

- Thomas Riddle is the Assistant Director at the Roper Mountain Science Center. You all are part of the Greenville County school system.

- Yes.

- And you have children coming through all day long, during the school year--

- Absolutely.

- Learning about science and the natural world. And not just the natural world, but all sorts of scientific activities. But right now you've got a special event that really is geared towards the outside in South Carolina. So let's learn about that.

- Absolutely, so what we're doing is we're opening a lot of public for the first time this consecutively. Five weeks, six days a week, we'll be open for our butterfly adventure. Which kicks off this Saturday, from 9 to 3 with our butterfly festival. And at the event, you not only can go into our butterfly house, our butterfly encounter, but we have our living history farm open. And the rest of our exhibits from the marine ecology lab, to the environmental science lab, the arboretum, the outside butterfly garden. So there's a lot to see.

- A lot to do. Pack a picnic.

- Absolutely.

- And I think even some of our clips of people-- I think Cory, some of his coworkers are going to be out there with you too.

- Yeah, we're excited to have our local clubs and extension office there. They're going to be talking about pollinators and absolutely.

AMANDA That's a hot topic. We all love our pollinators.

MCNULTY:

THOMAS RIDDLE: Giving away milkweed seed.

AMANDA Oh.

MCNULTY:

THOMAS RIDDLE: So it's going to be a lot of fun. We're great partners with them, they're great partners with us.
And we love having them out.

AMANDA
MCNULTY: Well we're showing some pictures of some of the butterflies and things. And some of the things that will be happening out there. And it already looks fun. There's this cool thing going on with q-tips that we're going to talk about too. That's a lot better than sticking one in your ear and trying to get the wax out of it.

So first of all, let's see what we've got in this wonderful little contraption that you brought with you, here, Thomas.

- Right, so we have we have 12 different native species that are going to be on display in the butterfly habitat. And some of them will be like the Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, which is, of course, South Carolina state butterfly.

AMANDA
MCNULTY: Yes.

THOMAS RIDDLE: The Buckeye, the Pipeline Swallowtail. We also will have-- not in the butterfly habitat, but separately in the ecology lab-- demonstrations on the life cycle of the Luna moth.

- And we talk about the lifecycle of the Luna moth. And, of course, the Luna moth is one that you would see at nighttime. Sometimes you'll find them on the screen door in the morning because they've lit there during the night.

THOMAS RIDDLE: Right.

AMANDA
MCNULTY: And it's one that comes out just at night. And it has those, what do you call those long, long tail? I guess you call--

THOMAS RIDDLE: Right, there beautiful wings.

AMANDA
MCNULTY: And, I think, right here we actually have the caterpillars.

THOMAS RIDDLE: We do.

- And look at these beautiful green fellows.

- And I'll tell you, Amanda, when Cory and I started down the road this afternoon, about 2 o'clock, this box was full of sweet gum leaves. And they are voracious eaters at this stage in their life. And, as you can see, just about all gone.

AMANDA

MCNULTY:

Just about all gone. And then we have all these little pellets, which are not peppercorns. They are examples of what happens when you eat something. It has to go in one end and come out the other. And that is caterpillar frass. But these are beautiful, beautiful caterpillars. And it makes you realize why you should have a sweet gum tree in your yard. And then, tell me, when you go in, you've got a special area in the rain forest.

- Yes, so we have--

- So the rain forest is one of the permanent displays?

- Yes, yes it is. And in the rain forest, we have this butterfly enclosure.

AMANDA

And I think we've got a picture of that up now.

MCNULTY:

THOMAS RIDDLE: Absolutely, so we've added additional netting in there to lower the ceiling. And to make sure--

AMANDA

Since children are--

MCNULTY:

THOMAS RIDDLE: Absolutely.

AMANDA

Generally a little lower to the ground.

MCNULTY:

THOMAS RIDDLE: Right. And we want the children to really be immersed in the experience. And when you enter, we'll give you a butterfly wand, a nectar wand, which will be longer than this. But, this what we had on hand.

- And so what we've got here is just a sugar q-tip.

- Sugar, right with sugar water.

- And you dipped it in sugar water.

- Yes, mam. And so, what we'll do is we'll try, when they are lighted on the flowers. You can

see, for instance, we'll try to get this butterfly, this monarch, out that we harvested. And then they'll be able look to have this butterfly up close and examine it. We had some children in this afternoon and they were just enamored with the butterfly.

AMANDA Well who wouldn't be?

MCNULTY:

THOMAS RIDDLE: Yeah. And so you can be surrounded by these, we'll have about 400 native species that will be flying around you in the butterfly enclosure. And they may just land-- a monarch landed on my nose this afternoon before we came.

AMANDA That's pretty special. And the monarch is really-- we are interested in all butterflies, but the

MCNULTY: monarch, particularly. Because it's kind of indicative of the health of the environment, isn't it?

THOMAS RIDDLE: Yes it is. And we actually have some monarch-- I'll take this from you-- some monarch caterpillars here. And they are eating, feasting on milkweed, which is so vitally important to attract the monarchs.

AMANDA And the milkweed, of course, has a latex-like substance in it, as I understand. And it means

MCNULTY: that the monarch adults and caterpillars have compounds in them that make them unpalatable to predators. So the monarch, there are even butterflies that mimic the monarch, I believe, is that right?

- That's correct. So this is kind of a natural defense mechanism for them.

- And so all this is going to be on display there. And then this caterpillar, let's pull him out because he is so cool.

THOMAS RIDDLE: Cecoprias is a large fellow. And really cool looking. You'll notice all these different colors.

- I know. Look at all these bumps and things on him. And, again, you said sometimes that's a defensive measure.

THOMAS RIDDLE: It. Is so it looks-- you know we had a little 2-year-old in today. And she was looking at this one. And she drew back and she said, scary. And that's absolutely what that--

AMANDA What nature intended.

MCNULTY:

THOMAS RIDDLE: Exactly. It's a defensive mechanism for him. She said, that doesn't look like the hungry caterpillar.

- And again, you all, so these, we'll be able to actually use our magic wand and hopefully get some of these out and hold them. The Luna moths are going to be in a special area where we can understand their lifecycle. And, of course, the lifecycle is fascinating.

- Yes.

- Because you have another area where you have some of the pupating organisms. Tell us about that.

- We have some monarchs that are just about to emerge in their chrysalis. And so we're hoping that it will happen Saturday. And not Sunday. But over the span of the five weeks,

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

- Yes, we'll rotate different things in.

- And with all the things that are going on at Roper Mountain Science Center, there's no reason to make this a one time visit. I think people would like to come on several occasions because you all have so much to do there.

- Absolutely, there's a lot to see.

- And if people want to know more about the activities, they're not just this wonderful butterfly adventure that you have coming up, but the other things. Where's the place to go to get information?

THOMAS RIDDLE: You can visit RoperMountain.org and on the front page, you'll find all the information that you need.

AMANDA And I'm real proud because, I think, that the master gardeners who have learned their craft
MCNULTY: under Cory's excellent instruction help keep your butterfly garden very beautiful.

THOMAS RIDDLE: Absolutely, they do. And we couldn't do that without the master gardeners. They'll be on hand to give tours through the garden. And also talk about what it's like, what it takes, to start your own butterfly garden.

- And one of the things that it takes is to plant some plants. And we didn't even talk about

these pretty plants. Because you all have put plants out to show people what will attract butterflies.

- We have.

- And to see them feeding.

- Absolutely. Like, the Verbena and the Lantana. They love the Lantana. And Coreopsis, as well.

So we've added that into our rain forest, which normally isn't in there. Just as nectarine plants to attract the butterflies.

- OK, and if that isn't enough, we've got these wonderful q-tips that we've dipped into sugar water.

[LAUGHTER]

- Thomas, this has been a lot of fun. Thank you, again and again. Once more, tell us that website, where we should go.

- You can just visit RoperMountain.org to learn more.

- OK, I think a lot of people will be out there.

THOMAS RIDDLE: Thanks.