

Students study life of the Metolius

By **Jim Anderson**
Correspondent

On Wednesday, November 2, three small buses rolled up to the parking area at Riverside Campground on the Metolius. With much glee and anticipation, 45 middle schoolers and their teachers — all from Cascade Academy in Tumalo — bailed out of the buses to meet their leader of the day, Kolleen Miller, education director of the Upper Deschutes Watershed Council based in Bend.

Even with the morning sun it was pretty chilly, only in the high 30s, as Miller told them

what they were going to do. She warned them not to get too carried away and accidentally end up in the river, which is very cold all year long, the way native fish like it.

They were going to be collecting macroinvertebrates to determine whether or not the spring-fed Metolius is really healthy for native fish. The students were also going to study and make detailed drawings of the riparian area, plus identify trees, shrubs, and wetland grasses.

Tom Walker, fish biologist with the Forest Service, was also on hand to share his knowledge of the habitat

needs of sockeye spawning in the Metolius and returning to the Pacific Ocean, and kokanee that live out their life in Suttle Lake.

Another goal was to provide the students with an opportunity to observe similar organs in fish that they have in their bodies, a subject that really opened many of the students' eyes and minds. Sixth-grader Fiona Fenstermacher was still talking about her experience long after lunch, "I really liked dissecting the salmon, it was pretty cool to see the fish's heart, liver and kidneys, and to learn they use their nose for smelling what's around them same as we do."

Dr. Anne Marie Eklund, biology teacher at the Cascade Academy, was in her glory when the students began to collect macroinvertebrates from the gravel bottom of the river. At one point, they paired up, one with a collecting net, the other carefully disturbing the bottom upstream of the net, causing the water flow to carry specimens into the net.

Back on shore the contents were placed in a large, white shallow pan after which students gathered around and began to separate the various invertebrates and place them in



PHOTO BY JIM ANDERSON

Adin Lyders and Mckenzie Lattig counting macroinvertebrates.

a plastic egg dish for ID and counting.

Seventh-grader Solomon Garner spent much of his time peering at specimens through a water-filled magnifier, calling out the species he got to know well: caddisfly, mayfly, riffle beetles, stonefly and others.

Using the time allotted for each segment of the studies, teacher Becca Schroder took the students for a short hike downstream from the area where they were working on macroinvertebrates, and invited them to find a spot — a quiet place of his or her very own where they could look around them, and put their thoughts on paper using the the acrostic method of poetry.

This is the way Miller saw

the day she had with the students: "It was great to work with Cascades Academy middle school kids on the river today. My own son is in middle school right now, and he and I both often get pulled into the social dramas that can permeate the life of a 13-year-old.

"Today though, on the beautiful Metolius River, these students were given the time to just sit and be themselves outside. They walked on logs and waded in the river. They sat by the riverside, sketched the riffles and the ripples of the water and shared their thoughts in their poems. Surrounded by the clean air of the forest, they just got to be kids getting to know the natural parts of the world they live in."



PHOTO BY JIM ANDERSON

Biology teacher Dr. Anne Marie Eklund helping students identify macroinvertebrates.

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