

FIELD TRIP

Student 'scientists' study marine, local environment

By DIANE VANCE
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NEWPORT — Fifth- and sixth-grade students at Lincoln Community schools brought their science research projects to Hatfield Marine Science Center on Tuesday to share with one another, and learn from one another's projects.

Four classes from Waldport, Toledo and Lincoln City studied how humans impact various ecosystems.

"Students have worked to understand the needs in three different specialized areas, from a river system in the Lincoln City area, to a school yard habitat in Toledo and Beaver Creek near Waldport," said Faith Forshee, fifth- and sixth-grade teacher at Crestview Heights in Waldport.

"Our STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) focus this year has been learning about our coastal community, from 'Ridge to Reef,'" said Forshee. "Our final goal is to encourage students to have a sense of stewardship for their community ecosystems."

Students heard researcher John Chapman, an assistant professor of fisheries at Oregon State University, and fisheries and wildlife educator at Hatfield Marine Science Center, talk about invasive species on the Oregon coast, specifically those that came as a result of the tsunami after the March 2011 earthquake in Japan.

Joseph O'Neil, senior technician and outreach coordinator for the Oregon Hatchery Research Center in Alsea, also talked with the fifth- and sixth-grade students about his work.

Earlier this year, O'Neil traveled to the southeastern corner of Russia to the Primorsky Aquarium and Research Center, to

discuss how the Oregon Hatchery Research Center educates youth on the Oregon coast about challenges of environmental issues regarding salmon.

“Our students had met with O’Neil before he traveled to Russia and knew he was going, so it was good to connect back with him and hear about his learning about the salmon hatcheries in Russia,” said Forshee.

Chris Ampersand, fifth-grade teacher at Oceanlake Elementary, had students study Starfish Wasting Syndrome. Groups of about three students created display boards about the disease with photos, drawings and facts students found through research.

Spencer McClure, Chloe Peterson and Caleb Cortez had a photo of a large starfish with two lesions on the center of its body.

“There’s stages zero, meaning healthy, to four, which is when the arms start falling off and they’ll die,” said Peterson. “This starfish with two lesions is at about stage one or two.”

The rest of the stages, with parts of the star points falling off, were depicted with colorful drawings the team made.

Liesha Monroe, a student at Toledo, studied the invasive Scotch broom, with her partner Talami Butler, who was absent Tuesday.

“It grows 3-to-9-feet tall, and was brought to the U.S. from European gardens,” said Monroe. “It is an invasive species. It displaces native and other beneficial plants.”

Toledo fifth-graders Tyler Godwin, Donovan Woods and Kaden McKibben studied twisted ulota moss, a native plant to rainy regions such as Oregon.

“When the weather is dry, the plant looks withered, lays down and it doesn’t look like anything,” said Woods. “When it gets wet, it’s standing up and colorful.”

The students had exclusive use of the marine science center Tuesday, as it is not open to the public during the week until the summer.

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