

The Field Guide to the OCDSB Outdoor Education Centres



Summer/Fall 2017

**BILL MASON AND MACSKIMMING OUTDOOR
EDUCATION CENTRE**

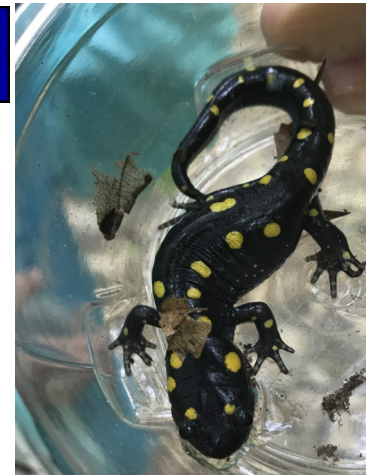


10th Anniversary of the “Every Student Attends Program!”

This school year, the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB)s Outdoor Education Centres (Bill Mason and MacSkimming Centre) is celebrating our 10th anniversary of the “Every Student Attends Program”.

This program allows all OCDSB Grade 3 and 7s classes, to have an opportunity to one full-day field trip, to attend either Outdoor Education Centre per school year, with no cost for programming. During their trip, students take part in an active, hands-on curriculum-based outdoor program focusing on their science or social studies unit. Each program provides students with many opportunities to explore and utilize this 497 acre living classroom.

See the back page of this newsletter, to see how you can contact the Centres to book your “Every Student Attends Program” field trip at this outdoor classroom.



Spotted salamander found by Grade 4 students from Elmwood School

Tale of One River!



Aurora Borealis at MacSkimming by Bill McMullen on May 27th 2017

This spring, the Ottawa River experienced well above average water levels.

MacSkimming Centre’s Waterfront Field Centre did have some minimal damage to its docks and boathouse but nothing, compared to the residents of Gatineau, Cumberland and Rockland.



Summer of 2016 Bill McMullen



For the 2016-2017 school year, the OCDSB Outdoor Education Centres were rewarded “Silver!” from Ontario EcoSchools for our environmental practices and ecological literacy!

Explore, Experience, Appreciate and Learn



Naomi's Letter to the Telus Foundation

This school year, the **Telus Foundation** generously donated funds to the OCDSB Outdoor Education Centres in cooperation with the **Education Foundation of Ottawa**, for **168 OCDSB Grade 5 & 6 students** to have an educational overnight field trip at MacSkimming Centre. Here is a letter written by a Grade 6 student from Vincent Massey P.S. who attended the program:

Dear Telus Foundation:

I am Naomi, a student at Vincent Massey Public School and one of the lucky students who got to experience the Environmental Stewardship program at MacSkimming Outdoor Education Centre. I would like to thank you for funding our class's trip. Going to MacSkimming was a great educational experience as well as a lot of fun. Our class learned about tracking animals by their footprints. We were able to figure out what was happening between predator and prey by following the prints and finding scat and fur. In our case the predators were coyotes and the preys were a snowshoe hare and a deer. We saw a deer carcass and identified how long ago it was eaten. I usually feel grossed out when I see dead animals or even blood, but I felt totally comfortable at the time and found it very fascinating seeing and identifying the coyote scat and fur around the body. At night we learned how to call barred owls and actually were able to observe one that came to a tree near our cabins. We also observed stars and planets through a telescope. During this trip I became more comfortable outside in the woods at night and alone in the woods during the day. While doing solos, I became connected to nature in a different way than ever before, I observed everything around me, the birds, the trees, the snow and the sky. We were given a time to do whatever we wanted in our journals while alone. I drew and wrote in a poetic way, what I saw, felt and heard. Now, when I read what I wrote I feel as if I was back in that woods, experiencing what I experienced before. The nature influenced my writing and in a way opened up a different part of me, almost as if it was the nature writing. The certain aspects of nature really come to life when you're not in a loud group. I was able to experience the natural diversity of the MacSkimming property and really connect to the area I was in. I am once again very grateful for the experience you have provided me with and will always happily think of my time at MacSkimming. I hope you continue to fund the overnight class trips, so that more students can experience the trip that my class was so lucky to go on.

Sincerely Naomi

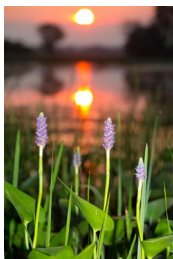


On March 10th, Grade #6 students from **Vincent Massey P.S.** made charcoal sketches inside their nature journals of the forest around MacSkimming Centre. The charcoal they used was from their campfire from the night before.



Rosemarie Keller generously donated a wide series of bird field guides, binoculars and a spotting scope to the OCDSB Outdoor Education Centres through the Ottawa Field Naturalist Club.

This valuable equipment will be implemented into the educational programs at both OCDSB Centres.



[Ottawa Riverkeeper Monitoring Station @ MacSkimming!](#)

The **Ottawa Riverkeeper** is an independent organization that works to protect, promote and improve the health of the Ottawa River and its tributaries. They have over 50 volunteers called "Riverwatchers".

Riverwatcher **Jane Pelletier** has established a monitoring station at MacSkimming's Waterfront Field Centre, which she will conduct monthly water testing, identify aquatic phenomena and environmental concerns. The results of her tests will be sent to an application of www.waterrangers.ca

For more information on the Ottawa Riverkeeper and its programs, see: <http://www.ottawariverkeeper.ca>

Ottawa Regional Envirothon
“A Competition for Secondary Students who love the Outdoors”



On April 24th, 25th and May 5th, the OCDSB Outdoor Education Centres hosted the **Ottawa Regional Envirothon** at MacSkimming Centre.

The Envirothon is a unique **team competition** that rewards secondary students for learning about the natural world around them .

Nine teams from secondary schools in the region of Ottawa (45 students) participated in the Envirothon workshops on April 24th and 25th and **7 teams (35 students)** took part in the tests and presentations on May 5th.

The students who attended the workshops, were able to stay overnight at MacSkimming Centre. They took part in a honeybee presentation, a night solo in the forest and a hike to look for barred owls, which we were successful.

Here are some of the results of the May 5th Competition Day:

- 1st– “Team Prickly Ash” from **Saint Thomas Aquinas Catholic High School**
- 2nd– “Team Hawthorne” from **Nepean High School**
- 3rd– “Team Moosewood” from **Earl of March Secondary School**

The team from **Saint Thomas Aquinas C.H.S.** moved onto the **2017 Ontario Envirothon** which took place at Sir Sandford Fleming College in Lindsay, Ontario.

Each team that participated, did an excellent job in representing their school!

Thank you to the following for their support in the Ottawa Regional Envirothon:

- University of Ottawa
- OCDSB Energy Management and Conservation
- Cabellas Ottawa
- Michael Harrison
- Canaan Blueberries
- Baxter Conservation Area
- City of Ottawa
- St. Lawrence River Institute of the Environment
- Nature Canada
- Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Farming and Rural Affairs
- Ducks Unlimited Ontario
- Hillcroft Stables
- Bill McMullen
- OCDSB Curriculum Services
- Forests Ontario



This pine marten photograph was donated by **Michael Harrison** as the “first place” trophy

2016-2017 Forest School Project on “Getting OCDSB Students Outside!”

This spring, 40 Grade 3 students from **Carson Grove Elementary School** and a Grade 1/2 class from **General Vanier Public School** (21 students) took part in a Forest School Project at MacSkimming Centre focusing on “Getting Students Outside!”



TD Friends of the Environment Foundation

This project was funded from a donation from the **TD Friends of the Environment Foundation** and allowed students to visit MacSkimming Centre’s forest one day a week over a 7 week period (March through to May).

The highlight of the project was the opportunity for the students to spend the full day with uninterrupted exploration and authentic inquiry of the natural world. The students asked questions based on their observations and pursued answers through independent and collaborative research at their own pace.

The students themselves made connections between their classroom curriculum and their adventures at the Centres, that their teachers didn’t even think of.

The English Languages Learners (ELL) demonstrated a great interest in developing their English vocabulary around their outdoor experiences and what they discovered.

Special thank you to the **TD Friends of the Environment Foundation** for their support!



Ducks Unlimited Canada
Conserving Canada’s Wetlands

Ducks Unlimited Wetland Centre of Excellence Program

This spring, secondary students from Nepean High School and West Carleton Secondary School guided half-day wetland conservation programs to OCDSB Grade 4 students at both OCDSB Outdoor Education Centres.

During the month of May, the secondary students led **570** Grade 4 students through the wetlands to learn about their importance.

The OCDSB Outdoor Education Centre would like to thank the following students for volunteering their time, showing great professionalism and having fun with the attending classes!

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| Hoda Osman | Isabelle Poulin |
| Flynn Graham | Melissa Vapit |
| Ethan Gallant | Hannah Durrance |
| Kaitlyn Noffke | Evan Murray |
| Taylor Johnson | Maia Twardowski |
| Cassie Carnegie | Wunnam Saani |
| Reese Jardine | Nick Ashfield |
| Dawson Helleman | Megan Beauchamp |
| Megan Farley | Owen Carnegie |
| Sofia Lentfer | Jamie Whittaker |
| Georgia Munro | Liam Mirza |
| Luke Vandenberg | Carson James |
| Niklas Lentfer | Nina Andrascik |
| Matthew Linehan | Annika Peveril |
| Taite Hauch Kreuger | |
| Mackie Hauch Kreuger | |
| Shaylyn James | |
| Chelsy Page | |
| Dorotea Bracika | |
| Olivia Facchin | |



This April, volunteer **James McDonald** stationed a trail camera on a carcass in the forest at MacSkimming Centre to document what happens at the Centre while the students are away.

He found this picture of a dispute between a turkey vulture and a raven, on who rules the roost!



What happened this spring & summer at the Centres!

On April 18th, the Grade 6 class from **Bridlewood C.E.S.** were asked at the end of the day “How they would describe Bill Mason Centre to someone who had never been here before?” They replied “Beautiful, plentiful, natural and a great place to learn!”

On April 20th, Grade 6 students from **W.E.Gowling P.S.** went for a night hike during their overnight trip to MacSkimming Centre. They heard a single hoot of a barred owl and the panicked call of a flock of wild turkeys. This trip was funded by the **Telus Foundation**.

On May 4th, Grade 4 students from **Greely Public School** watched a long-tailed weasel with a red-backed vole in its mouth, as it raced between their legs during their **Wetland Centre of Excellence Program** at Bill Mason Centre.

On May 11th, Grade 3 students from **Century Public School** were entertained by a large male wild turkey during their Early Life in Canada program at MacSkimming Centre. He put on a real display, fanning his feathers and calling to the students and a nearby female wild turkey.

On May 15th, Grade 4 students from **Westwind Public School** got a close look at a Blandings turtle basking on a log during their Habitats and Communities Program at Bill Mason Centre.

On May 17th, Grade 3s from **Woodroffe Public School** smelled the red trilliums during their Plants & Soils program at Bill Mason Centre. Some kids thought the trilliums smelled like crayons. Most agreed, the trilliums smelled “Aaghhh!”

On May 18th, Grade 4 students from **Knoxdale Public School** were intrigued by a Northern water snake hunting a green frog during their **Wetland Centre of Excellence Program** at Bill Mason Centre. The program is funded by **Ducks Unlimited Ontario** and was run by the secondary students at West Carleton Secondary School.

On May 26th, Grade 4 students from **Cambridge Street Public School** found a weird cedar-apple rust gall while exploring at Bill Mason Centre. This strange orange gall grows on eastern red cedar.

On May 31st, Grade 4s from **Chapman Mills Public School** found a huge bullfrog with the help of **Nepean High School “Green Learning”** students during their **Ducks Unlimited** Wetland Centre of Excellence program at MacSkimming Centre.

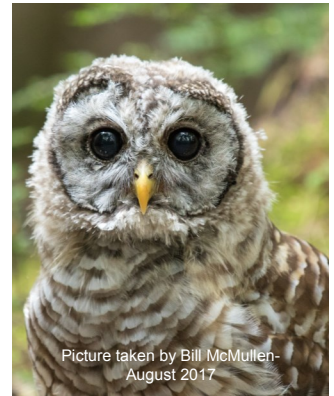
On June 6th, Grade 6s from **Regina Street Public School** found a blue jay fledgling while running around and learning to identify conifer trees with a dichotomous key during their biodiversity program at MacSkimming Centre. This trip is sponsored by the **Telus Foundation**. The bird is OK!

On June 22nd, Grade 3s from **Sir Winston Churchill School** eat wild strawberries, found a large patch of blooming wood lilies and discovered a white-throated sparrow nest with eggs during their Plants & Soils Program at Bill Mason Centre.

On June 23rd, Grade 1/2s from **General Vanier Public School** made clay sculptures with the clay they found in the creek and ate wild strawberries during their Forest School visit to MacSkimming Centre. This trip was sponsored by the **TD Friends of the Environment Foundation**.

On July 26th, campers from **Dovercourt Recreation Centre** found two tadpoles with red tails during their overnight camp at MacSkimming Centre. They were identified as gray tree frog tadpoles.

On July 27th, **OCENET** secondary students from China visited MacSkimming Centre as part of a science field trip. Until this day, 27 out of 29 students never cooked hot dogs or marshmallows over a fire before!



Picture taken by Bill McMullen-
August 2017



Wood lilies at Bill Mason Centre



Red trillium at MacSkimming Centre



Cedar-apple rust at Bill Mason Centre



Blue jay fledgling found by Grade 6
students from Regina Street P.S.

Look Who is inside the Classroom!

This summer, photographers Bill McMullen and James McDonald took some great pictures at MacSkimming Centre while the students were out of the classroom.



James McDonald 2017



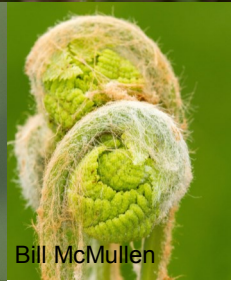
James McDonald 2017



Bill McMullen 2017



Bill McMullen 2017



Bill McMullen



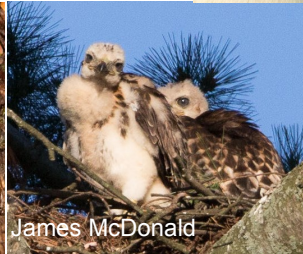
Bill McMullen 2017



Bill McMullen 2017



James McDonald June 2017



James McDonald



Bill McMullen 2017



James McDonald June 2017



James McDonald 2017



James McDonald July 2017



James McDonald 2017



James MacDonald June 2017

MacSkimming Outdoor Education Centre was established as a national migratory bird sanctuary by the Canadian Wildlife Service & Environment & Climate Change Canada in 1969. It is called the "Beckett's Creek Bird Sanctuary".

WILD ROOTS NATURE & FOREST SCHOOL

Students at **Wild Roots Nature and Forest School** spent the spring session exploring the beautiful forest at MacSkimming Outdoor Education Centre.

Our students made maple syrup from the sap we collected from maple trees, we found salamanders and snails on our nature hikes and spent a lot of time climbing trees in the apple orchard.

Our students enjoyed painting in the forest with watercolours, building forts and playing imaginative games in the woods.

Registration for our fall /winter programs is now open!

Visit

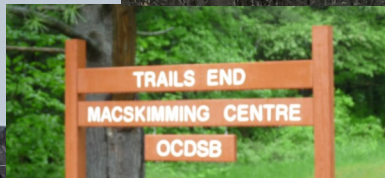
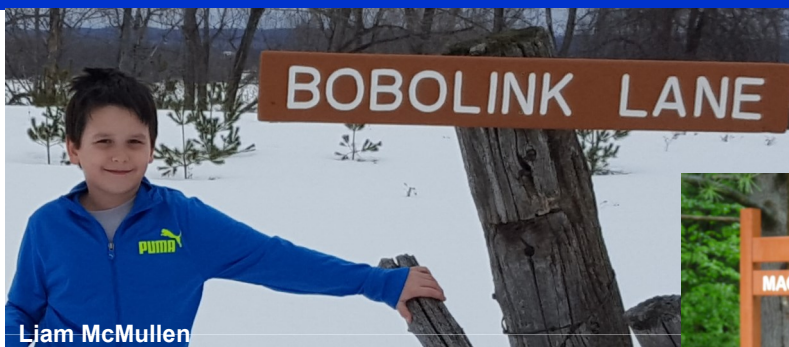
www.wildrootsnatureandforestschool.com to download our registration package.



On April 25th, after a 32 year absence, Grade 3s from **Bayview P.S.** found a rare **four-toed salamander** while investigating a rotten log at MacSkimming Centre.

This type of salamander was last seen at MacSkimming Centre in 1985 by Steve Darbyshire. It was identified by Instructor Karen James and herpetologist David Seburn.

These lungless salamanders are often found in sphagnum bogs or moist woods. You can identify them by the constriction at the base of the tail, white belly and four toes on their hind feet. Most Ontario salamanders have five toes on their hind feet.



PREDATOR RIDGE

This winter, Bill McMullen built and installed a variety of wooden signs around the trails and sites at MacSkimming Centre

The OCDSB's 497 Acre Classroom

OTTAWA-CARLETON DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD



Student Teachers @ OCDSB Outdoor Centres this Spring



Dara Potvin

Queens University
MacSkimming Centre
Alternative practicum
March 20th to
April 7th, 2017



Tiffany Bathurst

Queens University
Bill Mason Centre
Alternative practicum
March 20th to
April 7th, 2017



Jessica Rivard

Nipissing University
MacSkimming Centre
Alternative placement
January 9th to
February 3rd, 2017



Meaghen Jowsey

University of Ottawa
MacSkimming Centre
Alternative placement
April 3rd to the 21st, 2017

For those who like Numbers & Charts!

The 2016-2017 school year has been one of the busiest and best years for the OCDSB Outdoor Education Centres. **Here are some 2016-2017 statistics:**

Number of students who attend this school year: **25,559**

Number of Classes: **1,142** elementary & secondary classes

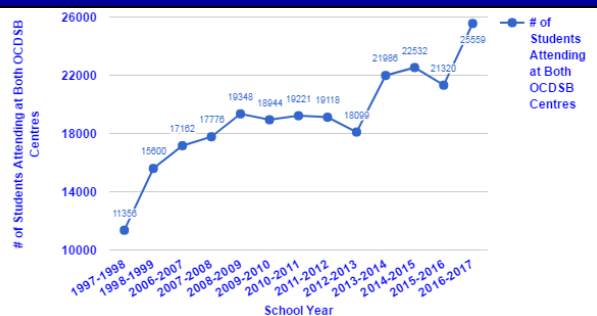
"Every Student Attends" Program (Grade #3 and 7s): **8,073**

Number of students who attended Bill Mason Centre: **7,681**

295 students funded by the **Ottawa Field Naturalist Club**

Percentage of OCDSB elementary schools that attended the Centres (118 elementary schools): **93%**

Number of Students attending both OCDSB Outdoor Centres



OCDSB Outdoor Education Centres- Bill Mason and MacSkimming Centres
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