

Lessons in the Living Classroom

Sara Gibson, Caretaker

Since moving to Drift Creek Camp at the end of January we have the best time in our whole seven years of homeschooling. How could we not when the class room encompasses the whole loop and miles of surrounding trails? Just within the camp we could spend a lifetime studying all the diversity that is to be found.

I have always loved the outdoors, and once I was a parent I found a passion for getting kids excited about their natural surroundings. It was at a Lincoln County outdoor school that I first discovered this wonderful place. I got to take the sixth graders out for hikes where they learned about mushrooms and their place in our forest ecology.

As an avid mushroom hunter it brought tears to my eyes to see the kids go from disinterest and being grossed out by fungus to total excitement as we hiked and learned. We have it all at DCC. It is a living, breathing classroom where you can see in real time things that are written about in text books.

My kids are now in perpetual outdoor school. We jettisoned some of our dry textbooks in favor of the many field guides available in the nature center.

There is something for everyone in our "schooling." One of the favorite subjects of my husband, Aaron, is "PE." He likes to take the family for long hikes on the surrounding trails, always stopping to photograph any mushrooms we may want to identify later, or just for the beauty of their many shapes and forms. Of course I love teaching the kids about soil cycles as we taste the edible oyster mushrooms that just

happen to be efficient at decaying dead deciduous trees. Toby loves collecting aquatic invertebrates and learning about the life cycles of these bizarre larvae that are so important to the local fish. Talitha and Barrett love the local mammals and birds. We even have a drama class if you count the escapades at the humming bird feeder and the spring rituals of the birds at DCC.



A Steller's Jay sits on its nest of four eggs. Photos taken by John Gingerich on a recent visit to camp in May.

It is also amazing to note that this classroom changes with the seasons. Although we will probably never have his wisdom, it is fun to be like Solomon who "described plant life" and "taught about animals and birds, reptiles and fish. Men of all nations came to listen to his wisdom." (1 Kings 4:33-34)

Paw Prints



A rare shot of a porcupine found near Drift Creek Camp. This shy, spiny rodent is usually active at night. A porcupine's range can be over 200 acres, but luckily for its other friends, it is not territorial (<http://sibr.com/mammals/M145.html>).



Jesse Sigmans, 2009

Family Nature Retreat is your Chance to Reconnect

The Family Nature Retreat this July is a chance to spend quality time as a family while having a lot of fun experiencing new things in the old growth forest at Drift Creek.

The retreat will run from Saturday, July 10 at 9:00am until Sunday, July 11 at 11:00am. Planned activities include: a night hike to look at bats; an opportunity to improve your photography; learning about the insects, stream ecology, creek macroinvertebrates (bugs), and plants around the camp. You will also have a chance to visit Drift Creek Falls and walk across the suspension bridge.

This event is being run by the Friends of Straub Environmental Learning Center and will be hosted by Drift Creek Nature Center. To register, contact fselc@fselc.org or call (503) 391-4145 by June 21. The cost will be \$100 for a family of two, and \$25 for each additional person, with no cost for children age 3 and younger. The cost includes

three meals and a private room. More information is available on our website.

Give Carpooling a Chance

If you already make the effort to carpool when you come to Camp, you should pat yourself on the back. According to 1thingpdx.com, **it takes 240 trees to absorb the CO2 produced from one car in a single year.** That is a whole forest! So don't be shy about calling up your neighbors before you head to Camp. Look for more information in the Currents newsletter about a Summer Camp ride-sharing opportunity out of Corvallis or Rickreall.

DCNC Wish List for 2010


- 1 dozen rubber animal casts \$10 ea.
- 1 dozen student orienteering compasses \$10 ea
- 1 dozen face masks and snorkel sets \$40 ea.
- Digital Camera \$250
- Tripod \$250
- Digital Camcorder \$400
- Large Screened-in Canopy (outdoor classroom tent) \$500
- Birding Scope \$500
- Telescope \$500
- GPS unit; Garmin's Oregon 550t or equivalent \$500
- Laptop Computer: iBook or MacBook \$1000
- Desktop Computer: iMac G4 or newer \$1250

Drift Creek Nature Center

is under the guidance of the Drift Creek Camp Board of Directors.

DCNC committee members are:

Joe Ebersole, Bruce Flaming, John and Louise Gingerich, Tony and Brenda Kauffman, Kayla Mast, Glen Oesch, Ken Snyder and Jon Yoder.

 To learn more, visit us online at driftcreeknaturecenter.org