each session includes an outside activity (weather permitting), an interactive activity, a craft, and a story. Children must be accompanied by a parent or caregiver. **COST: \$1/month, REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED.**

NATURE STORY TIME - Nature Story Time is a literature hour for children ages 3-5. Each session includes a story and a craft. Children must be accompanied by a parent or caregiver.

COST: \$10.00/5 Week Session, REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED. NO PARTIAL SESSION REGISTRATIONS.

JANUARY

1 Barn Closed – Enjoy the Trails

15 Tiny Wonder Time - "Bears"
10 AM - 11 AM OR 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM

Registration Required

31 Nature Story Time - Session 1 - Week 1
10:30 AM - "Walking in a Winter Wonderland"

Registration Required: \$10.00/Session (5 weeks)

19 Tiny Wonder Time - "Animal Feet"
10 AM - 11 AM OR 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM

Registration Required

21 Nature Story Time - Session 2 - Week 1
10:30 AM - "Up, Up and Away"

Registration Required: \$10.00/Session (5 weeks)

28 Nature Story Time - Session 2 - Week 2
10:30 AM - "Bugs on Parade"

Registration Required: \$10.00/Session (5 weeks)

FEBRUARY

7 Nature Story Time - Session 1 - Week 2
10:30 AM - "You Are What You Eat"

Registration Required: \$10.00/Session (5 weeks)

14 Nature Story Time - Session 1 - Week 3
10:30 AM - "Nature Love"

Registration Required: \$10.00/Session (5 weeks)

19 Tiny Wonder Time - "Arctic Animals"
10 AM - 11 AM OR 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM

Registration Required

21 Nature Story Time - Session 1 - Week 4
10:30 AM - "Sleeping Animals"

Registration Required: \$10.00/Session (5 weeks)

28 Nature Story Time - Session 1 - Week 5
10:30 AM - "Do You Speak Frog?"

Registration Required: \$10.00/Session (5 weeks)

MARCH

14-15 Pennsylvania Association of Environmental Educators Conference
"Spheres of Influence: Shaping the Curve of Environmental Education"

Two days of informative workshops for Educators at Antiochian Village, Bolivar, PA. For more information, visit www.paee.net. Scholarships available.

APRIL

4 Nature Story Time - Session 2 - Week 3
10:30 AM - "Salamander Party"

Registration Required: \$10.00/Session (5 weeks)

5 Beatty County Road Clean Up
9 AM - 11 AM

Join the Nature Reserve and Mountain View Rotary as we clean up Beatty County Road. Coffee and donuts at 8:30 AM. Please register at 724-537-4571. Meet at the Saint Vincent Gristmill.

11 Nature Story Time - Session 2 - Week 4
10:30 AM - "Hippity Hop, Hop, Hop"

Registration Required: \$10.00/Session (5 weeks)

16 Tiny Wonder Time - "April Showers"
10 AM - 11 AM OR 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM

Registration Required

25 Nature Story Time - Session 2 - Week 5
10:30 AM - "Open Wide"

Registration Required: \$10.00/Session (5 weeks)

27 Westmoreland Earth Day
Saint Vincent College Carey Center Gymnasium
11 AM - 4 PM

Join local organizations as they share their time and expertise and connect you to your natural community. Activities, vendors, information, and more!

MAY

1 Summer TWT Registration Begins

**3 Geocacher Badge for Girl Scouts in Grades 4-5
10 AM - 2 PM**

Spend the day at Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve learning how to use GPS units and the great activity of geocaching. Make a trade item to leave in a cache or even start your very own. You'll also earn the Geocacher badge. Offered in coordination with Girl Scout Council of Western PA.

Registration Required: www.gswpa.org (Adults \$5, Girls \$10)

**21 Tiny Wonder Time - "A Seed Story"
10 AM - 11 AM OR 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM**

Registration Required

JUNE

**18 Tiny Wonder Time - "Trees"
10 AM - 11 AM OR 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM**

Registration Required

**20 Family Nature Experience: Pollinator Day
10 AM - 3 PM**

Celebrate pollinators, but especially bees on this special day. Learn about the bee life cycle, honey production, and much more! Free for families of all ages.

Registration Required

**20 Family Story Time
10:30 AM**

A free family program, for all ages, which includes reading a story together in the barn and exploring the grounds while completing a scavenger hunt at your own pace.

No Registration Necessary.

JULY

**1-3 Bug Camp for 5-6 Year Olds
10 AM - Noon**

5 and 6 year Olds (with an adult) will "Go Buggy" along the tall grasses, the trails, and around the pond edges as they search for butterflies, spiders, ants, dragonflies, bees, beetles, and more! Hands-on investigations, games, and mini labs will take children on a nature adventure they will never forget!

Registration Required: \$75.00/child

Registration Deadline: June 13, 2014 Late Fee: \$25.00

Early Bird Discount \$25.00 off, if registered by June 1, 2014.

**7-11 Fur and Feathers Camp (6-7-8 Year Olds)
9 AM - Noon**

Curiosity will take flight as students learn about song-birds, birds of prey, and other birds native to our state. They will also learn about mammals that inhabit our region. They will take part in explorations, experiments, games, hikes, and more as they explore the Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve.

Registration Required: \$125.00/child

Registration Deadline: June 20, 2014 Late Fee: \$25.00

Early Bird Discount \$25.00 off, if registered by June 1, 2014.

**18 Family Story Time
10:30 AM**

A free family program, for all ages, which includes reading a story together in the barn and exploring the grounds while completing a scavenger hunt at your own pace.

No Registration Necessary.

**16 Tiny Wonder Time - "Flowers"
10 AM - 11 AM OR 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM**

Registration Required

**21-25 Slime and Scales Camp (6-7-8 Year Olds)
9 AM - Noon**

Children will enjoy a week of learning and adventure as they explore the slimy and scaly world of amphibians and reptiles. Native toads, salamanders, frogs, turtles, and snakes will visit throughout the week as children learn about these cold-blooded creatures. Campers will create themed crafts and explore the natural areas of Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve in search of these fascinating creatures.

Registration Required: \$125.00/child

Registration Deadline: June 20, 2014 Late Fee: \$25.00

Early Bird Discount \$25.00 off, if registered by June 1, 2014.

**31 Family Nature Experience: Pond Life
10 AM - Noon**

Take a pond adventure by learning about the life cycle of a frog, take a scavenger hunt and dip net in our pond for critters. Free and fun for the whole family.

Registration Required

AUGUST

**15 Family Story Time
10:30 AM**

A free family program, for all ages, which includes reading a story together in the barn and exploring the grounds while completing a scavenger hunt at your own pace.

No Registration Necessary.

**20 Tiny Wonder Time - "Rollie Pollies"
10 AM - 11 AM OR 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM**

Registration Required

**21 Family Nature Experience: Beautiful Butterflies
10 AM - Noon**

Do you know the difference between a moth and a butterfly? Can you identify backyard butterflies? Come explore the life cycle of these fascinating insects, take a butterfly hike, and more with Reserve staff. Free fun for the entire family.

Registration Required



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at Saint Vincent College



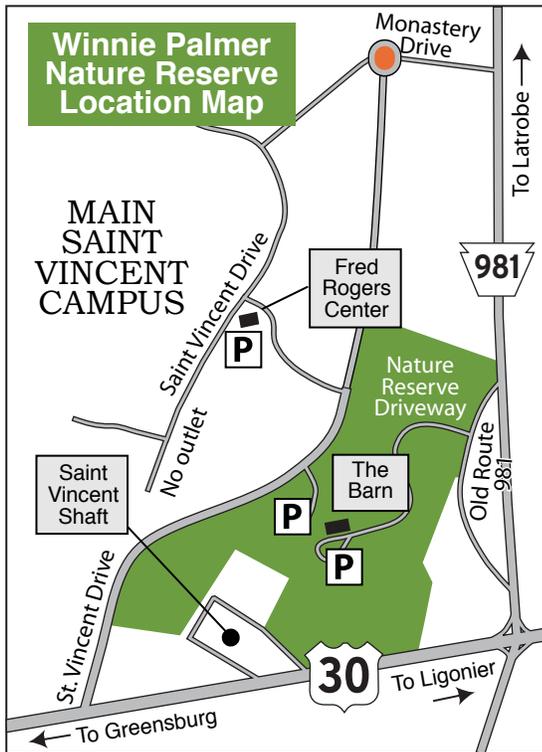
The Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve

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Nature Explore Camps

Bug Camp
July 1st - July 3rd
10:00 am-12:00 pm
5 & 6 Year Olds
\$75.00 per child with an adult
Registration Deadline: June 13, 2014

Fur and Feathers Camp
July 7th - July 11th
9:00 am-12:00 pm
6, 7 & 8 Year Olds
\$125.00 per child
Registration Deadline: June 20, 2014

Registration information available at the Nature Reserve and online beginning April 1, 2014

Slime and Scales Camp
July 21st - July 25th
9:00 am-12:00 pm
6, 7 & 8 Year Olds
\$125.00 per child
Registration Deadline: June 20, 2014

Early Bird Discount: \$25.00 off if registered by June 1, 2014.
Late Registration Fee: \$25.00



WINNIE PALMER NATURE RESERVE
AT SAINT VINCENT COLLEGE

