

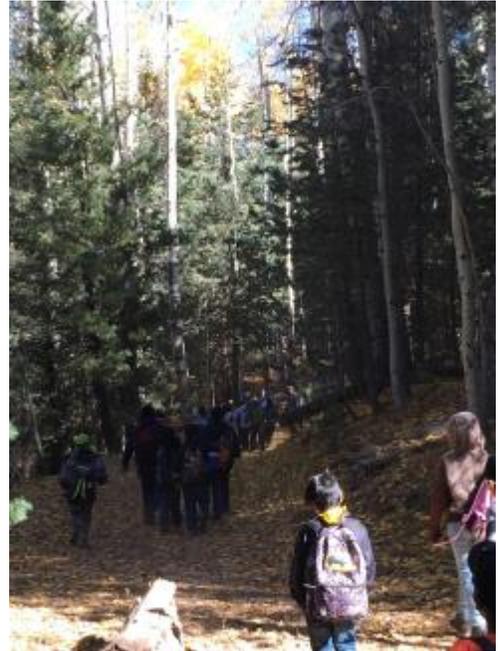


From Peacemakers to Observant Scientists Part 2

by Sabrina Carlson

On October 20, 2016 the 40 students of Mr. Caslin and Mrs. Richardson's 5th grade classes from Kinsey School took a trip to the peaks at Aspen Corner to view the changing leaves and cultivate their scientific observation skills.

On our last outing together, we had worked on our skills as peacemakers – how to be together and in the wilderness while no harm to the environment and learning to calm our bodies and minds and notice the things we miss when we are busy talking or doing other things. On this outing, we built upon that foundation to begin using our new found mindfulness to become highly observant of the world around us.



The last of the leaves.

After hiking 1.5 miles north on the Arizona Trail from Aspen Corner, we came together as a group to see what we could learn about this corner of the world. We began by looking for colors in nature. They created color wheels in their notebooks based on the colors of the objects they found in nature. Green leaves, blue sky, and brown bark of course, but also pink and red on the leaves of small gentian flowers preparing to rest for the winter, and vibrant yellow in the aspens overhead. As we watched the trees above us, a stiff wind came along and treated us all to a shower of golden leaves that floated down into outstretched hands. We may have hit the very last day of the autumn colors!



Seed pods make great rattles!

Then we struck out for a nature scavenger hunt. We looked for straight things, soft things, round things, rough things and smooth things. We hunted for squirrel pencils and seed pods, and looked carefully for leaves that had been chewed on. All sorts of treasures we found and shared. Each one building a connection to the nature all around. The Rocky Mountain iris seed pods were a huge attraction as they were fun to pick and made a satisfying rattle when shaken. We talked about the importance of not picking too many, as these are the reproductive part of the plant, and how we could enjoy these natural music makers but should leave them in the meadows where they will grow again next year.

As we walked the 1.5 miles back to the trailhead, we talked extensively about trail damage, water erosion, and how we can best hike and ride to minimize long-term damage. Everyone has a part to play in keeping the Arizona Trail in good shape.

We had so much fun enjoying each other's company and experiencing the glory of the changing leaves in autumn.



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