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Interactive, hands-on learning session finishes school year

June 11, 2014
Mary Wardell - Journal Staff Writer (mwardell@miningjournal.net) , Mining Journal

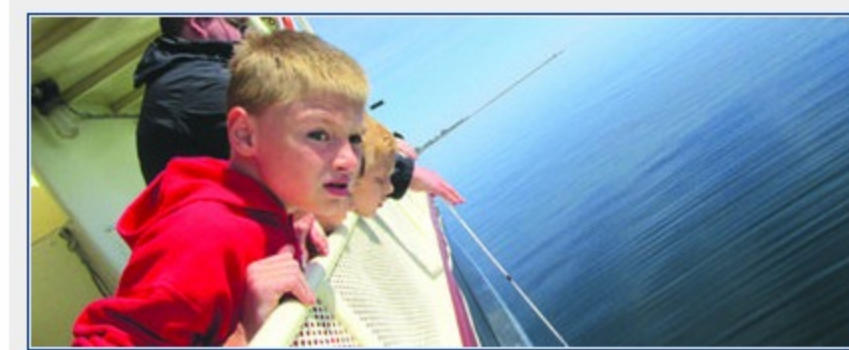
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MARQUETTE - From petting sea lampreys to dissecting fish, fourth-graders across Marquette have rounded off their year with a learning experience to rival any other, and with an unbeatable view.

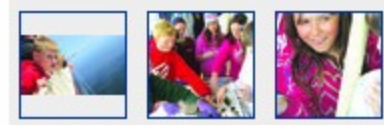
The program was designed by Moosewood Nature Center and brought together experts from the DNR and Superior Watershed Partnership for a three-hour cruise on Lake Superior, including four different educational stations on the boat.

All three Marquette public elementary schools, Northstar Academy, Father Marquette Catholic Elementary and an immersed homeschool group participated at no cost to the schools or parents.

Article Photos



Students learn how to measure the depth of the water in ...



Chip Neuman, intern at Moosewood Nature Center and senior wildlife management major at NMU, said there were five trips total to accomodate all of the students, the last of which was Tuesday.

"Hands-on I feel is the best way to teach," he said. "Having (the kids) out of the text book, out of the classroom; having them put gloves on and feel different fish...It's a great experience for them."

One of the stations, taught by Jenn Hill of the Superior Watershed Partnership, discussed ecology. Hill brought four different species of small organisms native to Lake Superior to inspect under a microscope, discussed their habitat and place in the food web and also showed them how to take water samples from the lake.

"They learn a lot about science and ecology in the classroom," she said. "But it's a different environment on a boat, where Lake Superior and its relationship to the Upper Peninsula are put more in perspective. We're teaching them about care and management of the lake, so this is a good place to do it."

Another station, taught by Theresa Neal, DNR interpreter at Tahquamenon Falls, educated students about three invasive species-sea lamprey, zebra mussels and Asian carp, including live sea lampreys, dead mussels and a 6-foot-long lifesize cut-out of an Asian carp.

Laurel Hill, biological technician for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, taught students about the endangered Piping Plover, a native bird species of which there are only 33 mating pairs left in Michigan,

And Karen Sanford, DNR technician at the Marquette fisheries research station, taught fish identification at the fourth station. It included a live dissection, in which students were able to touch and hold various parts of the fish's anatomy.

Mindy Talus, fourth-grade teacher at Sandy Knoll Elementary, said the students were absolutely loving the experience.

"This type of learning is so much more beneficial and engaging than just sitting with a book," Talus said. "This is stuff that they'll remember."

The field trip was sponsored by the Marquette Community Foundation, Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition and the Superior Watershed Partnership. All experts and educators that participated volunteered their time.

Talus said planning and organizing such a unique and high-quality learning experience would not be manageable for an individual teacher, if only due to the expense.

"Moosewood Nature Center did a beautiful job coordinating all the different people," Talus said.

"It was a nice culminating activity for the end of the year, a perfect ending."

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