



ORGANIC ROOTS

THE NORTH COUNTRY SCHOOL & CAMP TREETOPS BULLETIN



THE MAKING OF HUBBARD LEAN-TO: A Treetops friendship for the ages *Campus sustainable forestry efforts gaining momentum*

Glass fusing and slumping debut in NCS art class and more...

TIME FOR WONDER

By Karen Culpepper

In her acclaimed *The Sense of Wonder*, Rachel Carson wrote: “If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder... he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in.” Though Carson’s words were written more than 50 years ago, they seem to me even more relevant today, when children have so few opportunities to connect with their natural world.

A few summers ago, I got a real sense of what Carson was talking about when I had the privilege of co-leading a Junior Camp “Live off the Land” trip at Osgood Pond with Mildred Brooks. The plan was to forage wild edibles for our meals. We had set up camp and begun picking berries for the much anticipated blueberry fritters we had planned for dinner. However, the grasshoppers jumping all around us on that hot August afternoon soon proved much more exciting than the promise of blueberry fritters. Before I knew it, our merry band of berry pickers had morphed into a crazed gang of grasshopper hunters. My first inclination was to re-focus them on the original task, but before I could say anything, Mildred had joined the hunt, promising to add fried grasshopper to the menu. That evening, we all had our first taste of the little green critters, and the children surprised me by proclaiming the meal one of the best they’d ever had. They couldn’t wait to get back to camp to tell everyone what they had caught, cooked, and eaten.

Our current Junior Camp nature counselors, Margaret “Mogie” Kinoshian and Katherine Daven, understand that children love to explore, make discoveries, get muddy, and care for living creatures. They offer structured experiential activities, such as catching frogs, animal track casting, creating habitats, and building shelters—all the while recognizing the teachable moments. This past summer, the junior nature area was a menagerie of baby chicks, angora rabbits, and snapping turtles that children played with and cared for. With a dredge made from a coffee can, campers scooped up tiny aquatic invertebrates from the pond and created their own ecosystem in an aquarium back at the nature house. Mogie and Katherine encouraged children to turn over logs, ask questions, and generally get down and dirty with the natural world.

Over the past few summers, Ken Baker has inspired our senior campers to tap into their passions and natural curiosity by helping them experience their environment first-hand, treating our campus as a living laboratory. He gave them the tools to explore and encouraged them to ask questions and form hypotheses. Together Ken and our older campers found ways to answer questions by observing, trapping, dissecting, and otherwise digging for clues. Children were thrilled to get up at midnight to hunt salamanders or gaze at stars. They set live traps in the dark to discover which nocturnal animals live in the Adirondacks, built a terrarium that fit all the living requirements for the various species of frog and toad found around camp, rehabilitated a chipmunk that had survived a run-in with a cat, and dissected a red squirrel that wasn’t as lucky. (See Ken’s article, page 10).

At Treetops, we are fortunate to have caring and talented adults who nurture children’s sense of wonder and excitement for their natural world. Our campers learn an appreciation for the beauty that surrounds them and a respect for living things. I believe that we truly embody Carson’s words of advice, and by doing so our campers grow up to become deeply connected with and strong advocates for our natural world. 🍄



GWEN SEARCHES FOR TREASURE

A WOMAN OF WONDER

NO ONE BETTER EMBODIED RACHEL CARSON’S SENSE OF WONDER IN THE WORLD AROUND US; NO ONE WAS A MORE FIERCE PROTECTOR OF NATURE NOR A MORE DEVOTED ADMIRER OF HER BEAUTY THAN OUR BELOVED **MILDRED BROOKS**, WHO PASSED AWAY PEACEFULLY ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2009, JUST AS WE WERE GOING TO PRESS.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE, WE’LL PAY PROPER TRIBUTE TO A WOMAN WHO STIRRED IN GENERATIONS OF TREETOPS CAMPERS AND COUNSELORS A LOVE OF NATURE AND ALL IT’S CREATURES THAT NEARLY MATCHED HER OWN.

— KAREN C.

