

# Nurturing Learning in the Outdoors

Kansas  
Environmental  
Education  
**CONFERENCE  
2023**

**November 2 & 3  
SEDGWICK COUNTY ZOO  
WICHITA, KANSAS**



## 2023 Kansas eeConference Schedule at a Glance

Time	Thursday, November 2, 2023 Sedgwick County Zoo	Friday, November 3, 2023 Sedgwick County Zoo
8:00 - 9:00 am		Registration, Breakfast, and Welcome
9:00 - 9:50 am	Pre-Conference Workshop 12:30pm-3:30pm	Concurrent Session 1 (3 session)
9:50 - 10:00 am		Break, Exhibits, & Silent Auction
10:00 - 10:50 am		Concurrent Session 2 (3 sessions)
10:50 - 11:10 am		Break & Exhibits
11:10am – 12:00		Concurrent Session 3 (3 Sessions)
12:00 - 1:30 pm		Lunch, Business Meeting, and Keynote Trevor Cohen, <i>Why Our Bright Future Begins Outdoors</i>
1:30 - 2:20 pm		2 Interactive Workshops, Field Experience
2:20 - 2:40 pm		Break, Exhibits, & Silent Auction
2:40 - 3:30 pm	<b>Registration Desk Open: 3-4pm</b>	2 Interactive Workshops and Field Experience Continued
4:00 - 4:15 pm	Welcome to Conference	Safe Travels Home!
4:15 - 5:15pm	Opening Keynote: Dr. Theresa Coble, <i>Nature Experiences Can Help Us Understand Our Place, Connect with Each Other, and Heal</i>	
5:15 - 5:45 pm	Social, Networking and Silent Auction	
5:45 - 6:45 pm	Dinner	
7:30 - 11:00 pm	Hospitality Suite at the Hampton Inn by Hilton Wichita Northwest Optional Wild Lights at SCZ (6:30-9pm)	

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## Detailed Schedule

*NOTE: This is a DRAFT Schedule and may be adjusted slightly!*

### Thursday, November 2nd

- 12:30-3:30pm**      **PreConference Workshop** This workshop is designed for PreK-12 formal and non-formal educators with an introduction to environmental education, and experience with integrating lessons from KACEE's environmental ed. core programs (PLT, WILD, WET, WILD Aquatic, LEP) within your classroom, homeschool classroom, or program. Register [here](#).
- 3:00-4:00pm**      Registration Opens/Exhibitor Set Up
- 4:00-4:15pm**      Welcome: Laura Downey and Delia Lister
- 4:15-5:15pm**      **Keynote with Dr. Theresa Coble, Nature Experiences Can Help Us Understand Our Place, Connect with Each Other, and Heal **INCLUSION AND ACCESS IN THE OUTDOORS****

As a researcher, I've been wondering about "the visitor experience" at national parks and whether the parks are primarily natural parks or cultural parks—which may be an artificial distinction. I propose that park programs should focus on four key elements: Story Stewardship, Sense of Place, Civic Imagination and Collective Life. Further, all the delivery mechanisms, techniques, and programs should align to support the **four key elements**. These four key elements could represent goals for EE and experiential education and together we'll explore how facilitating these four elements through nature experiences could help us *understand our place, connect with each other, and heal*.



*Theresa Coble is the Des Lee Endowed Professor of Experiential Education at the Univ. of MO – St. Louis. She currently serves on the National Park System Advisory Board. She co-developed an online master's degree in resource interpretation with the NPS and served on the NPSAB Education Committee. She's a Fellow of the National Association for Interpretation. Her research interests include meaning making at heritage sites, engaging audiences about complex and controversial topics, building civic capacity, and facilitating transformative experiences. She has a M.A. in Chinese and a Ph.D. in Forestry. At UMSL, Dr. Coble leads the Heritage Leadership for Sustainability, Social Justice, and Participatory Culture doctoral cohort.*

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**5:15-5:45pm** Social, Networking and Silent Auction

**5:45-6:45pm** **Dinner**

**6:30-9:00pm** **OPTIONAL! Wildlights at Sedgwick County Zoo– Down the Rabbit Hole**

Back for the third straight year, Wild Lights is a must-see display at the Sedgwick County Zoo. Experience the one-of-a-kind illuminated Asian lantern sculptures highlighting Alice and Wonderland, allowing for a uniquely wild time.



Though the sculptures are lit throughout the zoo, visitors should note that animals will not be on display and indoor exhibits will be closed to the public.

***Conference participants will have the option of purchasing tickets for Thursday night at a reduced cost of \$13-\$15 per person. Details on purchasing tickets coming soon!***

Wildlights ends at 9:00 PM so don't worry, you still have plenty of time to enjoy the hospitality room.

**7:30-11:00pm** Hospitality Suite at the Hampton Inn by Hilton Wichita Northwest.

## **Friday, November 4th**

**8:00-9:00am** **Registration, Breakfast, and Welcome**

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WATERSHED MANAGEMENT SECTION

**9:00-9:50am** **Concurrent Session 1**

**Equipping Learners to Engage with Place Toward Equity** **INCLUSION AND ACCESS IN THE OUTDOORS**

An overlooked dimension of inequity in the outdoors is how and by whom places are defined and described. This session will discuss a framework for place as something that is socially constructed and explore how educators can make instructional choices that prepare students to engage in the creation of place.

**Presenter: Matthew Clay, Fort Hays State University**

Audiences: General/Mixed

### **Using Growing Up WILD and PLT for Kindergarten Zoo Camp** **OUTDOOR LEARNING & EXPERIENCES**

How activities from "Growing Up WILD" and PLT's "Environmental Experiences for Early Childhood" were outfitted for use in kindergarten summer camps at the Hutchinson Zoo. Hutchinson Zoo's Education Coordinator, will talk about her experience with camp as well as thoughts on how she would use it in future activities.

**Presenter: Sierra Wood, Hutchinson Zoo**

Audiences: PreK/Early Elementary Educators

### **Data Collection Through Nature** **BRINGING JOY TO TEACHING AND LEARNING THROUGH OUTDOOR EE**

This session advocates for the integration of data from nature into the classroom, harnessing the power of the natural world as a rich and dynamic educational resource. In an increasingly digital age, where students often spend more time indoors and online, reconnecting them with nature through data-driven educational experiences can not only enhance their learning but also foster a deeper appreciation for the environment. This session will explore the benefits of using natural data in the classroom, share practical examples and resources, and discuss strategies for implementing this approach effectively.

**Presenter: Katlin Vargas, Great Plains Nature Center**

**9:50-10:00am**      **Break, Exhibits, & Silent Auction**

## **10:00-10:50am**      **Concurrent Session 2**

### **When You Just g2g Outside** **OUTDOOR LEARNING & EXPERIENCES**

Learn how a rag-tag group of nonformal educators developed g2g Outside, a program that's goal is to get young people outside and promote family legacies of outdoor play.

**Presenter: Tonya Bronleewe, Wichita State University**

**Additional Presenter(s): Libby Albers, Kansas Alliance for Wetlands and Streams**

Audiences: Nonformal Educators, Program or Project Administrators, Non-Profit Organizations, General/Mixed

### **Bee City Wichita: Generating Buzz for Conservation in Our City** **GROWING AND LEARNING IN THE OUTDOORS**

In 2023, Wichita became the first Bee City USA affiliate in Kansas. Grassland Groupies, in partnership with Xerces Society and City of Wichita, supports native pollinator conservation through education, action, and policy change. Learn how you can join this initiative and connect your community to the bugs that sustain us!

**Presenter: Nicole Brown, Grassland Groupies**

Audiences: Green Schools, Elementary School Educators, Middle School Educators, High School Educators, College & University Programs, Nonformal Educators, Non-Profit Organizations, General/Mixed

**eeLandscape Analysis: Informing the Future of Environmental Education** **OUTDOOR LEARNING & EXPERIENCES** and **INCLUSION AND ACCESS IN THE OUTDOORS**

This presentation will discuss an eeLandscape Analysis involving Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Iowa, Colorado, and Wyoming. A specific focus will be placed on organizational and programmatic aspects of environmental education (EE) within Kansas, while addressing the future of accessibility in EE for the d/Deaf and hard of hearing community.

**Presenter: Brady Wolken, Kansas State University**

**Additional Presenter(s): Sarah Jackson, Kansas State University**

Audiences: General/Mixed

**10:50-11:00am**      **Concurrent Session 3**

**Meaningful Work** **OUTDOOR LEARNING & EXPERIENCES, BRINGING JOY TO TEACHING AND LEARNING THROUGH OUTDOOR EE** and **GROWING AND LEARNING IN THE OUTDOORS**

This session will address the topic of bringing joy to teaching through practical examples of how to implement the Kansas Green School program in your classroom. Through outdoor learning experiences, children learn they can "shine bright" as they help take care of planet Earth.

**Presenter: Jena Simms, Wichita Collegiate School**

Audiences: Green Schools, PreK/Early Elementary Educators, Elementary School Educators, Educators Working with Children with Special Needs, Educators Working with English Language Learners, Nonformal Educators, Program or Project Administrators

**Working with Special Needs Students can Promote Joy and Benefit your Organization** **INCLUSION AND ACCESS IN THE OUTDOORS** and **BRINGING JOY TO TEACHING AND LEARNING THROUGH OUTDOOR EE**

This session will share a model of engaging special needs students in a worked based environment that improves attendance, increases grades, empowers students, and provides valuable resources to your organization.

**Presenter: Susan Shimkovitz, Sedgwick County Zoo Special Populations Coordinator**

Audiences: Green Schools, PreK/Early Elementary Educators, Elementary School Educators, Educators Working with Children with Special Needs, Educators Working with English Language Learners, Nonformal Educators, Program or Project Administrators

**Prairie and Native Gardening** **GROWING AND LEARNING IN THE OUTDOORS**

This session explores ways to engage learners through hands on native and prairie gardening.

**Presenter: Bailey Richie, Great Plains Nature Center**

Audiences: Green Schools, PreK/Early Elementary Educators, Elementary School Educators, Educators Working with Children with Special Needs, Educators Working with English Language Learners, Nonformal Educators, Program or Project Administrators

12:00-1:30pm **Lunch, Business Meeting, and Keynote: Trevor Cohen, Why Our Bright Future Begins Outdoors** INCLUSION AND ACCESS IN THE OUTDOORS and BRINGING JOY TO TEACHING AND LEARNING THROUGH OUTDOOR EE

Our generation's greatest green innovators got their start in nature's classrooms: forests, prairies, and oceans. Even small experiences outdoors can change the way we think and lead us to a lifetime of environmental stewardship. Join the author of Bright Green Future, in a conversation about how outdoor education has influenced real changemakers who are building a better future for people and planet.



*Trevor Cohen is an environmental author and educator who travels the country to chronicle a renaissance in empowering communities and healing the planet. His book Bright Green Future brings together stories of innovators and activists who are building the foundation of a sustainable society. Readers will learn what symbiotic relationships can teach us about switching to renewables, how ecosystems can guide the next industrial revolution, and how the hidden genius of rainforests and prairies can help us grow food in a warming world.*

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1:30-3:30pm **Workshop Sessions and Field Experiences**

**Climate Change Education from National Parks to Zoos** OUTDOOR LEARNING & EXPERIENCES

This session will cover a doctoral project on climate change communication in two national parks, provide participants with strategies for gaining confidence in their own ability to teach climate change, and we will take an hour-long field trip around the zoo to discuss the zoo's efforts to educate the public.

**Presenter: Delia Lister, Pittsburg State University Nature Reach**

**Additional Presenter(s): Pamela Blair-Bruce, Schanee Anderson**

Audience: General/Mixed

**Merlin - and Other Great Nature Apps** OUTDOOR LEARNING & EXPERIENCES

375 of the 450 bird species found in Kansas have been documented at Cheyenne Bottoms. Merlin is a great citizen science tool used to identify and document birds. We will ID birds using mounts, photos that can be set up along a nature hike, any live birds witnessed on our hike, and using bird song calls. As time allows, we will delve into some other great apps. Resources, programs, and field trips offered by the Kansas Wetlands Education Center are free for educators. Come learn how we can assist your students experience wetlands!

**Presenter: Mandy Kern, Kansas Wetlands Education Center**

Audiences: Green Schools, Elementary School Educators, Middle School Educators, High School Educators, College & University Programs, Nonformal Educators, General/Mixed

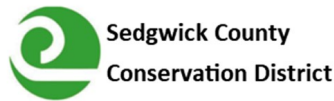
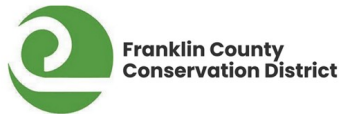
**Perennial Practice: Using Natural Ecosystems as Inspiration to Reshape Agriculture** **GROWING AND LEARNING IN THE OUTDOORS**

In this workshop, we will delve into our personal relationships with natural landscapes, past, present and future. The lessons we will explore are from the Kernza in Context curriculum and emphasizes how engagement with natural systems can inspire innovation towards a more just perennial future.

**Presenter: Lydia Nicholson, The Land Institute**

Audiences: High School Educators, Nonformal Educators, General/Mixed

**3:30pm Safe Travels Homes!**



**A Big Thanks to Our  
2023 Kansas  
Environmental  
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Butler County Conservation District ~ Kansas Association of Conservation Districts

Cowley County Conservation District ~ Wilson County Conservation District