

Messalonskee Middle School Students Create Forest, Pond Field Guide

17 June 2019

'A Catalog of Species' field guide project was created through a grant from the Natural Resources Council of Maine.

Students at Messalonskee Middle School in Oakland have been working on a project to create a forest and pond field guide through a grant from the Natural Resources Council of Maine, according to a news release from the organization.

With guidance and support from the teacher, Amanda Ripa, the students have been working for months on a project and have created "A Catalog of Species" field guide, which serves as a guide to identifying the natural species found in the natural environment they have in the school's own backyard. This field guide will serve both faculty and students as they explore the school's forest and pond areas.

Students first chose to investigate the trees throughout the forest and worked with Morten Moesswild, a district State Forester, to learn how to easily distinguish tree species from one another by using diagnostic characteristics. They then used this information to identify present trees and create identification cards for all species noted. Through the NRCM grant, the Messalonskee Middle School class was able to purchase a professional digital camera, which now gives the students the ability to take photos of the tree species and add them to the identification cards to serve as reference photos.

Samantha Amison, an eighth-grade student at Messalonskee Middle School who has been working on the project, "I am very thankful we were able to get a new camera because we now get to go back out to our trees and take new and better pictures for our Tree Identifying Cards. I am also thankful for Mrs. Ripa, who always makes learning engaging and fun for us. Finally, we are going to pick the best cards made by our team and compile them into a digitally printed guide. This guide will be of our school forest and will be shared with our entire community."

Messalonskee Middle School is one of 10 schools throughout the state to receive one of the NRCM Middle School Grants in the 2018-19 cycle.

"The Natural Resources Council of Maine has provided grants to schools in 24 Maine towns and reached more than 3,000 students since we began our school grants program in 2015," said Lisa Pohlmann, CEO of the NRCM, according to the release. "We are pleased to see so many Maine middle school teachers, mentors, club leaders, and students learning about their surrounding environment and the value of protecting it. From these lessons, we hope a seed is planted, a sense of wonder is developed, and future environmental stewards are inspired to take action to continue protecting the nature of Maine."

Source: <https://www.centralmaine.com/2019/06/17/messalonskee-middle-school-students-create-forest-pond-field-guide/>