

## Highlighting Senses

I THOUGHT I KNEW MY SENSES. I could walk into a forest and describe with great detail the sights, smells, and sounds. But I had no idea what I was missing, until I attended the “Writing from Nature” workshop cosponsored by the Highlights Foundation and the Roger Tory Peterson Institute, held April 5–9, 2006.

We began with a tour of Highlights Magazine and Boyds Mills Press, housed in two historic Honesdale, Pennsylvania homes in the beautiful mountains of northeastern Pennsylvania. Then we headed higher into the mountains to Boyds Mills, to the Myers home for an incredible four-day journey.

Each day began with instructions for a new way of looking at the world. Then we practiced the new techniques. We hiked through forests and fished with nets in streams and vernal pools. We saw where/how bear, deer and coyote uniquely mark their territory, and where wild turkeys had “dusted”. We corralled a goat, gathered warm hen eggs and unearthed little critters. We inspected fairy shrimp and frog eggs with microscopes, star gazed, listened, smelled, measured, stepped in bear scat (oops), journaled, drew, photographed, created, bonded...and had a blast!

We shared heartfelt stories that brought laughter and tears. We each had our own cozy cabin and Dominick treated us to incredible gourmet meals. One of our fellow participants exclaimed, “This is like summer camp for adults!”

### Donna H. Bowman

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The expert faculty included editors, authors, scientists, biologists and naturalists. They taught us unique techniques for investigating the world around us, and then revealed the most compelling way to convey our findings to children. Elevated awareness is crucial to writing any subject or genre. Incorporating the techniques can help one manuscript stand out from the others. This workshop is an absolute treasure for anyone interested in writing about science and nature.

Inspired by “Writing from Nature,” Southern Breezers will now be offering “Science & Nature Writing” workshops/field trips such as hikes, stargazing, fossil hunts where we can show others the new techniques we learned, as well as network and inspire each other. Passing along the fun and knowledge from our own environmental journeys is a worthy endeavor for each of us. It may only take one, small spark of interest in a child to ignite a flame of passion that can burn for a lifetime.

For more information about this workshop please contact RTPPI's Director of Education at [mbaldwin@rtppi.org](mailto:mbaldwin@rtppi.org).

**From top:** The cabins where we stayed during the four-day workshop; using a large net, called a seine, to catch aquatic creatures in a nearby stream; workshop participants holding hands around the state champion Black Maple; exploring a vernal pool; Wood Frog eggs found in the vernal pool.

