



Boston Nature Center Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2009



Mass Audubon's Boston Nature Center
500 Walk Hill Street, Mattapan, MA 02126
617-983-8500 www.massaudubon.org

Boston Schools Environmental Initiative (BSEI)

Boston Schools Environmental Initiative (BSEI) is BNC's most in-depth environmental education program, funded through the generosity of an anonymous foundation and Mass Audubon supporters. The core of this four year program engages students to improve academic achievement, integrates science instruction into all subjects, supports teachers to transform their instruction to inquiry-based teaching methods, and applies conservation skills with a connection to nature through student projects. BNC provided BSEI in the Haley (Roslindale), Holmes (Dorchester), Mason (Roxbury) and Philbrick (Roslindale) Elementary Schools this year. Some key components of this program are working individually with each school and its community culture through modeling, mentoring, or coaching with Boston Public School teachers, combined with professional development focused on curriculum planning. BNC helps build relationships between schools and community partners and challenges students to be part of solving local issues. Most importantly, there are more students applying their education in their communities and taking responsibility for their environment.

Included in this in-depth program is a four-year external evaluation by Peer Associates, highlighting the successes of the program, which can be read at www.peecworks.org/PEEC/PEEC_Research/S046F8ED7-0483203A. BNC is honored that an anonymous foundation approved four additional years of funding for this innovative program that will now extend into middle schools.

Boston Schools Initiative (BSI)

Students and their teachers in grades 1-3 from the Chittick (Mattapan), Curley (Jamaica Plain), Everett (Dorchester), and P.A. Shaw (Dorchester) participated in the Boston Schools Initiative (BSI). Students engaged in outdoor explorations, observations, investigations, and journaling, including discovering outdoor classrooms. As with the BSEI program, BSI aligns its activities with the Boston Public School science curriculum and Massachusetts standards.



Exhibits and Public Programs

The George Robert White Environmental Conservation Center (GRWECC) continued to live up to its designation as “the building that teaches.” Individuals and groups from across the state and around the world visited the BNC to see green design up-close and learn about environmentally friendly practices. Tours were given to architects, college and high school students, and the general public. The City of Boston’s George Robert White Fund along with Massachusetts Technology Collaborative funded a 9.9 kW photovoltaic pole mounted array resulting in a 10% increase in renewable electricity used at BNC.

Visitors who came to public programs, group functions, or to walk the trails were treated to a year-long interactive exhibit: *Life in the City*. Adults and children were asked to explore the question “What do urban dwellers, both human and wildlife, need to survive in the city?” Each season a new series of creative, hands-on exhibits were developed by BNC’s education team and Teen Ambassadors. Visitors were drawn into the daily challenges faced by wildlife to meet their most basic needs of food, shelter, water, air, and habitat range.

The number of community programs, including public and privately requested group activities, nearly doubled from 155 last year to 292 this year. This substantial rise was due to an increase in group programs, an expansion of favorites such as *Early Explorers* and guided snowshoe walks, and by introducing new opportunities ranging from *Art & Nature* to *Exploring the Night*. Over 7,400 children and adults attended community programs led by educational staff at BNC and guest presenters.

Out of School Time (OST) Science and Nature Enrichment Program

The BNC's outreach efforts in the OST Programs made great gains over the year as the program was supported by funding from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Programs on topics such as solar energy, water conservation, recycling, habitats, and plants were offered at no cost to 16 schools and community centers in 6-8 week cycles. BNC staff taught 246 sessions with specific theme-based programming that reached 642 students from kindergarten to eighth grade.

Our partnership with Young Achievers Science and Mathematics Pilot K-8 School remained strong as BNC was able to host their surround care program. Each week, a BNC teacher naturalist provided environmental programming and hands-on, minds-on experiences for small groups of students. The program met the objectives to improve students' science and critical thinking skills, get them outdoors to interact with the local environment in a way that would nurture a respect for nature, and explore ways to create a foundation for children to connect with the BNC and their own local green spaces.



In collaboration with the Educational Development Center, BNC conducted *Zooming into Nature* with middle school students. This research-based OST program investigated ponds and trees through a multimedia approach, linking to students' academics.

School Vacation and Summer Camp Programs

Due to high demand from the surrounding communities, the BNC summer day camp expanded this year to include five year olds and added 16 more slots every week. Campers, age 5 to 14, experienced a unique curriculum each week, tailored for their age group. Every day was packed with outdoor activities, science exploration, arts & crafts, camp songs, and much more. This engaging camp community encouraged camper participation, diversity and inclusion. In the nine weeks of camp, BNC filled 681 openings with 251 individual campers, operating at 95% capacity.

Over 1600 children from 41 summer camps across Boston had the opportunity to explore the BNC through the Summer Discoveries program. Children discovered the BNC's trails, investigated habitats, and connected with the natural world. This exciting program was launched by the generosity of an anonymous foundation and in collaboration with Forest Hills Educational Trust and the Franklin Park Zoo.



Life in the City and *Animals on the Move* were the themes for February and April school vacation week programs. Each week was like a bit of summer camp with fun, active, and educational days. Children participated in non-competitive games, teambuilding exercises, art projects, and nature inquiry. Field trips supported the campers' understanding of science concepts and connected their learning to the greater Boston area.

BNC is currently operating its recreational summer camp under a license granted by the City of Boston's Health Department, and is also nationally accredited by the American Camp Association (ACA).

Community Connections

Partnerships

Partnerships and collaborations are key to the success of BNC's efforts. **Clark Cooper Community Gardens (CCCG)**, located at BNC, continues to be one of our most significant partners. Nearly 250 families in the surrounding communities have garden plots that are managed by this private, non-profit organization. Additionally, BNC maintains ten garden plots for educational purposes.

Another key ongoing collaboration is with the **Boston Youth Environmental Network (BYEN)**, of which BNC is a founding member along with Antioch New England Institute, Appalachian Mountain Club, Boston Children's Museum, Boston Schoolyard Initiative, Franklin Park Zoo, and Urban Ecology Institute, among others, with funding by an anonymous foundation. This group of Boston area environmental education providers works with school teachers to deliver programming that specifically supports the Boston Public School science curriculum and Massachusetts standards. BYEN's goal is to provide the resources to allow teachers and students to "Get Outside and Learn" on a regular basis while making important connections to their curriculum and communities.

One of our newest partners this year was the National Park Foundation, the charitable partner of the National Park Service. **First Bloom** is a year-long program that connects children to nature through hands-on planting and gardening projects at national parks near them. This year First Bloom programs operated in eight cities across the country, with the BNC acting as the coordinator for Boston, the only city with six participating parks and seven youth partner organizations.

Another exciting initiative started this year was **Pathways to Nature**. Associated Early Care and Education, Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD), Children's Investment Fund, Horizons Design, Sussman Associates, and BNC launched a preschool program to serve children from low income, urban neighborhoods of Boston who are enrolled in Head Start or early education centers. BNC provides professional development to the partnering organizations' educators, as well as hands-on environmental education, including songs, activities, and explorations for these young stewards.

These are some examples of key partners involved in our work. We value and acknowledge the importance of working in collaboration with other organizations to reach the surrounding neighborhoods and beyond.

Teen Ambassador Program

The BNC teen ambassadors continued to learn and grow in their advocacy of the environment. They played an active role with children during nine weeks of summer camp leading arts and crafts, games, stories, and team-building activities. The guiding principles of the program include leadership, civic engagement, mentoring, professionalism, and academic achievement. Throughout the year the teens engaged in developing these skills by participating in workshops focused on goal-setting, the nature of conflict, public speaking, and finance issues. In addition, they had the opportunity to design, implement, and participate in a workshop entitled "Delicious Can Be Nutritious," where they presented healthy concepts, recipes, and taste tests to the thirty other teen ambassadors in programs across the city. BNY Mellon CityACCESS: *An Investment In Youth* is made possible by a grant from the BNY Mellon Charitable Giving Program through the Arthur F. Blanchard Trust.



Special Events

BNC celebrated the sixth anniversary of the George Robert White Environmental Conservation Center with its annual **Rappin' with Raptors** festival. Four hundred visitors attended this community event featuring nature activities provided by BNC staff and partner organizations, live raptor demonstrations, food, and entertainment. This free event was made possible by the sponsorship of several local businesses and we are grateful for their support.

Along with the Arnold Arboretum, Forest Hills Educational Trust, Franklin Park Coalition, Franklin Park Zoo, and Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, BNC co-sponsored the fourth annual **Birds & Bards Festival**, a weekend of free community programs celebrating birds, poetry and nature in Boston. Programs held at BNC included a presentation on the fascinating ways that birds and humans interact in cultures around the globe, a bird walk, and live raptor demonstrations.

BNC's **Bird-a-thon** team consisted of 38 individuals who identified 154 bird species across the state during the 24-hour fundraising event. The team raised close to \$13,000 to support environmental education programs, an increase of 112% over last year, winning Mass Audubon's Greater Boston Regional Migration Award.

This year's **Spring Fling Auction** featured 120 interesting and exciting auction items and was a tremendous success, raising \$20,000 for BNC's camp and teen ambassador scholarship funds. The BNC extends our sincere thanks to the businesses, organizations, and individuals who donated to the Spring Fling Auction:

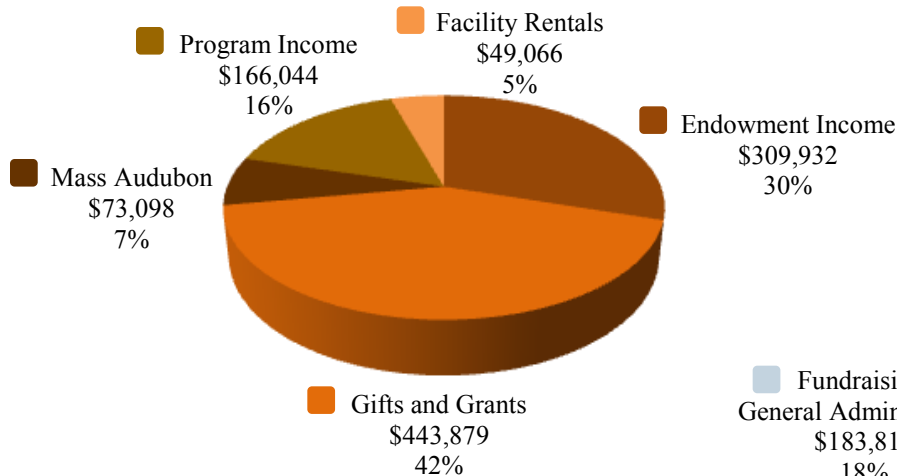


5 Wits, Inc.	Cape Ann Whale Watch	GunnDesign	New England Coastal Wildlife Alliance
All That Glistens Jewelry	Career Treking	Harvest Co-op	New England Revolution
American Repertory Theatre	Jennifer Charles	Healthworks Fitness Centers for Women	Mary Anne Petti Preserve
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Anomalous Bits	Diane Chester-Demicco	HP Hood LLC	Roots & Shoots
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Boston Bruins	DeCordova Museum	Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum	Stonehouse Studio
Boston Celtics	Roy DeLonga	Java Jo's	Taylor House Bed & Breakfast
Boston Children's Theatre	Eduardo del Solar	Jillian's Boston	Urban AdvenTours
Boston Classical Orchestra	Diane's Bakery	Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health	Village Books
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Boston Lyric Opera	Epicenter Acupuncture	Manna Massage	Westport Rivers Vineyard & Winery
Boston Red Sox	Equilibrium Bodywork & Yoga	Mass Audubon	Wheelock Family Theatre
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The Brattle Theatre	F1 Boston	Erin McKenna	WikidFit Personal Training
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Anne Brooke	Ferris Wheels Bike Shop	Museum of Science	Zoo New England
The Cambridge School of Culinary Arts	Forest Hills Educational Trust	New England Aquarium	
Cathy Campbell & Jack Orrock	Fresh Hair		
Canto 6 Bakery	Gadgets		
	Beth Kressley Goldstein & Dennis Goldstein		

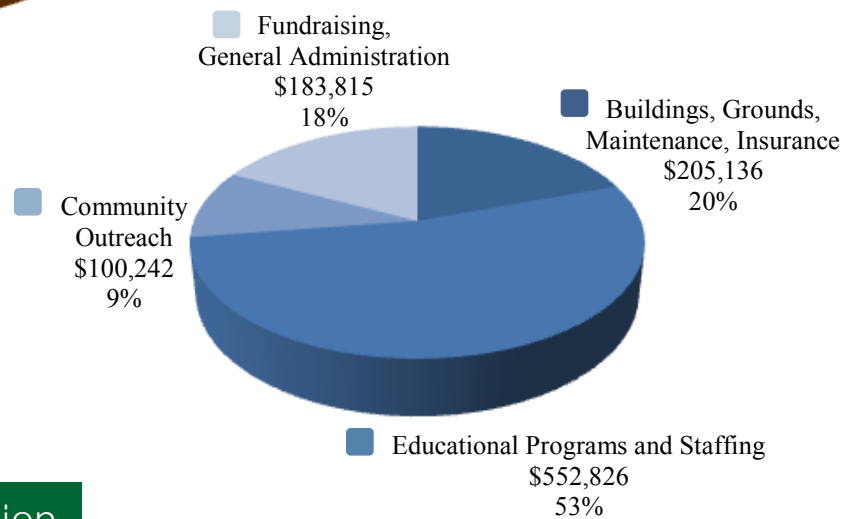
Financial Year In Review

BNC's annual budget for Fiscal Year 2009 totaled \$1,042,018. The charts below identify the major income and expense categories (unaudited). BNC's commitment to access and inclusion continues as program participants' and campers' household income is not a deterrent for program participation. BNC continues to accept state vouchers or other payment arrangements for income eligible families. In addition to raising important funds to operate, BNC is a part of Mass Audubon's comprehensive statewide campaign "Connecting People and Nature." To date, BNC raised \$4.5 million towards its goal of \$5 million.

FY 09 Income Report



FY 09 Expenditure Report



Donors: Our Sincere Appreciation

Anonymous (3)
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		Carolyn Salerno	Amy Yeakel
			Tomas Zavada
			Zell Family Foundation

Stewardship: Ecological Management and Volunteerism

Boston Nature Center has significant ecological value that continues to be researched by local colleges and universities and managed by Mass Audubon staff. Some projects this year focused on controlling invasive plants such as purple loosestrife, Japanese knotweed, and black swallowwort. Purple loosestrife has invaded two wetland areas totaling approximately 10 acres including a freshwater cattail marsh and wet meadow. Through natural occurrence combined with additional releases of *Galerucella* biocontrol beetles in the wetlands, purple loosestrife was successfully suppressed.



Volunteers are an important asset to BNC and assist with an array of stewardship projects. BNC's Sanctuary Committee provided advice, guidance, and support on key issues affecting Boston Nature Center. The 17 member committee helped to identify annual goals, advised on issues ranging from the development of the new driveway connecting Oak Street to the parking lot, to degradation of the sanctuary by issues such as storm water. The committee's three task groups: Education Advisory Task Force, Environment Committee, and Planning and Development Committee met throughout the year addressing specific objectives related to their focus.

With Mayor Menino's and Mass Audubon President Laura Johnson's support, EarthWorks Boston teamed up with Timberland's Earthkeepers to plant 325 trees at the BNC in an effort to mitigate the impacts of Japanese knotweed, increase the tree canopy, and provide a green boundary, as well as help to ensure the sustainability of BNC's habitat into the future. BNC is appreciative of these efforts as well as the other corporate groups that have helped with trail restoration and tree planting projects throughout the year including Goldman Sachs, PricewaterhouseCoopers, InterGen, and Vantage Partners.



BNC took part in Mass Audubon's third annual *Work for Wildlife* statewide volunteer day. Volunteers helped with a variety of projects including trail restoration, garden bed preparation, and invasive plant removal.

This year, 408 volunteers provided a total of 2,650 hours of work to BNC. The estimated value of this contribution is \$63,707. BNC is grateful to the individuals and groups that contributed to a wide range of projects.

Boston Nature Center Staff

Mohamed Abdulrahman, *Property Worker*, Jamaica Plain
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