

Kids go outdoors to learn about plants, animals

By Kathryn Reed

A lagoon that looks more like a mudflat became a wealth of scientific discovery for Tahoe Valley Elementary School students.

“I learned how to keep water clean,” third-grader Sabrieo Parker said. She also learned that certain weeds could be bad for native fish.

Students throughout Lake Tahoe Unified School District spent last week and will spend part of this week getting out of the classroom to learn about their environment.

“The biggest message was when you have invasive species it hurts native species,” Adilene Negrete with the U.S. Forest Service said.

This is true of plants and animals.



Adilene Negrete with the USFS teaches students about aquatic invasive species.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

Savannah Rudroff with the League to Save Lake Tahoe was imparting information about plants in the area – primarily Eurasian milfoil and curlyleaf pondweed – that are not native.

A magnifying glass allowed the students to see the plants in greater detail. Then they got to color them – a step in reinforcing what they look like, with the idea they will be able to identify them outside the classroom experience.

Besides learning about specific fish and plants, the youngsters also broadened their vocabulary – learning what native, non-native and invasive mean.

Instruction is geared toward the appropriate grade level, with K-5 part of the outdoor classroom.

Also helping educate kids, though not necessarily each day, are representatives from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, South Tahoe Public Utility District, Lake Tahoe Humane Society, Tahoe Institute for Natural Science, Sugar Pine Foundation and community volunteers.

Each outing was as close as possible to the actual school site. This was designed to allow teachers to go to the location to further the learning experience.

For TVES kids it mean walking outside the back gate to the area near the Tahoe Keys lagoon.

This is the fourth year Beth Quandt, science outreach coordinator for the district, has put together this program.

“All the activities get kids to see what is going on in their environment,” Quandt told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Each lesson is age appropriate, with the curriculum growing from one level to the next.