

Title of Session: Nuts About Nature - No Island Is A Man

Moderator: Bill Hilton Jr.

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Room: Tree House Conference

BJB2: Welcome to tonight's Nuts About Nature.

BJB2: Bill is the discussion leader and his topic tonight is No Island is a Man

BJB2: we usually start the discussions in Tapped In with introductions

BJB2: please tell us where you are located and what you teach

DavidWe: I'm David Weksler. I'm a HelpDesk volunteer for TappedIn and I help teachers learn more about educational technology. I'm in New Jersey, near New York City

SharonSta: I am a special education teacher at a high school in Calcasieu Parish

BillHi: BJ?

BJB2: I'm an art teacher in Pennsylvania

BillHi: Thanks.

BillHi: I'm Bill Hilton Jr., executive director of Hilton Pond Center for Piedmont Natural History in York, South Carolina.

DavidWe cheers

BillHi: I taught high school and college biology for about 20 years and also travel the country giving talks about natural history topics and doing inservice and preservice teacher training.

BillHi: "Nuts About Nature" is a discussion aimed at helping teachers (and future teachers) use the out-of-doors--either for real or virtually--to excite students about learning science and other disciplines.

BillHi: Each month I select a topic for discussion that is intended to make you think and, in the end, to give you some ideas for implementing activities with your current (or future) students.

BillHi: Sharon, do you do science with your students?

SharonSta: Yes, but at a very low level

BillHi: What's the level of your students?

SharonSta: we like hands-on activities at the first and second grade level

BillHi: Do you ever take them outside for walking field trips?

SharonSta: Yes, a few times

BillHi: How many students in the class?

SharonSta: eight to ten

BillHi: And how did they respond to an outdoor adventure?

SharonSta: they enjoyed being out of the classroom

DavidWe smiles

BillHi: We all do. (-:

BillHi: Did you have a particular goal for that field trip.

SharonSta: One time it was just off the cuff. I had seen a spider web on the posts as I walked in. We talked about spiders and webs, then did an art activity

BillHi: That sounds terrific. And creative on your part.

BillHi: Plus it was spontaneous.

BillHi: One reason many teachers DON'T take field trips is that they're afraid of the unpredictability of what goes on outside their classrooms.

SharonSta: In my class things are always unpredictable

BJB2 smiles.

BillHi: But that's what makes it really "special" education. (-:

BillHi: Have you thought about bringing the outdoors inside the classroom?

SharonSta: Not really,

BillHi: How do you think your kids would respond to having plants or animals in the classroom?

SharonSta: I think that animals would be distracting. Perhaps plants would be better. However, I have no windows

BillHi: Ah, Gro-lights.

SharonSta: that's a thought

BillHi: You could set up a simple fluorescent shop light.

BillHi: I think they're still about \$9.99 at Wal-Mart.

SharonSta: o.k.

BillHi: I don't know if you're familiar with a relatively new field called "Horticultural Therapy," but people are doing great stuff with plants and people--including senior citizens and special Ed kids and adults.

SharonSta: no, I am not

DavidWe smiles

BillHi: The simple process of planting seeds, watching them sprout, tending the plants can be a very powerful experience for participants.

BJB2: we have a green house that the lowest level kids work with

BillHi: A greenhouse is great, especially up north in Pennsylvania where the growing season is so short.

BillHi: Another possibility, Sharon, is to have a small plot outside the classroom where students could create a garden.

SharonSta: That sounds like something we could do

BillHi: It would create a place where you could teach more than science.

SharonSta: like working cooperatively

BillHi: You could do the art stuff (as you did with the spider webs).

BillHi: Plus lots of other disciplines. Math (as in counting seeds and measuring water).

DavidWe nods

BillHi: Etc.

SharonSta: even math in planning rows, amount of fertilizer, etc

DavidWe: How much plants weigh, when they grow

BillHi: Great.

BillHi: Calendar concepts.

SharonSta: endless possibilities

BillHi: You're EXACTLY right! (-:

BillHi: My suggestion would be to put a bird feeder right in the middle of the garden plot.

BillHi: You could use a seed feeder in winter.

BillHi: And a hummingbird feeder in spring and fall.

SharonSta: they'd like that

BillHi: The birds might kick out a few seeds that would sprout, and there's a whole 'nother lesson.

BillHi: I brought up the hummingbirds because that's one of my specialty areas.

BillHi: I do research on the Ruby-throated Hummingbird . . .

BillHi: Which is the species you have breeding in Louisiana.

SharonSta: my brother in law has several hummingbird feeders in his yard but I know nothing about them.

BillHi: If you really want to do a hummer feeder, I can direct you to part of my Web site for "Operation RubyThroat: The Hummingbird Project" that deals with creating a Hummingbird Habitat and attracting hummers.

SharonSta: that would be great

BillHi: Sounds like your brother-in-law could be a local resource, too.

SharonSta: yes-they have 7-10 at a time many days

BillHi: Neat. Click on the following URL and it will open a new browser window. Don't do anything except got to that page: <http://www.rubythroat.org>

BillHi: Got it?

BillHi: Good. You might want to bookmark this main page so you can come back later. (-:

SharonSta: I did

BillHi: Go ahead and click to the right of the top arrow where it says "Click Here to Enter."

BillHi: That takes you inside to the Directory page.

SharonSta: your web site looks cool

BillHi: Click here: <http://www.rubythroat.org/default2.html>

BillHi: That puts you back on the main directory page.

BillHi: Got it?

SharonSta: got it

BillHi: Good. This page gives a synopsis of what Operation RubyThroat is all about . . .

BillHi: . . . Plus it gives you links to the site's main sections.

BillHi: Scroll down that left hand column to the section on "Attracting & Feeding Hummingbirds."

BillHi: Click on those words.

BillHi: It should take you to <http://www.rubythroat.org/AttractingMain.html>

BillHi: Are you there?

DavidWe smiles

SharonSta: I think I may be too slow but I will browse it later

BillHi: Well, just let me mention that <http://www.rubythroat.org/AttractingMain.html> has subsections about how to start a Hummingbird habitat, the kinds of plants to use, and lots of info about how to put up and maintain hummingbird feeders.

BillHi: The rest of the site has LOTS of hummingbird photos on it that your students might like to look at.

SharonSta: Can I copy them to make a PowerPoint to introduce to the students?

BillHi: There are also some hummingbird classroom activities outlined at <http://www.rubythroat.org/ActivitiesMain.html>

SharonSta: thanks for the extra site

BillHi: You're free to use anything on the Operation RubyThroat Web site in your classroom. Special permission is required to use any text or photos on a Web site or other electronic format.

BillHi: BTW, does your high school have a horticulture class?

SharonSta: Our parish does but not at our site. Some of my students attended last year. None this year.

BillHi: Hmmmm.

BillHi: Here's a quote from <http://www.rubythroat.org/ActivitiesInterGradeMain.html> :

BillHi: High School horticulture students learn valuable skills about plants and gardening that they can share with younger students. In a real-time application of those skills, have your horticulture students implement Operation RubyThroat by adopting a nearby elementary school that needs a Hummingbird Garden. The hort students can design the garden, order the plants and then teach the elementary students to do the planting, watering, and other maintenance. (Remember, no sharp cutting tools should be used by the younger kids.) In this relationship, the horticulture students reinforce their learning by teaching it, the elementary students learn some practical skills, and the school gets its own Hummingbird Garden than can be used for Observational Activities

BillHi: Sharon, just so you're aware, I also have another Web site about nature.

BillHi: It's the one for Hilton Pond Center for Piedmont Natural History at <http://www.hiltonpond.org>

DavidWe: How big is the pond at Hilton Pond, Bill?

BJB2: with a wonderful newsletter, Sharon

BillHi: There's a little about hummingbirds there, but a Ton of stuff about birds and bees and flowers and trees.

BillHi: Hilton pond is only about an acre or so.

DavidWe nods

BillHi: Much smaller right now because of our drought.

DavidWe: We had a very wet October in NY, NJ, PA

BillHi: Anyway, Sharon, many teachers at all levels are using "This week at Hilton Pond" newsletter as a resource and enrichment tool.

SharonSta: Great- I have gained a lot from this chat-glad I participated-even if it was for a class assignment

BillHi: Here's an example if you want to look:
<http://www.hiltonpond.org/ThisWeek051008.html>

SharonSta: thanks I'll do so when I get my transcript

BJB2: Bill leads this discussion on the third Tuesday of each month

BillHi: Pleased you were here--even if it WAS for a class assignment. (-:

DavidWe smiles

BillHi: What questions might you have, Sharon?

SharonSta: Can't think of any others at this time.

BillHi: You should feel free to contact me at education@hiltonpond.org

SharonSta: Thanks

BillHi: Just out of curiosity, how many years have you taught?

SharonSta: eighteen-but not all in the setting I am in now

BillHi: That's quite a career. Keep up the good work.

SharonSta: Thanks for your help. I will sign off now

BillHi: Okay. Have a great Thanksgiving.

BJB2 waves goodnight to Sharon

SharonSta left the room.

BJB2: that turned out to be a good discussion, Bill

DavidWe: Thanks, Bill

BillHi: As I have said before, we teach them one person at a time.

BillHi: And, as you know, when we teach them one at a time the effort snowballs when they take it back to their classrooms.