



# Sheldrake Environmental Center

[www.sheldrakecenter.org](http://www.sheldrakecenter.org)

## Fall 2011 News



### Letter from Interim Executive Director Holly Moskow

*"Come forth into the light of things, let nature be your teacher."* - William Woodsworth

Many of us are returning from summer vacations where we had opportunities to savor rich experiences in nature. I am here to remind you that you can enjoy nature right here in our community, at locations like the 60-acre refuge that is the Larchmont Reservoir - James G. Johnson, Jr. Conservancy. Sheldrake's fall programming is designed to foster the desire to protect our environment by encouraging children to connect with the natural world and by teaching adults sustainable living practices. From Judy Martin speaking at our annual meeting about ways to make your home more energy efficient, to learning about composting and recycling in our Master Composter program, there is much to learn. As you read through these pages, we hope you'll be inspired to participate in one of our programs and support our mission.

### Feathers - Form, Function and Fantasy by Mary B. Davis, Program Director

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to fly like a bird? Soaring high in the sky looks like it would be such wonderful fun, but for us, earth-bound as we are, it is just a flight of fantasy. For birds, it is a way of life. Birds are truly unique, as they are the only ones in the animal kingdom to have feathers, and feathers are the main reason that they are such masters of flight.

Not only are feathers very light and replaceable when worn out, but each feather is attached to a muscle, allowing for amazing maneuverability in flight. Also, birds have bodies that are streamlined, bones that are light and hollow, internal air sacs for buoyancy, and wing shapes that minimize air resistance.

Enabling birds to fly is just one of the feathers' many jobs. Having amazing diversity of both form and function, feathers can protect, insulate, waterproof, camouflage and attract a mate. Each and every bird has a variety of different feathers. A feather may be smooth to protect, downy to insulate, stiff as a

woodpecker's tail feather to prop a bird climbing up the trunk of a tree, or fringed to soften the sound of an owl as it hunts.

When we think of birds, the first thing we usually think of is the color of their feathers. Mention a Goldfinch and sunshine-yellow comes to mind. But the colors of feathers are not only beautiful, they are important. Sometimes colors say "How would you like to be my mate?" Or, as in the case of a Red-winged Blackbird, its scarlet and gold "epaulets" announce "Go away. This is **my** territory."

Have you noticed that birds sometimes look fat on a cold winter day? Since birds have muscles connected to their feathers, they are able to fluff them up, making them look fat. This traps the warm air from their bodies, providing the lightest, most effective insulation there is. Feathers also



*(Continued on next page)*

### Fall Events and Programs

#### For Kids

##### Fun in the Fall for Kids

- Classes begin Tuesday, September 13
- Tiny Trekkers: ages 3 to 5 with caregiver
- Young Explorers: pre-k children ages 4 to 5
- Go Green Adventurers: kindergarteners
- Holiday and Vacation Clubs: ages 4 to 9

#### For Adults

##### Master Composter & Recycler Training Program

Class begins Tuesday, September 13  
A train-the-trainer course for individuals who wish to teach sound composting and recycling practices in their communities.

##### Green Your Home

Tuesday, September 20, 7:30 pm  
Come hear Judy Martin, principal of Green Homes Consulting, deliver a talk on how to make your home more energy efficient.

##### Become a Volunteer in Your Local Schools and Nature Center

Class begins Thursday, October 20  
Our beloved Volunteer Environmental Educator Training Program prepares you to lead school trips in nature's classroom.

##### Learn about Backyard Composting

Saturday, October 22, 9-10 am  
Come to the demo and buy a bin!

#### For the Whole Family

##### International Coastal Cleanup

Saturday, September 17, 10 am-12 pm  
Sheldrake will organize clean-ups at three locations.

##### Sheldrake's 2011 Fall Festival

Sunday, October 16, 1-4 pm  
This day of family fun is back!  
Pumpkins, animals, music, crafts and more!

**For more info or to register, contact Amy at 914-834-1443 or at [scheduling@sheldrakecenter.org](mailto:scheduling@sheldrakecenter.org).**

**Sheldrake Environmental Center**  
685 Weaver Street  
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Photos by Dorothy Dietz, Jerry Friedman, Jim Sutherland, Bill Wang, Anthony Waring and Sylvia Weisner

**Our Mission**

*Sheldrake Environmental Center is a non-profit organization whose mission is to inspire environmental awareness and action in the community and to preserve, protect and enhance local environmental resources.*

**Feathers, continued from previous page**

serve as raincoats. Many birds “preen”, applying oil from a gland at the base of their tails to their feathers, which waterproofs them!

As the days get colder and we slip into our parkas and vests and snuggle under our comforters, we may not think about the down feathers keeping us warm and how they work. The secret is in the structure of a bird’s down feathers; they branch over

and over into intricate webs that trap air, a natural phenomenon that we have been unable to replicate.

Come for a walk at Sheldrake on a crisp, fall day. Watch for birds in the trees, but don’t forget to look down. When you see a feather on the ground, I hope you will pick it up and think about how many kinds there are and how they serve so many different functions. Feathers may be common, but they do uncommon things.

**Bring On the Leaves! by Jennifer Jensen, Co-president**

Some of my fondest childhood memories are gardening with my father. I don’t recall my father ever *asking* me to garden with him, but if I was out playing, I would sometimes find him playing too, in his garden. I would wander over and ask him the whats and whys of what he was doing and he would patiently explain why the irises needed dividing, why marigolds kept bugs away, why the grass was green and the sky was blue, and why he grew things like rhubarb and asparagus if he knew my mom would make us eat them.

Learning to garden with my dad taught me patience, respect for living things, and the benefits of being a part of nature . . .but we had lots of fun, too. Bring on the leaves! Every autumn without fail, we would find ourselves in the yard, raking leaves into a big pile and taking turns jumping, diving and doing the “Nestea Plunge” back into the pile. Our dog would get in on the action too, and before you knew it, every kid and dog in the neighborhood was jumping, screaming, laughing and generally running amuck in our front yard.

But what did we do with the leaves when we were done? We threw them in the compost pile, and if you’ve never tried it, autumn is the perfect time of the year to start!

The ideal compost pile is 30 parts carbon to 1 part nitrogen. Or to make it really simple, 30 parts autumn leaves to 1 part kitchen scraps and green yard waste. So, if you need 30 times more carbon than nitrogen to have a successful, trouble-free compost pile, it only makes sense that the best time of the year to start is when you have a whole lot of carbon, and that’s your autumn leaves!

Once you have determined your composting site and system (turning unit, heap or bin) and have added your leaves, take the rest of the year to add grass clippings and garden waste, vegetable and fruit scraps, egg shells, bread, coffee (grounds & filters) and tea bags. And if you’re worried about attracting pests, simply don’t add meat, fat, dairy products, bones or fish.

To learn more about composting, attend one of Sheldrake’s Composting Workshops.



**Call 834-1443 to buy your Earth Machine Compost Bin today!**

**James “Jimmy” G. Johnson, Jr. 1915-2011**

*Soft-spoken lawyer, nature-lover, master negotiator, and the founding father of the Larchmont Reservoir—James G. Johnson, Jr. Conservancy, Jimmy has left behind a legacy which will remain for generations to come.*

## Interview with Laura Chamberlain, Volunteer Environmental Educator

### *What is the most rewarding part about being a Volunteer Environmental Educator?*

There are really three rewarding parts: (1) seeing the kids' sense of curiosity, wonder and just pure joy during outdoor discovery; (2) learning so much myself; (3) being part of a learning community of volunteers who share my passion and are a diverse, interesting and fun group of people.

### *Has anything surprised you about your experiences as an educator or about the way the students interact with nature?*

I am surprised at how much I never noticed right here in the Larchmont outdoors. The fact that we explore three distinct eco-systems – the woods, the pond and the beach – means I am always learning. I am so happy that even in our highly technical world, the kids also react on our visits with a sense of “This is SO cool!”

### *What is your most memorable experience out on the trail?*

There are so many! I love listening to the kids' responses when I ask them to name one cool thing they observed on a trip - to see their eyes light up, to see their smiles, to hear a child breathlessly say “Everything!” Or when a kid starts out hanging back but by the end of the trip is running up to me with her every discovery and saying “Laura, look what I found!”

### *What would you tell others about this experience?*

This is by far the most rewarding volunteer experience I've ever had. You will continue to learn about the outdoors and hone your ability to react to new situations as long as you do this; you will have a great time with the other volunteers; and you will absolutely adore and learn so much from the kids. You can make it work even if you have a part-time or flexible full-time job. I find that a trip with kids can put me on a high for the rest of the day.

Special thanks to Con Edison for underwriting this year's Volunteer Environmental Educator Training Program.



Laura Chamberlain teaches Freshwater Ecology

## How can YOU get involved?

### **WE RELY ON YOUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

In this time of tight budgets, we need you more than ever. Your dollars work hard to help us fulfill our mission and provide quality environmental education programs throughout the year, including:

- Hands-on nature programs for thousands of children yearly
- Training for volunteer environmental educators
- Education on composting and recycling

Another way to make a lasting contribution . . . consider including a charitable bequest to Sheldrake Environmental Center in your will or revocable trust.

### Thank You to Our 2011 Sponsors

**Goldfinch Members**  
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### **VOLUNTEER OUTSIDE**

**Volunteer Environmental Educators:** Class begins in October  
**Clean-ups:** Join us on Sept. 17 at the Larchmont Reservoir - James G. Johnson, Jr. Conservancy, Hommocks Conservancy or Manor Beach

**Fall Festival Volunteers:** Lend a hand on Oct. 16 to set up and man tables during this event

**Sheldrake Gardens Volunteers:** Tomatoes, zucchinis, cucumbers, collard greens and radishes are among the fresh produce we've grown for the local food pantry this summer

*A number of new volunteers have helped with garden chores this year. We thank them and hope some of them will be able to return in the spring. New helpers are always welcome. Watch for a notice about spring start-up.*

### **VOLUNTEER IN THE OFFICE OR AT YOUR HOME**

**Writers:** Ad hoc projects can fit into your busy schedule

**Graphic Design:** Design brochures, signs and more

**Data Entry:** 1 hr/wk

**Grant Writers:** Research/write grants

**Fundraising & Events:** Join our Spring Gala Committee

**Computer Support:** Troubleshoot computer issues

Send email inquiries to [scheduling@sheldrakecenter.org](mailto:scheduling@sheldrakecenter.org).



**Sheldrake  
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Center**

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**Fall 2011**

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***Come enjoy the fall at Sheldrake! There's something for everyone!***

**For Adults**

Volunteer Environmental  
Educator Training  
Master Composter &  
Recycler Training  
Green Your Home:  
Featuring Guest Speaker  
Judy Martin - September 20



**For Kids**

Explore the Great Outdoors:  
Nature Classes for Children  
Ages 3-9

**For the Whole Family**

International Coastal  
Cleanup - September 17  
Fall Festival - October 16

