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Elgin High School to Host Annual National Biodiversity Teach-In

*Teachers, EHS alumni to facilitate hour-long webinars for
environmental science enthusiasts in February*

ELGIN - In a year that has demonstrated how important it is to maintain connections, the environmental science teachers at Elgin High School enlisted some of their student alumni to make sure the National Biodiversity Teach-In could continue for the ninth consecutive year.

The event, which gets underway on Friday, Feb. 5, will feature nearly 30 free webinars with globally respected scientists and policy experts on select Thursdays and Fridays in February. Subjects to be addressed during this year's Teach-In include microplastics, soil biodiversity, herbicides, climate science, and animals including orcas, whales, polar bears, snow leopards, turtles and sharks.

Current environmental science students at EHS usually play a large role in putting the event together. But because of the variety of schedules necessary this school year to accommodate both Distance Learners and students in the District's Hybrid Program, science teachers at EHS looked to the past for help.

Science teacher Brittney Mallen recruited three of her former Advanced Placement students — Class of 2020 graduates Sarah Welch, Maja Stachnik, and Alex Ruiz — to help with the Teach-In logistics.

"I think it's really important that students have access to learn directly from scientists," said Sarah, who is studying psychology at DePaul University in



Chicago. "The Teach-In offers a really unique way for students to learn about biodiversity and I love to participate in it!"

The webinars first began in 2013 to raise awareness about the importance of biodiversity. The 100-year anniversary of the extinction of the passenger pigeon in 2014 and the story of Martha, the last known living passenger pigeon, increased the students' interest and desire to discuss biodiversity with some of the best experts in the field.

Since then, the event has attracted a growing number of environmental science enthusiasts from around the globe — registering more than 100,000 participants from 20 countries.

As was the case in 2020, the Teach-In will feature a day of sessions with all female presenters for the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, a declaration from the United Nations General Assembly to encourage a new generation of women and girl scientists to tackle the major challenges of our time by leading innovation in science and technology.

Among the women presenting Thursday, Feb. 11 are Dr. Dawn Bazely, a professor in biology at York University, on "Amazing Arctic Plants Above the Treeline," Sandra Postel, founding director of the Global Water Policy Project, on "How We Can Fix Our Broken Water Cycle," Dr. Naomi Rose, the marine mammal specialist for the Animal Welfare Institute, on "Captive Whales: Beneath the Surface," and Dr. Katharine Hayhoe, a world-renowned climate scientist who is based at Texas Tech University, speaking on climate change. A special webinar aimed at children ages 9 to 14 will focus on "Shark Science: How We Study Sharks and Why," presented by Jillian Morris, the founder of Sharks 4 Kids.

There are also webinars scheduled during the school day on Friday, Feb. 12, Friday, Feb. 19, and Thursday, Feb. 25. The speakers will lead a lecture based on their specialty and leave time for discussion and questions.



“It's a pandemic but that does not mean that the fun and interaction with science and scientists has to stop,” said EHS science teacher Brigid Trimble. “We are able to once again provide teachers, students, and interested people from around the globe this awesome opportunity to talk with scientists and see how science is done by a lot of fascinating people. It doesn't matter if people are stuck at home or learning in a hybrid classroom, the National Biodiversity Teach-In is here to keep science alive!”

New this year, the Teach-In is offering an educator workshop on Friday, Feb. 26 called "From Phenomenon to Storyline - Endangered Species," featuring award-winning author and filmmaker Rick Wood. U-46 educators will be able to register via Canvas; educators from other districts or organizations can sign up via a Google Form at <https://forms.gle/eMWPtbbdzjnaVZsv8>.

The webinars are free and open to the public. The Teach-In website at www.nationalbiodiversityteachin.com has a full schedule and details on the speakers and topics being discussed. Those who register to attend a webinar will receive a personalized Zoom link. Webinars will also be livestreamed on U-46's Science and Planetarium YouTube channel the day of the event at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzR8S6GHTtV3ipRljnuPsPA> and its Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/U-46-Science-and-Planetarium-1974917279388810>

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