



Volume #19 Issue #4
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Current in the Creek

Creek Connections Summer Institute for teachers will take place Thursday, August 7th at the University of Pittsburgh Pymatuning Laboratory from 9am until 4pm. Please register and find more information on our web-site.

Spring Watershed Explorations



Above: Parker Middle School students find macro-invertebrates in Woodcock Creek with Kathy Uglow from the Crawford Conservation District.



Above: Cochran High School students experience electrofishing with Dr. Wissinger from Allegheny College.



Left: Sixth grade students from 3 Ellwood City schools spent the day in Ewing Park where Creek Connections hosted one of 10 stations they traveled between that day.



Above: Creeker, Camille Sicker, plays Union City HS's watershed map game.

Pittsburgh Area Shows Their Creek Know-How

By William Tolliver, Allegheny College graduate

Our annual Student Research Symposium is a celebratory day for our students to showcase the work that they have been doing on environmental and science based issues over the school year, as well as a time where students and teachers have the chance to interact with environmental professionals to promote environmental awareness and opportunities. The Pittsburgh Area Student Research Symposium, hosted April 4th at YMCA Camp Kon-O-Kwee, had approximately 330 students, 30 teachers, and 34 environmental professionals attending. Creek Connections was honored to have Kristi Niekamp and Mandy Smith from the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission as the featured speakers, in addition to several environmental partners from the Pittsburgh area that tabled and ran focus group activities. Overall, despite the steady all-day rain, this event was a great success and Creek Connections looks forward to continuing our service to schools and furthering collaboration with the array of environmental organizations that participated in the Student Research Symposium.



Above: Students check out the other students' project displays.



Above: Students play the bird banding game put together by the Quaker Valley Creekers.




Above: Students investigate owl pellets in their focus group activity.



Above: Sarah Dippold, former Creeker now at Raccoon Creek State Park, leads a focus group activity on mammal skulls.

What would the Lorax do?



Check for Pipes and
Faucets for leaks.
-Kellie
Cochranton

Save Clothes, you can
make other things. I
made a headband out of
an old shirt.
-Lexie
Lakeview

The Lorax would
present his
conservation tips and
research
electronically so as
to save paper and
cardboard.
-Logan
Quaker Valley

Find Creative ways to use old
products for example turn a
light bulb into a greenhouse
garden or a pop bottle into
an aquarium.
Hera
Gateway

Save dead leaves,
put them in black
bags, and let them
bio-degrade to
make compost.
(Fertilizer) you have
green fertilizer for
plants.
-Vijay, Gateway

Working to fix faulty Septic
systems.
-Cody
Crawford Central Gifted
West End

Surround yourself with
nature, once you've spent
enough time listening and
feeling it—you will
understand the need for
conservation.
-Toby
North Allegheny

Monarch Madness

By The Hermitage Green Team

Members of the Green Team from Hermitage are working to create habitat for Monarch butterflies one milkweed seed at a time. They gathered hundreds of seed pods from milkweed plants in the school butterfly garden in the late fall. Once the seed pods dried they extracted the seeds and separated the tufts from the seeds. They decided to do this part of the project outside; it looked like it was snowing outside with the fluffy tufts flying everywhere. After the seeds were dried the students counted out 5 seeds and placed them in small baggies. They have filled over 1,000 bags so far. The seeds will be distributed to all 1,000 students in grades K-5 during Earth Week. They will be bagging more seeds to distribute at the Creek Connections Youth Symposium at Allegheny College.

The Green Team has been involved with the citizen science tagging project with Monarch Watch from the University of Kansas. Caterpillars are collected from milkweed during the late summer and early fall. Students are able to watch the stages of metamorphosis in a screen cage. Once the butterflies hatch and their wings dry, tags are applied to help track their migration to Mexico.

According to Chip Taylor, an entomologist with Monarch Watch, the population of Monarchs at the overwintering sites in Mexico is at an all-time low. Loss of habitat is the main reason behind the decline in Monarch populations. Milkweed and nectar sources are declining due to development and the widespread use of herbicides in croplands, pastures and roadsides. To offset the loss of milkweeds and nectar sources we need to create, conserve, and protect milkweed/monarch habitats. Monarch Watch is asking people to help monarchs by creating "Monarch Way Stations" (monarch habitats) in home gardens, at schools, businesses, parks, zoos, nature centers, along roadsides, and on other unused plots of land. Without a major effort to restore milkweeds to as many locations as possible, the monarch population is certain to decline to extremely low levels.

Monarch Way Stations are places that provide resources necessary for monarchs to produce successive generations and sustain their migration. Without milkweeds throughout their spring and summer breeding areas in North America, monarchs would not be able to produce the successive generations that culminate in the migration each fall. Similarly, without nectar from flowers these fall migratory monarch butterflies would be unable to make their long journey to overwintering grounds in Mexico. The need for host plants for larvae and energy sources for adults applies to all monarch and butterfly populations around the world.

The Green Team encourages others to create Monarch Way Stations to help with Monarch conservation.

Monarch Watch suggests the following plants to create a Way Station:

MILKWEED

Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)
Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)
Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)

GENERAL NECTAR PLANTS

Indian Blanket (*Gaillardia pulchella*)
Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)
Joe Pye Weed (*Eupatorium purpureum*)
Scarlet Sage (*Salvia coccinea*)
Tithonia Torch, Mexican Sunflower (*Tithonia*)
Zinnia, Dahlia Mix (*Zinnia elegans*)



Creekers Shine at Allegheny College

By Levi Lundell, Allegheny College Student

Creek Connections hosted 450 Students at our annual Student Research Symposium at Allegheny College in Meadville. It was easy to see that many students had a fantastic time, saying things such as: “It was super informative” and “It was interesting because you learned how connected all water sources were.” Once at the college, they identified macroinvertebrates, played with a customizable watershed, controlled underwater robots, and that’s not all! Students had fantastic projects they got to show off such as, how to get monarch butterflies to flourish in our environment. Many projects involved ideas for conservation and protection of the local ecosystems.

It was clear a lot of hard work went into the event from the students, teachers, and all the organizations that attended and presented their research. There are always a few drawings for shirts as long as you can guess the right creature on them! This year some of our winners were Jacob from Conneaut Lake Middle School, Andrea from Clymer High School, Antonio from East Elementary, and Britani from Maplewood High School. One student, when asked if it was great to learn about our waterways, gave us an answer we feel everyone should say. “Yes, because it’s always good to know about stuff going on around you.”





Thank you for another successful Creek Connections Year! We look forward to seeing you in the fall, unless you are a lucky Creek Camper we'll see this summer!

Have a Creeky Summer!

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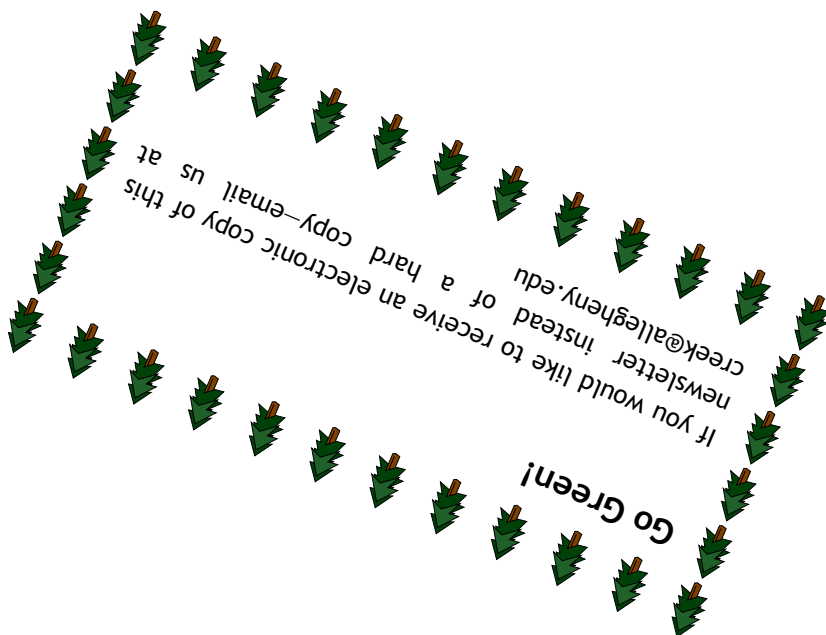
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