

Jamestown to Welcome Interactive Nature Art Festival

By Joan Patrie of
Jamestown Audubon Society

JAMESTOWN, NEW YORK, steps into the national spotlight the second week of August with the Nature Art Festival. Acclaimed by artists and patrons alike, this is the most unique art show, exhibit and sale in the USA today. Here, and only here, artists set up "Festival Studios" and create original works of art as they interact with visitors over the course of the weekend.

Jamestown Audubon Society and Roger Tory Peterson Institute, two nationally recognized natural history and environmental education centers, collaborate to produce the Festival.

Ruth Lundin, president of Jamestown Audubon reports that the mission of the Nature Art Festival is "to raise general operating funds for the sponsoring organizations, to expand the base of people served with our nature education programs and to increase awareness of the beauty and vitality of the Chautauqua-Allegheny region."



Onlookers gather in a gallery during the 1999 Nature Art Festival.

PHOTOS BY JAMESTOWN AUDUBON

The festival brings together over 80 of the finest nature artists of the United States and Canada. While they work, these select award winning painters, sculptors, photographers, and carvers take time to explain to visitors their choice of media and how their art reflects and interprets their view of nature. Festival goers can view the artists' displays at their leisure, chat with the artists, and purchase works of fine art.

This festival is too large for one location and requires four sites for all the artists, exhibits, and guests. Each of the Festival venues is an important destination in itself.

A designated New York State historical marker, the New York State Armory at 34 Porter Avenue has served military, government, and civic organizations for over 80 years.

Jamestown Community College (JCC,) New York State's first community college, celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 2000. The college seeks to provide expanding services to the community in keeping with the State University of New York motto, "To Learn ... To Search ... To Serve." The JCC campus is a hub of community educational, cultural, and recreational activities.

The Jamestown Audubon Nature Center, is the home of the Burgeson Wildlife Sanctuary, a 600 acre preserve which provides a varied habitat for wildlife and a living classroom for its many visitors. More than 430 species of plants have been cataloged in the sanctuary. The nature education program of the Jamestown Audubon Society, one of the first of its kind, is regarded by National Audubon leaders as a pacesetter for similar programs across the country. The mission of the Jamestown Audubon Society is to provide educational opportunities for the appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of the natural world and to encourage and practice environmental stewardship.

Roger Tory Peterson Institute of Natural History is a national center for nature education and teacher enhancement. Located at 311 Curtis Street, it is named for the eminent naturalist whose love for the natural world began here in his hometown of Jamestown, New York. Completed in 1993, this architecturally significant building, created by Robert A.M. Stern, reflects the Swedish heritage of the area with the flavor of a rustic building blending harmoniously with its natural setting. The mission of the Institute is to create a passion for and awareness of the natural world in the hearts and minds of children.

Free comfortable air-conditioned motor coaches transport visitors among the four locations. While riding the shuttles, visitors have the additional pleasure of listening to knowledgeable volunteer tour guides talk about the



Steven Hamnering's painting entitled "A Shady Spot" reflects the artist's ability to capture a cougar resting in a natural setting.

area's history and points of interest.

Door prize drawings for over \$5000 of work donated by the artists and food vendors at all sites also contribute to the fun. There is something for everyone at this family-friendly event.

Thanks to the generosity of local foundations, 100 area school age children are VIP guests as "Festival Scholars." The youth are mentored by the festival artists and learn more about nature art and explore new media, at the same time gaining a greater respect for the environment. Festival scholars from previous years are offered free workshops with festival artists on the day before the festival begins. The artwork they produce is exhibited during the festival. The missions of Jamestown Audubon and the Peterson Institute stress the importance of nature education for children, and the festival's highly successful youth initiative is greatly appreciated by art teachers, parents and the participants. The artists enthusiastically support this unique part of the Festival, too!

The festival brings together a volunteer force of over 300 from the Warren and Chautauqua county areas. The memberships of both organizations support this endeavor and recognize the potential for growth and enrichment of the entire region.

Though only in its third year, the festival, which visitors call "wonderful," "amazing," and "fantastic," has come to be known as "one of the top three nature art festivals in the nation." It has wide appeal to nature lovers, collectors of fine art, environmentalists, and those in search of a delightful weekend spent in beautiful surroundings. The festival has the potential to become a major economic factor in the tourism and hospitality industry of Chautauqua, Warren and neighboring county areas. For more information about the event call Jamestown Audubon at (716) 569-2345.

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For more information contact Barbara Cohen of the American Littoral Society at (800) 449-0790 (718) 471-2166 / aslsbeach@aol.com or see the website at www.alsync.org.