



MAINE PROJECT LEARNING TREE®

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FALL 2018

PLT® Mission: PLT uses the forest as a "window" on the world to increase students' understanding of our environment; stimulate students' critical and creative thinking; develop students' ability to make informed decisions on environmental issues; and instill in students the commitment to take responsible action on behalf of the environment.

PLT, EE and Outdoor Learning Brings Us Together

Pat Maloney

The heat and humidity have given way to strong and chilly winds, dropping temperatures and nudging reminders to switch from screen to storm windows. This edition of our Fall newsletter brings you stories of adaptations that teachers and schools have made toward outdoor education, stories that share existing outdoor explorations with students and communities and reminders that change is possible with a little help from colleagues, friends and resource people in your own backyard. Enjoy articles written by a cross section of our Maine PLT network from preK teachers through retirees. Thanks to each of the contributors and to our statewide network of teachers foresters, community leaders and others – all of whom make PLT come alive while providing healthy, educational and fun nature based learning opportunities.



Volunteers make EE work! Thorncrag Forest Field Day for Lewiston HS students

Looking back over the last few months, the Maine TREE Foundation and Project Learning Tree summer Teachers' Tours once again attracted outstanding educators from all

regions of the state and from every grade level. Our teams of PLT facilitators and organizers plus excellent field trips from working forests to meeting paper mill workers all set the stage for highly rated reviews. Sugar houses sweetened each tour along with lots of food for thought about how to use and build outdoor classrooms that enrich our small town communities. A tour of the Passamaquoddy Museum added a depth and richness to our understanding of Maine's history and as one teacher commented on a take-away: *my 2018 lessons will include topics about Maine's natural environment including tree ID, soils and watersheds and how they all relate to our current and past cultures.*

Throughout the spring, MEPLT facilitators stepped up to deliver hands-on and experiential lessons at various conferences: UMF Nature Based Conference, Maine Environmental Education Association conference, Children's Water Festival, the International PLT Coordinator's Conference and the Maine Science Teachers Conference. Their presentations and expertise help to spread enthusiasm for environmental education throughout the state and beyond.

The Holt Research Forest in Arrowsic hosted a first time Kennebec Estuary Land Trust summer camp with the Holt outdoor classroom acting as an excellent venue for a successful program. From the creation of a frog condo to trail maintenance, kids enjoyed a happy, healthy and fun filled week!

Project Learning Tree and the Maine TREE Foundation have moved to a new office at 535 Civic Center Drive, Augusta, Maine. The phone numbers and emails are the same.

Tree Cookies, Literature and History

By Barry Burgason

One of the great things about PLT lessons is that they cover a multitude of subjects, and when you start linking them together along with a little creativity, the possibilities become endless. During the 2018 Downeast Teacher's Tour, I combined three activities to illustrate this point.

Tree Cookies, PLT K-8 activity #76, has always been one of my favorites because of the many directions you can take. The annual rings on the butt of a log can give a fascinating history of the local forest. Science, math and ecology are all tied up in the age of the tree, the current growth rate and the history of growth of the tree. By combining growth with the height of the tree, you can calculate tree volume at various stages of growth and economic value. Tree cookies can also be used as art. I don't know how many cookies I have made for coasters, plaques and name badges! Tree cookies can also be a visual timeline for chronicling history; whether as an individual's history, the history of a place, of an organization or of a thought, idea or attitude.

Native Ways, activity #90, and *In the Good Old Days*, activity #91, invite students to explore the ways, "Human attitudes and values, and therefore behavior, with regard to the environment can change...". When Europeans first came to North America, the prevailing attitude was that natural resources were abundant and unlimited. *Native Ways* focuses on American Indian values and *Good Old Days* relates to the writings of some of our early conservation writers as Americans came to realize the impacts we were having on resources. These are important lessons for students as they form a conservation ethic.

Now for the creative part! In an earlier version of the PLT K-8 Activity Guide one lesson used Aldo Leopold's essay titled "Good Oak" to illustrate a tree cookie being used as a "slice of history" to teach about conservation attitudes of people in northern Wisconsin and throughout the United States. In the essay, a large oak tree has been felled by a lightning bolt on his farm and Aldo, with a companion, are using a 2-man crosscut saw (the technology of the times) to cut the tree for firewood. As they cut, Aldo visualizes the conservation history his tree has "witnessed" during its life and creates an image by likening the sawdust to "fragrant chips of history spewed from the saw cut... on the snow before each kneeling sawyer." As the saw cuts through the decades, he highlights specific events including the extinction of the passenger pigeon and the

passage of conservation legislation designed to stem the tide of America's waste of resources. The essay contains factual information and a strong conservation message.

Now for fun! When I bought my first house, squirreled away in a back corner of the garage was a perfectly functional 2-man cross cut saw. I prefer to cut my firewood with a modern chainsaw but I kept the crosscut and use it to recreate Leopold's essay on "Good Oak". After introducing material available in "Native Ways" and "Good Old Days" and specifically to Aldo Leopold, we launch into literature and history lessons with a log and a crosscut saw as props. With a teacher on each end of the saw, we make our own "fragrant chips of history" and cut tree cookies as another volunteer reads the "Good Oak" aloud. Once the push-pull rhythm of the saw is established, it becomes quite poetic.



Tailgating and Cross Cutting with Barry

At the end of the session, teachers think about how they can use these lessons in their curriculum. After going through a similar exercise, can students be challenged to write their own "slice of history"? Tree cookies can be the tool for science, art, literature, history, social studies and even a little PE! PLT can help bring your lessons alive.

*End Note: Aldo Leopold was born in 1888 and was trained as a forester. He later became a professor of wildlife science at the University of Wisconsin and is known as the "father of wildlife management". He was an eloquent and influential conservation writer who helped shape the attitudes of many conservationists and professional natural resource managers. His most famous work, "A Sand County Almanac" contains a strong conservation ethic and is great literature and should be required reading in high school literature courses **and for all PLT teachers!***

EcoVenture Kids Camp Connects with PLT

By Amanda Laliberte, Program Manager, alaliberte@rlht.org

In 1998 Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust established a youth program, EcoVenture, to connect the community with RLHT's conservation work. Since then over 2000 campers have participated in our program. The entrance to EcoVenture states, "through these gates pass the future stewards of Rangeley's natural resources." A statement that has come to fruition, due in part because of our longstanding relationship with Project Learning Tree.

EcoVenture campers are outside, all the time, immersing themselves on the trail, in the woods, and on the waters of our region. We provide opportunities that engage the hearts of our campers as they explore and connect to the natural world. We develop their stewardship ethic as campers begin to understand the impacts of their choices on the natural world. We do this with the support of the PLT curricula.



EcoVenturers Test Water Quality

Each day as campers take to the field, they bring with them an environmental science activity. A few of our favorite PLT lessons are *Trees as Habitats*, *Are Vacant Lots Vacant?*, *400-acre Wood*, and *Tree Factory*. Each of these lessons has connected our campers to the mission of our organization and their connection with the land.

With our PLT partnership we will continue to cultivate a legacy of stewardship in our campers that will provide both recreational and conservation dividends forever.

To learn more about Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust or how to get involved, visit www.rlht.org.

A Maine Audubon Story

By Tammy Heiselmeyer

Tammy sent a description of the Maine Audubon book trails following our Southern Maine Teachers' Tour when there were a few inquiries about the trails. Enjoy and feel free to get in touch with her at Maine Audubon:

tammyheiselmeyer@gmail.com

I had a great time on the southern Maine teachers' tour in July. One topic that I discussed with a few people, and with Beth Clarke at the Agnes Gray School, was the idea of creating a story book trail to help alleviate some teacher anxiety around taking the kiddos outside. At Maine Audubon's Gilsland Farm Preserve in Falmouth they have created 2 story book trails of which 4 books are easily swapped around depending on the season. On one trail, which goes through the woods, the 2 books that can be seen include one about bats and the other about Snowy Owls. The other trail, which follows a path near the pond and through a meadow, may display a book about Monarchs or about the Blanding's turtle. One way to have teachers become more involved is to have them pick a story or two where different grades can develop a lesson. The story does not have to be long. Also, to gain community and/or financial support reach out to the local land trust or library and consider forming a partnership. In Bridgton, Maine, Pondicherry Park, a preserve managed by Loon Echo Land Trust, has a story book trail during the summer months which is maintained by the Bridgton Library.

Enjoy creating your own Story Trail with students!



Story Trail at Maine Audubon

An Outdoor Learning Dream Come True

By Pam Dunphy and Renee St. Pater

Two years ago art teacher, Pam Dunphy, had a dream to start an outdoor learning garden and food pantry for the Old Town Elementary School. A garden committee was established which included teachers, administrators, and university partners. Dr. Hoshide, a UMO professor, and Kate Garland with Cooperative Extension helped design our expansive vegetable and flower gardens. After our first successful harvest, we added a pumpkin patch, story walk, and above ground wheel chair accessible raised beds.

The elementary school teachers, students, parents, and community members have taken great interest in the new project. Students are involved with planting, weeding, and harvesting food for our food pantry. Families experiencing food insecurity now have access to fresh produce. Teachers are invested in this project and have created reading, writing, and science lessons both within and about the gardens.



A Surprise Fungus on the Forest Floor!

As a result of this successful garden project, two teachers attended the 2018 Maine TREE Foundation/PLT Teachers' Tour. The experience led Renee and Pam to plan and build an Outdoor Classroom in the University of Maine Forest which surrounds the school. With support from volunteers and the administration, the outdoor classroom goals now include the building of benches and tables, creation of an alphabet trail, and setting aside an area for a village of fairy houses.

The PLT training has inspired our school to continue expanding the outdoor learning space and to provide a valuable hands on learning approach to environmental education. All are invited to visit anytime when Pam and Renee will be happy to show you around.

2018 MAINE PROJECT LEARNING TREE STEERING COMMITTEE

Anita Smith, Chair, Maine Master Naturalist
Henry Whittemore, Treasurer, Maine TREE Foundation
Barry Burgason, Wildlife Biologist
Kenny Fergusson, Huber Resources
Stephen Gettle, Woodland Investment Services
Laurie Haines, Lewiston High School
Betty MacWilliams, Tree Farmer and Former Science Teacher
Timothy Surette, University of Maine, Augusta
Shari Templeton, Maine Department of Education
Bernie Welch, Former Teacher
Warren Whitney, Maine Coast Heritage Trust
Linda Woodard, Maine Audubon
Pat Maloney, Maine PLT Coordinator

OUR SEMIANNUAL ROUND OF APPLAUSE TO THE FOLLOWING PLT FACILITATORS & PRESENTERS EXTRAORDINAIRE:

Barry Burgason	Janice Rey
Terri Coolong	Andy Shultz
Patty Cormier	Anita Smith
Kevin Doran	Don Sprangers
Susan Linscott	

Sincere & special thanks to:

Joanne Alex & Laurie Haines, Nature Based Conference
Patti Baillie, UMF
Kyle Burdick, Baskahegan
Estate of Mary & Philip Chadbourne
Shane Duigan & Alanna Doughty, Bridgton
Krysten Gorrivan, UNE
Colin Kelley, Bates College
Lakes Environmental Association
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MEPLT Steering Committee
Greg Miller, MFS
Sarah Morrisseau, FIG Advisory
National Project Learning Tree
Society of American Foresters – Maine Division
Laura Wilson, University of Maine Cooperative Extension

Art on an Island!

By Laura Devin

Living on an island? Who wouldn't want to do that?

8th grade students at Woolwich Central School recently had a chance to live and learn on some small islands off the coast of Maine under the auspices of RSU #1 and the Chewonki Foundation. The program is called FLOW and was developed by Lawrence Kovacs, our Gifted and Talented coordinator. Students rowed themselves and their provisions out to several small islands in Hockomock Bay and spent four days and nights rowing between the islands and learning about the water and the forests of Maine's coastal areas.

I was lucky enough to motor out for two days in a row to teach some observational techniques and do a watercolor project. Sam, the captain of our little motor boat, was a font of information about the birdlife we saw as we putt-putted out to the students.

The first day out was overcast and rainy. I wore a rainsuit and boots and went with the flow.....literally. The students greeted me as I climbed ashore as if I was their long lost best friend come to save them. It was quite refreshing to be appreciated by a bunch of middle schoolers!



Island Reflections and Observations

We talked about what we were seeing all around us...from the horizon, the earth, the sky and anything on or in those elements. Getting students out there in nature and really immersing them did some amazing things for their observational skills. They were seeing details of the

land and forest they had never considered before. Some were used to being outdoors, coming from hunting families or other outdoor traditions, but even they seemed to really look and see some things for the first time.

We used watercolor pencils and paper to capture what the students were most interested in. They had the choice of any view they could see.

The Natural World through Art

By Joanne Alex, Stillwater Montessori School

At Stillwater Montessori School we are fortunate to have Valerie Wallace as our art instructor. She engages ages 3 to 10 years of age students in experiencing the world of nature through art. The children enjoy not only the subject matter but the process of creating a work of art as well.

Valerie explains her philosophy with the students: "When I teach painting, it is all about the colors. When I was a kid, I knew I felt different at different times of the year and different times of the day. I realized later that a lot of it had to do with how the light changed the colors and how the pallet of the landscape changes with the seasons. I am inspired by these colors when I choose what we paint. We consider how the time of the day, or year or weather effects how things look.

I remember wanting to know how to draw or paint when I was a child so I teach the kids basic art skills while they follow along step by step and hope that they may tell their own stories."

So with our emphasis on environmental education and Valerie's art classes we hope that the children will experience a life-long engagement with the natural world.



Art that tells a story

Maine TREE Foundation
Project Learning Tree
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Calendar of Events

Watch www.maintreefoundation.org for 2018/2019 workshop updates.
If you are interested in hosting a PLT workshop in your school or community,
please call Pat Maloney at 626-7990 or email pmaloney@meplt.org to make plans!
Visit us on Face Book: <https://www.facebook.com/MainePLT>

November 13, 2018
Maine PLT Steering Committee
535 Civic Center Drive
Augusta, Maine

December 5, 2018
SFI/SIC Committee
535 Civic Center Drive
Augusta, Maine

April 2019
Girl Scout Workshop
535 Civic Center Drive
Augusta, Maine

November 30 & December 1, 2018
EE Bringing Us Together
Kennedy Learning Center
Nobleboro, Maine

December 12, 2018
Natural Resource Professionals Workshop
535 Civic Center Drive
Augusta, Maine

April 20, 2019
Green ME Up!
LL Bean's
Freeport, Maine