

# The Homeschool Herald

## The Newsletter Created By and For Homeschoolers

The place to share your creative creations!

Winter 2008-09



## Where Does Winter Come From?

We all know that when Winter comes, cold days are ahead, much of the greenery of Spring and Summer disappear, and thankfully, the mosquitoes and fleas take a break from munching on us. But where does Winter come from? Greek mythology explains it this way...

Persephone is the goddess of the underworld in Greek mythology. She is the daughter of Zeus and Demeter, goddess of the harvest. Persephone was such a beautiful young woman that everyone loved her, even Hades wanted her for himself. One day, when she was collecting flowers on the plain of Enna, the earth suddenly opened and Hades rose up from the gap and abducted her. None but Zeus, and the all-seeing sun, Helios, had noticed it.

Broken-hearted, Demeter wandered the earth, looking for her daughter until Helios revealed what had happened. Demeter was so angry that she withdrew herself in loneliness, and the earth ceased to be fertile. Knowing this could not continue much longer, Zeus sent Hermes down to Hades to make him release Persephone. Hades grudgingly agreed,

but before she went back he gave Persephone a pomegranate (or the seeds of a pomegranate, according to some sources). When she later ate of it, it bound her to underworld forever and she had to stay there one-third of the year. The other months she stayed with her mother. When Persephone was in Hades, Demeter refused to let anything grow and winter began. This myth is a symbol of the budding and dying of nature.

So there's one perspective... What do you think?

We are always looking for submissions for the *Homeschool Herald*. You can send us submissions via e-mail or snail mail. Please contact us with any questions, ideas, or suggestions. We look forward to publishing YOUR creative creations!

Enjoy the Winter 2008-09 issue of the *Homeschool Herald*!

Works Cited:  
"Persephone." Encyclopedia Mythica from Encyclopedia Mythica Online.  
<<http://www.pantheon.org/articles/p/persephone.html>>

# So... You Think You Know Everything?

- 40 to 50 percent of body heat can be lost through the head (no hat) as a result of its extensive circulatory network.
- The blue whale can produce sounds up to 188 decibels. This is the loudest sound produced by a living animal and has been detected as far away as 530 miles.

<http://www.hightechscience.org/funfacts.htm>

## Sudoku

						3		
7	2			8	6	9		
			4	2			8	5
						6	4	
1		8				5		2
	6	4						
8	1			3	5			
		6	2	1			5	7
		9						

**The numbers 1-9 must be in every column, row, & box**

## Birds of Prey

By Cole Swims



I took a trip to the Chattahoochee Nature Center and learned a lot about birds. I learned that animals that are awake at night are nocturnal and animals that are awake during the day are diurnal.

When owls kill

their food they regurgitate the bones and fur. We got to dissect one of the owl pellets. It was cool. There were lots of bones and we found 3 heads of animals that were eaten.

An Owl's eye is very big. It has bigger eyes so they can see better at night to kill small prey. This is what my eyes would look like if my eyes were like an owl's.



Sometimes owls fly across the road trying to catch prey and end up getting hit by cars. This



Horned Owl had been hit by a car and they had to amputate his wing at the wrist. He now lives at the CNC for the rest of

his life because he can not fly and catch prey. So the people at CNC will take care of him.

Owl's have hooks on their feathers so that the prey will not hear them coming down to get them. The hooks make the wings silent as they move through the air. You can only see hooks with a magnifying glass or a microscope.

Farmers used to think that their barns were haunted because of the Barn Owl. Their call sounds scary.

We learned that a Turkey Vulture is a scavenger and they eat stuff that is already dead. They would even eat another Turkey Vulture if it was dead.

Hawks have sharp talons so they can stay on trees and catch prey easily. I had a great time at the Chattahoochee Nature Center and you would like it too.

# What's In A Game?

By Aaron Morris

This past Thursday (October 23, 2008), I got the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to test out a brand new game from the up-and-coming game developer, Hi-Rez Studios, one of the only such companies based right here in Georgia.

Their current project is called Global Agenda, and though it's still in early development, I



can tell you now that it's going to be 'epic'. It's a deeply enjoyable shooter that has the feel of the feel of a 'World of Warcraft' game, but, with a much simpler set up.

Set in a futuristic world of robots and awesome weapons, with amazing graphics to boot, this is just about the funnest game I've ever had the luck to play.

Although a confidentiality agreement prevents me from saying much more, I hope you'll be looking for the Global Agenda debut as eagerly as I am.

Thanks for the opportunity Vered.

**"You can teach a student a lesson for a day; but if you can teach him to learn by creating curiosity, he will continue the learning process as long as he lives."**

**- Clay P. Bedford**

# Weeds? What Weeds?

Compiled By Vered Kleinberger,  
Program Coordinator for  
Homeschool Excursions

What can you eat in the Winter to help boost your immune system? It's probably growing in your yard... and if not, I guarantee it's near by! Winter Cress! This 'weed' is sometimes called scurvy grass for its high concentration of disease-preventing vitamin C. It's native to



Europe and was introduced to America by the first sailing ships where it was used as an edible and medicinal herb for preventing scurvy.

Winter Cress is mainly used for salads, as a pot herb, or fried. It is high in vitamin C and minerals and is used as a bitter medicinal tea to stimulate appetite, purify and strengthen blood (Cherokee), for coughs, and as a diuretic. Winter Cress may also be used externally as a poultice to help heal wounds. Caution is advised in eating the raw plant; use only small amounts... 1 tbs. chopped leaves or less. Winter Cress are members of the family Brassicaceae, which grown under cultivation all over the world.

The fresh green Winter Cress leaves can be collected any time you find them between now and next spring. Toss a handful of them into a salad, or collect a pot full to steam for a spinach-like green vegetable. Include them in a stir-fry or add them to soup.

Leave the roots intact as you gather the

Continued to page 4

leaves, and they will produce more leaves in the spring. Keep harvesting the leaves through the spring until the plants begin to produce a flower bud. Then collect the buds! These look like miniature broccoli and are cooked in the same way.

Many warnings exist about the consumption of this plant. Some are due to its ability to store contaminants, even pesticides, from the soil or water it grows in. To make sure it is edible, do not to harvest from roadsides, waste places, cultivated fields where pesticides and herbicides have been used, or anywhere near polluted or



brackish water.

While harvesting any wild plant, keep these cautionary thoughts in mind. Always be certain of the identity of a plant before you eat it. Be sure to collect your edibles from an area that is not polluted. Think conservation! If there are only a few plants in an area, don't pick any of them. Try a small quantity to begin with, as some people have allergic reactions to new foods.

Think twice before pulling that weed! You may be throwing away something delicious and nutritious! *Please consult your physician before making any medical or dietary decisions.*

Images and Information:

<http://www.motherearthnews.com>

<http://www.naturesherbal.com/Wintercress.htm>

<http://www.northernlife.ca>

<http://www.calflora.net>

<http://gallery.nen.gov.uk>

## You Are What You Eat!

By Jill Gottesman

Each year, about this time of winter, I find myself daydreaming more and more about summer. As the nights get longer and I spend more time in front of the wood stove, I might think about sunny afternoons in a swimming hole or perhaps the ocean. But more than exotic vacations and lazy days, I am really dreaming about the parts of summer that involve tomatoes and strawberries, blueberries and basil! Yes, it's the garden that I miss, and the tastes of fresh food grown with pride and love.

The last few years I have become more aware of the seasonal cycles of fresh food, and I have tried to catch my favorite fruits and

veggies at their local peak, preserve some for the rest of the year, and then miss them just a little bit until they make their star appearance next time around. I have grown some of my own food and supported my local farmers at the markets and produce stands. These small changes in my eating habits have made me think more and more about the energy needed to grow, transport, and preserve food, our local and organic food networks and resources, and our own connections to what we eat and how it got to our tables. And in January, I think about all of the planning and projects that are starting right now to make sure we have a tasty and nutritious supply all summer long!

Farm and food-related projects can be a fabulous way to incorporate math, science, civics, history, writing, and even art into everyday lessons. I wanted to share a few

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possibilities with you at this time of cold winter, when dreaming about those first peaches and green beans pushes me to make some concrete commitments to my food planning, starting with taking out the compost...

The most direct way to dive in is to grow some of your own food this summer. Planning a garden for the space you have, whether it's a tilled backyard or pots on the patio, requires math to calculate space needed per plant, how many seeds to plant, planting schedules according to growing season, and budgeting for seeds, tools, and soil amendments. Learning about soil composition is a great science lesson, as are pollination, the plant life cycles, and the ecology of a garden environment—complete with



worms, bees, and other not-so-welcome bugs. The construction of cold frames, raised beds, greenhouses, and trellises also require

some math skills, which seem to make much greater sense when you are using them with hammer and nails in hand. The next couple months are the time to research, budget, and gather materials, draw out your garden plans, and even start some early plants indoors from seed.

If time and space do not offer the possibility of a home garden, you can investigate what kinds of community gardens or farms exist in your area. Community gardens take on all kinds of shapes and forms, from separating out individual plots for families to dividing all food yields between those that come to work in the garden. You may even know someone with some good yard space but no time to tend a garden themselves! You might also find a local farm that would welcome regular volunteer shifts. This would allow you

to participate in and learn about each stage of crop growth, while also learning about the economics of running a farm. Many small farms grow a diverse array of foods, and might have animals as well. Some farms offer Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) options, in which a family can buy a share of the seasonal harvest at the beginning, and then collect weekly baskets of what is ready. This structure allows us to invest directly into a farm,



provides farmers capital at the time they need it most (when they have to buy seeds and such), and ensures you the freshest produce, right in season. Tapping into the local farm community will also lead you to sources of other locally produced goods like eggs, cheeses, honey, grains, and meat, and maybe a few more learning opportunities. Now is the time to research what is going on near you, and start talking to local farmers. Making exploratory phone calls and interviewing are great skills to develop during this process. Start with farmer's markets and local groceries—ask what is available near you, and compare options. It is an interesting exercise to follow your family's food budget through the seasons, look at what you buy, and then compare it to what you spend when you are buying local food in season.

As we round out the winter holiday season, I am reminded again of how we—our families, communities, and cultures—define ourselves through our food. When you are planning out what you would like to grow this year, think about your treasured family recipes. Where is your family from? What kinds of cuisine and food traditions have been passed down through the generations? This time of year is perfect for researching genealogy, recording family

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# Upcoming Homeschool Excursions Programs

We have lots of exciting activities coming up! Here's a small sample of what's in our future...

- January 7 Weather Rocks at the Center for Puppetry Arts (with puppet workshop & backstage tour!!)
- January 28 Duckbill Glass Studio tour and paperweight project
- January 13- February 3 Stained Glass or Pottery in Pickens County (4 class series)
- February 19 Jack & the Beanstalk at the Center for Puppetry Arts (with puppet workshop & backstage tour!!)
- March 13 Class of 3000 Live at the Alliance with a backstage tour!
- April 7 Stellaluna at the Center for Puppetry Arts (with puppet workshop & backstage tour!!)

Our Winter and Spring calendars are growing as new programs are added (*many* fun and unique events are currently being planned!), so check our web site often. Remember to refresh your pages!

We look forward to seeing you and your family soon!

**Here are some photos from a few of our most recent adventures:**

**Duckbill Studios**

**Raptors**

**at the Chattahoochee Nature Center**

**Hi Rez Studio Tour**

**Goodnight Moon at the Alliance**





stories, and collecting those recipes to create an heirloom cookbook. What can you grow and preserve this year that can be part of your holiday meals next winter? Where did those foods originate, and how did they get to North America? I come from a cultural background to which I feel a great connection through food, and I feel a loss of that connection when I am not intentional about what or how I eat. I feel the same about cooking for and sharing meals with others. Putting the time and intention into food preparation, along with knowing who grew it and how it was grown, makes the acts of cooking and eating very special indeed, and grounds us in a very literal way. Of course cooking and baking also use some more of those math skills, but it is such a fun way to use them I almost hesitate to bring them up!

A very important aspect of adding food into your winter studies is learning about the state, federal, and international laws that affect everything about our food supply. The more involved you are about the production of your own food, the deeper you will want to dig into policies regarding genetic modification of seeds and patent laws, labeling and certification of organic foods, government farm subsidies, and food trade between countries. Fortunately, there is more and more public interest in food policy as we consumers see the relationships between our food, our land, and our economy. Ask your farmers and grocers how laws affect them, and look into local groups that are active in educating the public about food policy and public health. This type of awareness is becoming more important than ever and we all must realize the very real power of how we choose to spend our money (and time and energy) on food. It is kind of funny to think



of planting a garden or buying organic produce directly from a farmer as a political act, but in terms of food safety and stability of local food supplies, that is exactly what they are.



While you are spending the remainder of these winter months interviewing local farmers, drawing out your garden plans, and researching the new farm bill, I have one more recommendation for a book report. This year I read Barbara Kingsolver's Animal, Vegetable, Miracle, which reinforced all of my small steps to become more involved with what and how I eat. This book catalogues a family's experiment to grow as much as possible and eat locally for one year, and includes each family member's perspective, smaller essays on the science and politics of issues discussed, and delicious recipe ideas. The family lives in Southwestern Virginia, similar to Georgia where we are so fortunate to be able to grow so much in extended seasons. It has encouraged me to commit this year to eating more local food, learning how to make cheese, volunteering at a friend's farm, and helping my neighbor extend her garden. This book is beautifully written and includes many resources to help with all of the projects I have suggested above. In fact, it inspired the writing of this very article! It is the perfect story with which to spend a cold winter evening curled up in front of the fire, under a blanket, dreaming about fresh berries and the promise of long summer days.

Images and Information:

- <http://www.kitchengardeners.org/pics/seedso53006.jpg>
- [http://www.landhaus-hagen.de/images/105\\_0521\\_IMG.JPG](http://www.landhaus-hagen.de/images/105_0521_IMG.JPG)
- <http://www.nbca.org/BlueHeron/>
- <http://www.usda.gov>
- <http://www.indianacertifiedorganic.com/>
- <http://www.foodalliance.org/>
- <http://activerain.com/blogsvie/436495/Spring-Farmer-s-Market>

# Raptors

By Marie Swims



Today we went to the CNC (Chattahoochee Nature Center). It was so much fun. We met Laurie who walked us around and showed us all the different birds

that are native to our state.

We saw Turkey Vultures, Black Vultures, Red Shouldered Hawks, Red Tailed Hawks, and several different types of Owls. We were able to see a Horned Owl that had been hit by a car and it's wing was amputated. Birds that have wings amputated have problems balancing themselves.

We always thought owls could turn their head all the way around but that is not true, even though it looks like it. They have 14 vertebrae in their necks which help them turn farther than we can (we only have 7 vertebrae). Owls are nocturnal which means they sleep during the day and are awake to hunt at night. Humans and many animals are diurnal, which is awake during the day and asleep at night.



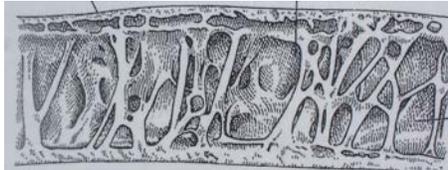
Owls have big eye sockets which help them see at night. Most of their heads are made up of the eyes. If you look at a light bulb the end part would be the eye ball and the bulb would be the space in the head that helps them see at night. Our sockets were like an owl's we would look really funny.

Raptors have large claws called talons to help them grab onto their prey. They usually



kill it by stabbing the animal with the talons. They are very sharp.

We were also able to dissect owl pellets. It is not poop. It is actually kind of like a hairball that is dry. The bones and hair from the animal go into the gizzard and stay there till they regurgitate it. It never makes it to their stomachs because they can not digest it.



We also learned that Owls' bones are similar to a sponge. It makes them lighter so they can fly.

If you have a microscope you can see tiny hooks on the end of an owl's feather. It helps them fly through the air quietly to attack their prey. It slows the air down so they do not make any noise when they fly. That is really cool.

We had a lot of fun learning about raptors. We can't wait till our next field trip!

**"Do not train children to learning by force and harshness, but direct them to it by what amuses their minds, so that you may be better able to discover with accuracy the peculiar bent of the genius of each."**

*- Plato*

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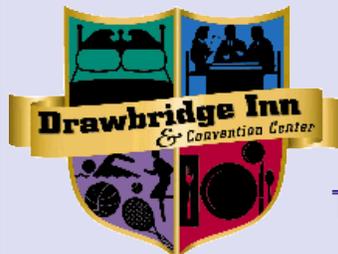
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# The Winter 2008-09 Issue

**Happy New Year! We hope you had a terrific holiday season, and we're looking forward to an exciting new year with you and your family! Homeschool Excursions wishes you a fantastic 2009!**

**This is an especially exciting version of the *Homeschool Herald*. It's the first time it's printed on our large format color laser printer (thanks to the generosity of BenefitStream in Jasper), so for all of you viewing it in print, we hope you enjoy the improvement. If you don't have a subscription, please order one to help support our efforts to continue publishing the *Herald*. Thanks!**

**We hope you enjoy the Winter issue of the *Homeschool Herald*! And we look forward to including your creative contributions in future issues!**

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