

GEAR-Up students attend Stehekin camp

By Bob Ashmore, GEAR-Up Director

In September the Tonasket School District GEAR-UP program offered two bio-diversity camps to this years' 8th and 9th grade students. Twenty-six 8th grade students attended the September 12-14th camp, while nine 9th grade students attended the September 19-21st camp.

Students rode on the Lady-of-the-Lake ferry from Field's Point to Stehekin located at the far end of Lake Chelan on the eastern border of North Cascades National Park. Once at Stehekin all the camping gear was loaded on a shuttle to be dropped off at the Harlequin group campground located in the park. The students hiked the three miles to the camp, stopping at the old Stehekin school, the new Stehekin School and Rainbow Falls.

During the three days, students worked in teams to prepare their meals, perform camp clean-up and keep the camp stocked with fresh water for drinking and washing. Students participated in a variety of learning activities including using field guides to observe, identify and document flora and fauna in the Stehekin Valley biome. The students identified, flowers, shrubs, trees, mushrooms, butterflies, reptiles and birds. Once students had found a species, they looked for the species in their field guide. Students worked in groups and used several identifiers to

confirm the species.

Next the students took a photo of the specimen using an iPad. Then they created a PowerPoint slide of the specimen that contained the photo, two excerpts of information from the field guide and one observation from the environment. Back at camp the groups presented their PowerPoints to the entire camp.

Other activities included staff members (which included principals, a counselor, certificated science teachers, a naturalist educator and retired U.S. Forest service Biologists) teaching a "Passion Activity). Staff created an activity on a subject that they were passionate about. Examples included nature photography, music, art, leadership, silent movement.

On the final night, students and staff sat around the campfire and shared personal experiences and impressions they would take with them from the camp. All the students felt that these types of learning experiences are important components to their education. Staff were impressed with how rigorous learning can occur within a camp environment and how students can form new relationships outside of their social circles back at school and home.

Thank you to all the students and staff who participated in this amazing experience!



8th grade students stop by the "old" Stehekin school which opened in 1921 closed down in 1988. The students also visited the "new" school house which is still a one-room school house heated by a stone fireplace. Students discussed what it would be like to attend a one-room school house.