



taft Times

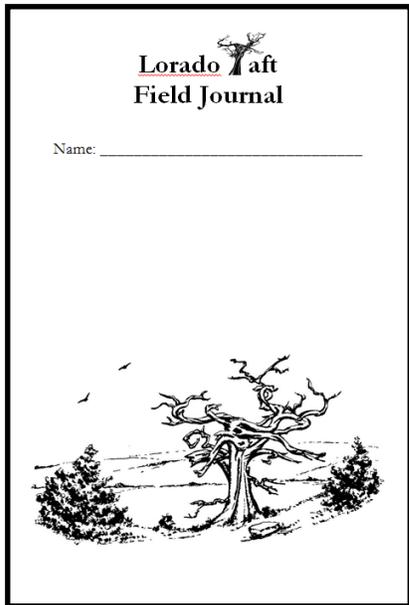
Winter 2016

Northern Illinois University ~ Lorado Taft Field Campus

Oregon, IL

The Taft Field Journals Have Been Revamped!

Over seventy schools come to the Lorado Taft Campus every year, with many of them only able to take their memories home with them. Memories are wonderful, but we want to help the students get a more lasting impression of what they did and learned while they were here. To do that, we created a template that teachers can use to print journals that cater to their entire experience here at Taft. The template is customizable to fit with most schools' unique schedule and classes. The journals also include a map, a list to help the students remember their responsibilities, and a place for each student to design a brand. This is replacing an older memory book that was more generalized. We feel that the updated journal will help to make the experience last and transfer more smoothly back to the classroom. Classroom teachers can use the journals as an assessment tool or as a reference for student projects relating to the Taft experience. Go to the teacher resources section of our website to check it out (<http://www.niu.edu/taft/outdoored/teacher.shtml>). If you are interested using the journal template, talk to your Taft coordinator! - Garrett Greely



THE ZERO WASTE REPORT!!

CONGRATULATIONS TO THESE SCHOOLS WHO HAD ZERO FOOD WASTE FOR AT LEAST ONE MEAL!

20	Earlville x2	Beaupre
16	Benjamin Middle	Disney II 7th Grade
12	Highland Maroon	Du Jardin
8	Highland Gold	Warren
4	Chicago City Day	Galena
	Chesterbook Aca.	Krug
	Westmont Jr. High	P.E. Majors
	Orangeville	

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Eagle Eye-identification!

Winter time birding is a special treat, because of our location to the river. The Rock River is part of the Mississippi flyway, meaning that it is a route that is commonly taken by migratory birds. One bird we tend to see a lot of is the Bald Eagle, and in recent years we have seen another large raptor in the sky: the Golden Eagle! Here are some facts to help you identify if the bird you see is a Bald Eagle or a Golden Eagle.

BALD EAGLE

Range: North America. For the most part, this species breeds in Canada and winters in the United States/Mexico. However, where there is plenty of open water to fish in, they can stay year round.

Identification:

Adult- Adults have a white head and tail with a brown body and wings. Their beak and feet are yellow, and their eyes are pale in color.

Immature- Bald Eagles do not mature until 4-6 years of age. Until then, their bodies are mostly brown but are mottled with white specks. Their feet are yellow, their beak yellow and brown, and their eyes dark - just like a Golden Eagle! They are significantly smaller than the Golden Eagle and can be differentiated by the white on their undersides when they fly.



Photo credit: Hinker Photography



GOLDEN EAGLE

Range: Found on every continent except Antarctica! They tend to be seen in rocky, open areas.

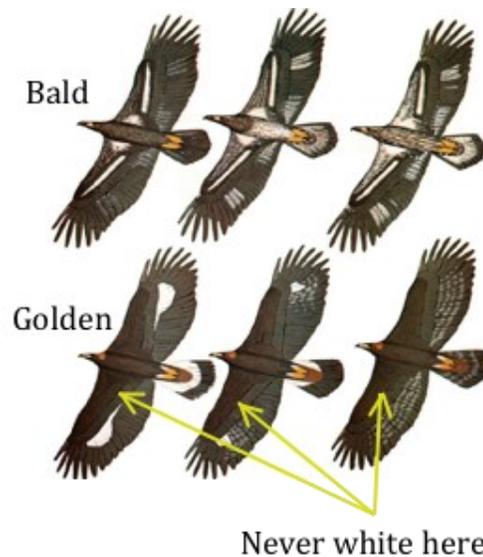
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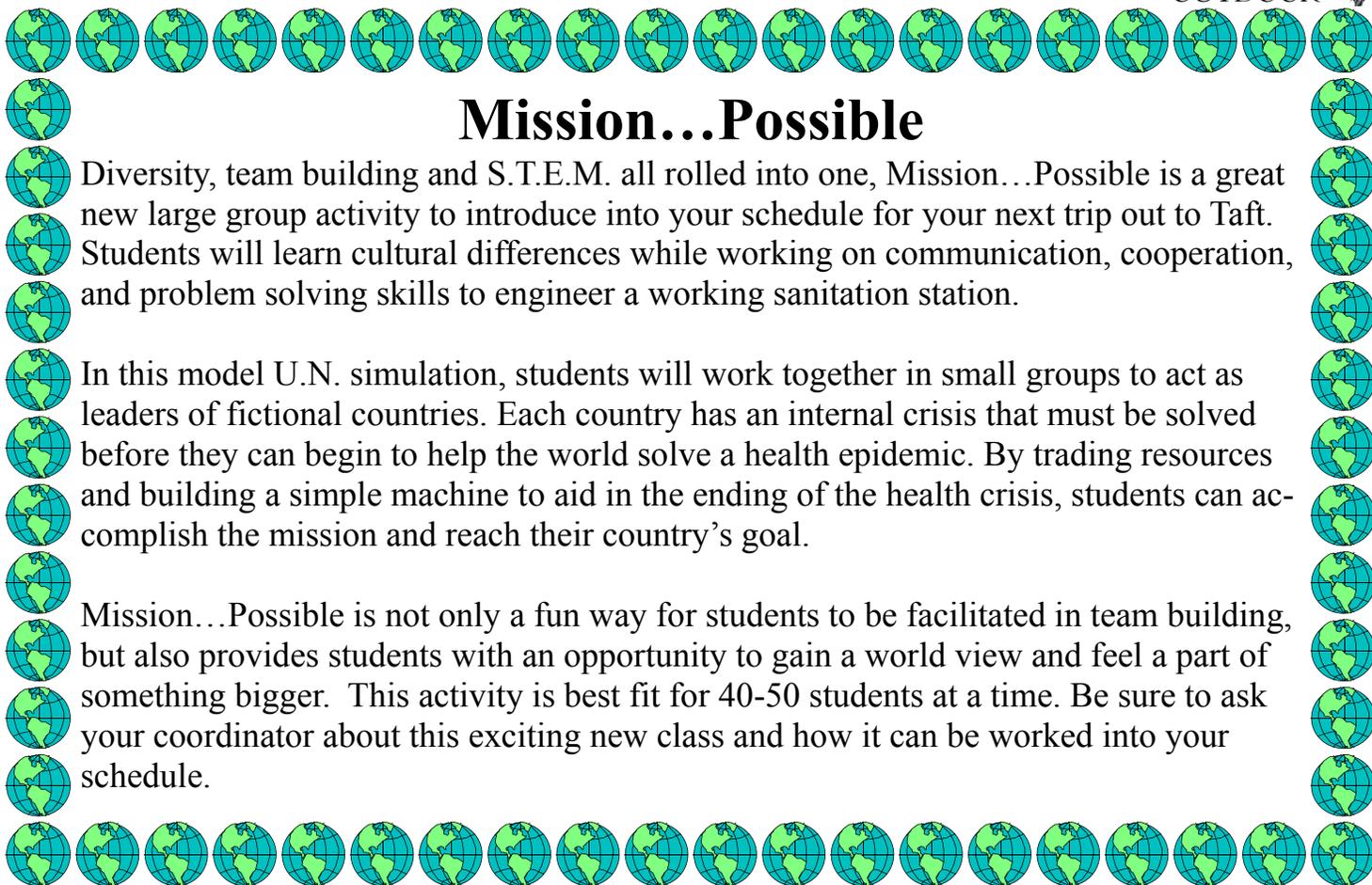
Adult- Adult Golden Eagles are dark brown with a golden blonde sheen on the back of the head and neck. They have dark eyes, yellow feet, and a black and yellow beak. They are big raptors with relatively small heads.

Immature- When immature, they have white patches near the middle of their wings and at the base of their tail. Golden Eagles remain immature for 5 years and mature on the 6th



Photo credit: eaglesforkids.com





Mission...Possible

Diversity, team building and S.T.E.M. all rolled into one, Mission...Possible is a great new large group activity to introduce into your schedule for your next trip out to Taft. Students will learn cultural differences while working on communication, cooperation, and problem solving skills to engineer a working sanitation station.

In this model U.N. simulation, students will work together in small groups to act as leaders of fictional countries. Each country has an internal crisis that must be solved before they can begin to help the world solve a health epidemic. By trading resources and building a simple machine to aid in the ending of the health crisis, students can accomplish the mission and reach their country's goal.

Mission...Possible is not only a fun way for students to be facilitated in team building, but also provides students with an opportunity to gain a world view and feel a part of something bigger. This activity is best fit for 40-50 students at a time. Be sure to ask your coordinator about this exciting new class and how it can be worked into your schedule.

Nature Myths

It's time for another installment of Nature Myths! Here is another interesting "fact" that many misguided people will swear is true but isn't.

Earthworms are an introduced species – there are no earthworms native to North America! While this statement is false as stated, there is some truth in it. The majority of earthworm species currently here are native, and earthworms have been in North America since long before the first humans came to this continent. On the other hand, the latest ice age did kill off the native earthworms in most of the coldest northern portions of North America (pretty much everywhere that the glaciers covered). In fact, many of these areas are still without earthworms of any kind. Furthermore, research seems to indicate that in these places the presence of worms (as they are inadvertently introduced to the ecosystem) is actually detrimental to the health of ecosystems! (<http://www.nrri.umn.edu/WORMS/forest/index.html>)

Have you heard any other nature myths? If so, write me at Jhapner@niu.edu and perhaps I'll include your myths in a future Taft Times! -Joshua Hapner



“NEAT”URE FEATURE

When the days become shorter and the snow begins to fall, the earth seems like a whole new world. If you look deep into nature, you can even see new worlds inside of this new world. New world inception if you will.

The subnivean layer in snowpack is created by the snow trapping heat emitted from the ground. That’s right! Snow is such a great insulator, it can cause the snow that touches the ground to melt, making it easier for mice, voles, shrews, and some insects to travel in a 20- 30 degree F tunnel. The “ceiling” of the tunnel is made up of frozen vapor from the melting snow. These tunnels allow critters to be active all winter without fear of the weather. In the tunnels they have all they need to survive: water from the melting snow, shelter in the form of tunnels and holes, food from plants, food stores from the fall, and even fresh air. This is accomplished by way of little holes in the snow’s surface. As you can see in the photo, this tunnel has 3 vent holes. When I originally saw these holes, I thought they were exit points but was confused when I did not see any tracks!

Unfortunately for the critters, these holes do not just let fresh air into the tunnels, but also predators! Weasels and mink can hunt inside of the tunnels, and owls and foxes use their keen sense of hearing to listen for the critters and then pounce on them through the snow! (Discovery has a great video of this on YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2SoGHFM18I>)

Would you like to discover this new world? Just after a fresh snowfall, go for a walk near some bushes, tall grass, or trees. Look for raised lines in the snow. These are your tunnels! Do you see any tracks? If there was a lot of snow and you can’t seem to find any tunnels,

look for ventilation holes, or even signs that an owl or fox got some dinner! Happy exploring!

-Ashley VanSpeybroeck



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WANTED

Be in the next newsletter!

Email avanspeybroeck@niu.edu with your best picture of an animal, plant, or fungus that you took on your trip to Taft. Didn't bring a camera? Send us a drawing of an Illinois species. We will research it and include that in the next newsletter. Don't forget to include your name, school, and what class you were in that inspired your artwork.

Taft Times Contributors:

Ashley VanSpeybroeck (Ort, Eagle Eye-identification, “Neat”ure Feature)

Garrett Greely (Taft Journals)

Joshua Hapner (Nature Myths)

Shauna Guglielmo (Mission...Possible)

“Eagle Eye...” Sources: <http://www.nationaleaglecenter.org/eagle-nesting-young/> and <https://www.learner.org/jnorth/tm/eagle/>

