

Sixth graders spend week learning about nature



Three sixth graders from Heppner Elementary School assembled their materials to build a fire with one match during a survival session at Bull Prairie near the Forest Service's Tupper Work Center. Working diligently were (left-right) Todd Miller, Damon Wilson and David Green.

Don Cole, Heppner Elementary Principal, is seeing the results of seven years of the sixth grade Outdoor School program which ended Friday for the latest batch of youngsters who spent last week learning about nature and environment at the Forest Service's Tupper Work Center.

"The high school students we are using as counselors for this year's program were the first graduates of the program," said Cole. Only two out of the 16 counselors were not members for the Outdoor School seven years ago.

The 48 sixth-graders received instruction from a wide range of professionals in wildlife, ecology and wilderness survival—volunteers from the Heppner Ranger District, U.S. Forest Service, State Fish and Wildlife and representatives of the U.S. Soil and Water Conservation Service. Cole said the period of instruction given by the Outdoor School is actually longer than the normal school day, five hours with an hour and a half for recreational fun as archery, B-B gun shoot and bait-casting.

However, Cole says "it's not just a week out in the woods. The world we are living in is creating more leisure time and we are sitting on a

recreational gold mine. We must enjoy, protect and understand the total environment."

Over the years, the program of instruction has been expanded to take in areas of need. Cole added survival training to the growing list of studies because he was personally acquainted with the death of some youngsters in the Portland area who died of exposure during a Christmas tree cutting outing. He feels the Outdoor School's survival instruction will make the students better prepared to meet those emergencies.

On Thursday, the students were learning from Bob Jepsen, an lone rancher, how to survive in the woods with a single match, building survival shelters and making fish hooks and fishing poles from native materials plus snares for catching animals.

In another area of Bull Prairie, Errol Clair and Jim Van Winkle of the State Fish and Wildlife Service, John Day, were showing a fish-shocking demonstration. Clair strapped on a packboard with battery and fish nets, then waded upstream giving the trout a minor shock and dipping the species in a plastic bucket. The technology is used to determine the number and particular species.

Each youngster paid \$12 to attend the five day program. Along with student counselors and teachers, they stayed at the facilities at Tupper Work Center. The weather was chilly for May but according to Cole, most of the sixth graders were enjoying the week in the outdoors.

An interesting observation by Cole is that students less successful in the classroom turn out to be the leaders in the outdoor school.

"Their social status soars. They have a better image of themselves."

Besides survival and fishing instruction, the youngsters were instructed in map and compass, weather study and soil study.

Cole gave special praise to the high school counselors for accepting the responsibility at the Outdoor School and giving their time and effort. The counselors were Jackie Gentry, DeAnn Connor, Susan Gray, Sandi Hudson, Sherry Combs, Larry Palmer, Joedy Marlatt, Ken Bailey, Greg Sweeney, Brian Thompson, Alice Abrams, Lyn Dee Devin, Kaedene Hollomon, Carolyn Plocharsky, Chris Zita and Lee McCarl.

"Their social status soars. They have a better image of themselves" said Don Cole, Heppner Elementary Principal



A fish shocking demonstration by State Fish and Game officials (left-right) John Van Winkle and Errol Clair, John Day captured the interest of the Heppner students attending the Outdoor School. The Fish and Wildlife agency shocks the fish to count the number and species in a particular body of water, in this case a creek running into the lake at Bull Prairie.



Outdoor school instructor Bob Jepsen, lone, showed the inquisitive students how to build a fire with one match, then had his charges try it out. Survival training is now an integral part of the week-long studies.

**Story and Photos
By Jim Hackett**