Traveling through the world as a naturalist, I have noticed how the experiences we have in nature can be a window into understanding the world around us. The world of nature is a place of wonder, mystery, and discovery. It is a place where we can observe the cycles of life and death, the interactions between species, and the processes that shape the environment. In this way, nature provides a lens for our understanding of the world and ourselves.

In the classroom, I have seen how students can become more engaged and curious when they are exposed to the natural world. They can learn to appreciate the beauty of nature, to observe the details of the natural world, and to develop a sense of wonder and curiosity about the world around them. This can be an important part of their education, as it can help them to develop a deeper understanding of the world and to become more engaged citizens.

In the classroom, I have encouraged students to observe the natural world around them. They can observe the plants and animals in their environment, and they can learn to appreciate the beauty of nature. They can also learn to observe the details of the natural world, and to develop a sense of wonder and curiosity about the world around them. This can be an important part of their education, as it can help them to develop a deeper understanding of the world and to become more engaged citizens.

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FOSTERING INTEREST & COMPETENCY IN SCIENCE

Through targeted classroom lessons aligned to state standards, students prepare for engaging field activities that teach scientific concepts in fun and exciting ways. Audubon Workshops help elementary educators gain confidence in teaching science through inquiry based activities. Corkscrew naturalists mutually benefit by learning from classroom teachers. Students gain valuable knowledge which they share with educators, parents and peers.

Corkscrew Naturalists & Elementary Educators

“I have been at Sabal Palm Elementary School since we began our partnership with Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary 9 years ago. What started out as a simple fieldtrip to Corkscrew guided by knowledgeable staff and volunteers has turned into a great learning experience for teachers and students alike. I have been guiding my students for the past 3 years. I feel that I learn something new every time I go. Many times I am even learning from my students because they have learned so much through their research. I always look forward to this trip because it is a day that I am able to take my classroom outdoors. It isn’t simply students sitting and listening to a teacher tell them about the animals and plants; this is a day when everyone can teach!” Lisa Morse, Sabal Palm 5th grade

Insect Adventure graduates read to first graders

“Kids are enthusiastic and eager to learn and ask questions. They are even more eager to have an adult actually listen to them if they ask a question or want to say something. The rewards that come from leading kids on programs are intangible. They come when an eight year old is half way through a boardwalk hike and asks, ‘How old do you have to be to work here?’ Knowing that kids are going to grow up and care about the wild and that you may have contributed in some small way to that is immensely satisfying.” Dick Breuer, Corkscrew Volunteer

Partnersing for Success

“The need for more science, technology, engineering, and math professionals has never been greater. In order to prepare the STEM professionals of tomorrow, STEM education needs to begin as early as possible in a child’s education career. We need to take advantage of the fact that young children are born explorers and problem solvers who are naturally interested in science, technology engineering, and math.”

We very much appreciate the fact that Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary has been a key Collier County Public Schools partner in STEM education for many years. By introducing our second and fifth graders to environmental education, conservation, endangered species, and real world experiences like the ones they get at the Sanctuary, students will hopefully develop a lifelong interest in STEM and our environment. Thank you to all the sponsors who support these programs and are helping to introduce tomorrow’s leaders to these amazing opportunities today.

Lisa Morse, CCPS Coordinator, Community Partnerships & Engagement

RESEARCH & CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Audubon Scientists & University Students

Dr. Shawn Liston, research manager for Southwest Florida, holds adjunct faculty status at Florida Gulf Coast University and Edison State College. Shawn feels strongly that her expertise as a research scientist allows her to reach students in a unique way. Bridging the gap between the classroom and the real world is critical for building student interest in STEM fields and prepares them for the workplace.

Serving as a field classroom for higher-education environmental science and ecology students, this year Shawn hosted several groups of researchers creating the mutually-beneficial opportunity for students to gain real world field experience while providing Audubon scientific reports and data from our Swamp.

FGCU undergraduate geology students examined soil properties of cypress/wet prairie/pine flatwood ecotones. Ohio State and FGCU graduate students conducted studies of wetland carbon sequestration and methane emission within the Sanctuary. University of Florida students studied the growth characteristics of sabal palmettos.

Conducting research at Corkscrew enables students to learn new sampling protocols, use specialized equipment, and practice identification of native flora, fauna and landscape characteristics. Field skills complement students’ coursework making them marketable in the work force and help Audubon to groom the next generation of scientists and conservation advocates.

Audubon & Americorps

AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps is a federal, team-based program committed to helping non-profit organizations with environmental stewardship, urban and rural development, disaster relief, infrastructure improvement, and energy conservation. Teams are comprised of up to twelve young adults, ages 18-24. During spring 2013, Corkscrew hosted team Delta 1 from the southern region campus.

A three week “work and learn” program was strategically planned. Goals were to complete extensive exotic plant removal projects and provide a larger picture of Corkscrew and its vital role in regional conservation of the Western Everglades. During their three week project, Delta 1 treated approximately 75 acres of Brazilian pepper and 45 acres of popcorn sedge on Panther Island in the northwest section of the Sanctuary.

“Corkscrew staff members assured that we had the motivation to complete our tasks and the knowledge and passion to appreciate it. We went face-to-face with our newest enemies: Brazilian Pepper, Popcorn Sedge and Torpedo Grass. We were also provided some incredible educational opportunities, including a swamp walk, sea turtle monitoring and estuarine stewardship. We shadowed volunteers on the boardwalk, learning about different species and interacting with visitors. The bulk of our education came from hands-on experience doing resource management on Panther Island. We gained a greater appreciation for nature and learned that all things are connected and, therefore, irreplaceable.” Mady, Delta 1 team member

Peer Driven Inspiration

University Colloquium invites discussion about local and global sustainability. “The role of a student naturalist is to interpret the course objectives for our peers. I have come to understand that the terms ‘student’ and ‘teacher’ are synonymous. Students are learning and the ability to interpret facts, figures and concepts is developed throughout the course of the project. Every Audubon trip is a learning experience and an opportunity to develop skills for a post-college career.”

“I have developed clear and confident public speaking abilities, my interpretation style has developed significantly and my leadership position has solidified into a clear role in situations that require it. These skills have already proven helpful during my internship, during coursework, and for extra-curricular activities. The position as a student naturalist is a rare opportunity to develop not only a resume, but especially myself as a person by expanding my world view.” Joan Firth, FGCU student naturalist

Insect Adventure graduates with Corkscrew's education center.

“Working at a Grade 1 school and having the opportunity for our students to experience the Insect Adventure fieldtrip is phenomenal. Many times people take for granted the nature that surrounds us, but after a day with 40 second graders their views would change. As teachers, we were able to build our lessons around the insect theme and incorporate it across curriculum. It was a great way to enhance our teaching.” Lely Elementary 2nd grade team

“Upon our return to school, students continue to learn about the habitats of Corkscrew Swamp. They have the opportunity to share with classmates what they learned about the plants and animals they saw. Because students are grouped into teams and sometimes their team members have different experiences at the swamp, this year we have taken the learning a bit further and allowed students to select one of their studied species to use as a topic for a Pre-Laureate essay. Students selected one animal and conducted research to determine how this species is being affected by its environment. It was interesting to see the information that students were able to find regarding these animals. Through this, students were required to write a research paper encouraging others to protect the various animals.” Melissa Rodrigue, Sabal Palm 5th grade

“AmeriCorps field work is important. Just as vital is educating the team about our watershed and local flora and fauna. Making connections between healthy ecosystems achieved through land management practices based on sound science and experience has far reaching implications.” Allyson Webb, Panther Island Resource manager

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