

For Immediate Release

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Manteo Middle School Science Club Learns about Documenting Nature

A recent in-school program conducted by Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Services Specialist Cindy Heffley taught Manteo Middle School Science Club students basic scientific skills. And, a follow-up trip to the refuge last week allowed them to practice those skills.

How do you prove to others that you saw a certain plant or animal while out discovering nature? Students in the Manteo Middle School Science Club were asked that question during their monthly meeting in December. Most

students answered that they would take a picture with their camera or cell phone. Visitor Services Specialist Cindy Heffley of Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge reminded them that there was a time before cell phones and cameras when scientists and other nature observers relied on pencils and paper to document their finds. She then passed out clipboards with paper and pencils while explaining that drawings, as well as words, serve as documentation of observations. Earlier, mounted birds and snake replicas had been placed around the room. Students selected a particular animal and went to work. Some chose to sketch the animals while others decided to describe the animals in words.

The second part of the experience involved a January field trip to Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge. Using digital cameras provided by the refuge, teams of students took pictures of listed items requiring them to read informational signs along Creef Cut Trail. They also looked for tracks and scat along the way. In addition to the required items, the students were able to take pictures of anything they wanted to capture. This gave the students a mission similar to a scientist



documenting evidence for research. Each student will be given a CD of the pictures their team captured on the camera. The highlight of a recent field trip was the appearance of a four-foot long cottonmouth sunning itself in the grass along the trail. All of the teams took pictures of the snake guaranteeing they will have evidence to show others!

Photo Captions:

2- Manteo Middle School Science Club members take a break during their field trip to Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge.

4- Manteo Middle School Science Club member Keagan McCall concentrates on sketching an Osprey during a recent club meeting.

Photo Credit for all: USFWS

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