

Local Schools



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MDC Naturalists Bring Whole New Level of Learning to Students

FEBRUARY 16TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Cape Girardeau, Missouri - Naturalists with the Missouri Department of Conservation's (MDC) Cape Girardeau Conservation Nature Center visited elementary schools in Ste. Genevieve and Bloomsdale recently to give nature programs. These visits are part of a large effort the naturalists make every year to take nature programs to students who might not otherwise get to visit the center.

"This time we did Lewis and Clark based programs, but we do other programs such as mammals," said Sara Turner, manager of the nature center. "All of our nature programs teach about animal conservation, habitats, nature appreciation and connect to classroom science studies."

Debbie Baker, a fourth grade teacher at Bloomsdale Elementary School, said she appreciates the programs coming into her classroom.

"The great thing about the classroom visits is that it brings a whole new level of learning into the classrooms," Baker said. "Many of our students may never get the chance to visit the nature center, but they still got that hands-on experience because it came to them."

Baker said her students learned about Lewis and Clark this year as part of their curriculum, and she appreciated how the naturalists went into depth about what life on the trail was like, and what contributions different members of Lewis and Clark's crew made

to the team.

“I was very impressed with the presentation, and the students loved it,” Baker said.

Turner said map and compass and other outdoor skills are included in the programs. Due to classroom time constraints and lack of school funding for gasoline and buses, it creates a need for the naturalists to travel to some schools, which saves field trip costs for the school, she said.

“We initiate the contact based on which schools haven’t been to the nature center in a while for a field trip and which schools we think might benefit from learning about our Discover Nature Schools (DNS) or Missouri National Archery in the Schools programs,” Turner said.

Turner said she hopes the programs help teachers see how they can tie nature as a theme into their current teaching strategies using DNS curriculum as the lesson or supplement to their lessons.

“We correlate with the current school standards, too,” Turner added.

For the students, the benefit is knowledge and appreciation of Missouri wildlife and the ability to see ways they can get outside and discover nature.

“We give them insight into how people had to be much more connected to the land in previous generations,” Turner said. “They will hopefully begin to see how their own survival connects to the survival of nature.”

Shown in the submitted photo: Naturalists from the Cape Girardeau Conservation Nature Center recently brought Lewis and Clark themed nature programs to 133 elementary students in Ste. Genevieve and Bloomsdale.

Article submitted by the Missouri Department of Conservation.

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