

3rd National Conference on Science, Policy and the Environment
Education for a Sustainable and Secure Future

Natural History

The Revitalization of Natural History Education

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Recommendations:

1. The National Council for Science and the Environment should emphasize that natural history education is the foundation for all ecological learning and sustainability education. As such, it should be an overriding educational priority.
2. Develop a White Paper to outline the rationale, purpose, and virtues of natural history education.
3. Organize a society of natural history educators, including members from government, schools, academia, nature centers, parks, zoos, museums, and land trusts, in order to reestablish the prominence of natural history for citizenship, community participation, and ecological literacy.
4. Increase opportunities for public involvement, interaction, and education in natural history through family and community organizations, worship communities, and media outlets.
5. Cultivate a national network of accessible, convenient, visible, and local natural history observation sites in schoolyards, shopping centers, and playgrounds (“bird banding on Main Street”).
6. Organize web based efforts to collect, distribute, and evaluate grassroots natural history data, supported by scientists, employing citizen groups, schools, and amateur naturalists.
7. A national program of field based natural history training, sponsored by nature centers, teacher organizations, and environmental studies programs to support and enhance the natural history skills and observation techniques of K-12 teachers, and provide instruction for place-based, schoolyard programs.
8. Initiate a comprehensive research program to investigate cognitive natural history—how people learn to observe nature at different stages of lifecycle development.
9. Increase the opportunities for natural history education by providing sites that offer security and freedom to explore habitats, without concerns for personal safety.