



Bringing the Wonders of the Outdoors Indoors

by Sabrina Carlson

One of my least favorite things to do is cancel an outing. Unless the weather is completely unfriendly, I always keep outings as scheduled. But if the weather report looks too dire and participant safety becomes a concern, occasionally an outing has to be canceled. The evening before Mr. Caslin's 5th grade outing to Marshall Lake on May 2, 2016 the weather predictions were calling for lightning and heavy rain the next day. Weather had been especially intense for days, and the possibility of having 23 students out near water in a lightning storm was not a smart idea.

Since I am not one to give up easily, I hatched a plan to drive out to Marshall Lake myself, collect water in plastic tubs, and bring it back to the classroom for the students to examine. Mr. Caslin agreed that we could fit this into his science hour right before lunch.



Dragonfly nymph

While the day did not turn out to be as stormy as predicted, the road to Marshall Lake had become overly saturated, with slippery and muddy roads along the way. It would have been impossible for a school bus to make it through. After filling the tubs with water and agitating as many aquatic macro invertebrates out of the pond as I could, I put the lids on the tubs and headed to their school hoping for the best. It was a tricky adventure.

Upon arriving in the classroom, the students were excited to see the tubs of water and couldn't wait to explore what was inside. We talked about the concept of "water canaries" and reviewed the trophic pyramid where these aquatic insects are near the bottom. For the next 40 minutes we began exploring. Shouts of "oh, look!" and "what's this one!" could be heard all over the room. We even found a dragonfly nymph!

Teaching students to identify insects while ensuring that the tubs of water wouldn't flood the floor or soak their nearby books was so fun. I realized later that I hadn't taken a single photo of their in-class "field trip." How sad! But the experience is no doubt preserved in the student's minds as it is in mine. One student told me it was the "best canceled field trip" she ever had.

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