



## Wupatki with Ms. Griffin and Ms. Laughlin's 4th Grade Classes by Sabrina Carlson

On April 15, 2016 I had the privilege of presenting to the 53 students of Ms. Griffin and Ms. Laughlin's classes at

DeMiguel Elementary School about Leave No Trace Ethics, outing expectations, and the Hug-A-Tree curriculum. We had a discussion about what trash really is (yes, your apple core is trash), and what a special treasure places like Wupatki National Monument is for our country. The students were empowered with the knowledge of what to do if they ever get lost in the woods, and they all agreed that staying in one place would be the best plan, even if it might feel scary at times. Many students had concerns and questions about how to know if someone looking for them was Search and Rescue or a stranger. It comforted them to know that Search and Rescue volunteers will always have a radio and identification. When our presentation was finished, each of the students received a

basic survival kit to always keep with them when adventuring in the outdoors. The kit contained a poncho, emergency blanket, glow sticks, signal mirror, and whistle. While I hope none of those young people ever need it, I'm thrilled to know that these students now have the knowledge to keep themselves safe if they are ever separated from their families while outdoors..



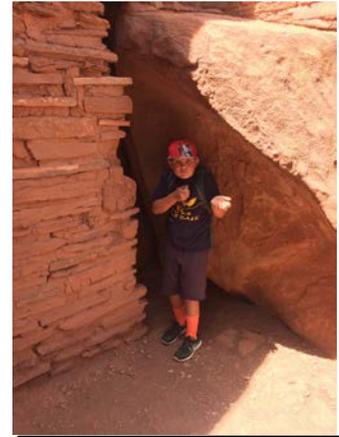
Hiking the trail at Wupatki

On May 5, we took our newly found outdoor confidence to Wupatki National Monument to learn about the history and culture of the ancient people who once lived there. On our drive to the monument, co-leader Richard May and I knew today would be different. Not only was today our last Wupatki outing of the year, but the spring air was warmer than any other day so far. Also, on our drive in we spotted more wildlife than ever before. A gopher snake, red tail hawk, two pronghorn, and a flurry of prairie dog activity were all seen along the way. It definitely feels like spring.

When the class arrived at Wupatki we divided everyone into two groups to start the activities. We discussed the concept of "fundamental human needs," which is the common ground that all cultures throughout history have shared. Material needs like food, shelter, and defense; and non-material needs like love, art, beauty, and a belief system were all examples of this idea. As the students toured the ruins, we looked for evidence of human survival and to see if we could recognize these needs. We wondered if the one petroglyph of a snake was communication, art, or part of their belief system. We took note of the *metates* used for grinding corn and other plants. We learned the pueblo had no doors on the first two stories in order make the houses safe and better for defense. Figuring out a way to direct fire smoke out of the lower rooms sideways made us realize they had seriously advanced engineering skills!

In the community room we imagined what a ceremony might have been like and tried the unique sounding acoustics. It is amazing how well a whisper can carry in a well-designed space!

After the first activity, one student exclaimed to find a rattlesnake! Expecting to see a gopher snake, since children often assume that all snakes are rattlers, I peered around the corner to actually see a gorgeous Hopi rattlesnake, sunbathing and tongue flickering. With curiosity and care, we observed from a distance, and then returned to the visitor center to inform the rangers who would then relocate it to a safer area.



“Was this hole used for defending ?”

Richard May then led the activity at the ball court. He taught the students about the importance of ball courts throughout villages all over the southwest and what a huge distance there is between Wupatki (the northernmost example of these ceremonial courts) and Chichen Itza (the southernmost). The students were amazed to learn that the quetzal feathers and seashells found at Wupatki were evidence that trade took place between the two separate groups. He also explained how even today, playing games with people from other cultures helps break language barriers and has the ability to create friends anywhere you go. After the short lesson, the students had the chance to play a ball and stick game similar to what children at Wupatki might have played 900 years ago.

Before leaving, we made a quick stop at the blowhole. A fascinating geological feature where an opening to an underground cave will either suck air in or blow air out, depending on the temperature differential between the cave and the outdoor air. Archeologists think this opening might have had supernatural and religious significance to the residents of this home site.



On their hike back to the bus, Richard’s second group spotted yet another Hopi rattler under a ledge. Wow! What a day for wildlife. A perfect way to end the Wupatki spring season!

**This Seeds of Stewardship outing made possible by grants from:**



**Thanks to Peace Surplus for donating a portion of the survival kits for all the 4th graders in Flagstaff!**