

Field Notes

The Weekly Newsletter of the Community School of Mount Desert Island
Wednesday, October 21st, 2015 - Volume #6

From the Youngers...

Just a week ago, leaves still held to the trees and green was still a common hue. Now, after a frost, rain and some gusty evenings, not only have the leaves passed peak foliage, but many of them have fallen to the ground. I am always baffled by how quickly this shift in the autumn landscape happens. We are reminded of the true smells of fall when we walk through leafy meadows, and woods this time of year; a sweet, slightly spicy



Youngers enjoy lunch and a beautiful autumn day on Hunter's Beach trail.



In the library of Birch Bay Village, Mr. Herredon tells of surviving the great fire of 1947 on MDI.

smell of moist, dry leaves, soil beginning to chill and freeze.

As a school, we were reflecting on how we have had a moist October so far, much different from the fall of 1947, when the fire in Bar Harbor blazed, along with many fires all over the state of Maine. As both of our Honoring the Fire Days have been quite rainy, it has honestly been hard to fathom such October drought conditions. As we combed the old newspaper clippings of the Jesup Library archives, it was also tough to imagine the island in such a state of emergency, so much lost and changed in such a short

amount of time. But as we listened to Mr. Herredon in the library of Birch Bay, the narrative of the fire, 68 years ago, began to come alive. As we walked along stone foundations, never rebuilt, we pictured the buildings that once stood there and the children asked questions about displaced families and travelers. As we traced some of the fire's edge by car, the children noticed how close the fire came to many of the places that they know so well, and how colorful these ridges and mountainsides were now, as deciduous

Thank you to:

Gerrard Herredon for sharing with us his stories of fighting the fire 68 years ago, **Birch Bay** for helping facilitate the visit, **Gordon Longworth** for printing us our very own map of the 1947 fire burn zone, **Sam Day** for teaching us about responsible campfire fire building, **Ian** for being an intrepid substitute for the the Youngers, continuing our jam-making process, **Heather Jones** for her wood working expertise, and **Sarah** and **Donna** for helping with the Older's outing logistics at Cooksey Drive, **Matt Messina** who taught the Youngers about mosses.

Reminders:

- It's the time of year to take out **hats, mittens** and cold-weather **layers!** If you do not send your child with a hat and mittens, please leave a set in their cubby. Often Seal Harbor is cooler than the rest of the island.
- **A call for library books!** Please bring in all library books that are checked out, as we will be going to the library on Friday. Thank you!
- **Bring your pumpkins in for carving on or before October 30!** Jack-o-lanterns will be sent home at pick-up with children on the afternoon of 10/30 for your family to enjoy on Halloween.

Natural History Mystery

What is the common name of largest owl in the world and where does it live?



The children on their day's adventure of Honoring the Fire of 1947, observing the changes in the forest species since the fire.

trees now dominated an ecology where coniferous trees once stood. Not only was our Honoring the Fire day local history come alive, it was a reminder that our environment is always changing, and where live is shaped by the many stories of people and place. Understanding the history, human and natural, is such a crucial piece of connecting to where we live.

As we left the GIS lab, where Gordon Longworth printed us a custom map of the 1947 fire boundary, he looked out at all of the children's inquisitive faces, and we briefly shared with him our recent visit with Mr. Herredon, and our plans to walk many



Looking through archived newspaper clippings to learn more about the fire of 1947.

of the old, remnant foundations. He looked back at us, equally inquisitive, and said, "You know, you have all inspired me to send out a note to the COA community, reminding them to reflect on the anniversary of the great fire. So many have likely forgot about the event, or never learned about it, as the students come form all over the world. But you're right, the fire is really important to where we live and



As the children spend their day exploring building remains from the fire, they are also fostering new friendships.

how the island looks now."

As we built our campfire, on the small point of land, on Somes Sound, and the clouds parted for us, we also reflected on the respect that we give fire. It is not something just to be feared, and not just a force that destroys, but it is an element that has brought human's together for ages. To build and gather around a fire is part of being human, and it seemed appropriate to end the day with responsibility putting out our campfire, and singing together as we looked out at the beautiful mountains of our unique island.

Warm wishes,
Miss Jasmine

From the Olders...

Dear Families,

The Olders group continues to map and build here at the school house. We spent two full mornings last week at the Cooksey Drive Overlook—the Maine Coast Heritage property where The Community School children work as stewards of the land. We are undertaking a comprehensive mapping project of Cooksey Drive, building a stronger connection to this place through careful observation and discovery.

The children explored the “view shed” at Cooksey and collectively drew a panoramic view map that depicts the shinning ocean, sheer cliffs and nearby islands that can be seen from the land. Making a map of the view was a new experience for the children and they brought great focus to this work as they completed their section of the panorama.

We also began to measure the boundary lines of the Cooksey Drive property, revisiting the story of Eratosthenes and how he used human paces (stadia) to measure the distance between cities. We brainstormed how to best undertake a measuring project of this size and identified the strengths and weaknesses of our measuring strategies—we used both a reel tape measurer and human (Cedar) steps.

As the leaves slowly begin to fall, we have started to explore tree ID. We’ve learned to use a variety of guide books and are



A panoramic vista of Cooksey Drive Overlook created by the varying vantage points of the artistic Olders.



Cooksey Drive Overlook, the most beautiful classroom for nature observation, discovery, and mapping skills.

becoming acquainted with tree names. While at Cooksey Drive, the children spotted Spruce, Fir, Tamarack, Dogwood and an assortment of Maples. And on our walk exploring the old water works, during our Honoring the Fire Festival, we spotted many Aspens—a tree that often springs up after large fires.

Homework books continue to travel back and forth each day. At this point each child needs a parent signature to sign off on work completed. If you have any questions about homework completion please be in touch.

I look forward to our outing this week which will take us out and about around the schoolhouse, exploring maps and navigation in a new light!

With warmth,
Bethany



Meredith drawing what her eyes see.

Specialty Classes

Handwork



Felted apples & pumpkins, created by the Youngers'.

This week in Handwork, the Olders challenged themselves with the task of sewing their previously felted pieces into whole apples. This was no small feat! The project required sewing through a dense felted object, finding the middle and strategically placing stitches in order to form and keep the shape of an apple. Using four inch doll making needles, cotton thread and lots of hand strength, the students learned to thread sewing needles, make knots and hide thread ends when finishing. They did a fine job and can be proud of their lovely apples, now perched on windowsill in the classroom.



The Olders' felted apple creations.

This week in the Youngers class, we were joined by Matt Messina, a student at COA who is very knowledgeable about mosses. Matt led us on a short

walk down to the ravine by the schoolhouse where we searched for and located many types of mosses. He shared with us a wealth of interesting facts about these fascinating plants. Did you know that mosses were the first plants to come out of the ocean? We learned that moss goes to sleep when it is dry and wakes up with the addition of moisture. We saw this happen before our very eyes as Matt allowed each child a turn with the spray bottle of water, moistening a dry patch of moss and literally seeing it come to life! Matt showed us the upright stalks (babies) growing up from some of the mosses. He explained that the babies, when mature, are released in a puff of "smoke" and can be carried across the world in the Jet Stream.

The children were very interested in the community of mosses. Our time with Matt will enrich our experience in our next project where we will be handling and working with many types of beautiful mosses.

With the help of the Handwork Gnomes, the Youngers apples are complete! (See photo). What fine felting the children did!

Warmly,
Miss Karen



Matt Messina, a COA student, intrigues the children with his expert knowledge on mosses.

Upcoming Events and Info

Winter Fair Information Meeting

Tuesday, October 27: 6:30-7:30pm at the schoolhouse

“The Art of Winter” Fair is a holiday fundraiser hosted by the school that includes a silent auction, Community School-made crafts and goods, craft from local artists, a patisserie/cafe and more! It is an all-hand-on-deck operation, and there are many ways to be involved. This informational meeting will touch on the volunteers that are needed for each aspect of the fair, and how we can all help to gather items from the community for the silent auction. Please let Jasmine know if you plan to attend this informational meeting, and which areas you would be interested helping with if you are unable to make the meeting. “The Art of Winter” Fair is on Saturday, December 12th this year.

Apple Workshop from Out on a Limb Crew Member

Wednesday, October 28th: Laura Seigler, one of the members of the heirloom apple crew, who puts together our fabulous apple share, will be teaching a workshop about apple seedlings, flavor and natural history. She will be telling us of apple lore, and lead us in planting our own apple seedlings (which has to over-winter in the refrigerator!), and a cooking apple taste test. We are excited to welcome Laura to The Community School and share our mutual love for apples. This workshop will take place during our Morning Lesson time.

Costume Parade and Pumpkin Carving

Friday, October 30: Children are encouraged to come to school in costume on Friday, 10/30, or have the pieces of their costume ready to go for our parade at 12:30. We will walk up Main Street in Seal Harbor, turn around just past Naturalists Notebook, and walk back down to the schoolhouse, where we will sing together before preparing to carve pumpkins. Pumpkin carving will begin around 1:00, and will be outside, if the weather is nice. Parents are welcome to come to the parade, and help with carving. We will take all of the completed Jack-o-lanterns and display them lit, in a darkened room of the schoolhouse for a seasonal story at the end of the day.

Second Annual Kings and Queens of Northeast Creek

Thursday, November 5th: Once called Kings Creek, we will paddle Northeast Creek dressed as kings and queens, donning capes and crowns, paddle together, and harvest cranberries in the bog. We will take this opportunity to learn about the ecological and historical significance of this watershed, and enjoy the wild bounty of the cranberry harvest. We hear that it is a good cranberry year! Note: There will be two children and one adult per canoe. Please send your child with a life jacket (if you have one, we also have extras), rubber boots and an extra pair of socks.

You're Invited

The Nature of Halloween: a spooky evening of fun and learning for all ages, presented by the George B. Dorr Museum of Natural History and Acadia National Park:

On Friday, October 23rd from 5-8pm, the museum will be haunted with all sorts of creepy exhibits and activities. Sample treats made from real insects, learn about bats and bugs from Acadia Rangers, touch creepy bones from the museum's collection and see live snakes and owls. This spooky evening of fun and learning is suitable for all ages, and costumes are welcome. Admission is by donation. For more information, contact the museum at (207)288-5395 or email: graham@coa.edu.

The George B. Dorr Museum of Natural History is located at the College of the Atlantic, 105 Eden Street, Bar Harbor Maine.

Apple Pressing at Super Chilly Farm, Palermo

John Bunker, Cammy Watts and their apple crew invite their apple CSA members to join in a late fall cider pressing among their heirloom apple trees at Super Chilly Farm. Palermo is outside of Belfast and a good 1hr 1/2 drive, but if you are up for an apple adventure and would like to meet the source of our beautiful apple deliveries, it will surely be a fun way to spend Halloween day! Super Chilly Farm is located at 167 Turner Mill Pond Road, Palermo, Maine 04354.

Here's what John writes in his apple newsletter, Out on a Limb:

We want to invite all of you to visit us here at Super Chilly Farm in Palermo. We will be pressing cider on **Saturday, Oct. 31, from 11-3**, and we'd love to have you join us. It's a potluck so bring a dish to share. If you want to take home some cider, bring a jug or jar. We will have apples to press, and you are welcome to bring any that you'd like to make into cider as well. Costumes are strongly encouraged!

