



**PEEC**  
Pocono Environmental  
Education Center



Winter Solstice 2011

# Seasons

A Quarterly Publication to Advance Environmental Literacy

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*Written By Janine Morley*

After months of planning, working, building, and painting, at 5:00pm on Saturday, November 19, the doors to the EcoZone! were opened for the first time. That evening over 80 invited donors & supporters arrived to explore & discover. Then, on Sunday, November 20, the EcoZone! was open to the public from 12-3pm. A steady stream of guests arrived to build a bear, crawl through the bat cave, sit in the eagle's nest, and visit with our native snakes "Garrett", "Salazar", and "Squiggles".

The idea for the EcoZone came about when our Executive Director, Jeff Rosalsky, envisioned the old indoor pool as a room where the thousands of children that visit PEEC each year could learn about nature in a fun, hands-on setting. The old pool had been closed for some time due to the high cost of maintenance & repairs and through the efforts of PEEC staff & volunteers, and with many generous donations of funds, time, and materials, the room was transformed.

Visitors entered the EcoZone next to a life-sized Bald Eagle's Nest and moved past the aquaponics display to the Build-A-Bear station. On the way to the Fossil Pit are the Reduce, Reuse, Recycle displays. Guests also checked out the Watershed, Bat Bytes, and The Lab. Skins & Skulls & Critter Corner (the home of Garrett, Salazar, and Squiggles) were other popular education stations. Of course, no visit to the EcoZone! is ever complete without a crawl through the tunnel to the Bat Cave and a walk into the Beaver Lodge!

Please check our website [www.peec.org](http://www.peec.org) or call 570-828-2319 for information about visiting the EcoZone! The exploration & discovery room will be open to the public with no charge on the following Sundays: January 8 & 22, February 12 & 26, March 11 & 25.

*More EcoZone photos on page 6*



*PA State Representative Rosemary Brown & PEEC Executive Director Jeff Rosalsky*



*Looking at a snake skin at "The Lab"*

*Photos By Mariann Oswald*

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## Message from the Executive Director

Jeff Rosalsky



The EcoZone is finally open after much planning and work on the part of staff, volunteers, and contractors. It was rewarding to see families interacting with the exhibits in the room on the day of the Grand Opening. The adults were as enthralled as the children and willingly donned a headlamp and crawled into the bat cave and had their photos taken in the Bald Eagle's nest. Perhaps most satisfying to me was seeing entire families gathered around the magnetized black bear skeleton working to put it together. Parents and children were all able to contribute to the assembly process and there was a sense of family accomplishment when they had finished.

While the room is now officially open and will be used by school groups and open to the public on alternate Sundays, there is still a list of new exhibits to be constructed and installed. The new exhibits will demonstrate sustainable living concepts, as well as additional aspects of natural history found in the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. The EcoZone is intended as an evolving exhibit and place for learning and exploration. Some of the most interesting exhibits in the room sprang from a conversation which began, "Wouldn't it be great if you had a..."

The EcoZone has received wonderful coverage in the local press and enthusiasm from school groups booking their environmental education trips to PEEC. My hope is that the EcoZone will attract new schools, local visitors, and enthusiasts for learning about the natural world. The EcoZone is intend to complement the learning experience of a walk in the woods and transport visitors to extraordinary and inaccessible places, like a bald eagle's nest, a bat cave, or a beaver lodge.



# CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

SUNDAY, JANUARY 1, 2012 • 8AM START

It's time for the National Audubon Society's 112th annual Christmas Bird Count! Families, students, birders and scientists, armed with binoculars and bird guides, brave the cold weather to participate in this extraordinary measure of conservation. Help us search and identify birds in our area.

Pre-registration required.

**CALL  
PEEC**  
570.828.2319

**\$5** For  
Audubon



## Birds of Winter

By Jessica Snyder

Winter time is here and so are our winter visitors! The winter season can be a great treat for birders and other nature lovers. With temperatures getting colder and the days getting shorter, our winter time visitors can be seen at feeders more frequently. The daily gathering of these wonderful visitors is a great time to introduce youngsters to the wonders of nature as well!

The winter season can be a great time to get a bird feeding station up and running. My childhood is filled with fond memories of feeding our winter time visitors. As a youngster, I would wake up each morning and bundle myself up for the biting winter cold. Each hand toting a bucket of bird seed, I would trek outside to our bird feeders and fill them to the brim. Satisfied with my offerings, I would plop myself into the snow and whistle to my feathered friends that breakfast was served. On cue, the birds would arrive in numbers and treat me to a feathery show. I encourage everyone to make their own feathery memories!

There are many different birds that might show up at your winter bird feeders, all sporting different personalities and colors. Chickadees, White-Breasted Nuthatches, Dark-Eyed Juncos, and the Tufted Titmouse are most likely to be the regular visitors to your feeders. Just because it is winter doesn't mean you will not have some colorful visitors to your feeders! Blue Jays, Northern Cardinals, Downy Woodpeckers, and even Goldfinches are likely to add a little color to your feeders during the winter months.



*Tufted Titmouse*

These are just a few of the visitors that might make it to your feeders this winter. Come to PEEC and check out our feeding station and reference our birdfeeder guide to identify your visitors or ours.

Want to start your own bird feeding station? Here are some tips:

Wintering birds often need foods high in oils and fats. The best foods for them are sunflower seeds, suet cakes, and peanuts. Providing a variety of foods will increase the number of birds visiting your feeders.

Remember that different birds like to feed from different types of feeders. Providing platform feeders and tube feeders will help to attract the most birds possible. It also doesn't hurt to scatter some seeds on the ground for some visitors, like the Mourning Dove.

Bird baths are often overlooked during the winter. Bird baths are not a winter time necessity; however, providing a heated bird bath will attract different birds that may not visit your feeding station otherwise.

Visit us on [FACEBOOK](#) and share your winter birdfeeder findings!



*Goldfinch*



*Blue Jay*



*Northern Cardinal*

## The Birds, the Bugs, the Bees, & the Trees

By Flo Mauro



In September 2010, Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area (DEWA) and PEEC cooperated efforts and facilitated the first ever Bio

Blitz in the Park. The Bio Blitz was a 24-hour biodiversity survey of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area.

During the actual 24 hour event, 300 PEEC and DEWA staff members and volunteers collected data and photographed over 3,500 individual species of flora and fauna located throughout the Park. The information was collected on individual, hand-written data sheets and included: Scientific name, Common name, was species observed/collected within

park, date of observation, time of observation, collector name, habitat, photograph, lat/long - decimal or degrees/minutes/seconds, elevation, notes. Over 500 individual 'survey sheets' were turned in. Volunteers then entered and cataloged the data by 'location and/or species'.

While the actual Bio Blitz event was deemed successful by all who planned, worked and/or participated in it, there existed an overall feeling that the event was only half done. All of the data, illustrations, and photographs still needed to be entered somewhere and correlated accordingly. We had all this great information but you 'simply' could not get to it.

Until today, there was no single, systematic mechanism to use to access any of the Bio Blitz information. Thanks to our great partner, DEWA and their staff who helped us receive a \$10,000 National Park Foundation IMPACT GRANT (NPF), PEEC will now be able to engage our staff and a computer program designer to design an appropriate, useful, and easily accessible BIO BLITZ data file program and will be able to enter/re-enter all data, illustrations, and graphics into the new program.

'The Birds, the Bugs, the Bees, & the Trees' will be a user-friendly, interactive Bio Blitz exhibit for all visitors and interested parties to have access to and interface with the Bio Blitz information on site at PEEC and/or through remote access. It will be designed for accessibility by all visitors regardless of their abilities, disabilities, or ability to read and write English – all one simply has to do is touch the screen and follow the icons, illustrations, photographs, and/or maps to learn more.

The Bio Blitz exhibit (computer and 2 large touch screen monitors) will be located in the Main Education Building in a location for easy access and use by all visitors to PEEC/DEWA. Web links of the Bio Blitz exhibit will also be available for off-site, on-line visitor use and access. The exhibit will be accessible to 24,000 annual PEEC/DEWA visitors and to tens of thousands of 'visitors' by remote access. The actual outreach is difficult to assess as the PEEC web site alone receives over 40,000 annual 'visitors'. Look for it in 2012!

# CROSS COUNTRY SKIING

**MOST WEEKENDS IN  
JANUARY! & FEBRUARY**

Beginner lessons provide a chance to enjoy the winter woods. No snow? Join us for a free winter hike. Skis and boots provided.

Register with your shoe size to guarantee a spot!

CALL  
PEEC

for availability  
**570.828.2319**

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\$20 PER  
ADULT

\$10 PER  
CHILD

Dear PEEC,  
 Thank You for making our  
 stay at PEEC interesting, educational  
 and fun. The food was great the  
 counselors made lessons fun  
 and I learned a lot. I ♥ the night  
 hike and how we made light with  
 life savers. I liked how we could go  
 in the stream in Stream Ecology. we  
 played lots of fun games like sneaky  
 fox and it was an amazing experience.



## The Un 'BEAR' able Debate

By Allison Owczarczak



One of peoples' first mental images when the word 'hibernation' is uttered is an image of a deep slumbering bear in a cave during winter. However, bears do not hibernate.

Or maybe they do?

There is debate amongst the scientific community about the differences between hibernation and torpor (also called dormancy). To make matters even more confusing, some scientists will say that hibernation is a state of torpor.

Going to Wikipedia, we will find some definitions:

"Hibernation is a state of inactivity and metabolic depression in animals, characterized

by lower body temperature, slower breathing, and lower metabolic rate."

"Torpor, sometimes called temporary hibernation is a (usually short-term) state of decreased physiological activity in an animal, usually characterized by a reduced body temperature and rate of metabolism."

Simply put, it is the time frame, as well as how much the metabolic rates are depressed in an animal, that draws the line in the sand of which animals use torpor verses hibernation to survive the winter months when there is little food available to them.

As an example of torpor, look at a black bear's metabolic rate in the summer verses the winter: Heart rate: from 50 to 8 beats per minute. Breathing: down to a couple of times a minute. Body temp: from 98 to 90 degrees.

While a hibernating animal such as a woodchuck has a very different rate: Heart rate: from 80 to 4-5 beats per minute. Breathing: once every ten minutes. Body temp: from 99 to 38 degrees.

One torpor theory is that a bear is too large to dissipate heat and reduce these life processes just to bring them back up again during their frequent "wake up" events that occur every

day to a few times a week. The hibernation theory is that black bears are actually highly efficient hibernators and that we should call them such. The theory on this belief is that a bear is so efficient in its metabolic processes that it does not need to reduce its body temperature, breathing, and heart rate as much as smaller mammals that hibernate do. A little brown bat, after all, loses 30% of its fat reserves with each individual "wake up" event during hibernation. In contrast, a male bear only loses 15 to 30% of his body weight and a female tending to her cubs can lose up to 40% of her reserves during the entire winter.

To date, the majority of the studies state that bears are not true hibernators because they are too large to be. But then again, Pluto was once a planet and the American kestrel was once known as the sparrow hawk. So time will tell.



## Forest to Faucet

By Sheri Bone

On November 1, PEEC was host to an Educator Workshop sponsored by The Nature Conservancy and Johnson & Johnson. Teachers and environmental educators from New Jersey and Pennsylvania attended the workshop with the expectation of receiving information and activities to teach to middle school students about how healthy forests affect the quality of water. They were not disappointed.

The workshop began at 9:00 am with a presentation from Eric Olsen from The Nature Conservancy about the "Forest to Faucet" program. Because forests help

to keep the surrounding water clean, less money is then needed downstream at water treatment plants. This lesson is important for not only environmental studies, but also for municipalities, home owners, and industry!

Carla Beasley, Chief of Interpretation, Education, and Partnerships for the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, gave a short presentation about the history of the National Park and how its forests have been preserved and maintained. She was followed by Leah Miller, from the Izaak Walton League, who was the main speaker for the day. Ms. Miller shared her organization's efforts to educate students about clean water. She not only distributed lesson notes and online resource information, but she also brought displays and watershed models.

After lunch, the PEEC staff gave the participants some 'hands-on' experience in water quality testing as they visited Tom's Creek and the Delaware River at Eshback. The groups also looked at macroinvertebrates in one of PEEC's ponds as another way to monitor water quality.

Before the teachers left at the end of this very full day, they received lesson plans and water test kits so they could begin the program activities as soon as they returned to their schools. Everyone was talking about ways they would engage their students in this very important project. We at PEEC are looking forward to repeating the workshop soon.

*Continued from page 1.*



*Above: EcoZone mural at the entrance*

*Left: Touch Screen Display*

*Below: Building a bear skeleton*



## FREE AFTERNOONS

PEEC Main Building  
12PM – 3PM

January 8 & 22  
February 12 & 26  
March 11 & 25



## VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Volunteers are needed for our NEW Ecozone Discovery Room. We are looking for dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers who are passionate about the environment and enjoy working with the public. Volunteer responsibilities could include exhibit supervision, tour guiding, interpretation, and general cleaning.

**VOLUNTEERS ARE  
NEEDED ON THE  
FOLLOWING DATES  
FROM 12-3PM**

January 8 & 22  
February 12 & 26  
March 11 & 25



## ANIMAL TRACKS IN THE SNOW

By Molly Check

When people visit the PEEC campus, in the heart of the Poconos, they always ask about the animals. Do you have black bears here? Have there been any owls hooting at night? Where do you usually see the deer? As animals ourselves, people are fascinated with the other animals sharing our world – especially the mammals that live near us. It's not always easy to catch a glimpse of the Pocono wildlife, but if you carefully observe your surroundings, you can usually find some signs that were left behind.

The winter snow provides a convenient backdrop for animal tracks and greatly increases the chance of seeing some exciting animal signs. During my first winter at PEEC, a group of us stumbled upon some fresh black bear tracks that led across the pond. We followed the tracks for hours and, although we never found the bear, we discovered that it had an interesting morning! The bear had traveled through the woods to a second pond, where it tried to break into a beaver lodge. The ice had broken under the heavy weight of the bear, forcing it to abandon the lodge and head back into the shelter of the forest. It stopped a few times to dig under logs for food, and we even found a freshly broken tree that was used as a scratching post – complete with clumps of bear fur still stuck in it.

Animals leave behind clues that give us glimpses into their lives. There may be evidence of their feeding activity – a pile of feathers, chew marks on a leaf, or a blood trail that leads to a kill site. Tracks and trails give us an idea of where and when the animals are moving around. By carefully observing all the animal signs, we can piece together the connections and interactions that occur each and every day.

PEEC offers several Animal Tracking classes this winter. Join us as we explore our natural areas for signs of wildlife! The classes will be held on January 7, January 21, and February 4, from 1-3pm. Pre-registration is required.



Black Bear



Striped Skunk



Coyote



Rabbit



Opossum



Beaver



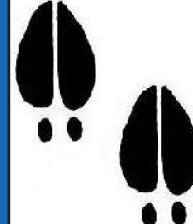
Red Fox



Raccoon



Deer



Turkey



*All images are courtesy of [www.camping-field-guide.com](http://www.camping-field-guide.com)*

# NEW YEAR PROGRAMS 2012 — AND — GETAWAYS

**PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED**  
Unless otherwise indicated.

## TO REGISTER:

Call PEEC at 570-828-2319  
with credit card information available  
Or download application: [www.peec.org/pdfs/PEECProgramRegistration.pdf](http://www.peec.org/pdfs/PEECProgramRegistration.pdf)

## JANUARY

### Cross Country Skiing

Every Saturday morning | 9am-11am

Every Sunday afternoon | 1pm-3pm

Cost: \$20 adult / \$10 child

Beginner lessons provide a chance to enjoy the winter woods. No snow? Join us for a free winter hike. Skis and boots provided - register with your shoe size to guarantee a spot!

\*Exception: There will NOT be skiing on Sunday, January 1.

### Christmas Bird Count

Sunday, January 1, 2012 | 8am start

Cost: \$5 for Audubon

It's the National Audubon Society's 112th annual Christmas Bird Count! Families, students, birders and scientists brave the cold weather to search and identify birds in our area. If you are a beginner, we match you with a more experienced participant. Potluck dinner afterwards -please call for details if you are interested. Pre-registration required.

### Animal Tracking

Saturday, January 7, 2012 | 1-3pm

Cost: Free for members / \$5 for non-members

Animals leave behind clues that give us glimpses into their lives. Explore our natural areas for signs of wildlife.

### Sunday for Singles

Sunday, January 8, 2012 | 1-3pm

Cost: Free

This monthly hike is all about meeting new people and exploring nature together.

### Introduction to Winter Ecology

Saturday, January 14, 2012 | 1-3pm

Cost: Free for members / \$5 for non-members

Learn how different plants and animals survive the winter. Join us on a hike and experience PEEC in the winter.

### MLK Jr. Day of Service

Monday, January 16, 2012 | 9am-12pm

"Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does." - William James

This is the perfect day to become involved with our volunteer program. All ages are welcome. Snacks will be provided.

### Animal Tracking

Saturday, January 21, 2012 | 1-3pm

Cost: Free for members / \$5 for non-members

Animals leave behind clues that give us glimpses into their lives. Explore our natural areas for signs of wildlife.

### Eagle Watch I

Saturday, January 28, 2012 | 9am - 3pm

Cost: \$25

Join us as we take a trip north in search of eagles. We will make a stop at the Eagle Institute and look for eagles soaring, feeding and nest guarding. Bring a lunch and dress in warm layers. Call by January 21 to reserve a seat in the van.

### Introduction to Ice Fishing I

Sunday, January 29, 2012 | 10am-12:30pm

Cost: \$10

Learn the basics of ice fishing and then try your luck on our ponds. We provide all of the equipment. Dress in warm layers. Supervised children only, please. Not enough ice? Join us for a free winter hike. No fishing licenses required. Spaces limited. Call to reserve your spot!

## FEBRUARY

### Cross Country Skiing

Saturday mornings | 9-11am

Sunday afternoons | 1-3pm

(of the first two weekends in February)

Cost: \$20 adult / \$10 child

Beginner lessons provide a chance to enjoy the winter woods. No snow? Join us for a free winter hike. Skis and boots provided - register with your shoe size to guarantee a spot!

Classes on February 4th, 5th, 11th, & 12th

### Eagle Watch II

Saturday, February 4, 2012 | 9am-3pm

Cost: \$25

Join us as we take a trip north in search of eagles. We will make a stop at the Eagle Institute and look for eagles soaring, feeding and nest guarding. Bring a lunch and dress in warm layers. Call by January 28 to reserve a seat in the van.

### Animal Tracking

Saturday, February 4, 2012 | 10am-12pm

Cost: Free for members / \$5 for non-members

Animals leave behind clues that give us glimpses into their lives. Explore our natural areas for signs of wildlife.

### Introduction to Ice Fishing II & III

February 11 & 12, 2012 | 9:30am-12pm

Cost: \$10

Learn the basics of ice fishing and try your luck on our ponds. We provide all of the equipment. Dress in warm layers. No ice? Join us for a free winter hike. Supervised children only, please. No fishing licenses required. Spaces limited. Call to reserve your spot!

### Winter Waterfalls

Saturday, February 11, 2012 | 2-4pm

Cost: \$20

This is a great time of year to enjoy the waterfalls. See them as they cascade down through chunks of frozen ice and snow. Dress warm, wear sturdy boots, and bring a camera! Call to reserve your seat in the van. Please register by February 4.





### **Sunday for Singles - Eagle Watch**

Sunday, February 12, 2012 | 9am-3pm  
Cost: \$25

Join us as we take a trip north in search of eagles. We will make a stop at the Eagle Institute and look for eagles soaring, feeding and nest guarding. Bring a lunch and dress in warm layers. Call by February 5 to reserve a seat in the van.

### **“Winter Wonderland” Family Nature Getaway Weekend**

President's Day weekend: February 17-20  
Cost: Adults \$205, 25% off ages 7-10, 50% off ages 4-6, free under 3

Bring your friends and family to experience PEEC in the wintertime. Cross country skiing, animal tracking, nature hikes, crafts, campfire and more! Price includes three nights of lodging and meals from Friday dinner to Monday lunch. Join us for a wonderful winter weekend! Commuter and day rates available – call for details.

## **MARCH**

### **Introduction to Orienteering**

Saturday, March 3, 2012 | 10am-12pm  
Cost: \$5

Learn to use a map and compass on our orienteering course. We'll provide the equipment and teach you everything you need to know.

### **Fossil Trail Hike**

Saturday, March 3, 2012 | 1:30-3pm  
Cost: Free for members / \$5 for non-members

Take a hike in the woods. This 1 ¼ mile trail passes a vernal pool that is important for breeding amphibians and then descends into a mature hardwood ravine. Look at fossils along the way. Moderate-strenuous with a final, steep climb.

### **Sunday for Singles**

Sunday, March 4, 2012 | 1-3pm  
Cost: Free

This monthly hike is all about meeting new people and enjoying nature together. Dress warm for this guided hike.

### **Sugar Shack Scramble**

Saturday, March 10, 2012 | 9am-12:30pm  
Cost: \$15 adult / \$10 child

Take an orienteering expedition to the “Two Saps” Sugar Shack. Use a map and compass to reach the sugar shack and then enjoy hot cocoa and pancakes with fresh maple syrup! Sign up for a 9am or 9:30am start time. Spaces limited!

### **Black & White Photography Tour**

Sunday, March 11, 2012 | 9am-3pm  
Cost: \$15

Grab your camera and join us for a tour of the historic buildings in the Park. This is the perfect time of year to shoot black and white photos. Pack a lunch and dress warm. Call to reserve a seat in the van. Carpooling encouraged.

### **Equinox Extravaganza**

Saturday, March 17, 2012 | 1-4pm  
Cost: \$5 per child

Celebrate the end of winter and welcome the new growing season with our annual springtime celebration! Enjoy exhibits and activities that honor the spring equinox. Call for details.

### **Amphibian Search**

Sunday, March 18, 2012 | 1-3pm  
Cost: \$5

Spring is right around the corner and the warming temperatures will bring out the frogs and salamanders. Join us on our search for the first sightings!

### **Boy Scout Weekend**

March 24-25, 2012 | 9am registration  
Cost: \$99 scout / \$40 adult

Attention all Webelos and Boy Scouts! Join us at PEEC for a weekend of badge work. The weekend includes a night of lodging and four meals.

### **Plan your Garden Day**

Saturday, March 31, 2012 | 1-3pm  
Cost: \$5 members / \$10 non-members  
Join us for a discussion on spring gardening. Learn how, what, and when to plant. This is a great forum for sharing experiences and learning some tips.

## **Scout Badge Fests**

By Jessica Snyder

This year's fall badge fests were a great success. The Girl Scout Badge Fest was held on November 5th and the Boy Scout Badge Fests was held on November 12th. Both events attracted over 100 participants each and everyone seemed to have a great time! Thank you to all who participated this year and we hope to see you all again in the near future.

### **Just A REMINDER!**

There will not be any Girl Scout events this upcoming spring 2012. The Girl Scouts are in the process of transitioning to a new program style and will be discontinuing their traditional badges. Girl Scout events will return fall of 2012 with the new Journeys program!

Don't forget...

All scout troops can individually schedule PEEC programming or a visit to PEEC at any time! Please give us a call and we can start planning with you.

Pocono Environmental Education Center ~  
570-828-2319





# Kids Page



## The Cranky Crooked Christmas Tree

By Mariann B. Oswald

The first time Theodore Balsam heard about Christmas he was just a little sprout. It was fall. He was planted between his new friends, Allison and Jessica. They were in a row right next to much bigger trees, Floie, Will and Sheri, at the PEEC Pick-a-tree Christmas Tree Farm. Theodore loved to listen to Floie's stories of snow, of watching sleigh riders in the field below, and of being decorated with big red bows for Christmas.

Theodore was always dreaming of being the tallest tree on the farm. He wanted to reach the sky and touch the clouds someday. Floie, Will, and Sheri told him it would never be.

"You will be dug up," said Floie.

"Just as you think you are the tallest tree on the hill," said Will.

"And a family will take you away," said Sheri.

These stories frightened Theodore.

As Theodore grew taller so did all the other trees. Each year the tallest trees were taken away in trucks or cars with giggling, happy children.

"I will not let them dig me up," said Theodore. "I will live here always."

"But what can you do?" asked Jessica.

Allison shook snow from her branches. "You cannot stop growing," she said.

Theodore thought very hard. "No. That would not do," he said. "But," he stood tall and waved in the cold breeze. "I can grow so crooked that no one will ever want me."

Theodore's plan worked for a couple of years. One by one he saw his friends taken away by smiling, laughing families. As each one left, he bent and twisted a little more. He never knew where his friends went or what happened to them. He missed Janet, Hannah, and Josh; he missed their stories and their companionship. Finally the day came for Allison to go.

"Bye, Allison," Theodore sighed, bending into the breeze and twisting away so she would not see his tears.

"Good-bye, Theodore," Allison said. "I am so happy that I was chosen this year. It is wonderful to be loved and needed."

Theodore watched as the family took her away in their bright red truck. His tears formed icicles on his crooked branches.

Now Theodore was all alone on the hill. The only trees around were Jeff, Barbara, Wendy, and Janine, small seedlings planted way down in the field. Glenn and Suzie were much too far away to keep him company. He began to think that maybe he had made a mistake. Had he been wrong?

"I should not have been afraid," he called to the other trees. "We can not stay planted in one place all of our lives." But the other trees could not hear him.

"I was meant to be a Christmas tree," he sighed. "And now no one will ever want me."

Soon it was Christmas Eve. Theodore could hear the carolers singing beautiful Christmas songs far over the hill. Theodore imagined what it must be like to be a Christmas tree. What a special honor that would be.

"But no one will want a cranky crooked old tree like me," he said, slumping against the wind. "Even the birds don't want me any more."

Suddenly he heard voices very near.



"...only one left," a man said. It was Mr. Clapper, owner of the tree farm. "It's not much to look at but the kids can fix him up real pretty."

"Let's get him into the truck. It is getting late and will be dark before you know it," the sweet voice of Mrs. Clapper said.

Theodore was so excited. Why had they chosen him? Where was he going?

He rode in the back of a truck, wrapped in a blanket and tied securely so he could not get hurt.

The truck drove a very long while. When it stopped, they were in front of a huge old white house with blue trim.

Theodore was taken out of the truck and placed next to the front door. Mr. Clapper rang the big brass bell that hung by the door. Then he jumped back in his truck with Mrs. Clapper and drove quickly away.

"Where am I?" Theodore wondered. "Is this all a Christmas tree does?"

Young voices screamed and giggled from inside the huge house. Suddenly someone opened the door. Children ran out of the house and surrounded Theodore Balsam.

"He is soooo tall," said a very small boy, looking up at the red bow on Theodore's top.

"He has such long branches," said another boy, stretching out his arms so everyone could see.

"We can put on lots of pretty decorations," squealed a little girl hiding her huge smile behind her hands.

Theodore was taken inside and placed in the center of a huge hallway. The children spent hours making decorations from paper and cloth, from popcorn and cranberries, even from pine cones, ribbons, and yarn. They put all of their creations on Theodore, one at a time,

being sure that each was placed in the perfect spot.

A big gold star was put up on top by his red ribbon. Theodore Balsam was so happy.

"What a GLORIOUS tree!" a tall gray-haired woman exclaimed. "The most beautiful ever!"

Theodore stood as tall and as straight as he could for his new friends, the children of Oleanders Orphanage.

When Christmas was over Theodore was planted right in the front yard by the walkway. He still wore the gold star on top. With his branches spread wide, Theodore greeted everyone as they came to the orphanage.

"What could be better," he thought to himself, "than to be needed and loved, to give everyone your best, and to grow stronger and happier everyday."



Dear P.E.E.C;

I loved all of your activities, especially the night hike. I thought it would be scary but it wasn't! I discovered lots of things; like that I have night vision and that trying out something new can be much funner than you expected. Keep up that night hike!

TAKE pictures  
leave only FOOTPRINTS



Attention all PEEC staff and volunteers,  
I would just like to thank you for making my stay at PEEC just magnificent. I'd like to thank you for giving me your time and showing me anything and everything fun and exciting on the PEEC campus. It was the best school trip ever and I will never ever forget my memorable experience here at PEEC. Once again thank you sooooo much.  
Your very own  
PEEC camper

Thank you for letting us explore PEEC. It was fun. The thing that I enjoyed was the camp fire. I learned the most in the bat study. I learned that they use ecobation.