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## S.C. Naturalist Rudy Mancke Delights Audience with His Artifacts

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# S.C. Naturalist Rudy Mancke Delights Audience with His Artifacts

## Quick Facts

- Best known for his ETV program "NatureScene," Mancke said that as a naturalist he "studies the world of nature and marvels at it."
- Mancke entertained and enlightened the crowd with his collection of natural artifacts including snake skins, turtle shells and animal skulls as props for his talk.

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*Rudy Mancke with snake skin*

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA - [South Carolina naturalist Rudy Mancke](#) brought a part of his world to his April 14 Winthrop University presentation in Dinkins Auditorium before the [Friends of Dacus Library](#).

Mancke entertained and enlightened the crowd with his collection of natural artifacts including snake skins, turtle shells and animal skulls as props for his talk. He noted that he never killed to collect a specimen and jokingly observed that most of his collection was "**DOR—Dead on the Road.**"

Best known for his ETV program "NatureScene," Mancke said that as a naturalist he "studies the world of nature and marvels at it." At age nine, he said he read a book entitled "The Life of John Muir" in which the pioneer environmentalist was quoted as saying, "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe."

He thought: Is that so? Thus started his career of discovery.

The naturalist observed that he was often contacted to identify specimens. "The key questions to answer were: What is it and how does it fit into this world?" Mancke said. "Learning the relationship and interconnectedness of things is the key...Knowledge is powerful stuff."

Everything is recycled in the universe, he said, and that life forms are made up of elements from the stars. "People are a part of something bigger than themselves," he added.

Mancke told interesting tales about his family members and some popular myths they related about nature. He remembered being disturbed as a child at finding a turtle shell because the turtle had died. His mother comforted him, saying, "The turtle did not die, but just shed its shell." He later found that was not so.

He related that an uncle, who was a farmer, had a dead corn snake (also known as a red rat snake) with a lump in it and said, "Look at the size of the ear of corn in that snake." He told his uncle that snakes did not eat corn and proceeded to cut it open to find out. It, of course, had a field rat inside. Mancke cut open the rat, and there was his uncle's precious corn. After that his uncle never killed another Corn Snake.

His grandmother often told him about some natural phenomena: "It won't kill you, but it will ruin your life." She used that adage when speaking of a rattlesnake's rattler. She maintained that its bite was poisonous, which was true enough, but she also believed it was "poison at both ends" and that "poisonous particles came off its rattler."

That, of course, is false, Mancke said. The real purpose of a rattler, he said, is as a warning, originally meant to prevent being stepped on by the American bison.

Life and death are all a part of the “recycling process” of nature, Mancke said. If you did not know if something in nature is poisonous, then just avoid it, so “you won’t end up being recycled early.”

Mancke concluded that he felt fortunate to have an opportunity to work at something he loved. In the process, he discovered that “the natural world is incredible!”

For more information about the **Friends of the Dacus Library**, contact Ronnie Faulkner at [faulknerr@winthrop.edu](mailto:faulknerr@winthrop.edu).

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