

Help Us Get Into the Woods

After School Club Eyes on the Skies

Since 2004 public and home-schooled students have gathered at Swan Ecosystem Center on

Tuesday afternoons to venture into the woods. On a recent afternoon, birder Adam Lieberg guided ASC youth on a winter bird watching tour. Boring, you say? Not according to these kids who have learned how to use compasses, binoculars, snowshoes, and cross country skis. Most of them can readily recognize the three

basic forest types of the Swan Valley and at least ten birds that winter here. Spring and summer service projects will include Van Lake campground cleanup, Squeezer Creek Nature Trail maintenance, knapweed weevil insectary monitoring, Leave No Trace camping techniques, and tree cookie exhibit restoration.



Students monitor water quality

In 2002 students began monitoring water quality in Glacier Creek and the Swan

River. They continue with support from the Department of Environmental Quality, Montana Watercourse, and Watershed Education Network. Home-schooled children gather water quality data from six sites on Elk Creek, a major bull trout habitat. In 2008 students will have the unique opportunity to participate in the Montana Water Summit, sharing valuable information about our watershed with other youth.



Students adopt Barber Creek Pit

Formerly a highway gravel pit on national forest land, the Barber Pit is

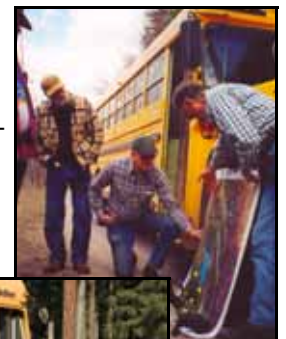
now a land stewardship project for Swan Valley Elementary 7/8 graders. Each month students spend valuable time mapping, GPS-ing, inventorying native plants and macro-invertebrates, snowshoeing, skiing, and learning from natural resource specialists at this 10-acre site—a varied landscape of ponds, marshes, native plants, conifers, and deciduous trees, where bats and geese and other creatures make their homes. Young stewards repair fences, seed native grasses, and construct interpretive trails under the supervision of volunteers.



Bus tours offer look at valley

SEC sponsored its first bus tour in 2000 to view local geology and glacial impact in the Swan. Much to people's

enjoyment, annual bus tours guided by long-time residents have focused on such nostalgic themes as the history of the Swan Valley and the Forest Service. Tours led by natural resource specialists have covered the hotter topics of Firewise planning and the Crazy Horse burn. Don't miss 2008's geology tour and a journey into Salmon Prairie history.



Family programs are year-round fare

It is our hope that people will apply the knowledge gained in our programs to better enjoy nature and make wise decisions about land use. Swan Ecosystem Center hosts family fieldtrips, workshops, and lectures on a wide variety of topics ranging from Swan Valley tree insects and disease, mushroom identification, avalanche safety, native plants, and white bark pine ecology.



Snowshoeing and winter ecology with Samsara Chapman of the Montana Discovery Foundation out of Helena.

School programs bring kids outdoors



Field days are more than just walks in the wild. They present informative visits to activity stations and interpretive hikes with natural resource specialists

and local volunteers. Ruby R., Polson 4th grader, wrote, "I really enjoyed your station about the bark beetles...when I got home I gave my parents a test."

Students on the Land introduces youth to forest science

Swan Ecosystem Center's education program began with Students on the Land, affording children the rare opportunity to work in the forest with natural resource specialists and acquire professional forestry skills. To accompany this program, SEC provides a Forest Stewardship Educational Trunk available for schools and teachers in northwest Montana. The trunk contains a forestry land management curriculum, including timber cruising and plant and wildlife inventory methods. SEC's education coordinator customizes presentations and fieldtrips for teachers upon request. Counting rings on a large tree cookie inspired Trevor P., Polson 4th grader, to write: "It's amazing how old some trees are."



Help us keep up the good work

As residents of the Swan Valley, we are in a unique position to foster stewardship of the land through first-hand exposure to the outdoors. Driven by the belief that concern for nature can only manifest through understanding, SEC invests a great deal in programs that provide children and adults with valuable experience beyond the classroom. Though we have been successful in funding materials for our education program, assurance of full funding proves a constant challenge. You can help keep our dream alive by sending tax deductible donations earmarked for education to the address below. We also accept credit card donations. Visit our Web site, SwanEcosystemCenter.com, or call for more information: 406-754-3137.



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