

Title of Session: Nuts About Nature - Dead of Winter? NOT!

Moderator: Bill Hilton Jr.

Title of File: 20040210nan

Date: February 10, 2004

Tapped In transcript for 2004.02.10 19:05:47

Room: Tree House Conference Room

BJ: Welcome to Nuts About Nature, everyone!

BJ: Bill Hilton is our discussion leader...

BJ: he's got a great topic for tonight...

BJ: The Dead of Winter? I think NOT!

BJ . o O (I could use some nice Spring thoughts)

BillHi: That's next month . . .

BJ: We usually start discussions in Tapped In with introductions

BJ: I'm an art teacher in Pennsylvania and a helpdesk volunteer for Tapped In

BJ: can you all tell us where you are located and what you do?

VickiAB: My name is Vicki and I am a preservice teacher at the University of Houston

ElizabetN: My name is Elizabeth and I am from Houston, Texas. I am also a preservice teacher from the University of Houston.

BillHi: Anyone else?

DanielRM: I am Dan and I am a Learning Support Faculty member for Cal State TEACH in California, for non-certified teachers.

BJ: Patricia?

PatriciaPo: My name is Pati I am also a preservice teacher from University of Houston

BJ hands the virtual floor over to Bill

BillHi: Thanks, BJ. I'm Bill Hilton Jr. I taught high school & college biology for many years and now am executive director of Hilton Pond Center for Piedmont Natural History in York SC.

BillHi: I consider myself to be an educator-naturalist.

BJ . o O (and a very good one, too!)

BillHi: Thanks, again.

BillHi: BJ is the Queen of Multitasking.

BillHi: Tonight, as always, we're going to be discussing nature.

BillHi: But we're going to concentrate on two things: How to encourage your present or future students to be interested in nature study . . .

BillHi: And how to prove to them that in places that have seasons (I see you folks are from Texas and California), that nature doesn't really die in winter.

BillHi: Anyway, last week Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania was in the news. Anyone know why?

BJ raises her PA hand

BillHi: Anyone else?

ElizabetN: No.

VickiAB: no

PatriciaPo: I have not heard

DanielRM hand raised

BillHi: First of all, I hope everyone was impressed that I could even spell "Punxsutawney."

BJ: Punxsutawney Phil! Groundhog Day

BJ . o O (I'm impressed!)

VickiAB: oh yeah!

PatriciaPo: Did the groundhog see his shadow?

VickiAB: yes

BJ Nods sadly

PatriciaPo: 6 more weeks

BillHi: You folks simply must read the newspapers more. Punxsutawney Phil is always covered by the media.

BJ . o O (even had a starring role in a movie)

BillHi: Yes, old Phil did see his shadow, which is to be expected since they had about a million watts of floodlights shining on him.

BillHi: In reality, in north central Pennsylvania, I doubt any groundhogs actually come out of their burrows the first week in February.

BillHi: So what are they doing at that time of year?

VanettaN: The groundhog always sees his shadow

BJ: are they still hibernating, Bill?

VanettaN: The element of surprise is gone

BillHi: BJ, let the students answer!

BJ blushes and sits on her fingers

VickiAB: are they still hibernating?

VanettaN: I believe they continue to hibernate

ElizabetN: I think so.

BillHi: Indeed, they are still hibernating at that time.

BillHi: What do groundhogs eat?

BillHi: Hint. Their other nickname is misleading.

PatriciaPo: grass maybe tree bark

BillHi: What's their other nickname?

PatriciaPo: prairie dogs?

BillHi: Nope.

BillHi: Although they are related.

BJ . o O (how much wood....)

PatriciaPo: woodchuck

BillHi: (BJ, do you have cabin fever from the long winter.)

BillHi: Woodchuck is correct, and groundhogs don't eat wood.

ElizabetN: What do they eat?

BillHi: Patricia was half-right.

BillHi: They eat grass, but not bark.

VanettaN: Grass?

BillHi: Yes.

ElizabetN: Only grass?

BillHi: And similar green plants.

BillHi: So think about Pennsylvania at this time of year and what kind of vegetation might be available.

PatriciaPo: Pine Trees

BillHi: Yep, but do groundhogs eat them?

VanettaN: Are groundhogs also called Whistlepigs?

BillHi: Yes.

VickiAB: groundhogs prob don't eat pines

ElizabetN: Not much vegetation.

BillHi: And I'm impressed that you know about "whistlepig."

BillHi: Correct, so if there's not much grass or leafy green vegetation--after all, there may be a foot or two of snow on the ground--what would a groundhog have to eat.

BillHi: Hint. The answer is "nothing."

VanettaN: I was thinking of that name at first, but it didn't sound right

BillHi -)

VickiAB: nothing

BillHi: That's right, nothing. So groundhogs eat like crazy in the fall, put on lots of fat, and then snooze until spring when grass sprouts and food is available.

VanettaN: So, if they eat grass, do they store away grass in their burrow?

VanettaN: Nevermind

BillHi: No, they don't. (Some animals do.) So if you had students and you asked them if the woods were alive in winter based upon the lifestyle of the groundhog, what do you think they would say?

VickiAB: they might say no

PatriciaPo: no

ElizabetN: No.

BillHi: Yep, I think they'd say the woods were dead, so you need to lead them away from that concept. After all, it's not true.

BillHi: Let me give an example.

BillHi: We all agree that groundhogs hibernate, right?

VickiAB: yes

ElizabetN: yes

PatriciaPo: yes

VanettaN: yes

BillHi: Excellent. (I love consensus.)

BillHi: Based on what you've heard, do squirrels hibernate?

VickiAB: no, I don't think so

ElizabetN: I think so.

VanettaN: I don't think so

BJ sits quietly

PatriciaPo: no I see them out and about in Houston but not up North

BillHi: Elizabeth, what have you heard about squirrels in winter?

[a large group suddenly entered the Tree House Conference Room - Ed.]

BJ: Bill, may I interrupt for a sec?

BillHi: Please do. the bus must have just arrived.

BJ: Welcome to discussion all you newcomers...

BillHi: No need to respond.

BJ: We're glad you are joining us, but please know that a discussion is taking place here

BJ . o O (it's kind of distracting to see all these people entering the room)

LaurieES: HI we're all a bunch of new users and listening in on a conference for the first time

BillHi: Okay. Just pay attention and you'll probably catch on quickly.

SusanaRi: What's the discussion about?

BJ . o O (sorry, Bill. Thanks)

BillHi: Pay attention, Susana.

VickiAB: Okay, so do squirrels hibernate Bill?

SusanaRi: Yes, I know it's about the dead winter, but what about it?

ElizabetN: I am using my knowledge of ground hogs and I believe they are similar.

BJ . o O (the topic of the discussion is that the woods are not 'dead' in the dead of winter, Susan)

BJ begs to differ with Elizabeth

BillHi: Elizabeth, good thinking, but groundhogs are ground squirrels and the others are tree squirrels, so they're a little different.

SusanaRi: So, it's about science.

CynthiaRi: How do you define hibernation?

BillHi: Actually, although most folks think squirrels hibernate, they do not. What evidence do you have that they don't. (Anyone may respond.)

CynthiaRi: Is it over a month, or over several weeks, or for days at a time?

VickiAB: well, I see them all over campus

BillHi: Cynthia, you are making valid points.

BJ: we feed the squirrels corn all winter...they build nests in the trees, but don't hibernate

ElizabetN: But, Houston has very different climate.

VanettaN: I have never seen them absent from the trees

BillHi: Groundhogs are true hibernators. (The word "hibernate" comes from the Latin : "hibernia," which means winter.)

VickiAB: that is true Elizabeth

PatriciaPo: To hibernate is to go through winter in a sleeping state

CynthiaRi: some animals sleep in winter for short periods of time, but longer then their summer customs

RosaElenaP: That wouldn't be called hibernation, right?

BillHi: Forgetting about human influence such as BJ feeding corn to her squirrels in winter, what evidence do you have that squirrels DON'T hibernate in Pennsylvania.

VickiAB: just a lucky guess on my part

BillHi: C'mon, what are squirrels famous for?

ElizabetN: The trees.

CynthiaRi: gathering food

BillHi: Elaborate.

BJ goes nuts trying not to answer

BillHi: Cynthia has it.

CynthiaRi: but all rodents are

VanettaN: acorn

ElizabetN: There are still trees available for them to gather food.

PatriciaPo: They find warm spots to stay in Winter but come out for food

BillHi: But the big thing about squirrels is that they gather nuts in fall and store them up for . . .

ElizabetN: WINTER

CynthiaRi: hamsters store food as well, but don't hibernate

VanettaN: I thought that was because they couldn't find any in winter

BillHi: Indeed, winter. So if a squirrel were truly hibernating in winter . . .

RosaElenaP: If they eat all the collected nuts, they're not hibernating.

CynthiaRi: rodents store food, in case they get snowed in in the winter, but not nes. to hibernate

BillHi: RosaElena has it!

RosaElenaP: thank you

CynthiaRi: she' good

LesterG: Would the fact that many squirrels have become domesticated, such as back yard squirrels affect hibernation?

BillHi: Even though squirrels may sleep longer periods in winter, it's only for a day or two, so it's not true hibernation.

RosaElenaP: When animals hibernate, they don't just sleep. Their vital signs slow down significantly.

BillHi: Correct.

CynthiaRi: true that

PatriciaPo: They go into a coma like state?

BillHi: Sort of.

RosaElenaP: yes

VanettaN: like bears, right?

CynthiaRi: similar to monarch butterflies, in a frozen state

BillHi: Ah, I was wondering when bears would come up.

BillHi: Are bears true hibernators?

RosaElenaP: Sorry, guys. This is really interesting, but I gotta go. Do you have another conference coming up soon?

PatriciaPo: yes

CynthiaRi: me too

VanettaN: no don't leave

CynthiaRi: when ?

VickiAB: I think bears are true hibernators

RosaElenaP: Are you all Science teachers?

BJ: Nuts About Nature is the second Tuesday of each month

ElizabetN: Yes, they are.

CynthiaRi: Elem teachers

CynthiaRi: so all curriculum

VanettaN: elem teacher

RosaElenaP: thanks. I'll hopefully see you again.

PatriciaPo: Elem Teacher

RosaElenaP left the room (signed off).

BillHi: Folks, try to come on time and stay the full hour next time.

ElizabetN nods

BillHi: Okay, where were we. Oh, yes, bears are true hibernators.

BillHi: They eat a lot in fall and den up for the winter.

BillHi: Even the females--who give birth to their cubs in the den--do so while hibernating!

VickiAB: oh wow!

BillHi: I suspect they do rouse up a little during delivery, however.

VanettaN: if their vital signs slow down, how does that affect cub bearing?

BillHi: The cubs are very, very small when they're born.

BillHi: Milk production continues throughout the winter.

VickiAB: are the cubs in hibernation when they are born?

PatriciaPo: Who protects them?

BillHi: They're in the den.

BillHi: But let's get back to our premise. The woods aren't dead in winter, although some animals--and plants--may be sleeping.

VickiAB: ok

BillHi: If you take students on a field trip in winter, the best thing to do is look for INDIRECT evidence that the woods are alive.

BillHi: Any ideas about what I mean here?

VanettaN: color?

BillHi: Explain.

ElizabetN: Animal homes?

VickiAB: there might not be much color though

VanettaN: When plants have new growth, bright new colors are shown.

BillHi: Okay.

BillHi: But most everything--except those pine trees--is not noticeably alive.

BillHi: Since we're growing short on time, I'd like to lead you to my Web site for Hilton Pond Center for Piedmont Natural History, specifically this page that you can click on.

Let me know when you get there:

BillHi: <http://www.hiltonpond.org/ThisWeek031122.html>

VanettaN: there

ElizabetN: I'm there.

PatriciaPo: there

BillHi: Vicki?

VickiAB: there

BillHi: Great.

BillHi: Scroll down the page and you'll see some photos of indirect evidence.

ElizabetN: So everything would be on the trees, but we are used to viewing things to our own eye level.

BillHi: I hope you'll bookmark <http://www.hiltonpond.org> and come back to explore the rest of the site as time allows.

ElizabetN: I already did.

PatriciaPo: Thanks will do

BJ: Don't forget to tell everyone about your newsletter, Bill

BillHi: Knowing that we're all involved--or will be involved--in teaching kids, can you give me a quickie lesson plan on how you would teach them that the woods are alive in winter?

VanettaN: Thanks, this was my first session and very interesting

BillHi: While you're thinking, you can subscribe to "This Week at Hilton pond" for free by sending a blank e-mail to <mailto:thisweek@hiltonpong.org> with SUBSCRIBE in the subject line.

VanettaN: Look for evidence. Where animals have made preparations for their offspring and themselves

VickiAB: I would take the kids outside with a digital camera to look for actual evidence

ElizabetN: Thank you too, and the Houston Arboretum is a great field trip for nature walks about animals.

PatriciaPo: So is the Jesse Jones Park in Humble

BillHi: That's good, Vicki. Digital cameras are the best teaching tool since chalk.

BillHi: Anyone else?

ElizabetN: This was a wonderful experience.

BillHi: Thanks. Sorry about the mob scene earlier.

VickiAB: Thank you for a great discussion!

PatriciaPo: This was really fun!

BJ is looking forward to next month's discussion on Spring

BJ: March 9

BillHi: I appreciate your being here.

BillHi: BJ, who are you kidding. It STILL won't be spring in Pennsylvania next month.

BJ chuckles...close enough.

BillHi: I'm glad I'm in South Carolina.

BillHi: Any more lesson plan ideas out there?

VickiAB: nope not right now

ElizabetN: Nature walks are excellent.

BJ: game commission usually has some cool resources

BillHi: Yes, but a nature walk without a theme is just a walk in the woods.

BJ . o O (they can get you rubber molds of critter feet...so you can make footprints in plaster or sand)

BillHi: Remember "teachable moments."

VickiAB: thanks again.

VickiAB: good night

ElizabetN: good night

BJ waves goodnight

PatriciaPo: Goodnight

BillHi: Night, all.