Japan Connection

By Sean McKnight, Hickory High School Student

This past summer I was fortunate enough to participate in the Japanese American Watershed Stewardship (JAWS) program. I was one of just 30 students in the United States selected to participate. The program is funded by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The purpose of the program was to have the students act as ambassadors representing America while in Japan, while learning about Japanese culture, watershed management, and environmental technologies.

The program is really a year-long commitment, consisting of 3 parts. First, we completed both group and individual projects online, helping to prepare us for the trip. Then, of course, was the trip. After a 4 day orientation in Washington D.C., was a month-long trip to Japan! And now the participants are to share our experiences with our communities and use what we have learned to plan and carry out a project to help our communities.

We traveled from Tokyo to Niigata to Sado Island and back. We attended many lectures on environmental science and Japanese culture. While in Tokyo, we toured Tokyo University, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Bureau of Waterworks, and the Tokyo Water Science Museum. We travelled by ferry to Sado Island, where we toured the Sado Units of Niigata University, Sado Marine Biological Station, and the Crested Ibis Conservation Center.

The green technology we saw that I found most interesting was a warehouse full of snow stored from the winter, where it was kept all summer to be used as air conditioning in a nearby building. This kept the building at a much more comfortable temperature, as it was very hot, without using the energy required by a standard air conditioning system.

Now that I am home I am sharing my experience with everyone I can, whether I’m giving a presentation, or just having a conversation. As for my project, I am going to try to help my school find a greener alternative to the Styrofoam trays they often serve in the cafeteria at lunch.

It was an experience I will never forget, and always appreciate. I learned a lot of lessons during my time in the program. And if you are ever considering going to Japan, I highly recommend it!
Feature Creature  

by Evelyn Ma, Allegheny College Student

We are large, long-legged and long-necked birds, in a family of birds that includes the world’s tallest flying bird. We range in size 90 cm (35 in) in length, to 176 cm (69 in), although the heaviest can weigh 12 kg (26 lb) prior to migrating. We fly with necks outstretched, not pulled back - which is different from another similar-looking but unrelated bird. We live on all continents except Antarctica and South America. There are fifteen species of us in four genera. Most have elaborate and noisy courting displays or "dances". Some species and populations of us migrate over long distances; others do not migrate at all. Also, our beauty and spectacular mating dances have made us highly symbolic birds in many cultures with records dating back to ancient times. Our mythology is widely spread and can be found in areas such as the Aegean, South Arabia, China, Korea, Japan and in the Native American cultures of North America! What type of bird are we?
May 20, 2011

Clymer Central School
David VanEarden, biology teacher
8672 East Main Street
Clymer, New York 14724

Dear David,

Congratulations on your part in the creation of the project to plant trees along the shore of French Creek to help restore the creek bed. Not only will this project help stop French Creek from eroding, it has given the students a great learning experience. Planting 3,000 to 3,500 trees in six hours is very impressive; the students must have worked very hard.

I found it very interesting to read how planting the trees here in Sherman, where the creek begins will help the creek’s overall ecology and benefit the portion of the creek in Meadville as well. It is great that you were able to work with Jason Drake and coordinate with him to bring his biology class to New York to help in the efforts; it was a great opportunity for students from both schools to work and learn together.

Thank you to you, your students and the teacher and students from Maplewood High School for your efforts to help the environment.

Sincerely,

Andrew Goodell
New York State Assemblyman
Last month, Creek Connections branched out to Friendship, Wisconsin. Friendship is located in Adams County, adjacent to Sauk County, Wisconsin. Sauk County is the home of well-known ecologist and environmentalist, Aldo Leopold. His book, ‘A Sand County Almanac’, is a series of essays that explain his idea of “land ethic” and is based off of observations made in the sandy soiled counties of that area.

With this rich history in environmental stewardship, it seems only natural that Creek Connections would expand to this area. The connection was actually made when a committee of community members and staff of the Adams-Friendship Area School District were working on a proposal for a Promise Neighborhood Grant. They proposed using Creek Connections as an ecological initiative to improve the social and academic well-being of impoverished children in the area. This would be done by getting the students outside and using hands-on activities to foster environmental stewardship. In essence, they plan to use Creek Connections to strengthen the community by increasing students’ exposure to the outdoors and strengthening “land ethic”. After all, as Aldo Leopold states “land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants and animals or collectively, the land.”

To get this program rolling in Friendship, we travelled out to the school and held a workshop on a Saturday morning for interested faculty and community members. During this workshop we gave some background about Creek Connections and gave examples of how Creek Connections can be implemented in the classroom. We also went to the stream and gave the teachers a crash course in water chemistry. In the afternoon some enthusiastic students showed up and the teachers got to practice teaching the chemical testing of the stream. We then headed to the stream and got our dance moves on doing the ‘riffle dance’ to stir up some macroinvertebrates. It was a beautiful day to be outside and both the students and adults enjoyed themselves. Creek Connections has a promising future in Friendship. Thanks to the motivated community members and faculty, I believe this program will be around to encourage environmental stewardship through outdoor immersion for years to come.
Fall is a great time for classes to be outdoors sampling creeks and it is also a time when many sportsmen go afield in search of game. In order to keep both parties as safe as possible here are a couple guidelines to follow for fall testing. These guidelines are designed for schools that test in rural areas and are good to consider if your testing site is in an area that is open to hunting.

First, wear bright colors, preferably fluorescent orange. This makes people very visible in the woods and helps prevent any possible misidentification or other mix up.

Second, know what sort of game is in season and what the orange requirements are for hunters. This is what to look for in the woods and also helps teachers plan a testing schedule that will have the lowest possibility of accidents.

Third, this goes along with the second point, avoid testing during deer season. Deer season is the time of year with the highest concentration of hunters in the woods. Avoiding this time is beneficial from both viewpoints; it minimizes the opportunity for accidents to occur and limits disturbance in the woods. This helps keep students safe and helps hunters be more successful.

For more information about PA hunting seasons and orange requirements please visit the PA Game Commission’s web site at www.pgc.state.pa.us.

Testing Tip

By Cameron Eddy, Allegheny College Student

Be Safe!

Many thanks to our friends and partners for making our Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) workshop for Creek Connections teachers a success. The workshop was held at Jennings Environmental Education Center and Miranda Crotsley, PA State Park Educator (above left) welcomed us and explained their educational offerings. Mary Walsh of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy introduced us to the iMap AIS database. Finally, David Boughton (above right) of PA Sea Grant delved into many aspects of impacts from AIS.
2011-2012 Creek Connections staff: Seated left to right: Ian Armstrong, John Milligan, Katie Katilius, Will Tolliver; Standing left to right: Lucas Carrion, David Olson, Evelyn Ma, Cameron Eddy, Wendy Kedzierski, and Briana Bulger. Not pictured: Jim Palmer, Laura Branby, Sara Salisbury and Sahar Arbab.

Feature Creature: Cranes. Photo Credits: http://3.bp.blogspot.com/_opg3kTZiOlI/SxXg5694E7I/AAAAAAAAAoY/HXPEy523OUU/s400/FlyingCrane_MG_1233s.jpg; http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1d/Sarus_Crane_%28Grus_antigone%29_at_Sultanpur_L_Picture_151.jpg