WVMN Class Description

Title:	**NATURE INTERPRETATION AND TEACHING**
Objectives:	Participants will learn what it means to be a nature interpreter and acquire a broad understanding of the goals, techniques, and attributes required to provide an effective interpretive program.
Class type:	Core curriculum
Time:	3 hours
Optimal season:	All seasons
Materials:	No special equipment or materials. Binoculars and hand lens may be useful.

The student will gain a basic understanding of

- what nature interpretation is and how it differs from formal environmental education and classical nature study.
- an appreciation that our natural environment and our lives and manmade environments are intertwined.
- the difference between the interpreter as leader and as provocateur and where and when to be one or both.
- the six principles of interpretation established by Freeman Tilden (incorporated by National Park Service) and "acclimatization" by Steve Van Matre.
- some basic techniques for interpreting the natural world.
- strategies for successfully leading a guided walk.

WVMN Class Outline

1. Overview of Nature Interpretation
    a. What nature interpretation is
    b. Attributes of nature interpretation
        - Guided discovery
        - Provocation
        - Appreciation
        - Understanding
        - Making Connections
        - Immersion
        - Feelings
        - Sensory experience
        - Wonder, curiosity
2. The Interpreter
    a. Teacher
    b. Provocateur
    c. Naturalist
    d. Resource
3. Historical genesis of nature interpretation
    a. Freeman Tilden 6 principals for nature interpretation
    b. Steve Van Matre acclimatization
    c. Joseph Cornell Sharing Nature with Children
4. Skills and attributes of the successful interpreter
    a. Enthusiasm for the natural world
    b. Articulate
    c. Ability to engage others

d. Passion for learning
e. Creativity
f. Self confidence
g. Broad knowledge of the natural world
h. Spontaneity

5. Conducting a walk: A.D.E.S. (= Analyze, Decide, Explain, Summarize)
    a. To do before the walk
        - Set a timeline
        - Explore area in advance
        - Determine an ecological concept or theme based on the area (food chain or food web, water cycle, nutrient cycling, how nitrogen comes from the air through simple nitrogen fixing plants to the soil to plants into protein, etc.)
        - Discover what features you can guide your participants to discover that will propel the group into their own realization of the ecological principle or theme you are aiming for
        - Plan a round trip walk where possible
    b. To do at the beginning of the walk
        - Always tie the concept to people and how it relates to us
        - Query participants to learn their backgrounds; you may discover ways to engage their participation more fully and a starting point for discussion
    c. To do during the walk
        - Set a moderate pace
        - Try to listen to what the participants are talking about, looking at
        - Refrain from show and tell use sparingly
    d. To do after the walk:
        - Summarize what was important about the walk
        - Thank the participants for their participation
        - Ask them if they need further information
        - Let them know where they can find more resources
        - If the site is dependent on donations, memberships, etc., be sure to mention that
        - Let them know what other needs your site needs: volunteers, funds, materials, equipment, tools, etc.
6. Effective techniques
    a. Utilize facts to teach a concept
    b. Begin the lesson from where the participant is in terms of understanding and comfort level with nature
    c. Engage the participants by asking questions what caused that dark color in the rock? look at that unique plant; can you feel that cool breeze coming from the crevice? what is its source? etc.
    d. Listen to their responses elaborate only when a participant has a direct question
    e. Hands and knees walk: assign participants to find one thing that interests them then show and tell
    f. Ask participants to look for signs of animal life
    g. Have a period of quiet reflection, lying on one's back looking up through the canopy; or sitting quietly with eyes closed
7. Teaching
    a. Research subject
    b. Write outline appropriate for the time slot and the audience
    c. Set format for classroom lecture (power point, slide show, etc.)