

# Little Birders Nature Camp

Kalmiopsis Audubon Society

Report by Teresa Bird

This summer was our second year of Little Birder’s camp, thanks again to a grant from the Oregon Birding Association. This year our day camp was held on four consecutive days at different locations in the Port Orford area, partnering with the Siskiyou Discovery School for coordination and recruitment support. We had an average of 10 children each day ages 4-12, with three adult chaperones. Rather than only learning about birds, this year we decided to develop our curriculum with a broader nature focus to give the children a larger understanding of how different parts of our ecosystem interact.

This grant enabled us to recruit a variety of local professionals to teach the lessons, giving the children the opportunity to learn from some great role models who work in natural resources – with the added benefit of involving more young adults in the work of our Audubon chapter. The first day we had a great hands-on lesson about bird adaptations, went birdwatching and practiced birdwatching skills, and built bird nests with



materials we collected along the way. Students learned about birds with the same “wingspan” as themselves, and were encouraged to make nests that were made for specific kinds of birds that interested them. The second day we took a “walk through plant evolution,” learning about the prehistoric native plants that still exist today, and how plants evolved to become more complex and resilient. This was a great way to build off of our lesson about bird adaptations, and the children were encouraged to think about how these different plants (including fruiting shrubs and trees) support a huge variety of different kinds of birds. Our walk ended in a garden where the children learned about different food sources for both people and birds, and how we can maintain gardens to serve both purposes. The children learned to identify some native plant species, picked berries, sampled different types of fruits and vegetables, and planted seeds to take home. The third day we learned about forestry at Blacklock State Park, which has a wide variety of forest types. A local forestry professional taught about types of

forests and human uses for them, facilitating a discussion about how these different uses affect the birds and wildlife living in the forests. We were amazed at the level of thoughtfulness the children expressed as we discussed some pretty in-depth issues! The students also got to experience using some forestry tools to gather data about the forest type, which was a neat opportunity for them to learn about natural resources work from a real working professional (not to mention they thoroughly enjoyed learning their own diameter measurements). The final day we tied all these lessons together by learning about watersheds. Thanks to the Curry watershed partnership we were able to use a stream trailer for this lesson, which I would highly recommend! The stream trailer enabled the students to clearly see the effects of real-life scenarios such as heavy logging, development, and chemical applications on river systems. This interactive model drove home the understanding that humans are an important part of ecosystems, and have the power to help or hurt the watersheds they inhabit. We did this lesson at Arizona Beach State Park, which is also an amazing birding spot, and all throughout the lesson there were several osprey flying around us! This watershed lesson was the perfect visual to enhance what we learned throughout the week, and we ended with a discussion about what watersheds we live in and what we can do to help keep them healthy.

This camp continues to be an important part of our outreach effort, as it educates both children and adults (parents and teachers) about nature and our local conservation work. We hope that providing these children with hands-on, exploratory experiences in nature will have a lasting impact on the future values. Thank you to the Oregon Birding Association for supporting this work!

