

Tualatin Students Explore Marine Habitats

Each school year Tualatin Valley Academy high school students participate in a three-day marine biology exploration in Newport, Ore. Students and staff look forward to this annual event as a great way to bond, and kick off the new school year. As an integral part of ongoing studies begun in the science classroom, the trip provides a wealth of hands-on experiences.

For their first activity, the students search for marine fossils eroded from cliffs at Beverly Beach State Park. At Hatfield Marine Science Center, they handle sea stars, barnacles, muscles and cockles during an animal adaptations lab taught by HMSC staff. After this, they are led out into the estuary mud where they learn to use shrimp guns to find hiding creatures. Here the students begin to appreciate

the unique animals that make the estuary their home, and the vital role it plays in their continued survival.

The next morning, they leave camp at South Beach State Park and head for the Marine Discovery Tours dock, where they board a boat for a three-hour adventure. Students collect plankton and use the onboard microscope to view the rich assortment of phytoplankton and zooplankton discovered in their samples. A bottom trawl brings up crabs, fish, shrimp, jellies and seaweed which students pull from the net and examine in touch tanks. Then they head out to sea to search for whales. This year, despite heavy seas, they saw gray whales, harbor porpoise, stellar sea lions and a variety of seabirds. For many of the students this is an unforgettable first experience out on the ocean.

Safely back on shore, students go to Seal Rock State Park to explore tide pools and collect seaweed samples. Ellen Bakira, ninth-grade student, says "I saw a cool orange and red snail and some pink seaweed that I liked. I don't think I'll look at the water the same way ever again. Before now the beach was just sand, rocks and water to me, but now I know a lot about the organisms that live here."

During their last day at the coast, Dennis Kingma, TVA principal, teaches the students how to surf. With high fives all around, the students agree surfing is a terrific way to conclude the trip and head for home. •

Phil Kahler, TVA science instructor



Ellen Bakira, ninth-grade student, holds up a Dungeness crab and a Red Rock crab aboard the Discovery.



Brittany Finch, Oscar Lopez and Karisa Ing, ninth-grade students handle a sea star at Hatfield Marine Science Center.



Mauri Brockman and Katrina Van Horn, ninth-grade students, look for tide pool critters at Seal Rock.



Oscar Lopez, ninth-grade student, learns to surf at Otter Rock.