

Hooting and Howling Emerson third-graders learn about coyotes, owls and others

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Editor's Note. This is the seventh installment in Waban's ongoing series about its TREE program. SANFORD — Emerson School teachers Cherie Fullerton, Laurie Flannery and Joanie Corwin brought their third-grade students to Waban Projects earlier this month to learn about habitat ecology at the organization's TREE (Teambuilding Recreation and Environmental Education) Center.

The students enjoyed lessons about the characteristics of habitats, the flora and fauna of those habitats and the roles of decomposers, producers and consumers.

Indoors at Waban's Wormwood Banquet and Conference Facility, the students visited stations set up with interactive cards and charts and played games such as "Coyotes and Owls," in which they had to howl or hoot their answers to true-or-false questions.

True or false: A habitat needs at least four things in order to be a suitable habitat: food, shelter, space, and Mountain Dew.

False. What gave it away?

How about this one. True or False: Rain, snow, sleet and hail are examples of biotic factors.

False. Biotic factors are living things. Rain, snow, sleet and hail are examples of abiotic factors.

OK, one more. True or false: A black bear is considered to be at the top of the food chain in a forest habitat.

True. Hoot!

Outdoors, students and teachers utilized the Kennebunk Savings Loop of the trail system to set up a game in which students raced to count and categorize species of flora in sampling quadrants. They found between just two or three species in a snowy quadrant all the way up to about 22 species in a quadrant with no snow, which, for April, is normal for the forest habitat surrounding Bauneg Beg Lake.

In addition to the hands-on experience with the forest habitat, students also learned about other habitats, such as the desert, and some of the plants, animals and seasons of each habitat.

Next came a lesson on decomposers, consumers and producers with a chase-and-tag game to emphasize these concepts.

"This is a food chain game. Students better retain concepts when a fun game, combined with physical activity, causes them to repeat terminology and take action based on the attributes of the subject they are learning," said Cynthia Peedin, an environmental educator.

For more information about the TREE Center, please call 324-7955, ext. 644, or send an email to TREE@waban.org.



courtesy photo Tristin Hale, a third-grader at Emerson School, counts and records all the different flora species he can find in a sampling quadrant on the Kennebunk Savings Loop of the trails at Waban's TREE Center.