New Classes Available for Spring Outdoor Education!
By: Caleb Jenks

With a new year rolling in, the Taft Staff has been hard at work creating new classes ready to be offered in the coming spring. The first of these classes is ready to go and is waiting for your school’s next visit to Taft.

For many students, the most memorable part of a trip to Taft is the sighting of wildlife, whether it be an eagle, deer, or snake. However, what many people fail to consider is that the most plentiful animals by far at Taft are insects. It seemed only fair that the most abundant animals have a larger role in the Taft curriculum, so the Taft Staff has now created a class dedicated to our creepy crawly friends, Entomology.

The Taft Entomology class offers students the opportunity to learn about many of the major groups of insects commonly found in this area and to explore some of the fascinating adaptations of insects which have allowed them to be so successful in the wild. Weather depending, it also offers the opportunity for students to collect insects or to do a lab with the Taft Campus’s own insect collection.

In addition to Entomology, another new class is being created which will explore the lives of some of the stealthiest and most secretive of Taft’s wildlife, reptiles and amphibians. The new Reptile and Amphibian Study class will be ready to go once the warmer weather returns in spring, and the frogs, turtles, and snakes that call the Taft Campus home come out of hibernation. In this class, students will learn about some of the unique characteristics of reptiles and amphibians, practice some of the skills used by scientists who study them, and hopefully have some up-close and personal experiences with a few of Taft’s less appreciated wildlife.

As your school prepares for its next visit to Taft, consider adding Entomology or Reptile and Amphibian Study on to your activity schedule. Both classes are sure to provide unique, memorable, and educational experiences for your students. The Taft staff is exited to add Entomology and Reptile and Amphibian Study to it’s outstanding collection of outdoor education classes.
The Science Behind Syrup

By: Anne Rohn

The early part of spring is such a sweet time of year as the sap begins to flow from trees and sweet syrup is made. You may know how maple syrup is made, but have you ever stopped to think about why trees produce the sap in the first place. From spring to fall deciduous trees are making sugars to help them grow. In the fall the sugars that are leftover are stored in the branches and trunk for the next spring in the form of sap. The sap acts as antifreeze protecting the tree throughout winter. Without the sap air pockets can form and destroy the xylem and phloem that help move water and nutrients through a tree.

Many types of trees produce sap, but sugar maple trees have some of the highest concentrations of sugars, almost 4%. It takes 40 gallons of maple tree sap to make one gallon of syrup. If you were to make syrup from birch trees it will take 80 gallons of sap. The very sticky sap that pine trees produce is not suitable for syrup because it has too many tannins and other compounds that can’t be consumed but do help protect the tree during winter.

Many people think that the sap in maple trees is being drawn up from the roots in the spring, but this is not the case. In order to tap trees the conditions must be just right. At night temperatures must drop below freezing and during the day they must be above freezing. This change in temperature builds up pressure inside the tree and sap will flow out of any fresh penetration in the bark that reaches the sapwood. If you walk around the woods in the spring you may even see sap flowing out of holes where woodpeckers have been trying to look for insects.

If the temperature is too warm the pressure will not build up and bacteria will grow in the collection bucket and turn the sap sour. Boiling the sap into syrup will evaporate off the excess water, concentrate the sugars, and kill any bacteria. The season is over as soon as the trees begin to leaf out. It is a very labor-intensive process but in the end you will get the sweet taste of success.

Sources: University of Vermont Extension (http://www.uvm.edu/extension/agriculture/maple) Cornell University DNR (http://maple.dnr.cornell.edu/produc/sapflow.htm)
Poetry Corner

This winter, the Taft Staff wrote Haikus for all of you to enjoy! Haikus are three lines long, the first line is five syllables, the second is seven syllables, and the last is five syllables. Try writing your own Haikus and send them in to us!

| Outdoor, nature fun                  | The joy of teaching                      | Cat eating compost,          |
| Laughing, playing, learning too      | Is given life through nature            | Will you please be my new    |
| Come and visit Taft!                 | When students explore                    | friend?                      |
| By: Amy Banner                       | By: Lori Knoechel                        | I’ll feed you my ort.        |
|                                      |                                          | By: Sam Allen                |

Walking in the Woods

The woods make me feel whole,
The woods have a lot of exciting things.
My favorite color is green, the forest is green.
Green is cool.
Brown is the trees.
I like nature.
The bugs here are cool.
The leaves are brown.
Below is the ground.
Above the sky so sound.

During their Burma Shave, a group of amazing sixth graders from Genoa-Kingston wrote their first group poem. As they did their solo hike, they came across a sheet of paper and had to write down one line of our group poem. This was written by Dylan, Austin, Corinne, Owen, Liliana, Jonny, Rubi, Brenna, Amir, Mrs. Shumacher, and Mrs. Stevenson.

Results Are In!

The winner of the Forest Presidential Election is the Great Horned Owl! Thank you to all who sent in their votes to make this decision. The Great Horned Owl had a few things to say about his win:

Thank you to all who made this possible. I will uphold the forest citizens’ values by providing a safe forest for all to roam. From large predators to the smallest among us, I guarantee there will be space for you to have a family and to be your free, wild self. Don’t be afraid to spread your wings and travel somewhere new in this forest because you will be welcome in all parts. Thank you again to every voter who placed their confidence in me, I will not let you down.

Disclaimer: This wasn’t, of course, a real election or a real speech. Naturally, a real great horned owl wouldn’t guarantee the safety of forest creatures, but would eat many of them instead!
Congratulations to all of our schools who got zero ort for at least one meal while at Lorado Taft! Many schools were very close, and we know the students worked really hard to achieve their goals. We hope that the idea of zero ort is something your students take with them back to school to share with their families and friends.

We are branching out into more areas of the social media sphere. In addition to our FB page, coming soon, look for us on Instagram and Twitter!