

Upper Elementary Spring Science Trip to Echo Hill



It has been said that in order to love and protect nature you need to first experience and understand it. Four days and three nights at the Echo Hill Outdoor School in Maryland offers the Upper Elementary students at Aidan Montessori the opportunity to experience and understand the outdoors and each other in a special way. It's a science lesson and a community-builder and just plain fun! Here, the students share their experiences from the **May 2009** trip.



Introduction to EHOS by Cole Srere

E.H.O.S. (Echo Hill Outdoor School) is, as its name suggests, a school where you learn about nature. The schedule for each day is simple: you wake up around 7:15am and go to breakfast at the Whip (an open dining hall), then you have your morning class and after that there's lunch and rest hour. Rest hour is time when you can rest in your tent, or take a shower on the "tent side" of camp. Afternoon classes follow, and then an hour of free time when you can play games, swim, or relax. Dinner is followed by night activities, and then back to the tents for bed. Some examples of day classes are: Mystery Tour, Garbology, Bay Studies, Scanoes, Adventure Courses, and Seeds and Weeds. Some night activities are Night Hike and Hay Rides.



The Whip Dining Hall by Ariadne Manuel

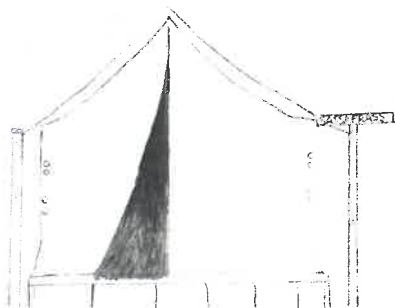
Girls' Tents

by Isabel Brown and Emma Frohardt

The girls stayed on the "far side" of the camp. We were in the Dogwood and Sassafras tents. Lisa-Anne, Zaria, Maggie, Tara, Karis, and Izzie stayed with Mrs. Mosher in Dogwood. Lucy, Haley, Ari, Abby, and Emma stayed with Ms. Kimboko in Sassafras. Once we got to Echo Hill we walked to our tents and claimed our bunks and put our luggage away. We were also given a tour of camp: the "far side" tents, the beach, and the Whip (the dining hall). Sassafras was tucked into a cove of woods and Dogwood was more in the open. There were four bunks and a single bed for the teacher in each tent, and all had bug nets covering them. In the middle of the far side there was an OD "on duty" station where two Echo Hill counselors stayed all day in case you needed anything and your teacher wasn't there.

The camp bell rang either to tell us to come to the Whip or to tell us our class was about to start. If you needed to go to the bathroom anytime at Echo Hill, you went to the privy. A privy is an outhouse, with a hole in the ground for waste. At night, you needed the three "f's": friend, flashlight, and footwear to go to the privy. The showers were open-air with concrete walls. You had limited time to shower, because there was usually a long line. There was also lots of wildlife around the tents. We saw skinks, snakes, birds, and insects. We woke up and fell asleep to insects and bird-song. The nighttime procedure was: come back from the night time activity, go to the bathroom, brush your teeth, and then back to the tent for a bedtime story.

We were encouraged to clean our tents by organizing our luggage and sweeping the tent floor. There was a competition for neatest tent, so during rest hour we swept, organized, and altogether cleaned. The two Aidan tents tied for first place!



Sassafras tent by Emma Frohardt

Boys' Tents by Sean Lovett

On Monday, we arrived and got assigned to our tent called Perch. It was right across from the tetherball court, so we went there whenever we had free time. Our tent counselor was Mr. Busch. There were five beds, including Mr. Busch's, so we had 8 bunks for seven people. The beds were very cozy, with the bug nets on the side. The stars outside were so pretty. On the first night, it was extra cozy because it rained. The weirdest thing was Romeo saying, "Oh crud, a spider!" all night.



Tetherball by Shane Cibor

Meals by Haley Butler

Ms. Honey, the woman who has been in charge of cooking at Echo Hill for a long time, made the best food. At the beginning of each meal, we would gather in a circle around the flagpole outside and have "thanking and sharing" and a moment of silence. For breakfast, we had pancakes, hash browns, eggs, and on the last day we had French toast. For lunch, we had lasagna, macaroni & cheese, tilapia, and then "Thanksgiving dinner." For dinner, we had hot dogs and meatball sandwiches. For dessert, we had cake or popsicles. To close each meal, we sang a song led by a counselor.

At the end of the meal, we would weigh the SLOP (stuff left on plate). We weighed it so that we could be more aware of wasting food. The goal was to have no SLOP at all. We didn't get that low, but we did have one meal with only 3 ½ pounds for everyone in camp.

Rest Hour by Ariadne Manuel

Rest hour is the time when you can hang out on the “tent side.” During rest hour campers like to play cards or hand games, write in their journal, take showers, clean their tents and bags, read books, get ready for class, or draw. On the “near side” (the tents closest to the center of camp), some campers even got the chance to play tetherball. Rest hour was designed by the staff to allow the participants of Echo Hill to digest their lunch and to cool off from previous activities. Rest hour was one of my favorite times of the day and I think that a lot of people would agree.

History Mystery Tour by Romeo Cabarga and Cole Srere

At Echo Hill Outdoor School, we sometimes have a “mystery tour.” This year, we went to Chestertown, a town near the camp. Once we were there, we compared Chestertown in the present with Chestertown in colonial times. We learned about the Chestertown Tea Party, where Chestonians dumped tea into the Chestertown River. There is no proof of whether it actually happened. We visited a lot of houses and important buildings built in colonial times, which helped us to learn how they changed. One of the buildings we saw was The White Swan Inn, which used to be a residence until it was converted into an inn. We looked at the structure of the building and noticed that it had not changed a lot. We also saw a church from colonial times. The History Mystery tour was overall fun and informative.



Extra Time by Shane Cibor

Extra Time is when you get to play outside with your friends. The boys were on the “near side,” called that because it is closest to the center of things. The near side had its own tetherball court, so we played that a lot. Sometimes we would play cards, or play basketball. When it was warm and sunny, we would go down to the beach and swim in the Chesapeake Bay.



Above and below left:

The History Mystery tour explores nearby Chestertown

Night Hike by Maggie Nixon

The “Night Hike” on the beach was one of the best parts of our trip. It was incredibly exciting to hear the sounds of the creatures instead of seeing them. At first I thought that it was a little scary because it was so dark, but quickly I realized just how interesting and fun it was. It was kind of cold and there were a lot of bugs. When I shined my flashlight near my face, there they were, just waiting to bite me! We told scary stories and my favorite part was when we told riddles. The fire warmed me up and scared the bugs away. I thought it was really cool and particularly beautiful to see the reflection of the moon on the Chesapeake Bay.



A View of the Chesapeake Bay from Echo Hill

Garbology

by Abby Weymouth and Sean Lovett

On Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning, we had Garbology with Scott, Trish, and Tim. We started by telling the counselors our names and then talked about what the class was. Garbology is the study of garbage and natural waste. We also talked about words like pollution and litter. Then we went to the "far side" of campus to pick up trash under tents. We also played games like a weird version of "Sharks and Minnows" and one in Mungo Lane (a place where the camp puts trash and recycling), where we put litter in the right containers. After that we cleaned up the beach. Some of the biggest things we found were: two tires, two Mother's Day balloons, and a piece of a fence. We wrapped up by talking about what we learned: a lot about the ecosystem and the effect trash has on it.



Talking about the Chesapeake Bay Watershed

Bay Studies

by Isabel Brown and Lucy Rock

We started out in the van, driving to a dock where we would meet the boat. In the van we talked, played handclap games and naming groups of animals, and checked off animals on our "sightings" list. We learned about problems in the Bay. The main problem is that there are too many nutrients that cause algae to grow, and this blocks the sunlight, which causes sea grasses and other plants on the bottom to die.

We learned about the Chesapeake Watershed ecosystem and why it is important. We had a lesson on blue crabs, which we all held. Then we learned about eels and some of us put our feet in a bucket of eels. We caught a bunch of fish and got to kiss them! We saw many different kinds of algae and bay life. Also, we learned that there is more life in a cubic foot in the bay's water than a cubic mile of ocean water! It was really fun...plus it made us want to own an eel.



Streams running into the Bay carry pollutants from the land



Everyone checked 'toad' on their "sightings" lists!

Adventure Course

by **Karis Felton and Zaria Nabinett**

On Wednesday, Tribes 10 and 11 did the Adventure Course I. Tribe 10 had a counselor named Sarah and we met at the “sleeping log.” Tribe 11 had a counselor named Eli and they met at the gazebo, where they came up with three rules for their tribe and a name, “Akmerchit.” Both groups walked to the ball field and played games there before going to the Course.

Tribe 10 first played a game called “Name Juggle” to help Eli learn their names. Then they played a game called “Ticket to Ice Cream World” and then they went to the Adventure Course to play a game called “Bank Game.” Karis said, “I really like the activity and I would like to do it again!” Tara said, “Adventure I was awesome and we cooperated well!”

Tribe 11 first played a game called “Turnstile.” Next, we played a game called “Move It” over at the ball field. Then we finally got to the adventure course where we played a game called “Combination Lock.” Zaria said, “I love Echo Hill; I also love Adventure Course. I really, really hope I go back.” Lisa said, “I thought it was fun.” It seems that everyone loved Adventure.



Tribe 10 prepares for the Adventure Course



Tribe 11 plays some games

Zip Line

by **Lisa Anne Barrow and Tara Khan**

The sixth-year girls and Mr. Busch got to go on the Giant’s Ladder Zip Line, which is part of the Adventure II high ropes course.

The first thing we had to do was get harnessed up and put on a helmet. Then we had to set a goal for ourselves, which could be anything as long as it challenged you: to get high enough to ring the bell attached to the tree, or to climb the tree and come down the zip line. There were even objects you could take up with you—flippers, a blindfold—to use if climbing the tree seemed too easy. To be able to zip down you had to climb up a tree which branched into a “V” shape. It had pieces of wood attached across the gap, which formed a ladder. Above the ladder, smaller footholds were attached to help you climb up. At the top there was a platform, which the zip line was attached to. Ms. Kimboko said that if we each met our goal, we could call her “Rachel” for the rest of the trip.

The first person to climb up was Tara. She started out with the blindfold and went about halfway up to the platform. Then Lisa-Anne climbed up the whole way. Next was Ari’s turn. Her goal was to get high enough to do a test flight—to let go of the tree and swing out, then back to the tree. Test flights are done about halfway up the tree, and should assure you that you’re not able to fall, even if you let go of the tree. Finally, Mr. Busch climbed up. He did the same thing as we did, only in about half the time. When all three of us were on the platform, we were clipped twice to the zip line. Then you would step off the platform and you were zooming down the zip line. At the bottom, the counselor and the rest of the people watching rolled out stairs, to climb down and get out of the harnesses. The zip line was definitely a fun experience.

Scanoe

by Romeo Cabarga and Evan Manuel

In our opinion, Scanoe was the most fun activity at Echo Hill Outdoor School. You're probably wondering what a "Scanoe" is. Three canoes are attached with boards so you can work together and not crush the canoes. It is a good way to canoe in a swamp.

We would stop every once in a while and look for animals. We saw a great blue heron, a painted turtle, and a beaver lodge. We heard a bullfrog and a tree frog. We also saw a rusty crane from the 1950's. The company who left it used it to dredge canals connecting the swamp to the Chesapeake Bay until their operation was shut down.



Boarding the Scanoe



Aquatic plants in the Big Marsh



A mud covered turtle



Scanoeing is a good way to explore a swamp

Hay Ride & New Games

by Sam O'Brien

Hay Ride & New Games is a night activity. We played large group games; my favorite game that we played was Sharks & Minnows. After the games we went on the hay ride on a huge wagon drawn by an old, old tractor. We rode all around the outskirts of the camp, really slowly; some of the counselors walked behind us and they could keep up with no problem. During the ride, we sang songs and told stories. At the end, we played some more games with a few more tribes. Then we went to bed.

Seeds & Weeds

by Haley Butler and Sam O'Brien

On Wednesday, Tribe 11 had Seeds & Weeds class. First we let the goats, Dream and Midnight, out for a little while and then back to their pen. After talking about what plants need to know, we went into the garden and weeded. After the bed was prepared, we planted golden watermelons and sweet peppers, and then watered the plants. Next, we talked about compost and how it was good for the earth. We walked over to a place with more variety of plants so we could write a short report on a specific plant. Two of us wrote about the spruce, a pine also known as a "Walter" or cedar. A lot of the group wrote about the buttercup and a few wrote about poison ivy.

Tribe 10 went into the garden and tried to find weeds, then we talked about what makes a plant a weed. We spent some time preparing the planting bed and then planted eggplants. Like Tribe 11, we also learned about compost and looked at the various creatures to be found in it. Then we played with the two goats. When we tried to feed one of them she turned around and rammed us. Our group also dug into the ground with a hollow pole to take soil samples. We learned that under the soil there was sand. Sadly, it was our last class.

Below and to the right:

Finding earthworms in the compost and planting eggplants



Petting Midnight the goat



Cookout by R-J van der Louw

The first cookout was planned for Monday, but it got rained out so we ate the same food in the dining hall (the Whip), not outside. On Wednesday, we had a cookout outside. There were 12 circles, with logs and branches for sitting on. We had hamburgers, which we cooked on a campfire in each circle. The desserts, cake and brownies, were on a huge table up at the top of the hill. Also on the table were pasta, vegetarian choices, and leftovers from earlier meals, plus fruit punch and water to drink. When we were finished eating we went back to our tents to get ready for the night's activities.



Campfire by Shane Cibor



A wigwam on the Echo Hill campground

Opinions by Karis Felton

In Opinions we watched a play performance of Dr. Seuss's *The Lorax*, a story about environmental issues. Then we got to be news reporters and ask the main characters—the Lorax and the Onceler—for more information about what they did and didn't do in the story. A lot of Aidan children participated. Ari asked the Onceler, "Could you have used any other parts of the Truffala tree?" Haley asked the Lorax, "How did you feel when you had to send off all the animals?" I think Opinions gave us a chance to realize that everybody's opinion counts.

Echo Hill Science Trip May 2009

Mrs. Mosher	Tara Khan
Ms. Kimboko	Sean Lovett
Ms. Kwerel	Evan Manuel
Mr. Busch	Ariadne Manuel
Lisa-Anne Barrow	Zaria Nabinett
Isabel Brown	Maggie Nixon
Haley Butler	Sam O'Brien
Romeo Cabarga	Lucy Rock
Shane Cibor	Cole Srere
Karis Felton	R-J van der Louw
Emma Frohardt	Abby Weymouth



Inside the wigwam