Riverview High School Creek Connections students lead a Creek Day for Riverview School District 4th graders

Juniors and seniors at Riverview High School in Oakmont, PA took on a huge challenge this fall. Mrs. Pegher and Mr. Ilnicki had their students lead ALL the 4th graders in the district in a full day of creek-related activities at Plum Creek in Penn Hills Park. It is a huge endeavor for both the high school students and their teachers to prepare for an intense day of activities! The day was separated into stations: kicking for aquatic macroinvertebrates in the creek with the help of Creek Connections, walking on nature hike, exploring streamside critters (skulls and pelts and other things from the Streamside Critters module), playing a predator/prey game (from the Aquatic Macroinvertebrates module), and making fish prints with the assistance of the art teacher and Creek’s rubber fish. We not sure who had more fun or learned more from the day - the 4th graders, the high school students, the 4th grade teachers, or the high school teachers!

What’s going on here? Find out on the next page!
Creek Camp

22-27 June 2014
6-11 July 2014

Are you currently in 9th or 10th grade? Put Creek Camp on your summer calendar!! In addition to the amazing things that the French Creek watershed holds, Allegheny College is beautiful, and the other campers are as awesome as you! Start planning now: put Creek Camp on your holiday/birthday wish list, save your ‘pennies,’ do odd jobs for neighbors, babysit, talk to your parents, do whatever you need to do to join us this summer! Teachers, talk to your students and help them formulate a plan to attend!

Mini Creek Camp Teacher Workshop by Kaitlynn Ingold, RMU Student

This fall, Creek Connections and Fern Hollow Nature Center in Sewickley Heights hosted a teacher workshop focusing on some of the most popular activities in Creek Camp: the stream table, salamander search, and fish electroshocking. Brogan, Creek Camp counselor and stream table presenter extraordinaire, led the demonstration and discussion at the Fern Hollow Nature Center stream table. It is not as large as the Allegheny College stream table but the concepts are the same. Brogan covered them with expertise! Any educator is welcome to borrow the Stream Geology module which comes with a stream table to use in the classroom.

April Claus, director of education at Fern Hollow Nature Center and a herpetologist, began the salamander search with live salamander identification inside the nature center (it was a wet, chilly day!). She discussed the types of salamanders native to Pennsylvania and even had a few live species to show off. The teachers were shocked to find out that many salamanders live underground and not in the water! After a delicious lunch, we wrapped up the workshop in the woods of Sewickley where we checked cover boards (see photo pg1) that April and her students put out a year ago. April explained that cover boards were placed on a transect to the creek about 10 yards apart. When lifted, the teachers recorded all the life they found beneath the board, vertebrates and invertebrates. Cover boards are a way to study amphibians and to collect data in a specific sized area.

Dr. Brady Porter, Duquesne University, joined us at Morrow-Pontefract Park (where the Little Sewickley Creek joins the Ohio River) for the final activity of the day, fish electroshocking. He explained the procedures and put the teachers to work in the creek with him! Dr. Porter has been studying the fish population in the creek for quite some time and relayed his work to the teachers. Thanks to April Claus and Dr. Brady Porter for assisting in a fun and educational workshop. Families, high school students, AND teachers enjoy Creek Camp activities!
Feature Creature

I am a carnivorous mammal in weasel family and make my home in burrows near the water’s edge. I have webbed feet and swim by propelling and flexing my body. My fur is water proof and I can also swim underwater for eight minutes without coming up for a breath! Usually I hunt my food at night and although my favorite food is fish I will also eat amphibians, turtles, and crayfish if I have to. Although I used to populate Western Pennsylvania, destruction of my home and water pollution forced me to move. Luckily, in the last 20 years a lot of people have been working to bring me back to Western Pennsylvania! As long as everybody takes care of their creek I will be able to stay in my home! If you don’t like me, then you’re otter your mind! What am I?

Photo from PA Game Commission website.

See back page for answer.

Testing Tip

A running stream is a fun place to explore, however, in the winter months, we must be aware of the temperature of the water. Although streams may still flow, this does not mean that the water is at a safe temperature. Stream flow makes it so the water does not have enough time to freeze, even if the temperatures are below freezing levels. If you accidentally were to fall in, you have a higher risk for hypothermia. With year-round testing, Creekers have found better alternatives to collect water samples such as using bailers instead of walking into the stream. Be sure to always ask your teacher before collecting a water sample, especially in the winter.
Family Creek Camp: 14-18 July 2014
Families And Mentors Involved in Learning ecology

It’s the best! Living and learning with families who share your interests. Residential camp means that EVERYONE gets a break and can enjoy the activities together. Invite friends and relatives (school-age and above) from near and far to join us for a week of hands-on learning.

Feature Creature: from page 3, river otter, Lutra canadensis