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ABSTRACT

This project was designed to give children opportunities to discover and to investigate plants, animals, and ecological relationships in their own neighborhoods. Through hands-on, natural science investigations, children have opportunities to find and observe a variety of plants and animals, look at them closely, sort them to analyze their similarities and differences, discuss ecological relationships, share discoveries, and wonder about the unknown. The children learn that nature is everywhere, in vacant lots, trees, and the playground. The activities are written to teach observation and critical thinking skills. This paper documents the processes used to begin and carry out this program. Chapters include: (1) "Starting with a 'Think Tank'"; (2) "Conducting a Needs Assessment"; (3) "Designing the Project and Defining Objectives"; (4) "Selecting Appropriate Learning Activities"; (5) "Selecting Pilot Test Sites and Gaining Their Participation"; (6) "Recruiting and Training Volunteers"; (7) "Assembling Materials and Supplies"; (8) "Conducting the Pilot Test and Evaluating the Results"; (9) "Expanding the Program to Reach More Children"; (10) "Getting Financial Backing"; and (11) "Establishing a Fee Structure." Appendices include: project director job description; volunteers' portfolio; materials for site planning meetings; pilot evaluation forms; host site application; team leader job description; printed material for members' approval and phonathon; and publications cited. (CW)

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**Denver Audubon Society
Urban Education Project
975 Grant Street
Denver, CO 80203
(303) 860-1476**

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*"Kids today are
information rich and
experience poor."*

—J. Howard



Preface

Denver Audubon Society, is a non-profit organization of about 3,000 members. We do many of the things that similar environmental organizations throughout the country do: organize field trips and monthly programs, testify and write letters to influence governmental decisions, raise funds through birdseed sales and annual appeals, offer adult education classes, and publish a newsletter.

Our members have always put education high on their list of priorities — especially the education of children. From our own experiences, we know that lifelong interests and attitudes begin to take shape at an early age. Most of our members have fond childhood memories of birding trips or wildflower outings with family or friends, Saturday adventures in vacant lots or neighborhood ponds, summertime treks to pristine natural areas. Those experiences served as a foundation from which our interests in nature and belief in environmental conservation have grown.

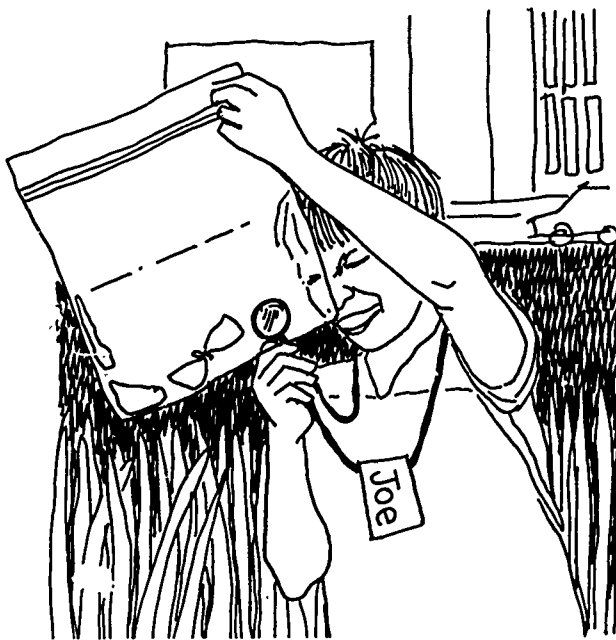
Knowing that our country's future will soon be in the hands of today's children who, for the most part, are growing up in cities, the Denver Audubon Board decided to look into a community outreach project. We wanted to give today's urban youngsters positive hands-on experiences with the natural world that might be as vivid and meaningful to them, as our childhood experiences have been to us.

Our dream has resulted in the creation of Denver Audubon's Urban Education Project — a volunteer-based program that enables thousands of city kids to discover and investigate nature each year. This document tells how we started the Project in 1984, what we do, who is involved, and how the whole thing is organized.

We hope it will be an inspiration and a useful reference that helps others who share our goals to create similar programs.

Our success with this project has been possible due to the leadership, commitment and generosity of literally hundreds of Denver Audubon members. Among them, David Dominick stands out because he was the Education Chairman, "Think Tank" leader, and premier fundraiser who got the whole thing started. He exemplifies the perseverance and enthusiasm that many of our volunteers exhibit — squeezing a lunchtime meeting into a busy schedule, joining in a weeknight phonathon to contact members, devoting his time on weekends to write a proposal or organize a planning session. We hope many of you who read this will start similar projects, experience the enjoyment that comes from working with and getting to know similar dedicated volunteers in your community and have the satisfaction of being part of a program that flourishes with the participation of many.

Lois E. Webster
President, 1987-88
Denver Audubon Society



verview

Denver Audubon Society's Urban Education Project gives children opportunities to discover and to investigate the plants, animals and ecological relationships that exist right in their own neighborhoods.

What does the Project look like in action?

Picture groups of nine and ten year-olds on their hands and knees carefully combing through piles of leaves. Concentrating intensely, they begin discovering slugs, beetles, spiders and exclaim with amazement: "Wow, look at this one!" "Quick, catch it!" "I found a tiny orange one." Spontaneous giggles of delight and cheers expressing the thrill of discovery punctuate the activity. The enthusiasm and excitement of the children are so contagious that the volunteer leaders smile and laugh too. A volunteer steers one pair to a new habitat, suggesting "Why don't you see if you can find some critters over in that sunny spot."

When one girl's magnifying lens focuses on the front part of an unusual insect, she screams with astonishment, "It's got a **head** . . . and a **nose!**" Two boys run over to their friends to show them the delicate bug with the red legs they have found. A child asks her partner to put another ant in their observation sack because the first one has disappeared. "Do spiders eat ants?? . . . Hey, look, it does!"

As the activity proceeds, each group of six youngsters comes together and compares the animals found. Each group's volunteer leader initiates a discussion of which ones were found among moist leaves, which ones came from drier leaf piles, and how they differ. Finally, the children return all the animals to their original habitats. As the groups go back into the building, the youngsters eagerly ask, "When are you coming back?"

Who does it reach?

A socio-economic cross section of children participate. About 35 percent are from families living at or below poverty level, and about 45 percent are from racial and cultural minorities (primarily Black and Hispanic).

Over 80 percent of the parents, teachers and youth leaders surveyed said that their children had new experiences with this program . . . learning opportunities they wouldn't have had otherwise.

What do they learn?

Through hands-on, natural science investigations, participating children have opportunities to find and observe a variety of plants and animals, to look at them closely with a magnifying lens, to sort them and analyze their similarities and differences, to ask about and figure out their ecological interrelationships, to share their discoveries and wonder about the unknown. Investigations may center on things as diverse as flowers, pillbugs and birds and vary from one season to the next. The children learn that nature is everywhere — that the vacant lot, the trees in the yard, and the leaves on the playground have wild things living in them.

The activities teach observation and critical thinking skills that are important for everyone to learn whether or not they pursue a scientific career.

Why is the project unique?

The program is delivered by volunteers to schools and to places children go after school and on Saturdays, such as community centers, libraries, Boys Clubs and Girls Clubs. No nature center or natural area is required, so there are no major capital expenses. The children discover a new world right in their own neighborhood and find that they can use their newly learned skills to continue discovering on their own.

How does the program affect the community?

Personnel at **sites** that host the program say it has enabled them to expand and enhance their program offerings. Teachers find that the activities enrich their science curriculum with hands-on, outdoor laboratory experiences which they haven't been able to offer previously.

The program gives **citizen-volunteers** opportunities to interact with a younger generation and gain first-hand experiences in schools and agencies for youth. It increases the **children's** awareness of and fascination and respect for the plants and animals living wild in their immediate surroundings. For the **sponsoring organization**, it is a constructive community-outreach program that can bring positive recognition.

What is needed to begin?

The program could be started with \$40 to \$50 and as few as four or five volunteers each investing 10 to 12 hours of volunteer time. At this scale, 25 to 30 children could be involved in several activities over several weeks.

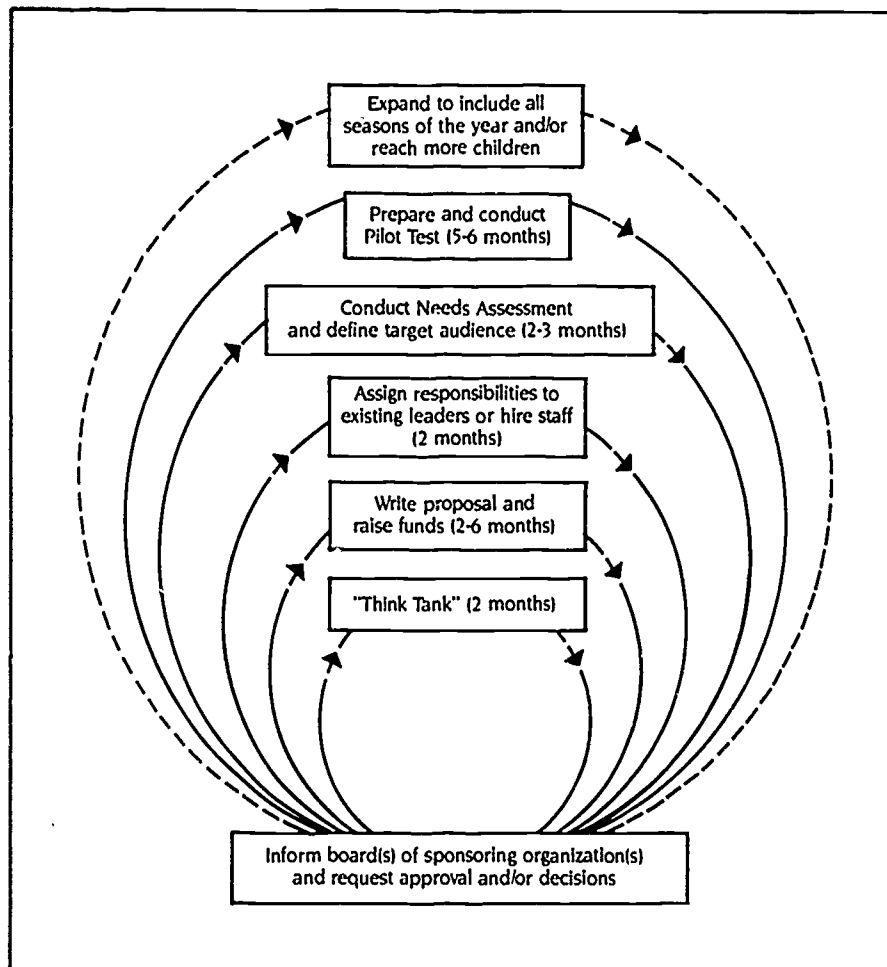
Our experience shows that the program lends itself to various sizes depending on the financial and human resources at hand. In 1985, we launched our first season with 250 children through the efforts of 60 volunteers (only 29 of those actually worked with the kids). By 1987, the program involved about 2,000 children and 200 volunteers annually. Two part-time, paid staff members served as project coordinators.

As we began this Urban Education Project, our Board and steering committee were very wise in admonishing us to "start small." We now pass that advice on to you.

How did Denver Audubon start this project?

The following chapters document the processes we've used. The project has grown from an idea in one or two people's heads to a fully developed year-round program. The diagram on the next page outlines the phases of development and the approximate length of time we needed to accomplish each "round".

In the last year and a half, we've received requests for information on the project design and procedures from 23 states. This publication is a comprehensive answer to those requests. Herein we have tried to give potential sponsors of similar projects enough details regarding the initiation, content and organization of our project that they will be able to learn from our experiences. Our hope is that your community will be able to adapt this model to your situation, start a program that suits your local needs, and provide children with active, meaningful learning experiences.



Starting with a Think Tank

- To develop the interest, thinking and participation of educators and organizational leaders.
- To enable a consensus to emerge regarding the purpose, direction and start-up of the project.

Denver Audubon Society's Board of Directors and officers had been talking about an Urban Environmental Education Project for quite awhile. To get beyond the talking stage and coalesce a group around a more defined project, the Education Chair planned a "Think Tank."

He invited a group of 18 people to a meeting in his home. All participants were involved in education professionally or as an avocation. Ten were active Denver Audubon (DAS) members (6 served on the Board of Directors, 4 chaired various DAS education projects); and 8 were guests from colleges, environmental centers, public and private educational institutions. Everyone shared an interest in helping launch the project.

The meeting's agenda listed the questions to be addressed: what programs already exist, what needs exist, what are the objectives for the Project, who should it serve, what should it look like. The ideas, butcher paper, and marker pens flowed as the brainstorming and decision making process proceeded.

As happens with such group planning processes, there were times when the discussion lost its focus or got bogged down, but comments like "Onward through the Fog!" were heard. And when the Chair and a small group of 3 others got together to review the results, compile a written summary and plan the next meeting, they found much had been accomplished.

The group had reached consensus in several major areas.

The scope of the curriculum: There should be a progression from awareness of living things and their natural history to ecological interrelationships and man's actions that effect ecosystems.

Who should be served: We should "teach children by teaching adults." The core of the program should be volunteer "lay naturalists" who would be trained at DAS sponsored workshops. The program would be limited to people in the Denver metropolitan area.

Where and how should the lessons occur: The program must proceed "without walls." (We had no nature center nor the ability to establish one.) Younger children must have "hands-on lessons to acquaint them with nature as something to be both loved and enjoyed." Many environmental curricula are already available but are not being used — we must use them.

Concerns and pitfalls to avoid: Don't duplicate existing programs or impose programs where there is no need or community/user acceptance. Make sure there's adequate support from sponsoring organization(s) and from the community at large and that funding is adequate. Don't start too soon or too big. Thoroughly test the program in a pilot stage.

Who should be in charge: A job description for a "helmsperson" must be agreed upon soon, and that person (probably in a paid capacity) should be recruited.

A report of these consensus items was sent to all participants in preparation for an evening meeting the following month. At that session, plans for the first year were made with major tasks and schedules broken out for two six-month phases.

Phase I: Further refinement of the Needs Assessment and Market Analysis, a review of existing and available curricula, travel to and coordination with other successful environmental education programs, and initial contact in the Greater Denver Metropolitan Area with identified user groups.

Phase II: Conduct a pilot Lay Naturalist Training Program. This program would be designed to train up to 20 docents or Lay Naturalists.

Following the completion of the pilot program, an evaluation by DAS would occur and a report filed with our funding agencies no later than May 1, 1985.

The DAS "Think Tank" Planning Group decided that they wanted to develop a new program that would grow to be sizable in its impact and scope. It was this conviction and the fact that one person had connections to potential major donors that led to the decision to hire a "helmsperson." They acquired two substantial grants from private sources. Then they hired someone with extensive curriculum and program development

experience as a full-time Project Director (job description in Appendix A). We hope you'll be able to use a lot of the methodologies and materials she has developed so that our investment benefits you. By using the materials and information in this document, you shouldn't have to invest as much time, energy and money as we did.

While some funds are essential for getting this kind of project started, we believe costs could be kept to a minimum if a volunteer "helmsperson" were identified, committee members and/or other volunteers had the time to carry out Phases I and II themselves, and an institution with office space, office machines, and the like were willing to provide a home-base for the project.

Summary

In getting the project started, we found three elements essential:

- involve many decision-makers and enthusiasts in initial planning meetings. By gaining the participation of the leaders of sponsoring organization(s), educators, and potential funders, we benefited from their good ideas and set the stage for their future involvement. Out of our "Think Tank" group came the Education Committee of eight that proceeded to nurture the planned project. Board Members who were informed supporters, our premier fundraiser, and donors and supporters who hold key positions in related institutions.
- commit plans in writing and get everyone's endorsement of the written planning document. An agreed upon plan enabled our whole group to know where it was headed and to move in the same direction.
- identify leaders and establish responsibilities. No matter whether the leaders are paid staff or volunteers, the group needs to agree on who does what and when. Successes in our volunteer organization depend on a team approach. The type of expertise and amount of time each member can contribute varies. I may have more time to work on the project this month and no time at all next month — I may be good at making phone calls, yet terrible at writing. We've found that the function of "coordinator" is a major responsibility and that asking people to make a commitment and to honor that commitment is essential.

We hope that you are convinced of this program's approach and its value for children. You may, however, prefer to try out some activities with youngsters next rather than spending your time raising funds and conducting a needs assessment. If that is the case, we encourage you to do an informal trial.

- Find a few cohorts who'll do a small scale test with you. (We suggest one adult for each six children.)
- Select 3 or 4 OBIS activities that will work outdoors in the next 2 or 3 months.
- Assemble the materials and supplies for the selected activities.
- Find a friendly teacher or scout leader who will let you use his/her children as a trial group.
- Enjoy the activities, and, afterwards, assess what you've done. This will be a real experience on which to base your subsequent plans. And you will know whether it's worthwhile creating a program for more youngsters and volunteers.



onducting a Needs Assessment

- **To determine whether there's a need for such a program in the community and, if so, for what age group and through what institution(s).**
- **To determine the potential for volunteers and financial support.**

In the early 1970's, nationally-funded elementary science curricula (such as SCIS, *Science Curriculum Improvement Study*) were produced and widely implemented in an effort to provide youngsters with hands-on activities to learn about plants, animals and their interrelationships. By 1978, Stake and Easley, in *The Status of Pre-College Science, Mathematics and Social Studies Educational Practices in U.S. Schools*, found that public schools appeared "to be moving away from science education" and that "reading about science" was frequently considered as science instruction in elementary schools. In the early 80's, groups like the National Science Board Commission and the Carnegie Forum continued to document deficiencies in science teaching and pointed to the need for learning experiences in the natural world that were meaningful and relevant.

Our intuition told us that these nation-wide trends existed in Denver too, which led us to conduct an assessment of our area's needs in nature/ecology education. This was an essential step because it provided us with the data necessary to build a strong rationale, which helped in recruiting volunteers and participants and in raising funds to sustain our efforts.

Data were gathered (1) from educators and adults in charge of agencies for children, and (2) from Denver Audubon Members (re: potential volunteers and donations).

Assessing the Need

The first part of our data gathering process included:

- personal interviews with 19 science supervisors/curriculum coordinators, principals, and teachers in the seven major school districts that serve approximately 241,000 of the 262,500 students in metropolitan Denver;
- on-site observations of children's education programs sponsored by the city's two museums, zoo and botanical gardens and extensive interviews with the education directors of those four facilities;
- phone and/or personal interviews with ten adults in charge of outdoor education programs at nine different public and private day camps, recreation centers and parks in the suburbs; and
- personal interviews with 14 educators, program directors and administrators at 11 inner-city agencies/institutions where youngsters spend their non-school time (including community centers, libraries, and extended day-care centers).

Needs Assessment - Interview Protocol
for Public Schools

1. Introduce self and purpose of needs assessment (to identify existing programs and determine niches we might help fill without duplicating or competing)
2. What environmental/nature/ecology courses or programs do you offer? For each, note: educational philosophy, program content, student activities, age/grade of students, numbers involved, staff, child:staff ratio, where learning takes place, time and duration, fee (if any).
3. Other programs offered in the past? Why discontinued?
4. Future plans
5. Needs you perceive or "holes" that you will NOT be addressing
6. Describe DAS project ideas under consideration. What advice do you have for us regarding the value of such programs for your children? ... best times, format, ages?
7. What volunteer opportunities do you have for adults? (... nature of activities, level of responsibility, number and source of volunteers, training and management)
8. Any other ideas/advice for us regarding our new project?

Note: For interviews with all non school agencies and institutions, we asked two additional questions:

- What population do you serve? (ages; racial, cultural, socio-economic make-up; total number; how they're enrolled or attracted)
- What is your purview and the scope of your programs?

The interviews were conducted by the Project Director and by volunteers, once the Education Committee and Project Director had agreed on an interview protocol. Most of the people interviewed were suggested by "Think Tank" participants or were located using the telephone book. City Hall and social service agencies also helped point us in the right direction.

The collected data are summarized in Tables 1 and 2.

TABLE 1.
NEEDS ASSESSMENT - SUMMARY OF DATA FROM PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Denver Metropolitan Area School Districts	Elementary Science Curriculum			Outdoor Education Experience In Mountains With Strong Science Component (Duration)	Comments
	Based on Adopted Textbook(s)	Hands-On Activity-Based Curriculum	Spotty Implementation		
1	Silver Burdett Scott Foresman		x	each 3rd grader (1/2 day) half of 5th graders (overnight)	science gets slighted - little to no time or money for it
2	Harcourt Brace		x	each 6th grader (3-4 days)	lots of elementary teachers don't teach science
3		Elem. Sci. Study (ESS) Sci. Curric. Imp. Study (SCIS)		each 6th grader (1 week)	district-mandated curriculum supported at all levels
4			x	"Almost all upper elementary students do some-things outdoors."	revising curriculum
5			x	No	revising curriculum
6			x	3/4 of 6th graders (1 week)	revising curriculum
7	Addison-Wesley			No	basic skills have always been important

* "Spotty Implementation" means some teachers teach science for 15 to 30 minutes per day, others do not teach science at all; some principals encourage and support the teaching of science, others do not.

TABLE 2.
NEEDS ASSESSMENT - SUMMARY OF DATA FROM NON-FORMAL INSTITUTIONS

Non-Formal Institutions (Total Number Interviewed)	Hands-On Science Activities Part of Regular Instruction	Camping Trips (Primarily to the Mountains)	Education Activities at Natural Areas	Free-Play and/or Other Non-Science Activities Occur Outdoors	Expressed Need For More Hands-On Science Experiences	Comments
Museums, Zoo, Botanical Garden (4)	100%*	0%	0%	0%	100% - especially for middle and lower socio-economic levels	Programs occur within the sponsoring facility. Primarily for members. Parents must register and provide transportation to workshops. Parents are in upper income levels and highly educated.
Suburban Non-Formal Programs (9)	0%	44%	44%	33%	56%	State Parks and Open Space programs provide interpretive activities at their natural areas.
Inner-City Non-Formal Agencies/Institutions (11)	9%	9%	0%	82%	100%	Had not previously thought of providing kids with opportunities to discover and investigate living things, but thought they'd love it.

*Data indicate percentage of institutions interviewed.

In general, we found that Denver students have experiences similar to those described in the national studies and reviews. Programs specifically dealing with environmental education have been eliminated through budget cuts, and education regarding the natural environment and ecosystems is included in "science." About half of the students are in school districts which have adopted science textbooks to wholly or largely replace activity-based curricula and which slight or ignore learning in the natural environment. The only outdoor learning most students have is a very memorable, but brief, two to four day experience as 5th or 6th graders in a mountain environment.

The outdoor, hands-on learning provided by non-formal institutions in the Denver-metro area are offered at suburban parks and open spaces, and at the urban zoo, botanical garden, and museums. These programs are largely available to children whose parents are in upper income levels and seek out the experiences for their children. Eighty-three percent of those interviewed felt that more of these kinds of opportunities were needed for youngsters — especially youngsters of middle and lower socio-economic levels.

We did **not** find informal, hands-on education concerning the natural world delivered **in the outdoor environment frequented by and accessible to children on a daily basis** — either in the suburbs or the inner-city.

Assessing Volunteer and Donor Resources

The second part of our data-gathering process was a survey of a sample of our membership. We wanted to learn about the potential pool of financial contributors and of volunteers (i.e., how many people are willing to do what.) By enlisting the help of 12 members at a real estate office with 10 phone lines, we were able to speak with and get responses from 144 members (6% of our total membership) in one evening.

For the first 500 names on our membership list, we were able to find 291 phone numbers in the phone book. The night we phoned, we were unable to reach about half (due to no answer, busy signals, etc.). In subsequent phoneathons, we've found approximately the same proportions to apply.

When we tallied our responses at the end of the evening, we learned (based on this sample of 500) that through phone calls we could get financial pledges from about 8% of our members and recruit another 10% as volunteers. Those volunteering were split fairly evenly between wanting to work with children and wanting to help out in other ways. Perhaps the most significant discovery we made was that, of the volunteers who wanted to work with kids, the majority were available after work or on Saturdays. If we were to use member-volunteers to deliver the program we'd need to arrange for them to work with children after work or on Saturdays; and if we wanted to deliver the program through schools we would need to find non-Audubon members to supplement our volunteer pool.

Summary

The needs assessment provided hard data that proved valuable in helping us to:

- focus our program planning to address the areas of greatest need,
- learn about the volunteer and donor resources within our organization, and,
- write convincing proposals, acquire grants, and gain support for our project.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROJECT PHONE SCRIPT
October 23, 1984

For numbers NOT reached, mark:

NA = no answer

BSY = busy

NG = number no good (e.g. disconnected,
person no longer at that number, etc.)

INTRODUCE YOURSELF & TELL WHY YOU'RE CALLING

Hello, is _____ there please?
My name is _____, & I'm calling for Denver Audubon Society.
I'd like to tell you about something new in our Audubon chapter, to learn what you think about it,
& to ask for your support. Do you remember reading in the newsletter about our new Urban Environmental
Education Program?

FIND OUT WHAT THEY KNOW ABOUT THE NEW PROGRAM & ESTABLISH RAPPORT

If YES,
listen to what they say:
WE'RE VERY EXCITED ABOUT
IT & WE HOPE YOU CAN HELP
IN MAKING IT A SUCCESS.

If NO,
hasn't read newsletter,
ARE YOU RECEIVING OUR
NEWSLETTER?
If NO, check address &
note errors.
EXPLAIN A FEW FACTS
ABOUT THE PROGRAM.
(see Fact Sheet)

If antagonistic NO,
DO NOT ARGUE, RESPOND (see suggestions below),
THANK THEM FOR SUPPORTING AUDUBON & SAY GOODNIGHT.

...the only reason I'm a member is to get the magazine & I don't want to
know about DAS programs.
Offer to NOTE "MAGAZINE SUBSCRIBER ONLY" on membership list.

... I've had too many Audubon fundraising phone calls. Will you take me off
your list?
THIS IS THE FIRST TIME WE'VE PHONED OUR LOCAL MEMBERS, BUT YOU MAY HAVE BEEN
CALLED BY THE NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS.
Offer to NOTE their REQUEST (i.e. NOT TO BE PHONED BY NATIONAL &/or LOCAL)
on membership list.

ASK FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAM

THERE ARE 3 WAYS YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAM. You can:

- volunteer your time (about 3-4 hours/month).
- share with us your expertise about a subject like herons or about a natural area like Barr Lake.
- make a financial contribution to keep the program going.

CAN YOU HELP US IN ONE OF THESE 3 WAYS?

If TIME,
In the spring we'll be conducting
outdoor activities with Denver
kids--so they can learn about
the insects, birds & other
living things in their neighbor-
hoods. We will need volunteers
to work directly with children
& others to help behind the
scenes. (All you need is a
desire to share your love of
nature with youngsters. We'll
provide training & suggest
activities.)

Would you like to

K - work directly with small
groups of kids?

or

O - help in other ways?
(e.g. preparing materials,
scheduling groups)

Is the best time for you:

W - weekdays?
A - after work?
S - Saturdays?

*MARK ANSWERS ON MEMBERSHIP
LIST

If EXPERTISE,
There are school groups & adults
who have requested lay naturalists
to lead a field trip to a natural
area. For this part of our
education program we need to have
experts who are very familiar
with specific natural areas or who
know alot about a certain topic
& are willing to teach others.
(For example, we'd like to have
experts who could lead a field
trip to Chatfield's heron rookery,
conduct a tour of the geological
formations at Red Rocks, show
folks the birds along the Platte
Greenway or the butterflies along
the Highline Canal.....
There are numerous possibilities!)

What is your area of expertise or
do you know someone who would be
willing to share his/her
knowledge with groups of people?

*FILL OUT A PINK EXPERT FORM.

If FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION,
We have foundation grants to fund
the first year of this program,
but to keep the program running
in the 2nd year we need \$9,000
in contributions from members.
Would you be able to contribute
\$25?

(If no, ... Then could you make
a contribution of \$10?)
We'll greatly appreciate any
amount.

*NOTE AMOUNT OF PLEDGE ON
MEMBERSHIP LIST.

I will be sending you a
postage paid envelope.
(If they say they have one they
just received in the mail, note
"NO ENV." on membership list.)

If NO time or expertise,
I know these do take alot of time
& you don't have time, but we're
surveying members to find those
that do have time.

Can you help us financially?
No gift is too small.

*NOTE AMOUNT OF PLEDGE ON
MEMBERSHIP LIST.

I will be sending you a postage
paid envelope. (If they say
they have one they just received
in the mail, note "NO ENV." on
membership list.)

WRAP UP THE CALL

THANK YOU FOR
VOLUNTEERING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE EDUCATION PROGRAM
OR
PLEDGING A DONATION OF \$ _____
(Review what you have written on the membership list or on pink form to confirm its accuracy.)

WE APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT OF THE EDUCATION PROJECT. IT WILL ENABLE US TO BUILD A PROGRAM
THAT WILL SPARK A LOVE OF NATURE IN MANY KIDS & ADULTS. THANKS FOR TAKING THE TIME TO TALK
WITH ME. I ENJOYED IT. GOOD NIGHT.

If no,
THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO
TALK WITH ME and FOR YOUR INTEREST
IN DENVER AUDUBON SOCIETY.

Designing the Project and Defining the Objectives

- **To describe a program which fills the need.**

Analysis of the Needs Assessment convinced us that the **children in the City and County of Denver** (the central part of the metropolitan area) had the greatest need for the program we envisioned. Central Denver youngsters from middle and lower income families did not have access to after-school programs that explored nature, and the professionals interviewed told us there was a tremendous need for such programs. The Denver Public Schools had switched to science textbooks, and the only opportunities for experiential outdoor learning for all students were two special programs in the mountains and foothills (1 day in third grade and 2 days in fifth grade.) We did not have a clear idea whether one grade level would be better than another, so for the time being, targeted the whole upper-elementary age range.

Since back-to-basics and computers were "in," we decided that training teachers to deliver outdoor hands-on activities would not lead to success in reaching our goal. Even the newly adopted textbook-based science curriculum was getting slighted.

The Education Committee decided that Denver Audubon Society would mobilize and train our own volunteers to deliver outdoor investigative activities to children in schoolyards on weekdays and in neighborhood settings after-school and on Saturdays. By offering our services to both school and non-school sites, we could enable more of our volunteers to participate. Other benefits of collaborating with these institutions were that (1) we would not have to expend energies recruiting and organizing children and (2) we would not have to make large capital outlays for transportation, land or facilities. We could use the yards of our host sites and the vacant lots, alleys, and rights-of-way in their neighborhoods. (Initially we budgeted funds to reimburse volunteers for mileage traveled to get to their sites, but none requested that reimbursement. In addition to volunteering their time, they absorbed their own transportation costs.)

Objectives

With this direction set, the objectives readily fell into place.

The purpose of the Project became: to provide Denver's children with enjoyable neighborhood experiences that will heighten their awareness, expand their knowledge, and develop their respect for the plants and animals living in their urban world.

The children participating in this program will:

- explore their local natural environment, the plants and animals that live there, and the ecological interactions of those plants and animals,
- interact with adults who demonstrate interest in and share enthusiasm for investigating nature out-of-doors.

-
- develop the skills necessary to observe, use scientific tools, record, compare, quantify and analyze data, and apply critical thinking to reach conclusions. (The children are encouraged to apply these skills in other settings too.)

We would emphasize hands-on experiences, **not** facts and information.

Pilot Test

To see if this project design was workable, we planned a pilot test for February-May, 1985. By testing all parts of the project on a small scale for one season, we could identify and iron out any problems before going further. More specifically, we would:

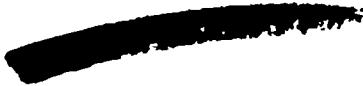
- test procedures for recruiting and training **volunteers**,
- try out a sequence of outdoor **activities** in neighborhood settings in March, April, and May,
- compare the implementation and reception of activities and procedures at several **diverse sites** including schools, community centers, extended day care facilities, and libraries, on weekdays, after school, and Saturdays; and
- evaluate the reception of the activities by **kids** from various neighborhoods and socio-economic backgrounds.

We also wanted to learn, incidentally, how teachers, librarians and youth leaders fit our activities into their existing curriculum and programs and how they extended the activities.


Summary

Using the data from our needs assessment, we made several basic decisions about the focus of the project. We would:

- involve children with the greatest need for opportunities to explore nature: those in the central city, especially from middle and lower income families,
- deliver hands-on experiences through schools and non-school neighborhood sites in the most direct way we could — through trained volunteers,
- aim to achieve three defined objectives; and
- conduct a spring-season pilot test to try out all components of the project on a small scale.



*"Children think they have to go someplace —
like to the mountains or to the site of a TV
special — to see nature. They're not aware of
what's here in their immediate surroundings."
— School Principal*



	February Training Workshop	March	April	May
<u>Envirolopes</u> a nature scavenger hunt, can be done in <u>any</u> weather	x	x		
<u>Litter Critters</u> search for leaf litter and soil animals	x	x	x	
<u>For the Birds</u> investigate feeding behavior of birds (birds must be preconditioned to come to food)	x	x	x	
<u>Isopods</u> find and investigate behavior of pillbugs <u>and</u> sowbugs			x	x
<u>Plant Hunt</u> find as many different kinds of plants as you can in study area and with <u>Environmental Sun Print</u> make a print of your favorite leaf			2nd half x	x
<u>Flower Powder</u> find out how animals move pollen from one flower to another			2nd half x	x
<u>Roots and Shoots</u> find plants with roots like those of two mystery plants			2nd half x	x
<u>Animals in a Grassland</u> find as many different kinds of animals on a lawn as possible			x	x
<u>Ants</u> find out how ants respond to different situations				x

An additional benefit of the OBIS activities is that in most cases the materials and equipment used can be scrounged or made from low cost supplies. This gave many of our behind-the-scenes volunteers, who were not willing to work with kids, opportunities to contribute (making insect nets, donating old sheer curtains and empty film cans, saving milk cartons and coat hangers) and had obvious budgetary implications. It also had merit educationally: the youngsters could see science and scientific tools as things that were easily within their reach. The model for investigating that we gave them was something that they could continue to pursue on their own.

Summary

We decided that the *Outdoor Biology Instructional Strategies* contained the kinds of activities we sought. We could find enough activities that would be appropriate for our spring pilot test and knew that they would work well for our volunteers and children since they had been developed for and field tested extensively with similar people.

	February Training Workshop	March	April	May
<u>Envirolopes</u> a nature scavenger hunt, can be done in <u>any</u> weather	x	x		
<u>Litter Critters</u> search for leaf litter and soil animals	x	x	x	
<u>For the Birds</u> investigate feeding behavior of birds (birds must be preconditioned to come to food)	x	x	x	
<u>Isopods</u> find and investigate behavior of pillbugs <u>and</u> sowbugs			x	x
<u>Plant Hunt</u> find as many different kinds of plants as you can in study area and with <u>Environmental Sun Print</u> make a print of your favorite leaf			2nd half x	x
<u>Flower Powder</u> find out how animals move pollen from one flower to another			2nd half x	x
<u>Roots and Shoots</u> find plants with roots like those of two mystery plants			2nd half x	x
<u>Animals in a Grassland</u> find as many different kinds of animals on a lawn as possible			x	x
<u>Ants</u> find out how ants respond to different situations				x

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Summary

We decided that the *Outdoor Biology Instructional Strategies* contained the kinds of activities we sought. We could find enough activities that would be appropriate for our spring pilot test and knew that they would work well for our volunteers and children since they had been developed for and field tested extensively with similar people.

Selecting Pilot Test Sites and Gaining Their Participation

- To identify host sites that would meet our criteria and enable us to achieve the goals of the pilot test.
- To develop a cooperative, productive relationship with host site staffs and to facilitate the acceptance and smooth-running of the program.

The debut of our Urban Education Project was the pilot test. To lay the ground-work for future success, it was essential for us to get off to a positive start. For this reason, we chose our pilot test sites very carefully using the following criteria:

1. We wanted to make sure that our activities would work in the **various kinds of "typical" central city neighborhoods**. So, we made sure that we had pilot sites in neighborhoods with:
 - long-established, well-tended yards with very few vacant lots or weedy-niches in alleys,
 - high-density housing, businesses, and busy streets (typically these locales had weedy areas in vacant lots or around unoccupied buildings); and
 - newer subdivisions that typically had no vacant lots amid the residences, but frequently had an adjacent open-space or undeveloped area.
2. In order to determine whether our program would interest and work with a full range of children, we had to select sites representing a **socio-economic diversity**. The staffs at the school district's central administrative offices, the city's community relations commission and planning office, and the United Way were helpful in providing us with demographics for different neighborhoods and in pointing out prime areas for our program. We learned about readily available indicators. (e.g. The State sets guidelines for **free** school lunch using poverty-level income figures, so any student getting free lunches is from a family living at or below poverty level.) The use of such indicators enabled us to gather data about participants without imposing burdensome tasks on the sites.
3. The same agency staff members mentioned in #2 helped us identify **solid, well-organized and respected sites**. They were, for example, able to steer us away from a community center that had a conflict raging between the Board and Executive Director and from another site that was having serious financial difficulties. We did not want our pilot to be affected by unrelated internal problems of host sites but instead wanted to try out the project in the best possible situations.

4. We needed the **interest, support and cooperation of the host site staff**. Here again we relied on the recommendations of others, but we could also gauge these qualities for ourselves during our initial meeting at each potential host site.

Using information from the Needs Assessment, the Project Director put together an array of potential pilot sites that seemed to meet our criteria. Once the Education Committee had approved the list of sites, the Project Director set up individual meetings with the person in charge of each site. In some cases she met first with the primary administrator who then arranged for a meeting with the teachers or staff members directly responsible for the children. In other cases, the administrator in charge asked that we all meet together right from the beginning. We have found both formats acceptable, but feel it's essential to involve **both** administrators and teaching staff. The purpose of these meetings was to:

- Explain the objectives of our program and plans for the spring pilot test,
- learn more about their sites' facility, clientele, interests,
- discuss the sites' preferences regarding *age/grade* level of participating children, find out the best times to schedule outdoor activities, and learn about the site's on-going programs/curriculum so we could try to mesh our activities with their existing programs; and
- reach a tentative agreement on their participation in the pilot test.

The majority of these meetings were with people we had interviewed during the needs assessment. We had already established some rapport with them, and this contact served as a welcome return visit and report on our progress. For the new people, we were able to break the ice by mentioning the name of the person who had referred us to them. We found these details important, because they helped us develop credibility.

We also found that it is important for **one** person to be the on-going **contact for each site**. For us, that person was the Project Director. It could just as well have been a dependable, well-organized volunteer.

Schools and community organizations, in our experience, are skeptical about volunteers and volunteer-delivered programs. They have had experiences where past programs have never materialized because of lack of follow-through on the part of the volunteers or because the result has been negative due to lack of quality control.

In some cases, potential host sites are concerned about the division of labor (exactly what we expect of them and whether they can fulfill those expectations) and about whether this new program will take away from existing programs.

When these concerns are addressed straightforwardly in the initial planning stages, we have been able to build much more constructive programs and cooperative relationships with host sites.

In every case, we reiterated the arrangements in writing and asked the host sites to formalize their commitment in writing too. For the pilot, we asked each site to send us a letter confirming their participation in the spring pilot test. Then we sent them a letter cementing our plans and setting forth the pilot schedule. (In subsequent years, we used a Memo of Agreement which both parties sign. See Appendix C.)



DENVER AUDUBON SOCIETY

1720 Race Street Denver, Colorado 80206 (303) 399-3219

December 28, 1984

As 1984 comes to a close, I wanted to write to thank you for your cooperation and let you know our timeline for the coming year.

It's always a challenge to design a new program that is manageable yet meets the needs of all those involved. I sincerely appreciate the time you spent with me this fall discussing our new program and ways in which we could work together. Your cooperation has enabled us to create a better program. Thank you also for getting to us a letter of commitment regarding the spring pilot in time for us to meet our grant proposal deadline.

We definitely plan to pilot our program with your children this spring. For your site, we have allocated:

4-5 volunteers to work with 2 classes of 4th graders, with the 2 classes scheduled back-to-back

We have decided to "start small" and limit the number of children in the pilot. Assuming our pilot test is a success, we will be glad to discuss the feasibility of increasing the number of participants at your site in the fall.

Our schedule for the pilot test is enclosed. You will notice that by February 25 we will be able to tell you the names of the trained volunteers that will be working with you. Please plan to spend 1 hour sometime between February 25 and March 8 meeting with them. The purposes of this meeting are:

- to schedule the dates the volunteers will come and work with your children
- to select the activities they will do
- to introduce the volunteers to your Site and allow you to get to know one another

We will phone you February 25 (or 26) to set up this planning meeting.

I look forward to working with you in 1985 and wish you a Happy New Year!

Sincerely,

Karen Hollweg

Karen S. Hollweg
Education Project Director

SCHEDULE FOR 1985 PILOT TEST

January	Confirm volunteer commitments and recruit additional volunteers, as necessary. Order materials and equipment.
February	Week of the 18th - Volunteer Training Workshops By February 25 - Assign volunteers to sites and set date for planning meetings at each site. February 25 - March 8 - Volunteer Teams will meet with contact people at host sites to schedule 3 spring visits (March-May) and select activities.
March, April, May	Volunteers will conduct 3 outdoor activities (approximately one hour each) with children on scheduled dates.
June	Final evaluation of pilot test.

SITES FOR PILOT TEST (SPRING 1985)

Contact Person	Participating Children							Volunteers	
	Number in Pilot	Grade/Age	Potential Number at Site	Racial Make-up	Median Income	% Families Below Poverty Level	Number	Time Needed	
SCHOOLS									
McKinley-Thatcher Elementary 1235 S. Grant Denver 80210	Rosie Dickens Principal 777-8816	55	3rd or 5th	168	51% Anglo/Other 22% Black 27% Hispanic	\$10,500*	28%*	4	2 classes scheduled back-to-back during school day
Meln Elementary 3185 S. Willow Court Denver 80231	Jim Tracy Principal 751-3157	60	5th	180	61% Anglo/Other 42% Black 3% Hispanic	\$23,000*	20%	4	2 classes scheduled back-to-back during school day
McGlowe Elementary 4700 Crown Boulevard Denver 80239	Melvin Rodie Principal 373-5080	55	4th	540	23% Anglo/Other 55% Black 12% Hispanic	\$21,000*	9%*	4-5	2 classes scheduled back-to-back during school day
LIBRARIES									
Park Hill Branch 4705 Montview Boulevard Denver 80207	Judy Stovall 322-3631	15	3rd-4th	100	82% Anglo/Other* 14% Black 5% Hispanic	\$19,000*	10%*	2	10-11 a.m. Sat.
Ford Warren Branch 2825 High Street Denver 80205	Mildred Hall 294-0907	15	3rd-4th	100	11% Anglo/Other* 81% Black 8% Hispanic	\$5,800*	42%*	2	10-11 a.m. Sat.
AFTER SCHOOL DAY CARE									
G/plan Extended Day 2949 California Denver 80205 (a Denver Public School pilot facility)	Mary Pat Howe & Keith Stevens 297-0313	10	5th-6th	178	58% Anglo/Other 29% Black 13% Hispanic	unknown	12%	2	4:15-5:15 p.m. weekdays
Armstrong Child Development Center 2820 Harrison Denver 80205 (a non-profit facility)	Shirley Armstrong 377-7141	10	3rd-6th	more in summer time	100% Black	\$14,500*	12%*	2	4-5 p.m. weekdays (prefers April)
COMMUNITY CENTERS									
Curtis Park Community Center 929 29th Street Denver 80205	James Willis & Sally Gerdee 295-2399	15	8-12 yr. olds	hundreds	40% Black 60% Hispanic	\$5,000	100%	2	4:30-5:30 p.m. weekdays
Aurora Community Center 1212 Marlposa Denver 80204	Adolpho Gomez & Gene Gilron 534-7616	15	3rd-6th	over 2,000	30% Anglo/Other and Black 70% Hispanic	\$8,000	47%*	2	10-11 a.m. Sat.

* Source: City and County of Denver's 1980 Neighborhood Census Project
 † Source: Denver Data, 2nd Edition, Denver Planning Office

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Summary

We selected pilot test sites to include:

- a diversity of habitat types,
- a range of socio-economic, cultural and racial make-ups,
- a variety of grade/age combinations; and
- schools and non-school facilities with solid reputations and interested staffs committed to the Urban Education Project.

By meeting with each site to plan for its participation we could tailor the program to each situation and address individual concerns.

R

ecruiting and Training Volunteers

- **To organize a system for recruiting and activating volunteers.**
- **To place volunteers in positions they enjoy and find satisfying.**
- **To give the volunteers the training and support needed to be successful.**

We already had the names of many potential volunteers from the phone calls that were made as part of the needs assessment. During the intervening months we also had people respond to newsletter articles and pitches made at our monthly meetings. The project staff kept track of the names, addresses, phone numbers and interests of each prospect (on 4" x 6" cards) and now that we were ready to involve many more people, we contacted them.

Activating Volunteers

Everyone received a letter up-dating them on our progress and giving them 2 options for getting involved. Job descriptions specified the types of commitments we were asking them to make, and a form gave them a mechanism for responding. The form also gave us much information about their interests, preferences and schedule constraints. This information allowed us to adapt the program schedule to include as many volunteers as possible.



DENVER AUDUBON SOCIETY

1720 Race Street Denver, Colorado 80206
399-2076 or 399-3219

Janu , 1985

To: Education Project Volunteers
From: Karen Hollweg, Project Director
Topic: Opportunities for Getting Involved in 1985

Thanks to you and others like you, response to our new Urban Education Project this fall has been tremendous. Scores of members have contributed money to sustain the project, and over 60 members have volunteered their time to work with kids or help behind the scenes.

We're writing to you because you've expressed an interest in the program. When we last communicated, we were still planning the education program and making arrangements for our 1985 pilot test. Now we're ready to roll, and we want to enlist your full participation in one of two specific ways.

Option 1, working with youngsters: This spring, trained volunteers will begin exploring the plants and animals in Denver neighborhoods with small groups of children. Five 7 to 12 year-olds and their Audubon guide will, for example, search for small animals living in the soil, find out how insects move pollen from one flower to another, and investigate the feeding behavior of birds. The groups will set out from a variety of schools, after-school day care facilities, libraries and community centers which are cooperating in our 1985 pilot test. Both children and volunteers are bound to make some fascinating discoveries and increase their understanding of nature through these adventures. (See detail's on enclosed yellow sheet.)

Option 2, putting together the tools and supplies needed to conduct these explorations: Some members have told us that they don't relish the thought of working with kids. If you're in that group, we need your help too. Lots of behind-the-scenes preparations have just begun. We need to assemble and organize the strainers, containers, and other learning materials that each group will use as they explore their surroundings. (See blue sheet for details.)

Please let us know which opportunity you'd like to pursue by filling out and mailing to us the enclosed VOLUNTEER INFORMATION FORM. We're counting on your participation. Our preliminary surveys have shown that we have more volunteers available to work with kids on Saturdays than on weekdays. If your schedule is somewhat flexible and you could participate at either time, please note that on your form.

We hope you'll start out the New Year by committing 3-4 hours/month to the Education Project. In return, we can guarantee you some enjoyable times working with fellow Auduboners and the sense of satisfaction that comes from contributing to the education of youth and the future of our community.

I look forward to working with you in 1985!

Karen

NATURE GUIDES will work directly with groups of 5-7 children (aged 7-12 years) conducting learning activities specifically selected for use in Denver neighborhoods.

What qualifications/background do I need to become a Nature Guide? The most important qualifications are a love of the natural world and a desire to help kids discover the joys of nature by exploring with them the living things in their own neighborhoods. No previous experience in biology and/or teaching is necessary.

The activities we'll be using are simple and enjoyable, and any information necessary to lead them will be provided. You'll be exploring and discovering neighborhood plants and animals with the children...discovering how many different kinds of insects you can find, watching how birds or sow bugs react to different situations, looking for plants with unusually shaped leaves.

What commitment do I need to make? We ask you to volunteer a minimum of 3-4 hours/month from February through June. We need people during weekdays, after work (about 4-5:30 p.m.), and Saturday mornings. When you choose to volunteer time is up to you. All we ask is that once you have agreed to participate, you honor your commitment.

How will I know what to do? We will conduct Training Workshops the week of February 18. Each guide will be expected to participate in one of the workshops. We'll conduct one during the week and one on Saturday in an attempt to accommodate everyone's schedule.

At the Workshop you'll do some of the activities and have chances to explore living things in a typical Denver neighborhood, while becoming familiar with the program's objectives. In addition, there will be opportunities to gain ideas about working with small groups and managing equipment/materials outdoors. You'll also get to know the other volunteers you'll be working with.

Between February 25 and March 8 you will have a planning session at your pilot site. Working with the host staff member(s) and the other volunteer(s) who'll be serving that site, you'll schedule activities for the spring and learn about the site and the children there.

When and where will I be expected to work with children? We have set up 9 pilot test sites throughout Denver. The adults at each of these are genuinely excited about the prospect of Audubon volunteers taking their children outdoors to explore the plants and animals in their immediate surroundings. The chart on the back of this page lists the sites, describes the children we'll work with, and shows the times and numbers of volunteers needed.

You will have an opportunity to team up with other compatible volunteers, identify the sites you prefer, and work out a schedule that is agreeable for you and the host site. In most cases, you'll return to the same site 3 times -- once in March, once in April, and once in May.

What happens in June? In June, we'll expect all guides to attend a follow-up meeting. At this session, you'll have a chance to compare your results with those of other volunteers, help us evaluate the program and make suggestions for improving it.

Some pilot sites have already asked us if volunteers will be able to continue these activities in the summer. There will undoubtedly be opportunities for those who wish to continue working with groups of children after our pilot test is completed to do so.

Summary of Dates and Commitments

Feb. 16-23 Training Workshops - Participate in one 3-hour session.
Feb. 25-March 8 Planning Sessions - Each team schedules a 1 hour meeting at their pilot site.
March, April, May Each team conducts 3 activities with kids as scheduled at site (1 activity/month).
June Follow-up Meetings - Participate in one 2-hour session.



MATERIALS ASSISTANTS - will prepare the instructional materials and tools for the children to use in their explorations.

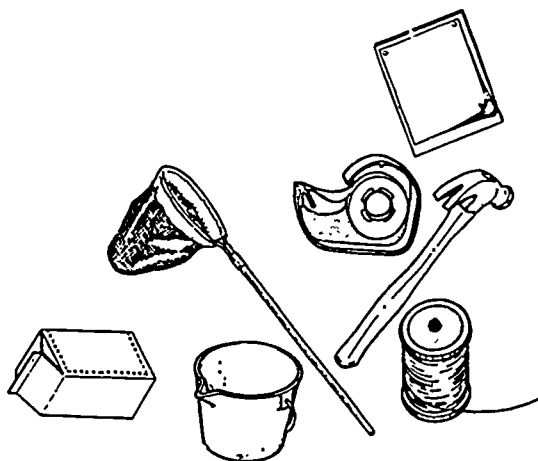
What qualifications do I need to become a Materials Assistant? The most important qualification is a desire to work on the Education Project and help it succeed. We can use people who are handy with tools (to cut wire, drill holes, make handles for nets, etc.), enjoy sewing (to make insect nets), have some extra space (to collect milk cartons and other containers), or enjoy organizing (to package and label sets of materials).

How will I know what to do? We'll introduce you to the activities the children will be doing and will provide patterns and directions for equipment and materials that need to be made.

What commitment do I need to make? We ask you to volunteer a minimum of 3-4 hours per month from February through June. We welcome people who can work on materials days, evenings and/or weekends -- anytime you choose. All we ask is that once you have agreed to participate, you honor your commitment.

When and where will I be expected to work? Some members have volunteered to work in their own homes; others want to come to the office and work on a project with a group of folks. We need both. When you're part of a group we'll try to schedule the working sessions at a time that's convenient for everyone -- e.g. one afternoon, evening, or morning each month from February through June.

If, in addition, you'd like to observe a group of children using the materials you've prepared, we'll be happy to help you arrange that.



VOLUNTEER INFORMATION FORM

Please complete & mail this form to
DENVER AUDUBON SOCIETY
URBAN EDUCATION PROJECT
1720 Race
Denver, CO 80206
by January 15, 1985

Name _____ Phone number(s) _____ Best time(s) to call _____
Address _____ (home) _____
_____ (work) _____

I want to volunteer 3-4 hours/month as a

- Nature Guide. I understand I will be expected to participate in a February Training Workshop, a February or March Planning Session, and a June follow-up meeting, and to conduct 3 neighborhood activities with children (March-May).
- Materials Assistant. I will work at the Audubon office or at home (as I have indicated below) to prepare materials for children to use as they explore their neighborhood.
- I'm not sure, but I definitely want to get involved. Please phone me to discuss the options.

OPTION 1: NATURE GUIDE
(See job description on yellow sheet.)

Best time(s) for me to volunteer:
(If your schedule is flexible and more than one time is possible, please note all possibilities.)

- weekday (early afternoon)
- after work (about 4:5-30 p.m.)
- Saturday (about 10-11 a.m.)

I understand that after the Training Workshop, volunteers will form teams and select pilot sites. If you have a strong preference and/or could only work at one of the sites listed, please indicate your preference here:

Training Workshops will be scheduled for the week of February 18. Each volunteer will be expected to attend one workshop. To help us in scheduling these workshops so that they're accessible to everyone, please check all possible dates on which you could attend a workshop:

	9-12 AM	1-4 PM
Feb. 16 Sat	___	___
Feb. 18 Mon	___	___
Feb. 19 Tues	___	___
Feb. 20 Wed	___	___
Feb. 21 Thur	___	___
Feb. 22 Fri	___	___
Feb. 23 Sat	___	___

We will try to select workshop dates that make it possible for everyone to attend one. Final dates will be announced the first week in February.

OPTION 2: MATERIALS ASSISTANT
(See job description on blue sheet.)

I could attend meetings on:

- weekdays
Please circle
Best days: M T W T F
- evenings
Please circle
Best days: M T W T F
- Saturday mornings

I prefer to work on materials at home

I would be glad to:

- sew insect nets
- drill holes in plastic and wood
- construct handles for nets, pond scooping tools, etc.
- package up sets of materials
- serve as a collecting point and have members bring materials (such as milk cartons, plastic containers, coat hangers) to my home for temporary storage.

If you have any experiences and/or skills related to this project that you'd like to tell us about before the Training Workshop, please note them on the back of this form.



DENVER AUDUBON SOCIETY

1720 Race Street

Denver, Colorado 80206

(303) 399-3219

February 6, 1985

We're happy to have you working with us as a Nature Guide this spring! I've been making final arrangements with the pilot test sites, and the teachers and program directors there are as excited as I am about the wonderful opportunities their kids will have to investigate neighborhood plants and animals with you.

We have finalized plans for the training workshops and are expecting you to participate in the one scheduled for:

Saturday, February 23
1 - 4 PM
at the Auraria Community Center
1212 Mariposa
(5 blocks west of Speer Boulevard)

If you have a problem with this time or date please phone me as soon as possible, and we'll try to accommodate you in the other workshop.

At the training session we'll spend most of our time outdoors, doing activities and becoming familiar with the materials. So, please dress warmly and casually, and be prepared to poke around in the soil and explore in the park. You'll also get to know the other volunteers (I think it's a wonderful group of folks!) and make some initial decisions about when and where you and your teammate(s) will be working with children. Please bring your personal schedule/calendar so that you'll be able to agree on a meeting date(s) with your team.

If you have any questions or concerns prior to the workshop, please call me at the office (399-2076).

I'm really looking forward to the 20th and am confident that this spring's experience will be an educational and rewarding one for all of us.

See you soon!

Karen Hollweg
Education Project Director

P.S. We plan to hold the workshop come rain or shine, snow or cold. But if there's a big storm and it's impossible to travel, we'll reschedule the workshop for February 27 or March 2. So please save one of those dates on your calendar, just in case.

Our philosophy of learning through hands-on experiences applies to our volunteer training as much as it does to our program for children. So, the volunteers spent a full two hours outdoors doing the activities they would later conduct with children. The activities were led by teachers experienced in investigative learning, OBIS activities, and conducting workshops for adults and children. By participating in each activity from start to finish as a learner, the volunteers had opportunities to experience the need for time to search, the value of finding and observing with a partner, the thrill of discovering and figuring out previously unobserved phenomena, the importance of the small group discussions, and the role of the person leading the group. When we ask volunteers to evaluate their training, the majority point to "actually doing the activities" as the parts of the workshops that they find most worthwhile.



DENVER AUDUBON SOCIETY

1720 Race Street

Denver, Colorado 80206

(303) 399-3219

February 6, 1985

We're happy to have you working with us as a Nature Guide this spring! I've been making final arrangements with the pilot test sites, and the teachers and program directors there are as excited as I am about the wonderful opportunities their kids will have to investigate neighborhood plants and animals with you.

We have finalized plans for the training workshops and are expecting you to participate in the one scheduled for:

Saturday, February 23
1 - 4 PM
at the Auraria Community Center
1212 Mariposa
(5 blocks west of Speer Boulevard)

If you have a problem with this time or date please phone me as soon as possible, and we'll try to accommodate you in the other workshop.

At the training session we'll spend most of our time outdoors, doing activities and becoming familiar with the materials. So, please dress warmly and casually, and be prepared to poke around in the soil and explore in the park. You'll also get to know the other volunteers (I think it's a wonderful group of folks!) and make some initial decisions about when and where you and your teammate(s) will be working with children. Please bring your personal schedule/calendar so that you'll be able to agree on a meeting date(s) with your team.

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Each volunteer received a set of materials: a DAS name tag, a magnifying lens on a string necklace, and a 2-pocket portfolio with a set of information sheets about the program and their responsibilities on the left side and on the other side, a list of spring activities and a full set of OBIS activity cards for the season. (A copy of the materials included in the volunteer's portfolio appears in Appendix B.)

The workshops were held at pilot sites; so by the end of the session, the volunteers were convinced that at least three of the activities worked at that site, and as long as their site was similar, would work there too. They had seen how two experienced teachers conducted the activities, and had in-hand directions for conducting each of the spring activities.

The workshop gives the volunteers a vivid picture of the program and the role they are expected to fill. Occasionally, volunteers tell us at this point that they don't feel comfortable filling that role and would rather work behind-the-scenes. And once or twice we've also spotted volunteers who don't seem to have the skills necessary to guide children in hands-on investigations, and have counseled them into other volunteer jobs. Both the program and the volunteers benefit from these mid-course corrections.

The next step was to assemble teams of volunteers and to arrange a meeting with each team at its assigned site. While there, the team and project director would:

- meet with the site staff,
- get to know the facility and hear about the children,
- agree on dates and times for each activity and for a rain-date,
- scout the area to determine which specific activities from their portfolio of activities would work best; and
- locate the best areas for doing the activity.

By the end of this planning meeting, each volunteer team and site knew their responsibilities and was ready to start conducting activities with children. (See Appendix C for Planning Meeting Agenda.)

Summary

Our volunteer recruitment process included 2 stages: advertising and collecting the names, addresses and phone numbers of potential volunteers, and asking these prospects to submit a written form indicating their commitment and decision regarding the role they wanted to fill based on job descriptions.

Volunteers who wanted to work with children had to attend a three-hour training workshop and a 45 to 60 minute planning session at a pilot test site.

The training procedures for Materials Assistant volunteers are described in the following section.

SITES FOR PILOT TEST (SPRING 1985)

	Contact Person	Participating Children				% Families Below Poverty Level	Volunteers/Time
		Number in Pilot	Grade/Age	Racial Make-up	Median Income		
SCHOOLS							
McKinley-Thatcher Elementary 1235 S. Grant Denver 80210	Rorie Dickens Principal 777-8816	26	Mrs. Yolanda Montoya's 4th - 5th	51% Anglo/Other 22% Black	\$10,500*	28%*	March 27, April 24, May 15; 12:30-3 pm Levonne Axford, Cleo Bloomquist, Kathi Demarest, Ales Peters
		26	Mrs. Ruth Hilliard's 6th	27% Hispanic			
Holm Elementary 3185 S. Willow Court Denver 80231	Jim Tracy, Principal Dave Thompson, Asst. 751-3157	30	Mrs. Julie Bunker's 5th	61% Anglo/Other 42% Black	\$23,000*	20%	March 28, April 11, May 9; 10:15 am - 12:15 pm Jennefer Ball, Pam Bent, Kathy Bollhoefer, Vivian Reed
		30	Mrs. Elaine Lindsey's 5th	3% Hispanic			
McGlone Elementary 4700 Crown Boulevard Denver 80239	Melvin Rodie, Principal Ruth Lane, Asst. 373-5000	27	Margaret Pacheco - 4th	23% Anglo/Other 55% Black	\$21,000*	9%*	April 16, 30; May 14; 12:30-3 pm Anne Halverson, Ukling Kingery, Marilyn Stokes, Eleanor Weingast
		28	Louise Ruskamp - 4th	12% Hispanic			
LIBRARIES							
Park Hill Branch 4705 Montview Boulevard Denver 80207	Judy Stovall 322-3631	15	3rd-4th	82% Anglo/Other+ 14% Black 5% Hispanic	\$19,000*	10%*	April 13, 27; May 11; 10:30-12:30 am (Sat.) Herbert Trettell, Laurie Duke, Ben Duke
Ford Warren Branch 2825 High Street Denver 80205	Mildred Hall 294-0907	15	3rd-4th	11% Anglo/Other+ 81% Black 8% Hispanic	\$5,800*	42%*	March 23, April 27, May 18; 11 am - 12 noon (Sat.) Steve Bernard & Tom Hardy
AFTER SCHOOL DAY CARE							
Gilpin Extended Day 2949 California Denver 80205 (a Denver Public School pilot facility)	Mary Pat Howe & Keith Stevens 297-0313	8	5th-6th	58% Anglo/Other 29% Black 13% Hispanic	unknown	12%	March 8 - May 31 (NOT April 5) (Fridays) 4:14-5:15 pm Sue Walter & Donna Allan
Armstrong Child Development Center 2820 Harrison Denver 80205 (a non-profit facility)	Shirley Armstrong 377-7141	10	3rd-6th	100% Black	\$14,500*	12%*	4-5 pm weekdays (prefers April) Barbara Bazler & Michelle Foss
COMMUNITY CENTERS							
Curtis Park Community Center 929 29th Street Denver 80205	James Willis & Sally Gerdes 295-2399	15	8-12 y.o. olds	40% Black 60% Hispanic	\$5,000	100%	April 10, 17, 24, Wednesdays 4:30-5:30 pm Della Bunney & Lynn Wohlfeld
Auraria Community Center 1212 Mariposa Denver 80204	Adolpho Gomez & Gene Giron 534-7614	15	3rd-6th	30% Anglo/Other and Black 70% Hispanic	\$8,000	47%*	April 27, May 4, May 11 10:30-11:30 am (Saturdays) Maren Reid, Jerry Besser, Eileen Stark

* Source: City and County of Denver's 1980 Neighborhood Census Project
+ Source: Denver Data, 2nd Edition, Denver Planning Office

A

sembling Materials and Supplies

- To identify and acquire instructional materials at the lowest possible cost.
- To enable volunteers to package and circulate the materials.

Before involving volunteers in the preparation of materials, we had to decide exactly what materials we needed. A few of us read carefully each of the activities selected for the spring pilot test and made a list of everything a volunteer and six children would need to do each activity. Then each list was checked for completeness by a second person.

Next we made a master chart of items that needed to be purchased, scrounged, and handmade for each of the spring activities. By comparing costs, we found that some items (e.g., magnifying lenses and trowels) could be purchased most cheaply from Delta Education, Inc., while others (e.g. medicine droppers) were less expensive at the local supermarket. A few things, like *OBIS Lawn Guides*, had to be ordered directly from the publisher. When there was a choice of purchasing ready-made materials or having volunteers make them from scrounged or purchased stuff, we opted for the handmade option. In the case of insect nets, the financial benefits were very obvious: ready-made \$7.12 + shipping, handmade \$1.08 each.

To amass the materials for these handmade items, we turned to our members once again via newsletter ads and articles.



GREAT MOTIVATION FOR SPRING CLEANING

You probably have some valuable old stuff accumulating in your garage or cupboards, and now's the perfect time to clean it out and contribute it to our Education Project!

Eight members have generously volunteered their time and skills to make insect nets for the 200 kids participating in our outdoor activities this spring. But before they can begin sewing nets and attaching handles, here's what they need from you: old sheer or net curtains, wire coat hangers, and wooden handles 2 or more feet long.

We also need clean, empty half-gallon cardboard milk cartons and old white or pastel solid-colored sheets.

Please clean out your cupboards! And if you find any of the good stuff listed above, please phone the office, 399-2076 or 399-3218, and ask for Patti or Karen so we can arrange to get the materials to the net-making volunteers.

We'll appreciate it and so will the kids!

Our members have never let us down! When our supply of sheer curtains, coat hangers, or milk cartons runs low, we just advertise our needs. (We purchase wooden dowels for net handles, because recycled broom handles seem to be rare.)

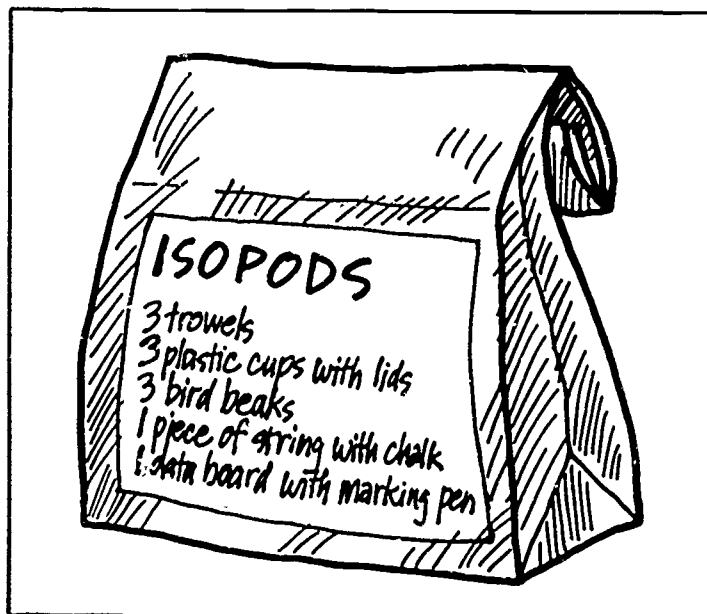
Once the raw materials had been collected, we began phoning volunteers who'd indicated a willingness to construct materials (see Volunteer Information Form, page 25). In working with our materials-volunteers we practice the same basic principles that guide our recruitment and training of kid-volunteers:

- we ask for their participation by phone in a simple and direct way, giving them a choice of (usually two) tasks;
- we provide appropriate training and support to enable success; and
- we give volunteers opportunities to select a time and place to work that's most convenient for them.

For example, a woman caring for a home-bound aunt may choose to sew bags for insect nets at home during the day; while a couple of young professionals may want to get together in the evening to build observation trays out of recycled milk cartons. In the first case, someone will have to deliver the materials to the woman's home; in the second, one of the volunteers can pick up everything from our central office on his way home from work. In both cases, we provide a finished sample of the item to be constructed, printed directions from the OBIS activity, and a phone number for questions. We also agree on a date for completion of the items and determine how we will get them back.

We've learned **not to assume** we know what people want to do, but to ask and listen to what they tell us. A very bright young person who has a hectic schedule and much responsibility at work may choose the most mundane, repetitive task and enjoy doing it. On the other hand, someone who has performed simple tasks in the past may be capable and ready to take on something more complex.

The final step in materials preparation is to put together the "kit" which includes everything a volunteer will need to do the activity with six children. A "kit" is a bag or box — any container that is the correct size to hold everything — with a label on the side that lists the contents.



Once we have all the parts ready, the volunteer leader or staff member in charge schedules two to three volunteers to come to the office to assemble the kits. By its very nature, this is a more social, group activity which, in our case, is done weekday mornings by a group of retired people and homemakers. But it might equally well be taken over by high school students after school or employed people in the evenings.

Our materials-volunteers have tended to become specialists — getting to know what's in the "Isopod" and "Ants" kits and sticking with the preparation of them, or learning a good way to construct the rims and handles for insect nets and wanting to continue doing that job. Leaders have emerged and have become the supervisors and quality control people for their working groups.

Re-supplying the Kits

Once the kits are used and returned to the office, they need to be checked. Consumable items and damaged or missing items must be re-supplied. This task is also performed by materials-volunteers in the office, as described above.

To facilitate all this, seven sets of metal shelves line the walls of our office, and a conference table and chairs sit in the middle. Since we're on the second floor, the kid-volunteers or delivery volunteers get a lot of exercise when they come to check out or return kits. Ideally, the office would be on the first floor with a door that opened onto a parking space.

This work and storage area is also the repository for our supply of OBIS cards. Prior to the training workshops for kid-volunteers, materials-volunteers collate the OBIS cards and other hand-outs and assemble the two-pocket portfolios for each kid-volunteer (See Appendix B). They also serve as librarians, checking out the portfolios at the workshops and checking them in at the end of the season.

Summary

Packets of printed materials for kid-volunteers and kits of materials for children to use in doing each activity are assembled by materials-volunteers in our office. By scrounging and using volunteers to make many items, and by purchasing other essentials from the least expensive supplier, we have been able to keep our materials costs to a minimum.

Conducting the Pilot Test and Evaluating the Results

-
- **To find out how the spring program we had put together would work from the perspectives of children, host sites, volunteers.**

As March arrived and all the pieces of our Project started to fall into place, it was hard to tell whether excitement or nervousness was the dominant emotion. Certainly both were evident as we got set to launch our experiment.

The week before our agreed on starting date, we mailed each host site the blank nametags for their children and a list of suggestions to use in preparing the nametags and in introducing the children to the first activity (See Appendix C). We also checked with each team to make sure that all team members were planning to conduct the same activity — one that would be appropriate for the predicted weather conditions. Then we double checked to make sure that we had the kits and magnifying lenses ready for each team. (The central coordination was done by the Project Director, but volunteers helped with the phoning and checking.)

On the date scheduled for the first activity, the volunteers arrived at their site early. Most teams decided to gather ½ hour early. They checked in at the main office and let the site staff know that they'd be out getting things ready. In the next 20 minutes, the volunteers:

- found good spots where the day's activity could be done, and made sure they had enough areas so that each volunteer and group of six children could have a separate territory in which to do the activity. (We have found that the success of each activity depends on having **enough natural resources** — e.g. an active ant hill for each pair of children, or enough damp leaves for the youngsters to search through, or at least three or four kinds of plants with different flowers — and having a **well-defined working area** for "my six kids" so that I can easily keep an eye on them and call them together when needed, yet allow them to freely explore and investigate with their partner.)
- each got their kit, checked the materials inside and reviewed how each item was used in the activity.
- each took the set of six magnifying lenses for their youngsters.

Then the volunteer team proceeded to the appointed place and met their children. Following introductions, each volunteer took his/her group to a separate area and, sitting in a small circle, got started. Each student attached his nametag to his magnifying lens necklace and each volunteer wore a nametag, so learning names was easy. The volunteers conducted the activity according to the OBIS card and the guidelines in their portfolios.

The host site staff member in charge circulated from group to group observing and participating in the activity. We've found that she rarely, if ever, has to exercise her role as disciplinarian, because the children are so interested and involved in the activity. And in the last three years, we only know of a few cases where the staff has had to take care of a minor first aid problem. We feel it is essential to have the site's paid staff available to handle such first aid problems because the staff members are familiar with the rules and regulations for their particular agency and they know the children well. In addition to the required responsibilities of disciplinarian and first aid/emergency person, the site staff members circulate doing any or all of the following:

- thinking of appropriate follow-up activities based on the children's discoveries and reactions to the activity.
- evaluating the program and the children's response to it (See evaluation form in Appendix D).
- notifying each volunteer when there is ten minutes left, so he/she has time to conclude the discussion and get the children to clean up.


When the group completed the day's activity, they returned to the designated place, turned in their magnifying lenses (so they'd be ready to use again for the next activity), and said goodbye to their volunteer leader.

We've found that the best time to get feedback from the volunteers is immediately following each activity. Everything's fresh in their minds. By filling out an evaluation form together, the teammates get a chance to compare their experiences, share any frustrations, and pick up ideas from one another. Within 15 or 20 minutes, the group has reached closure, agreed on the activity they will do next time, and loaded the kits into someone's car (for return to the office).


Evaluating the Pilot Test

To enable us to evaluate the pilot test, we collected data from six perspectives. As previously mentioned, the **kid-volunteers** (1) and **host site staff members** (2) filled out a form to assess each activity. A third form was used by **Education Committee members** (3) to record the observations they made while watching an activity in progress. (The form helped us determine whether the children, volunteers and staff members were doing the kinds of things we had expected during the activities.)

At the end of the spring activities, we got feedback from the **children** (4) by way of a simple questionnaire or from the one-paragraph compositions they wrote telling what they thought of the program. A half-hour **meeting with the administrator and the participating staff member(s) at each host site** (5) gave us a chance to discuss their views of the program's strengths and weaknesses and to recommend changes. And finally, we brought the **kid-volunteers and the materials-volunteers** together for a wrap-up **celebration and evaluation meeting** (6). In small groups we discussed their recommendations, and individually, they filled out forms indicating what they'd "like to do next." Appendix D contains copies of all the forms and protocols used in this assessment.



"The Audubon volunteers are great! They really get the children involved in digging, gathering, catching, and watching — and the students love learning outdoors."
— 4th Grade Teacher



Two other kinds of communication went on during the pilot test that we think were important. We mailed messages to the kid-volunteers twice to report on the experiences of teams at several sites, and to let them know how things were going in general. These mailings also contained additional details about materials and tips we'd learned as we gained experience with some of the activities. We tried to reiterate the value of their input and remind them that they were part of a larger effort. In addition, we informed Audubon members of our efforts via the monthly newsletter. Photographs showing kids and volunteers in action made the project real. By keeping our members apprised of our monthly progress, we laid the groundwork for more members to become involved as volunteers and financial supporters.

All this may strike you as a lot of forms, meetings, and mailings, but we felt it was important to give everyone involved chances to express their views about the program both verbally and in writing. By carefully monitoring the pilot test, we were able to identify some problems before they festered, clarify our expectations, provide assistance as needed, and insure a more positive outcome. Finally, we compiled all the data and summarized the results in a report.

After reading and reflecting on this report, the Education Committee conducted a Pilot Test Post-Mortem reviewing previous decisions on program design and delivery and reaching consensus on the following:

- The program's objectives and criteria for selecting activities were valid and should remain unchanged.
- Additional OBIS activities should be identified so we could continue the program year-round.
- Materials kits should be improved using the suggestions from pilot volunteers, and the concept of materials-volunteers should be expanded. (It had worked well, and the kid-volunteers were thrilled to have kits provided for their use.)
- The magnifying lenses on string necklaces plus nametags had worked well (once we figured out that the necklaces for each group needed to be tied in a big loose knot or hung from a peg to prevent all the strings from tangling together in massive knots between activities). We would continue to provide the inexpensive lenses and give them to youngsters who participated regularly at the end of the program year.
- We would narrow our focus to 4th and 5th graders (because the "chemistry" between volunteers and children of those ages seemed best), but continue to serve 8-12 year-olds in mixed age groups.
- Because private day care centers seemed to have so few children in our targeted age-range, we decided not to pursue those sites. All other sites had worked well and would be continued. In addition, we would try out a few sites in suburbia.
- We would try to reach as many children as we could by attempting to increase the number of volunteers. The number of volunteers and the time they were available would determine the number of children reached through school, after-school, and Saturday programs.

Summary

We carefully monitored our pilot test and requested feedback from everyone involved. This enabled us to learn about what was going well, find out about trouble-spots, and adjust our approach immediately, when needed.

After reviewing and reflecting on the data, the Education Committee conducted a Pilot Test Post-Mortem, made some revisions in the program, and decided to expand the project to reach more children on a year-round basis.

Expanding the Project to Reach More Children

- **To create methods for managing the project as it involves more volunteers, more sites and more materials.**

Three factors determine the number of youngsters that we can reach:

- the number of volunteers — how many new ones we can recruit and train, and how many existing ones we can retain;
- the inventory of materials available for volunteers to use; and
- volunteer leadership and/or paid staff available to coordinate and maintain the quality of the program.

We have always had a waiting list of sites who want to host our project and, as soon as we have the ability to expand, we allocate volunteers to those sites.

In this chapter we'll discuss the ways we have dealt with these factors to expand our reach from 250 to over 2,000 children per year.

Recruiting New Volunteers

For three years our main means for identifying new volunteers has been our phone-banks with members calling other members. We have modified the phone script from time to time, but the procedure remains very similar to the one first used during our needs assessment (see page 13). Each August and March, approximately two or three weeks before our fall and spring volunteer training workshops, we take an evening to phone and speak with 150-200 members. We typically recruit 40-50 new behind-the-scenes volunteers and kid-volunteers and identify another 30-40 who want to get involved at a later date.

In January, right before our winter training workshop, we send a brightly-colored bulk-mailed postcard to all DAS members. In response, 10-15 people usually call the office and join in our efforts. Articles and photos of the project appear in our newsletter throughout the year, and each edition results in two or three calls from members who want to contribute to the project in one way or another.

As the project grows, the number of volunteers recruited by word-of-mouth grows. Volunteers talk their co-workers or neighbors into joining in the effort. Since these people have heard their friends talk about their experiences with the project, they arrive with much enthusiasm and a very realistic view of what they'll be doing.

In the last year, we've experimented with a couple new methods for adding volunteers. Because of their success, we'll undoubtedly continue recruitment of volunteers through Parent-Teacher Organizations (PTA's) and Optimist Clubs. Each fall our large, central school district holds a PTA resource fair at which PTA officers from scores of schools get new ideas for programs they might sponsor. By having a display, demonstration (e.g. of pillbug and sowbug races), and sign-up, we've been able to identify new schools at which the PTA wants to help get our project established.

Another way PTA's have gotten involved is via requests from the school's principal and/or teacher(s). When a school asks to begin hosting the project or to add more classes to the project, we explain that we'd

like to, but that we cannot guarantee that we will be able to recruit the required number of volunteers. If the schools want to insure their participation, they may choose to recruit their own volunteers (which they usually do through the PTA) and send those volunteers to our workshops, etc. We reinforce this idea on the Host-Site Application Form and the form that each participating school is asked to fill out in June regarding their participation during the next school year (see Appendix E).

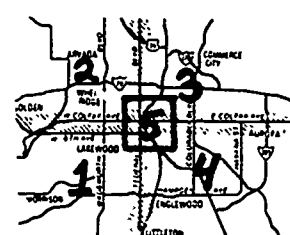
One of our kid-volunteers talked to his Optimist club about our project. The club has made donations and recruited volunteers to help conduct the activities at one of the schools in their area. We are looking forward to acquainting more Optimist groups with our project and hope to gain similar support for other schools.

All new kid-volunteers are required to attend a three-hour training workshop before they are assigned to a team and begin working with youngsters. The workshops continue to follow the format of the spring pilot workshop with one major change: experienced volunteers now lead newcomers in doing the activities for the coming season. At the end of each workshop, we collect from each volunteer a completed schedule and site-preference form. By using this information, we are able to fit the newly trained volunteers into existing or new teams with adequate consideration for their preferences.

Name _____ phones _____ best time(s) to call _____
 h. _____
 major streets I live near _____ work _____
 major streets I work near _____

Using the map at the right, list the numbers of the areas you prefer to work in first.

_____ best _____ worst



Put an X in each box to show when you can work with children

	M	T	W	Th	F	Sat.
A.M.						
P.M. 12:30-2:30						
after 4 P.M.						
after 4:30						
after 5 P.M.						

X as many as possible.

Put an X in each box to show when you could attend a planning meeting.

	M	T	W	Th	F	Sat.
3 AM						
lunch						
2:30-3 PM						
4:30-5 PM						
evening						

X as many boxes as possible.

I want to work with kids at one site two sites

I would be willing to substitute this fall if the time fits my schedule. once twice more

Retaining Existing Volunteers

We have a high retention rate with 75-85 percent of our experienced volunteers continuing from fall to winter and from winter to spring seasons. But our retention rate has dropped to 55 percent in the summer with only slightly more than half of our spring volunteers returning for the fall season. The two reasons most frequently given for leaving the program in any season are changes in work schedule or family responsibilities and poor health or pregnancy. Other reasons have included: moving, marriage, spending volunteer time on other interests, volunteer sites not conveniently located, and not liking the program.

Surveys consistently show that one of the key elements most attractive to volunteers is that they feel their time is well spent. They know what they are expected to do (via job descriptions and self-evaluation forms), feel well prepared (via training workshops and portfolios of printed materials), have the ability to schedule their participation at a time that's most convenient for them (via three choices of workshops and team planning meetings), and enjoy what they're doing.

We try to listen carefully to their suggestions for change and eliminate problems and/or tasks that they find undesirable. Division of labor is most important. The kid-volunteers want to spend their time with children and think it's wonderful that the kits of materials are provided for them to use. The materials-volunteers, on the other hand, don't want to spend five minutes with a bunch of youngsters, but gain a sense of satisfaction constructing kits and enjoy socializing with their work-mates. In response to volunteer feedback, we have added delivery-volunteers. This enables retired people who enjoy driving and meeting new people to contribute to the project and relieves an attorney with an office miles across town (for example) from the burden of coming to the Audubon office to pick up the kits for his team.

The biggest pay-off our volunteers receive is the enjoyment and sense of accomplishment they feel as they participate in the project. We also try to acknowledge their contributions in three ways:

- Verbally — with "thanks" from team leaders, project staff or whoever's in charge of the session they've just participated in.
- In Print — by way of recognition in the newsletter or letters sent directly to each volunteer. We extend our appreciation to each volunteer and note the accomplishments of the total project that wouldn't be possible without the collective effort in which each of them plays a part.
- From the Youngsters and Host Site Staff Member(s) They Work With — Once a year we suggest that each site send notes of appreciation to the volunteers that serve them. The majority have their children write notes telling their volunteers what they like about and have learned from the activities — and they warm the hearts of all who see them.

Then, of course, there are the smiles, hugs, and when-are-you-coming-backs, that spontaneously come from the kids before, during and after each activity.

A couple of times each year we hold volunteer events that are primarily social — e.g. dessert parties, after-work receptions. A volunteer-training element may be included (such as searching for spiders with an expert from the museum), but the emphasis is on enabling the volunteers to swap experiences and get acquainted with the other wonderful people

who share their interests in youth and nature. So far they've been held at interesting places that spark conversation and curiosity (e.g., a historic downtown hotel, an old mansion). The food and camaraderie make these enjoyable occasions, and we hope a "bonus" for our volunteers.

Bronwell School
2500 E. 4th Ave.
Denver Co, 80206
May 14, 1987

Dear Mrs. Simmons,

I thank you for coming to our school and helping us discover new things. It was fun. You were a good teacher and you taught a lot of new things to us. I hope you will come again sometime.

From:
Michael
Boules



Bronwell School
2500 E. 4th Ave.
Denver Co, 80206

Dear Pat,
I hope you had a great time teaching me all those things about nature because I had fun. I hope you learn more about nature Pat. Thanks for the magnifying glasses. Thanks.

P.S. Please write and call

P.P.S. My address is 3054 Newport and my phone number is 322-3576.

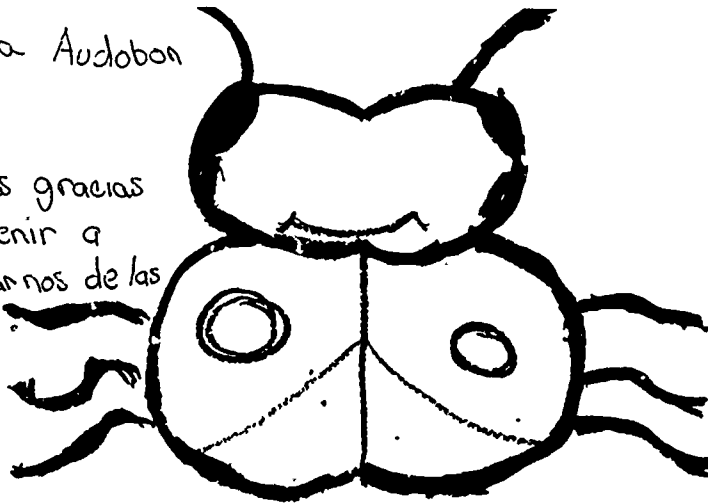
Your friend,
Leonard Atkins

Querida Audobon
Society

Muchas gracias
Por venir a
enseñarnos de las
ciencias.

¡Fue muy
divertido
Por favor,
regresen.

Sinceramente, maria



Enlarging our Inventory of Activities and Kits

With our decision to conduct outdoor activities year-round came the need to identify activities that would work well in the summer, fall, and winter. We again turned to the OBIS materials and used the same procedures that we had used for the spring season to identify activities for the other seasons (see section entitled "Selecting Appropriate Learning Activities").

For each season we have selected activities that can be used to take the children outdoors to discover and investigate the plants, animals and natural habitats in their neighborhoods. Each site has its own limitations that must be considered in choosing the most appropriate activities from all those on the seasonal lists. For example, one school may have no windows from which birds at feeders can be observed, another site may have a fastidious custodian that cleans away all spider webs and leaf litter. By listing 7 to 20 possible activities for each season, each volunteer team has been able to find at least three activities that will work at their site no matter what the resource limitations.

All the activities meet all our original selection criteria (page 17) with one exception. Winter is our most constraining season. To insure at least three activities that will work well at our most limited sites in the worst weather, we have added a simulation game ("Sound Off!" for 4th graders or "Food Chain Game" for 5th graders). Although these simulation games do not "directly involve" the children with plants, animals or habitats in the neighborhood, they do give the youngsters experiences that stimulate thinking about the interactions of organisms they investigate during their other hands-on activities.

The "kits" of materials for each of the selected activities have been assembled following the procedures outlined in the "Assembling Materials and Supplies" section. The materials-volunteers prepare additional kits, re-supply used kits and make replacements each season to insure a ready supply for the kid-volunteers.

Building Volunteer Leadership

As kid-volunteers gain experience with the project and want to assume more responsibility, they may become "team leaders." In this capacity, they organize their team's efforts and coordinate those efforts with the whole project via the central office (see job description in Appendix F).

Team leaders are selected based on their ability to work well with children and therefore serve as role-models, their consistency of participation and dependability, their ability to relate well to other volunteers, to lead team discussions, and to communicate with site staff. Team leaders are observed conducting activities with children and receive recommendations from site staff member(s) before being selected.

Experienced volunteers may also expand their participation by leading sessions at training workshops or by supervising a group of volunteers in preparing materials. In each of these cases, the volunteer gets new experiences, and the project is able to grow as volunteers take over the supervision of additional volunteers.

A note about volunteer supervision and the role of project staff: When "personnel problems" arise with volunteers (e.g., tardiness, below-par performance), volunteer leaders have come to the project staff, reported the situation, and asked the project staff to handle it. The volunteer leaders prefer not to take on such responsibilities and want our paid staff to deal with those tasks.

Providing Adequate Coordination

While we have chosen to hire a staff member to coordinate the participation of all volunteers and host sites, it is conceivable that this responsibility could be handled by a dedicated, experienced volunteer. In either case, the responsibilities include:

Volunteer Coordination

- Recruit, motivate and oversee a volunteer corps adequate to carry out all aspects of the program.
- Organize seasonal workshops for volunteers and periodic meetings with team leaders — making sure the objectives for each session are clearly defined and involving volunteers in the planning, preparation and conduct of each session to the maximum extent possible.

Materials Management

- Maintain inventory and circulate instructional materials assuring that adequate numbers are on hand, at least cost, and with maximum involvement of volunteers.
- Solicit in-kind donations of goods, materials and services from the community.
- Price, order and purchase designated materials.

Scheduling and Record-keeping


- Schedule and coordinate participation of sites and volunteers.
- Collect and account for materials fees from all sites.
- Keep records of all materials, volunteers and sites and provide information for project reports, as needed.

If you choose to hire a coordinator as you expand your project, you will have to raise the money to pay that person, which leads us to the topic of . . .

Raising More Money

In keeping with our philosophy of packaging volunteer tasks so that people specifically interested in certain opportunities can focus their energies on an aspect of the project they find most enjoyable, interesting or worthwhile, we have organized a fund raising group. As the nature of our fund raising task has become more complex, we have been able to involve more volunteers in this endeavor — and hope to continue to do so.

The strategies we use and the sources from which we raise money are set forth in the following section, so will not be repeated here.



"The lessons are simple yet deep — designed to spark much future inquiry on the part of the kids . . . I marvel that this many children can be reached with this quality of program at such a low cost."

—M. Stranahan



Suffice it to say that the fund raising volunteers draft a plan for the year's effort, and each volunteer works in his/her field of preference (e.g. organizing the members' campaign, researching prospective foundations, meeting with potential donors). Their efforts are coordinated and supported by the project staff.

One additional aspect of our fund raising operation is worthy of note. From the beginning we have followed a policy of raising money a year in advance. This means that, for example, the total amount raised from August 1987 through July 1988 will be used to fund the 1988-89 program. Or, to put it another way, in June-July, 1988, we will evaluate the success of our 87-88 fund raising effort, total the amount in hand, and finalize our budget and program size for 88-89. We have found this to work well because it allows us to make firm commitments to host sites and project staff before the new school year begins.

Summary

We have been able to reach more children in each of our first three years by recruiting and training new volunteers and by gaining the continued participation of existing volunteers. Our volunteers seem to feel their time is well spent and to enjoy what they do. We try to supplement their intrinsic motivation by extending our genuine thanks and by recognizing their valuable contributions from time to time. To maintain a coordinated, high-quality program, we depend on the leadership of volunteers and the daily oversight and attention-to-detail that our paid staff provides.

Getting Financial Backing

- **To determine the financial needs of the project you design, and**
- **to raise enough money to meet the budget.**

Depending on your early decisions about the size and scope of the project you want to launch, you'll need a larger or smaller amount of money to fund your effort. Our budget includes categories for:

- Instructional Materials
- Volunteer Training and Materials
- P.R./Promotion
- Mileage/Travel
- Office Supplies
- Office (rent, utilities, phone)
- Insurance (accident, liability and office/property)
- Staff Salary, Benefits, and Payroll Taxes
- Contingency

The proposed budget varies each year depending on the number of children we plan to reach and the number of volunteers we plan to support.

If you decide to start a program with one site and one team of volunteers, your costs may (as we suggested earlier) be less than \$100. That amount may be available in your organization's existing budget, may be readily contributed by your members, or may be raised from a "business sponsor" near your site.

Denver Audubon's first Urban Education Project budget (in 1984) was \$34,000 and included salary for one full-time staff member ("helmsperson"). In our organization's first 15 years, almost all our programs had been for members and/or on such a small scale that, with two exceptions, they were supported within the organization by dues, registration fees, an annual appeal mailed to members, a large birdseed sale, and a birdathon.

With plans to launch a community outreach project for children with paid staff, we found it necessary to raise funds from new sources. This has been a sometimes exciting, sometimes ominous new venture for us. Our experiences have taught us a lot, and we're still learning.

We've tapped a variety of sources:

- **Our Members** — We used a letter with a return self-addressed envelope and a follow-up phone call to request contributions from our 2,940 members. Seventy-seven volunteers participated in the phonathon, and we spoke with 704 members. Altogether we received donations from 330, with many people contributing at the \$20 level so they could receive an autographed copy of the new Denver's Winter Birds poster. (A set of materials used in this campaign are included in Appendix G.)
- **In-Kind Contributions from businesses and agencies** — We get food and drink free or at reduced prices from local merchants for volunteer events (e.g., the local pizza parlor donates pizzas for our phonathons). We receive 10 percent to 45 percent discounts on purchases from office and educational supply houses. Government agencies have printed brochures and provided meeting space for our project free of charge. In most cases, these contributions were acquired very simply by asking, but in some cases they involved more lengthy negotiations.
- **Foundations** — The large majority of our start-up costs have been paid by foundation grants. The data from our needs assessment provided a solid basis for major proposals. Since there are many references on foundations and proposal writing available in most public and college libraries, we will not attempt to cover those topics here. Suffice it to say that we have found private and governmental foundations both locally and nationally willing to fund this project because of its educational value and volunteer involvement. Even during our local recession, foundations found the collaboration between host sites and Denver Audubon an attractive feature. The project does not duplicate efforts but is a unique, needed, cost-effective addition.
- **Businesses** — As this document is being written both corporations and banks are cutting back on charitable contributions because of poor economic conditions. Nevertheless, we have raised ten percent of our funds this year from civic-minded and science-related businesses. Some responded to a matching challenge from a local foundation; others were approached directly via personal contacts or via a persistent combination of phone and mail requests.

-
- **Organizations and Individuals** — A hand-full of groups (such as PTA's and Optimists) and non-members who share our concern for the education of youth have learned about the project and contributed to it. In all cases, DAS members involved in the project have stimulated these donations through one-on-one discussions.

Among the lessons we've learned from our fund raising efforts to date are **the importance of personal contacts, the need for an annual fund raising plan** with periodic checks and fall-back positions should the initial goals prove to be too ambitious, and **the importance of building each year** to involve more people in the fund raising, to gain more donors, and to increase the size of the gifts so that adequate support exists when foundation support ends.

There is an old adage that people give to people. We have seen over and over how important personal contacts are given the demands on and competition for philanthropic dollars. Our first \$31,000 was raised by our premier fund raiser through a family foundation and a very generous personal friend. These people were willing to fund our first year because they had confidence in their relative's/friend's abilities and ideas. The rest of us shook our heads and said: we don't have any contacts like that . . . can't help. But some of us have **found** contacts. A few examples: (1) We got an appointment with a bank vice president who also happens to be an avid birdwatcher. He was immediately interested, understood the importance of our project, and introduced us to the vice president for public relations. (2) We found out the name of the head of the environmental department of a large corporation, concisely told him about our project and asked for his advice on how to get his corporation's financial support for the project. He allowed us to use his name in going to the man in charge of public relations, and we were able to get "in the door," establish the value of our project and acquire a contribution. (3) By using a foundation's annual report, we learned the names of those on the grant selection committee, and found two people who knew members or relatives of members and were able to bring attention to our proposal and to get it funded.

By persevering, by sincerely communicating our project's strengths and financial needs and by asking for advice and guidance from those more experienced than we are, we have gotten many good suggestions and have found people willing to help us raise the funds necessary to sustain the project. As is the case with volunteer recruitment, the key is to ask. We've met many generous, interesting people in the process.

Summary

We have raised funds to meet our project budget from a variety of sources. Since we had not previously done much fund raising in the business and philanthropic sectors of our community, we have had to find and make connections in new arenas, have had to ask others for their advice, and have learned much. We have found financial supporters among our members, foundations, corporations and banks, and other organizations and individuals who share our goals. Merchants and agencies with whom we do business have contributed by providing in-kind goods and services.

Establishing a Fee Structure

- **To establish a policy regarding user fees and determine a reasonable fee level.**

From the beginning, the instigators of Denver Audubon's Project had envisioned charging participants a "user fee." In fact, their initial plan was to totally or largely fund the program with payments made by those benefiting from the program.

Professionals who had recently implemented user fees for private nature-oriented learning experiences advised us to charge "whatever the market will bear." So we compiled a list of special natural history, wildlife and science programs available to school classes and youth groups in our community and phoned each one to find out about their fee structures. They all charged on a "per child" basis, and their fees ranged from \$.50 to \$2.50 for a one to three hour period.

It was costing us between \$1.00 and \$2.00 per child just to set-up and maintain the materials kits for each season. (The activities used in some seasons required more expensive materials than those used in other seasons.) So if we were going to keep our fees in the price range of the programs mentioned above, we clearly could **not** cover the **total** program costs (including staff salaries) via user fees.

The Education Committee discussed at some length the comparative educational value of a three hour class trip to the zoo versus a one hour assembly speaker versus three one-hour hands-on outdoor small group investigations. But the Committee concluded that the bottom line was the amount of money schools and non-school sites had available each year to spend on "extra" programs and the competition for that resource. Sites would be weighing choices with an eye towards getting "the most" for their money: a \$50 snake assembly for all students, a \$110 trip to the zoo for the third graders, and so forth.

We decided to go to the staff members at sites that had been hosting the program and giving us feedback for two to three seasons and get their views. We let them know we were considering a fee of \$1.50/child/season (assuming three activities/season) and asked whether that was workable. Their reactions ranged from "That's not steep. No problem," and "I'm surprised a fee didn't come earlier," to "We don't know how we'll get the money, but we'll find a way 'cause we definitely want to keep the program."

The following season we began testing this fee structure:

	1 season	For all 3 seasons with the same kids
1 school class (up to 30)	\$55	\$100
non-school group of 18	\$35	\$ 60
of 12	\$25	\$ 50

that collect money from home to either offer "scholarships" to disadvantaged children or to let us know about such situations so we can waive the fee.

Our biggest mistake regarding fees was that we didn't quote the fees in **whole units per child**. This just seems to be much easier for sites to deal with. As a result, our 1987-88 fees are:

\$2/child for one season (three activities)

or

\$5/child for the entire school year (nine activities)

Some sites pay the yearly fee in a lump sum; others pay it in installments.

Because the program is different in format and organization from other programs that these sites have sponsored in the past, we have found it best to give an "introductory offer" to new sites. It's hard for them to decide whether the program is worth the price when they don't really understand what the program entails or how it works. During our first meeting with a new site we have explained the standard fees and then noted that there is no fee for the first season, but that if they find the program valuable enough to continue offering it to their youngsters, they will be assessed at the going rate.

These "materials fees" only provide us with five to six percent of our total budget — a far cry from the income we had originally envisioned from user fees. So you may wonder: why go to the trouble for such a relatively small amount? The first reason is that that amount seems to be what the market will bear. The second is a philosophical one. We've decided that it's important for the recipients of our services to acknowledge the value of the program in financial terms — to be serious enough about wanting it to "buy-in" or invest in it.

This philosophy has also been voiced to us by staff members of some host sites. For instance, a teacher and a community center director have each told us independently, "Our kids always seem to be able to come up with 50 cents for candy or pop, so \$1 for a magnifying lens should be no problem . . . and by paying for it, they'll probably take better care of it."

Summary

By learning about fees charged for other programs in our community and by working with the staff members at our host sites, we've been able to establish fees that are competitive and a collection system that is workable. Although these fees cover only a small fraction of our total program costs, we feel it is important for the program's recipients to have a part in its financial support.

A p p e n d i c e s

- A. Project Director Job Description
- B. Volunteers' Portfolio — copy of contents with one sample OBIS Activity
- C. Materials for Site Planning Meetings
 - Agenda
 - Memo of Agreement
 - Suggestions for preparing nametags, lenses & children
 - Flyer used in recruiting children
- D. Pilot Evaluation — Instruments used for data collection:
 - Volunteer Feedback Form
 - Host Site Staff Feedback Form
 - DAS Education Committee Observation Sheet
 - Outline for Evaluation Meetings with Site Staff, Volunteers & DAS Staff
 - Student Form
 - Feedback from Volunteers' Spring Wrap-up Meeting
Forms for Kid-volunteers, Materials Assistants, & discussion groups
- E. Host Site Application and Form for Sites to indicate plans for "next year"
- F. Team Leader Job Description
- G. Printed material for Members' Appeal and Phonathon
 - Proposed plan
 - Appeal letter
 - Letter to phoners confirming arrangements for phonathon
 - Script, fact sheet, & tips for phoners
 - Record sheets (one used for each call)
 - "Mail room" Instructions
 - Follow-up note
- H. Publications Cited



DENVER AUDUBON SOCIETY

975 Grant Street Denver, Colorado 80203 (303) 860-1471

A

JOB DESCRIPTION FOR EDUCATION PROJECT DIRECTOR

I. Overview

The Education Project Director is hired by the Board based on the recommendation of the Education Committee. It is the responsibility of the Project Director to develop education programs that will promote understanding and appreciation of the environment of the South Platte Watershed and issues affecting that environment.

He/she receives direction from the Education Committee, which is responsible for making policy decisions. The Education Committee Chair is the Project Director's immediate supervisor and serves as the project's liaison and chief advocate on the Board. The Project Director reports to the Board at the request of the Education Chair.

The Board and Fundraising Committee have primary responsibility for funding this project.

II. Functions

A. Program Planning, Implementation and Management

- provide the Education Committee with data and suggestions necessary to make informed decisions regarding this project
--- including especially: project elements or programs, their design, implementation, materials, promotion, and funding.
- develop and implement education program(s) as defined by the Education Committee.
- recruit, train, motivate, oversee and maintain a volunteer staff responsible for delivering the programs to the targeted groups.
- propose and manage the program's annual budget.
- conduct periodic program evaluations.
- prepare reports to inform the Committee, Board, and donors of the progress of the project.

see next page

AS A VOLUNTEER YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT...

1. You are committing yourself to help make this program a success. We will depend on your continued participation as described in your job description. See copy of job description on the back of this page.)

In return, you'll receive from us training workshops, the materials you need to conduct activities with children, and our sincere thanks for your contributions. We also hope you'll gain personal rewards, satisfaction, and memorable experiences.

2. If illness or an unanticipated occurrence prevents you from fulfilling your commitment, please let your team leader and/or the office know as soon as possible. We will try to help you find a substitute so that your group of children will be able to continue their activities as scheduled.
3. As a volunteer, you represent Denver Audubon Society. Please wear your nametag when serving as a volunteer so that you can be recognized readily.
4. Please keep your Volunteer Service Record up-to-date. It is important for us to have an accurate record of the number of volunteer hours contributed to this program. Those statistics are just as important as the monetary contributions are.
5. On your income tax, you may wish to deduct the unreimbursed expenditures you incur while volunteering for this program. For your convenience, we have added a column for recording mileage and out-of-pocket expenses on the right-hand side your Volunteer Service Record. Use it if you wish. Additional information on such deductions is available from Denver Audubon and/or from the IRS (Publication #526, "Income Tax Deduction for Contributions").
6. Denver Audubon Society carries liability insurance that covers volunteers implementing Audubon programs. The insurance company has the right and duty to defend us in an injury or damage suit and, if negligence is proven, will pay for judgements up to the \$250,000 and \$500,000 policy limits.

12/87

Denver Audubon Society's
Urban Education Project
860-1476