

# St. Thomas students team up with Waban for seasonal adventures

from Sanford News & Fosters.com

Thursday, February 28, 2013

Editor's Note. This is the sixth installment in a series about Waban Project's Team-building Recreation and Environmental Education (TREE) program.

SANFORD — St. Thomas School students are partnering with Waban's TREE program, once again, to learn about the environment.

Seasonal changes offer different evidence of the activities of the ecosystem surrounding Bauneg Beg Lake, from the beautiful colors and sweet autumn air of October and November to the bright crisp chill of December and January. During those months, the fifth- and 6-graders at St. Thomas School were assigned the task of gathering and documenting the "living evidence" around them to help discover what type of forest they lived in.

In the Fall months, students gathered assorted fallen leaves, bark, fungi, and berries. They took pictures of the various animals, or evidence of animals, and documented their findings. On another occasion, the students gathered "non-living evidence," such as temperature and precipitation measurements. They also examined the forest's soil by testing its pH and texture. After gathering all of the evidence, the students discussed their findings and concluded that Waban's forest is a part of the Temperate Deciduous Forest ecosystem.

As the snow began to make its changes to the ecosystem, the St. Thomas students returned for a winter adventure. Mainers love winter and all of the assorted recreational possibilities it brings, such as skiing, snowshoeing, ice fishing, and ice skating, all of which are available at Waban's TREE Center. The students utilized snowshoes to make their way along the woodland trails for a winter habitat lesson. With the use of trail camera technology, students set up a location for investigating the wildlife that is commonly active during the winter. While on their hike, the students were tasked with discovering animal tracks and finding a suitable tree to place the trail camera. They looked for certain characteristics, such as medium trunk circumference, hardy build, similar color bark as the camera, location close to a water source, and evidence of animals inhabiting the area. Students predicted what animals they would catch on the camera and discussed adaptations that certain fauna undergo during the harsh winter season. They listed several survival responses to winter, such as the physiological process of hibernation, changes in diet to compensate for the lack of living flora, and migration patterns of certain bird species.

After an engaging lesson of adaptations and a snowshoe hike, the students enjoyed steaming cups of hot chocolate.



courtesy photo Fifth- and sixth-graders at St. Thomas School use snowshoes to get in touch with the snowy forest at Waban's TREE Center for a winter habitat lesson.