

Sisters students learn marine ecology

The day after wrapping up the school year, 15 Outlaws, three teachers and one Sisters RD fish biologist headed off to the Bahamas for a week of marine science and island ecology. The students travelled all night and the next day to Andros Island and stayed at the Forfar Field Station run by International Field Studies, Inc.

The kids spent three boat days and three land days learning all about barrier reefs, fish, corals, blue holes, island geology and culture, grass basket weaving, sustainable living, marine and land conservation, botany, excessive heat, bug bites, sunburns, and how to get a crab out of your bathroom!

"It's like our own private island and more fun than a hotel," said Cambrie Leaver about the Forfar Station, which has been leading educational programs for over

40 years. "The lodge was really old school, and I found that really cool. It's a super friendly place," said Tate Kaczmarek. "I loved all the interns who taught me how to ID a lot of fish and coral. They were awesome!" said Gus Patton.

Out on the water the students snorkelled the barrier reef, patch reefs, shipwrecks and oceanic blue holes.

"I had a stingray swim toward me and I saw a parrot fish in its night bubble. It makes you realize you are right there and not just observing," said Matthew Riehle.

"The manatee was such a graceful creature and I felt a sense of awe in its presence," said Josie Aylor.

The students also saw dolphins, triggerfish, butterfly fish, trumpet fish, lionfish, hog fish and many more.

Cian Schultz, Kaylee

Huber and Kinnon Rutherford agreed that the best part of the day was seeing a shark.

On land the students visited Androsia Fabric factory.

Ava Riehle and Hadley Schar noted that, "Androsia is important to the island by having the fabric spread across the world. It is also the official fabric of the Bahamas."

They also went to the remote settlement of Red Bays.

Jackson Parkins and Abi Manley said they "learned that the thatch housing can resist hurricane-force winds."

Students learned about making sponges, wood carvings and heard some songs and music by Wilton.

"Underwater is like a new world and I'm glad I could experience it," said Schar.

"I really appreciated the station's remoteness and its proximity to nature," said Parkins. "I appreciate everything about the trip and I realized that I really enjoy learning about marine life and the ocean," said Josie Patton.

Most of the students concurred that they "appreciate all the new friends."

A key theme of the program was conservation.

"I will try not to use as many plastic bags and



PHOTO PROVIDED

Gus Patton with a brittle star during a goniolithon lab in the field.

straws, and to think about the animals being affected by the plastic," pledged Ava, Kinnon, Gus and Tate.

"I will try to use less water and not waste as much food," said Hollie Lewis and Titan Kroytz.

Deb Riehle said, "Thanks to Rob Jensen for getting the ball rolling figuratively and literally, Julie Patton for an

unlimited amount of positive energy and Mike Riehle for all his marine expertise. Special thanks to Tate Metcalf at Sisters Athletic Club for loaning the pool out for snorkel practice and letting the kids gain initial confidence in the water. This trip was epic, and the kids were so impressive and awesome!"



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Kaylee Huber and Abi Manley joined by visiting Andros student Niah Taylor with Miss Annie who taught us how to weave grass baskets.

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Sisters salutes...

• Sue Edgerton wrote:

I wish to commend the Sisters Trail Alliance, Kris Calvin, and all the people who worked so hard, donating their time, energy and resources to create a wonderful trail connecting the high school and Tollgate.

It is handicapped-accessible, which is very important to many people. The trail is very nice, fits in the forest very well, and is a great addition to our community.

And thank you to the Tollgate Board of Directors for their support, also!

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