

FIELD NOTES

Spring 2023

A Note from Canuche



It's been a fascinating first few months in the new job. I'm learning all I can from the community, the WRI team and board as we transition from snow science and snowshoeing to birds and butterflies. I've watched dozens of kids try on

snowshoes and waddle across the meadow for the first time – seeing our educators grab those moments of wonder when they happen outside is inspirational.

2022 was a great year for the Wenatchee River Institute (WRI). You will see in our short annual report that we delivered more programming to more places than ever before – much of it free or Pay What You Can thanks to the support of our donors and funders.

Springtime brings many exciting programs, including workshops, Red Barn Events, Bird Fest, Field Days with schools, and more! Meanwhile, our Strategic Planning Committee is learning all we can from our community to help shape WRI's future path for the next 10-year Strategic Plan, being developed this year. Come out and join us!



Canuche Terranella
Executive Director

Adventures in the Snow

It was a winter full of days outside in the snow! From December through February, WRI offered 42 Snowshoe Strolls on our campus and at the Leavenworth National Fish Hatchery. That's 10 more than last year, and that doesn't even include the total number of groups led!

Over 400 people of all ages and experience levels joined us to learn about native wildlife, plants, and the cultural & natural

history of the area – all while on snowshoes! The majority of participants had never been snowshoeing; some may have never even been in the snow before.



Some participants said that they have made Snowshoe Strolls a new annual family tradition!

"Snowshoe Strolls are a way for us to connect people to land in a different way than they may have expected when they planned their trip to Leavenworth"

Joshua Schaub, Community Programs Educator

This 3-month long winter program wouldn't be possible without the 14 volunteers that worked alongside WRI staff. Thanks to you – our volunteers and supporters – for helping this program succeed and grow!

Traveling Through Space and Time...

How often do you look up?

We see stars and constellations on occasion, but it may not be something that we look at intentionally very often. Simply looking up into the sky can inspire our imaginations, bringing us all back to a stage in life where we are curious, full of wonder.

With our planetarium, this becomes possible.

The planetarium is a large dome that projects a realistic view of the sky in real time, showing anything from the moon's path throughout the year, the projection of all 88 constellations, or even travel to different points in the solar system – like the moon or Saturn!

The planetarium was donated in 2017 to kickstart the Traveling Planetarium Program, allowing WRI to bring the wonder of space to schools all over North Central Washington. For the first time since the pandemic, the planetarium made its comeback! Last November, WRI visited every 1st and 5th grade classroom in Wenatchee School District. Campers in grades K-3 also got to experience it during Mid-Winter Break Camp in February.

"Students were fascinated by the stars and planets. It's a jaw-dropping encounter when they first see it!"

Deanna Butcher, Youth Programs Coordinator



Over 950 students across 49 classrooms got to experience the planetarium at their school! They were so engaged – students' hands shot up in the air giddy with questions for Kyra (left) and Deanna (right).

The planetarium is always a popular and fun program, no matter the age. For the first time ever, WRI offered this program to adults this winter... and it was just as exciting and successful! The workshop filled so quickly that a second session was opened.

During the workshops, participants spent time inside the planetarium, then went outside to see the real night sky while on snowshoes. One participant said she "enjoyed learning the names and images of constellations and actually finding a few of them in the night sky."

Constellations aren't just groupings of stars in the sky, they connect to stories of people, culture, and place. Participants learned some stories behind the meaning of some constellations to different cultures like the Greeks, Egyptians, Hindu, and Native Americans.



What we know as "Orion" is a common constellation recognized by many other cultures as well, typically representing a protector. It's known as Atse Ats'oosj or "First Slim One" by the Navajo, and "Kaalpurush" by the Hindu, representing their god, Vishnu.

This program was a chance for adults to be kids again where they can rekindle that awe, curiosity, and wonder of the night sky and the universe beyond.

"I was awestruck by the beauty of the evening sky in the planetarium. It reminded me of the night sky when I went camping as a kid and we could see the Milky Way"

Patti, Program Participant

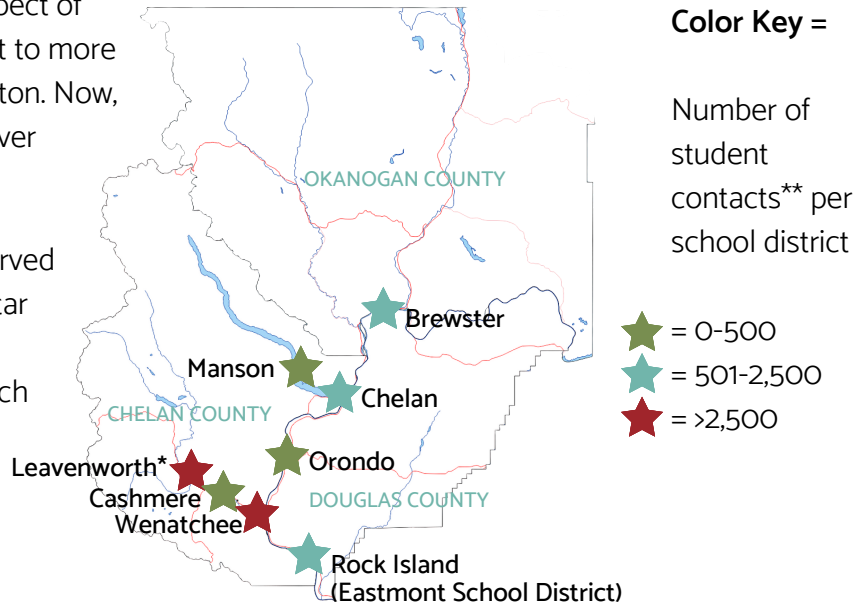
The planetarium captures imagination, allowing deeper exploration into the universe, touching on stories behind constellations from other cultures. More importantly, we are helping create more stories and sparking that curiosity of the world around us. Thanks to supporters like you, we can continue this program for both youth and adults to enjoy in the future!

2022 Annual Report – Short and Sweet

WRI's mission is to connect people, communities and the natural world... In 2022, we did just that! A key aspect of our last strategic plan was to broaden our impact to more communities throughout North Central Washington. Now, WRI staff drive as far as 2 hours each way to deliver environmental education programs to students.

To the right is a map of the three counties we served in 2022: Chelan, Douglas, and Okanogan. Each star represents one of 8 school districts where we delivered environmental education programs, such as Traveling Naturalist, Field Days, and Youth Camps. The color of the star indicates how many student contacts there were in that district in 2022, with the highest concentration in Leavenworth (2,975 contacts) and Wenatchee (2,776 contacts). In 2022, there was a total of 9,632 student contacts!

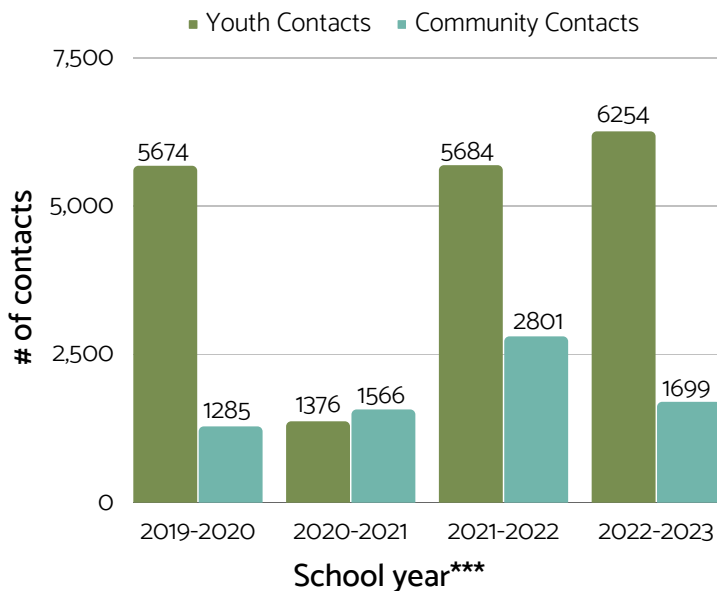
2022 Student Contacts



*Includes Cascade School District and youth camps.

**Number of student contacts is calculated by the number of days of instruction per student.

Youth and Community Contact Trends

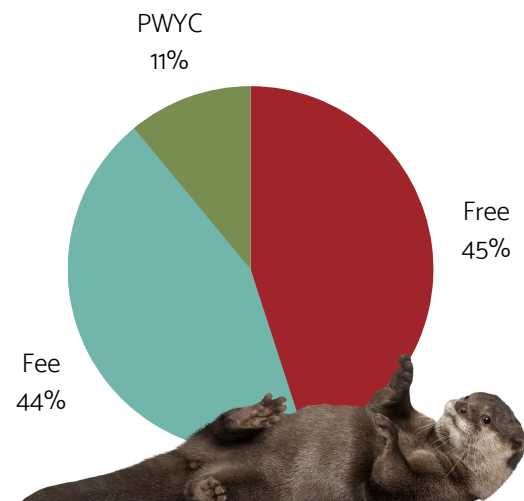


***Data for 2022-2023 school year through February 2023

Not only has WRI expanded our reach to more locations across North Central Washington, but we have been seeing you more often than ever! Our programs have bounced back to even higher levels than pre-COVID.

In the chart to the left, the total contacts of youth and community members are noted per school year (which runs from September through August). So far, the 2022-2023 school year is on track to surpass last school year's numbers, too! Even with 2020's bump in the road, the gradual increase of environmental education programs will continue for years to come.

Cost of Programs in 2022



Another one of our goals is to remove financial barriers for youth and adults participating in our programs to increase accessibility, particularly for low income and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) families. This includes the implementation of our Pay What You Can (PWYC) structure for some of our programs. In 2022, 11% of people participated in a WRI program that used the PWYC structure, 44% participated in a fee-based program, and 45% of people participated in a free program. We can offer free and PWYC programming because of support from grant funders and donors. Thank you!

WRI's Nature Journal

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Randee Zerger
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Joshua Schaub

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Entry No. 1: Morel Mushrooms (*Morchella* spp.)

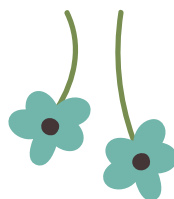
- True Morels are one of the most sought-after groups of edible mushrooms... and there are dozens of species in the Pacific Northwest!
- Here are some fun facts:
 - Spring is the best time of year to find them!
 - Most are found around trees – dead or alive – especially near conifers or on a landscape recently burned.

- Their caps look similar to honeycombs and can be elongated or shaped like a cone, egg, or sphere!
The stem and cap are completely hollow inside.



Disclaimer: Please refer to an official mushroom guide while foraging for mushrooms. Eat foraged mushrooms at your own risk.

Natural World
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- A Note from Canuche
- Adventures in the Snow
- Traveling Planetarium Returns
- 2022 Annual Report
- Thank you, donors!

Reflect on 2022 with us.

What's inside?

FIELD NOTES Spring 2023

Thank you to everyone who supported WRI in 2022!

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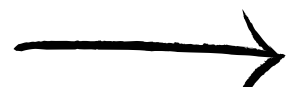
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