

FIELD NOTES

NEWSLETTER OF THE WENATCHEE RIVER INSTITUTE



In uncertain times it is so important to focus on the positive. There is so much to be thankful for.

I hope this newsletter reminds you of the positive impact you have on our youth, our community, and our world. Your support has allowed the Wenatchee River Institute to connect so many people with the joy and wonder of the natural world. Thank you.

Like you, my soul is replenished by the simple act of getting outdoors. Today, I hope you take the opportunity to spend time outside. Watch spring as it unfolds around you – the serviceberries in bud, house finches gathering nesting material, the song of the meadowlark in the distance. Nature is all around us. You don't have to travel far to experience its healing power.

This is a joyous and magical world. Thanks to you, the future is bright.

Carolyn

Carolyn Griffin-Bugert
Executive Director

Year Round Connections

Our outdoor classroom provides exceptional access to meadows, forests, sandy beaches, and the river – all just steps away from the Alpine Lakes Elementary School.

Easy access means that the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students visit our campus four times a year. By the end of 5th grade, students could have experienced 12 days of environmental science! Frequent visits



Habitat detectives nature journaling on Barn Beach

create strong bonds between students and WRI staff.

“We’re not just teaching science, we’re building community.”

In the fall, team challenges help students build their community. They collect macro invertebrates in the river. In winter, they strap on snowshoes and track the wildlife along the trails. They collect snow and learn about its density. In spring, binoculars dangle from their necks as they spy the new colorful arrivals.

A strong connection with place is the first step toward learning to care for the landscape we love. Your support helps make this happen.

Thank you!

Our Landscapes Sustain Us In So Many Ways

Nature isn't just something pretty to look at from far away. It can be felt, heard, smelled, and even tasted.

Thanks to you, that's what a group of Wenatchee 4th graders learned during an after school program designed to help struggling students improve in school.

One day last fall, students searched for acorns beneath the oak trees that shaded their schoolyard. The kids learned how these little nuts become a huge tree with just a little sunshine, water, soil, and air. They learned how acorns provide food for so many different kinds of animals, like Douglas squirrels and Steller's jays. And how for thousands of years, the acorn has served as an important food source for humans.

After that lesson, Traveling Naturalist Brandon took the acorns back to WRI's



Wenatchee After School Program students proudly holding up their collected acorns, soon to become a delicious snack

Red Barn. He processed them to leach out the bitter tannins: boiling, soaking, and rinsing them. Then he roasted and ground them and brought them back to the students at their school.

Using that acorn flour, the students made... chocolate chip cookies! They were excited to create something delicious out of a nut that most people consider inedible.

Not every kid in Wenatchee has parents who have the comfort level or the time to help them get out into natural places. These students didn't even have to leave their school grounds to see (and taste!) the natural world in a new way.

You made this possible - thank you!

Feeling stuck at home and want to be connected with more resources?

Sign up for our e-mail newsletter at:

www.wenatcheeriverinstitute.org

and click Join Our Mailing List under the Connections tab.

Appreciating Our Area, No Matter the Season

In January, a group of students were snowshoeing near the Wenatchee River with WRI's Will Crowley when a loud chattering trill stopped them in their tracks.

These students were visiting with help from the Washington State Department of Services for the Blind. Some kids could see shapes and light, but others couldn't see anything at all. So the sound of the kingfisher really stood out.

They turned their heads this way and that to follow the source of the sound, which was so different from the chickadees they had been hearing all day. "What was that?"

Will let them know that a Belted Kingfisher just swooped past them, probably looking for a meal. They talked about the kingfisher's long bill, which helped it catch fish in the river.

All day they had been exploring the adaptations of plants and animals that call this place home. They learned that chickadees moved constantly, calling to each other all the time, to make sure they could find enough calories to survive the cold. They felt the leaves of the grand fir, which helps it handle cold and snow, and they smelled its sap, which it uses to protect itself from insect attacks.

Plenty of kids - and adults - have been introduced to the wonders of winter through snowshoeing programs at WRI's campus and at WRI-led outings at the Leavenworth Fish Hatchery this year.

Thanks to you, your neighbors - young and old - are able to appreciate our area, no matter the season.

