

# Changing of the Guard At Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary And Audubon Center

By Marilyn England

OVER THE PAST FOUR or so years, it has been my privilege to serve as Director at a very special Audubon sanctuary. Established in 1923, Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary and Audubon Center has evolved over its 80-year history from a quiet bird sanctuary to a regional leader in natural science education and avian research. Situated in a quiet corner of busy Long Island, the sanctuary itself may seem sleepy at first blush. But spend a few days with us and that perception quickly changes! Sanctuary education and family programs reach over 100,000 children and adults each year. We are increasing our outreach into under-served and minority communities so that all children have access to hands-on nature experiences. And our growing avian research program is making important contributions to baseline data on birds and their habitats on Long Island.

Recently, the sanctuary was able to add three acres to the size of its preserve for the first time in its 80-year history. This addition will enable us to better manage sanctuary grounds for native plant species, and create more habitats for birds and other wildlife. Our reintegration with the National Audubon Society made this historic acquisition possible, as Audubon provided funding for the purchase, which the Sanctuary will repay through fundraising efforts in the community. An important result of this effort will be the Sanctuary's heightened visibility as we reach out to our neighbors for support. Our annual Gala benefit, now in its fifth year, provides the foundation from which we launched this campaign.

Now, as I contemplate retirement as Sanctuary Director, I look back and see that it was a busy and exciting four years. Any accomplishments I may have had were only possible because of the great people I have had the good fortune to work with. From the Sanctuary's outstanding staff (some of the hardest working people I've ever met!), to a stellar Advisory Board, to my incredible colleagues at Audubon it has been the adventure of a lifetime. After all, on my first day I was wondering what it is exactly that a Director does. I think I can explain it now!

I cannot leave this position without mentioning the community that hosts the Sanctuary. Part of the greatness of this experience has been working in a community with a generosity of spirit I haven't encountered before. Willing to give unstintingly of time and talents, our Board and Gala committee, as well as other volunteers work unceasingly not only to ensure the sanctuary's solvency, but to make sure we reach the broadest audience possible with our conservation message. This dedication is an important part of the reason the sanctuary continues to thrive.

My successor, Trish Pelkowski, will have the good fortune to inherit this special community and have the privilege, as I have had, to contribute to the Sanctuary's legacy of conservation. Having served as the Sanctuary's Director of Research for the past three years, Trish brings a wealth of experience to her new position. She is eager to continue the Sanctuary's commitment to conservation through the expansion of our research and education programs. Trish is currently finishing an MS in Environmental Studies at Long Island University CW Post College. Her thesis will focus on the Sanctuary's research conducted at the Hoffman Center, a 150 acre private nature preserve the sanctuary has been managing under a habitat enhancement project. She is very excited to be the Sanctuary's next Director and is thrilled to be working with our superlative staff, Board and volunteers. Trish will leave her own unique footprints on the trails like others before her, and will contribute much to the sanctuary's rich history and traditions.

As for myself, I will remain involved first as a consultant to help with the transition, and then as a member of the Advisory Board. The Sanctuary is just too much of a good thing to let it slip away.



New TRSAC director, Trish Pelkowski enjoys a moment with past director, Marilyn England.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT SANCTUARY & AUDUBON CENTER

## Prospect Park Audubon Center Hosts First Annual Children's Film Festival

By Glenn Phillips

PROSPECT PARK AUDUBON Center's first annual Children's Film Festival features nature films for kids of all ages throughout the public school winter recess, February 15 - 23. Each day will feature a themed collection of shorts at 12:30 PM and 2:00 PM and a longer film at 3:00 PM. The groupings of shorts run approximately 45 minutes.

**Winter Wonders** examines life outdoors in the winter; **World of Nature** explores folk tales of birds and nature from around the world; **Duck, Duck Goose** takes a closer look at waterfowl; and **Stewards of the Wild** looks at what people do to help protect their environment. The festival will take place in the Center's Con Edison Discover Nature Theater. For a full schedule visit the Center's website at [www.prospectparkaudubon.org](http://www.prospectparkaudubon.org) or call (718) 287-3400.

During the rest of the year, the Con Edison Discover Nature Theater is a setting where kids create their own theatrical presentations. Supported in part by a grant from the Con Edison Foundation, the theater's highlights include a collection of animal puppets and props including a soft-sculpture tree stump and a changeable mural of the Park. Local artisan Catherine Silverii created these props, along with the assortment of leaf pillows that the audience sits on. Catherine, who makes her living creating magnificent hats and headdresses for shows and

circuses, is also a volunteer at the center, where she leads tours of the Park and assists at the information center. The theater is also the home of the popular "Nestlings" program a free program held most Fridays at 2:00 PM for children aged 3 - 5 and their caregivers. Highlights of this changing program include simple nature crafts, hands-on explorations and a nature-song sing-along.

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### UPCOMING SHORT FILMS INCLUDE:

**Winter Wonders:** examine life outdoors in the winter. **"The Snowy Day"**, based on the classic Children's tale by Ezra Jack Keats follows a little boy, Peter, as he explores outside after a huge snowstorm. In **"Owl Moon"**, A father and his young daughter trek through a snowy landscape in search of the Great Horned Owl. The special closeness of the child to nature and family comes to a magical peak when, at last, the owl appears.

**World of Nature:** explore folk tales of birds and nature from around the

world. The award winning **"How the Kiwi Lost its Wings"** from New Zealand is an amusing look at this odd bird. **"Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears"** is based on the Caldecott Award winning retelling of this traditional African folk tale by Verna Ardema.

**Duck, Duck Goose:** take a closer look at waterfowl. **"The Boy and the Snow Goose"**, is a brilliantly animated story, told without narration. A boy protects and cares for an injured wild goose and they become friends. The classic, **"Make Way for Ducklings"** needs no introduction yet continues to delight audiences of all ages. In **The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks** a compassionate couple risks their lives to reunite a pair of Mandarin ducks and are rewarded in the end — but by whom?



Marie Smith, Con Edison's Director of Strategic Partnerships (left) and Tupper Thomas, President of the Prospect Park Alliance dedicate the Con Edison Discover Nature Theater.



Diana Bregman, School Programs Manager captivates students from Public School 22 at the Con Edison Discover Nature Theater at Prospect Park Audubon Center.

**Stewards of the Wild:** Discover what people can do to protect their environment. Two children wonder where all the birds have gone in **"Songbird Story"**, and track down the root of the problem, as they see the birds' migratory homes being overly developed. **"Spotted in the Woods"** features spectacular nature footage of the endangered spotted owl. Narration by 10-year old Linda Green presents this complicated and volatile issue in a way that is easy to understand. **"The Man Who Planted Trees"** is a film of great beauty and hope. A solitary shepherd plants and nurtures a forest of thousands of trees, transforming his barren landscape into a thriving oasis. This story is a remarkable parable for all ages and a tribute to the power of one person.

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