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# Kids in the Wild camp connects children and nature

by Bridget Mire | Aug. 14, 2018, 11:39 a.m.



## World photo/Mike Bonnicksen

Lexi Hughes holds onto a fishing pole as her fishing partner, Cosimo Terranella, ties a lure to the fishing line. The Kids in the Wild Camp was put on by the Wenatchee River Institute in Leavenworth. Camp participants spent the week learning survival skills.



LEAVENWORTH — From using maps and compasses to building fires and shelters, children learned how to tackle the great outdoors with ease last week during the Wenatchee River Institute's Kids in the Wild summer camp.

They foraged, practiced archery, learned how to make tools and brushed up on basic first aid. At the end of the week, they put those skills to the test in a challenge.

"It all falls under the umbrella of our mission of connecting people and communities to the natural world," Youth Program Manager Will Crowley said. "We place huge importance on being aware that we're not the only ones out here. ... We always want the kids to leave being more aware and observant of their surroundings and thinking that nature's cool."

One lesson was that if you hold up your thumb and close one eye, your thumb should completely cover an animal's outline. That means you're far enough away. Campers were also taught not to collect any plant parts that are still attached or living.

The institute partnered with the Leavenworth National Fish Hatchery and the Icicle Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited for some activities. Campers visited the Blackbird Island pond to learn how to tie lures to fishing lines, cast and catch fish.

"I'm kind of a freak about fishing," said Evan Tompkins, 10, of Leavenworth. "I want to do it every day."

He said he also learned the importance of having shelter, especially if you become stranded.

"If you have a horn, blow it, or scream or something," he said. "Stay put, and always bring a friend."





Kaia Tande, 10, of Leavenworth, said she had fun learning how to use a bow-and-arrow and spear.

"You can make a very sharp tool just with a rock," she said.

Crowley said activities like archery improve hand-eye coordination and build confidence.

Being outdoors is good for your physical and mental health, he said.

"You feel better when you spend at least a little bit of time outside and move your body and are physically active," he said. "We want kids to see that, too. ... Especially in a place like Leavenworth, you figure that every kid utilizes opportunities (and that) even if they don't have much money, they may go out and hike or just play at the river. But it always surprises me how few of them have ever seen the migrating salmon in September and October or noticed the migrating birds that come through and the bright yellow and orange colors."

Elisa Lopez, an AmeriCorps service member working as a field educator for the Wenatchee River Institute, said the skills children learned from the camp might help them decide on a career.

"A lot of them live in Wenatchee, and they've never been to Leavenworth," she said. "They've never seen forests, never seen an evergreen tree."

She said campers learned the importance of staying on the trail, picking up garbage and appreciating nature.

"It's really cool to teach them about what they have here in their own backyard," she said. "And I'm learning right along with them, so it's pretty fun. I think it's good for them to take all this information back home, even to their parents. A lot of times, they'll tell their parents to start packing them the reusable lunch bags."

For more information on the institute, visit [wenatcheeriverinstitute.org](http://wenatcheeriverinstitute.org).

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