

## A Message From Our President

by Ed Lovely

As stewards of the Cathance River Preserve, we anticipate with joy the onset of fall and winter and the busy schedule of CREA events. Our goal is to secure an environmentally sound future through our work with hands-on environmental education, encouragement of citizen science, creative pursuits, and seeking spiritual rewards from nature in the spirit of Thoreau and Whitman.

Our new Executive Director, Wendy Van Damme, brings a fresh perspective from a broad background and will guide CREA's programs in the schools, at our Ecology Center and Preserve, and at venues in the community. We look forward to serving thousands in the community as we pursue our mission of connecting people to nature.



## Ecology Center Sign Refurbished

by Carla Rensenbrink

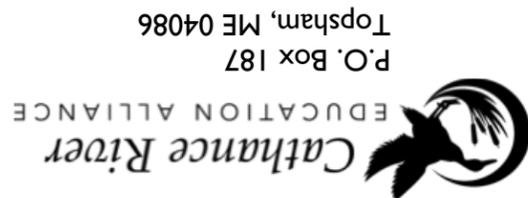
Have you noticed that “new” sign at the Ecology Center? Earlier in the summer it was peeling badly, and had become almost illegible—and something of an eyesore. That is what a visitor to the Preserve, Larry Morrissette from Hallowell, observed. He came to hike the trails one day and fell into a conversation with Ron Strand, a new CREA Board member, who was working around the Ecology Center.

As they stood in front of the building, Larry said, “That sign needs work. I’d like to fix it for you.” So Ron delivered the sign to Larry’s workshop, and soon afterward—with a tiny bill for materials—the sign was returned and rehung in all its glory. How’s that for a great gift to CREA?

Please visit [www.creamaine.org](http://www.creamaine.org) to stay informed about upcoming events and to sign up for our e-newsletter!



Pumpkinseed Sunfish



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Your contribution makes everything in this newsletter possible. Please consider a donation to CREA by visiting [www.creamaine.org](http://www.creamaine.org). Thank you!



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Volume IX : Issue 2

FALL 2017

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## Save the Dates!

“Inspired by Nature” programs:  
**October 24:** Franklin Burroughs, author of *Confluence: Merrymeeting Bay*. Topsham Public Library (6pm)  
**November 28:** Becky Marvil, world traveler, photographer, and birder. Curtis Memorial Library (7pm).

Registration is required for the following two Preserve walks (see [www.creamaine.org](http://www.creamaine.org) for details)  
**October 21:** Mindful Nature Walk for Kids (10am).  
**October 28:** A Lighthearted Look at CREA's Lovely Local Lichens (10am).



## A Message from CREA's New Executive Director

by Wendy Van Damme

The colors of autumn are surrounding us, bringing inspiration and creating opportunities to come together. For me, it is a wonderful time to join you at the Cathance River Education Alliance, and I am delighted to be part of the good work at hand.

I am focused on working with you on the stewardship of the Cathance River Preserve, promoting an interesting range of ecological learning activities, and encouraging community members to experience the beauty of nature here. As you enjoy the trails, the Preserve, and the events this month, I hope to meet you.

In recent years I have been based overseas with the Peace Corps in many beautiful countries, guiding the work of volunteers and their local counterparts. When people know that their work matters, they are motivated to do great things. I saw that in the projects overseas, and I see it here in the way that people care for the environment.

There are many different ways to participate in the mission of CREA, and one way is through serving as a volunteer. Within the articles and announcements in this newsletter, the upcoming activities, needs, roles, and ways to help are presented. When you serve you receive also, and we all move forward.



Wendy Van Damme started as CREA's new Executive Director in early October (photo by Yves Van Damme)

## New “Smart Trail” at the Cathance Preserve

We have a new “smart” trail at the preserve! Tom Lacy, our summer intern, developed a self-guided interpretive walk that features 10 QR codes linking users to readings, artistic renderings, and the voices of CREA campers at selected natural features. All you need is a smart phone, an app (free) that reads QR codes, and your hiking shoes. The loop begins at the kiosk near the Ecology Center, where you can pick up directions to the QR code locations. You will head west along the Highland Trail to the River Trail, then return along the Beaver Trail and finish back on the Highland Trail to the kiosk. Come check it out!



The Cathance River Education Alliance connects people with nature to improve the well being of both.

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School Programs Coordinator

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### Newsletter

Jane Littlefield

Carla Rensenbrink

Andrea Stevens

Many thanks to Carey Truebe, Sarah Rodgers, and Mel Christensen for contributing to this issue of our newsletter.

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## CREA's Teacher Fellows Workshop

by Sarah Rodgers and Carey Truebe

The Ecology Center was buzzing the first week of July. Eight teachers from five local elementary schools joined CREA educators for the second annual Teacher Fellows Workshop—a three day event designed for teachers who want to take their students outside to boost hands-on discovery in science learning. In a time when teachers are pressed to test more and may have less time to explore outdoors with their students, it was exciting to be with teachers who are eager to maintain this active approach to learning.

A unifying theme of the workshop was helping teachers develop ways to weave the newly adopted “Next Generation Science Standards” (NGSS) into their classrooms and across disciplines. How can teachers achieve these new science goals in ways that are rooted in authentic outdoor experiences?

Each morning started with an outdoor lesson taught by CREA staff—comparing soil samples, quantifying salamander diversity, searching for bugs in different life cycle stages. We included strategies for outdoor teaching such as what to do when a hawk swoops down and interrupts your lesson? How to keep students safe and on-task while giving them the freedom to explore?

We shared ways that outdoor explorations naturally lead to math and literacy follow-up back in the classroom. We counted salamanders in the forest, comparing the numbers we found under logs vs. rocks. What can we conclude from our data? What is the evidence? The outdoor world provides an ideal source of real data that students can use to meld math, literacy, outdoor excitement, and real-life wonder as they practice their skills in an engaging way. We also helped teachers with individual projects, such as fleshing out big picture visions for a new energy unit with more hands-on components like building a solar oven, borrowing CREA’s kit of solar powered gadgets, or leading an Energy Tour of the school.

The power of this workshop is in the relationships these teachers built during their time together and the enthusiasm they will bring back to their schools. We will continue to support them throughout the year as we hear about the new outdoor learning experiences at their schools!



Carey (left) and Sarah (right) share their insights about teaching outdoors (photo by Matt Dubel).



Members of Maine Association of Nonprofits enjoyed a tour of the Ecology Center, snacks, and a hike on the “smart trail” at the Cathance Preserve on August 9.

## Volunteer Profile: Mel Christensen

Working at CREA has been the centerpiece of my summers for nine years. When I was accepted into the Environmental Youth Leadership (EYL) program as a high school student, I spent the summer participating in field studies related to water quality and painted turtle populations, doing trail work, and leading activities at camp. This summer, as a summer camp leader, new board member, and Program Committee chair, I had the pleasure of seeing how the CREA community has grown since my earlier days.

There are many things I can always count on at CREA camp: encountering unfortunate frogs or insects getting eaten by predators (to the delight or dismay of the campers), playing numerous rounds of animal tag, and coercing that last camper to get out of the water (or clay). One of the highlights from

this summer was sharing these experiences with a fantastic staff that included another former EYL friend, former campers, my own high school students from Harpswell Coastal Academy, and a recently graduated high school member of our board (a position I also held in high school). Seeing so many people who, like me, were inspired by CREA to continue exploring new interests and return to lead programs shows me how powerful the experiences offered by CREA can be.

As I get ready for the start of the school year, I am reflecting on how I can use my role as a teacher and CREA board member to connect more young people in our community to nature and leadership opportunities. Sending groups of teenagers out to set turtle traps in the pond, or writing personal notes to each camper are simple ways CREA



Mel prepares CREA campers for a hike to the Head of Tide in August.

has provided kids with experiences that engage their curiosity, compassion, and collaboration. I hope in the next few years, I will see even more young adults develop into scientists, educators, and leaders as a result of their CREA experiences.

## A Conversation with a First-Year CREA Camper

by Andrea Stevens and Azhar Danforth



We signed up my daughter (age 9) for CREA summer camp this year. On the last day of her week at the Cathance Preserve, I asked her to “rate” the camp on a scale of 1 to 10. “TEN...definitely”, she replied. Wow! I wanted to know more. Here is what she shared with me...

**How is CREA camp different from your other camps?** We got to do all kinds of activities at CREA – indoors and outdoors. And, we always had lots of choices.

**What were your favorite parts of CREA camp?** I really liked the day we went to Clay Brook. We got stuck in the clay and Tom had to pull us out! We also had a stick race with three judges. We searched for fast sticks and watched as they went down the river and hit a big log. Only some got by. I also liked the day we went fishing. It was super fun. We learned fish names like Pumpkinseed Sunfish and Fallfish.

**Did you find other animals?** The critters at the pond were so cool! We caught 5 frogs and learned to tell a boy from a girl frog. We used nets and a cool tube that helps you see in deep water. In the forest, we found snails, slugs, worms, cool beetles, a tiny orange thing with legs, and

Thank you to the following foundations for supporting CREA's programs:

Brunswick Education Foundation  
Elmina B. Sewall Foundation  
Maine Humanities Council  
Merrymeeting Bay Trust

salamanders. The slugs felt gross.

**Did you learn about the rocks at the Preserve?** We learned the names of minerals in the rock piles: garnet, smoky quartz, mica. My favorite was black tourmaline.

**Did you do anything in the Ecology Center?** We did lots of cool art projects. We used “sculpty”, built a boat with blocks of wood, corks, and netting, and glue, and made trading cards.

**Did you play any camp games?** Lots! Camouflage, Flash Flood, Elbow Tag, and the Animal Game.

I didn't have any other questions, but she had one for me...Can I sign up for CREA camp again next year, Mom?