



Bow and Arrow Trail: Take 2! by Sabrina Carlson

After hearing all about the fun Mr. Caslin's class had on their visit to Bow and Arrow Trail, Mr. Doerfler's class of 23 fifth graders was eager to visit the place they had heard so much about. On September 23rd 2015, after a great pre-trip conversation about safety, Leave No Trace, and the history of the Arizona Trail, we headed out from school to hike to the FUTS trail system. We headed out

past the Coconino Community College to the Bow and Arrow Canyon.

On our first stop near the entrance to the canyon, we paused to observe a few things that were beginning to change as we stepped out of the urban environment and into a little pocket of nature at the south end of Flagstaff. First, we noticed how much car traffic we were hearing. The students commented that it was still pretty loud, but not as busy as it had been out on the sidewalk along the main road. We then examined some of the plants growing near the trail. We found a red columbine, lupine, and wild rose bushes!



Happy Cat from Local Clay!



Geodes! Even more fun than fossils!

As we continued up the canyon, the students noticed the plant life and the traffic sounds changing. They no longer heard the sounds from the road, and took note of the mixed grasses and flowers giving way to whole fields of the same kind of plant. Curious about this change, some of the students asked what they were. We had an impromptu lesson on invasive weeds, in particular the dreaded knapweed! They learned all about how invasives overtake an area and push out the native plants.

In this area of Flagstaff, the sedimentary rocks from the Permian oceanic deposition are still exposed (having escaped coverage by more recent volcanic activity) making it a fantastic place to hunt for fossils. However, fossils in this particular section were exceptionally difficult to find. Not to be deterred in their searching though, the young geologists discovered that the entire field was rich with beautiful quartz geodes! This made for a fascinating and exciting treasure hunt as the students made a game of finding and cataloging their finds.

After lunch, we played the "color match" game in which students are given a variety of colors, both earthy and bright, to find matches to in the natural environment. They were surprised and

delighted by all of the unexpected colors they were able to find. In looking for colors in the soil, one young lady discovered that the moist ground was very clay heavy and great for shaping into pinch pots and little kitten shapes.

We played the same game with a set of tent poles that the other class had played, and this group was particularly interested in cracking the code of how to work together to lift the pole without anyone losing their point of contact on the pole. While they didn't get there 100%, they made great strides.

After a bit more hiking, we stopped to have a little quiet rest time. The students made sound maps in their Arizona Trail Journals and took a few minutes of unhurried time to simply stare at the clouds, creating stories from the shapes.

I was impressed with this class, especially their enthusiasm and focus, and the leadership of their teacher, who gave his students free reign to explore and guide their own learning. It was an inspiring day on the trail.



Cloud Shapes! A rare unstructured treat for modern students!



Splendid day with a wonderful class!

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