



Local students learn about aquatic species in Ausable River

EXETER – About 100 local students from Grades 4-8 will learn why it is important to protect different plants and animals in local lakes and rivers on Monday, June 4 at Morrison Dam Conservation Area near Exeter, thanks to a grant from the Biodiversity Education and Awareness Network.

“We are thrilled BEAN has made it possible for local students to find out about the aquatic species that live in our watershed and the important role they play in the ecosystem, as well as the information they give us about the overall health of the watershed,” said Julie Stellingwerff, who is an educational specialist at the Ausable Bayfield Conservation.

The BEAN International Biodiversity Day Grant Fund grant covers busing and some new equipment costs so students get a chance to attend this active outdoor educational event, she said.

“We often need grants to give students outdoor experiences like this one and we thank BEAN for making our Biodiversity Bonanza possible,” she said.

It is very important children learn about the different local animals and plants, Stellingwerff said.

Events like this one help students to connect with nature and, as a result, better understand the world around them. When they value nature as children they are more likely to care for local soil, water, and living things as they get older. It is also important children learn about ways biodiversity is lost and how to they can protect the water and keep it clean for the animals and plants, Stellingwerff said.

“Young people are the future and teaching them ways to help improve habitat for the many different species in our watershed is important to everyone’s health,” she said.

BEAN is a collaboration of education, industry, government and non-governmental organizations and agencies dedicated to increasing awareness, understanding and action for more biodiversity in Ontario. Each year, BEAN promotes local action and awareness to engage Ontarians in activities that involve communities, organizations and individuals in the conservation of biodiversity. In 2012, BEAN is providing financial support for 29 events across Ontario. Schools are eligible to receive support from the IBD Grant Fund to do their own event at their school or work with the ABCA to include a talk or field trip as part of their event. Examples of past Biodiversity Day events in Ontario include restoration plantings, guided nature walks, and garlic mustard removal in local

woodlots. Most of this year's activities across the province focus on the theme of marine and aquatic biodiversity. The International Day for Biological Diversity occurs every year on May 22. For more information on BEAN, or to download lesson plans and activities, visit biodiversityeducation.ca

ABCA's Biodiversity Bonanza will focus on aquatic biodiversity including fish, insects, reptiles and mussels. Four classes of students in Grades 4-8, teachers, and parent/guardian volunteers will take part in a HIPPO Hike (HIPPO stands for Habitat Loss, Introduced Species, Pollution, Population Growth and Over-Consumption). Each stop along the hike through the forest will focus each letter of the word HIPPO and what it means while using various props and pictures. Students will use dip nets to investigate animals in the Ausable River, and watch for signs of pollution in the water.

This biomonitoring is the same way ABCA staff investigates the watershed's health.

Students will learn about aquatic species listed as being at risk according to Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada.

"Many of Ontario's aquatic species are at risk and we have some species in our watershed that aren't found anywhere else in the world," Stellingwerff said. It is essential that an event on biodiversity also emphasize people's actions – the ones that can hurt water quality and the ones that can help water quality. Actions upstream affect water quality downstream. Stewardship projects are actions that landowners can do to protect water quality and species. The ABCA helps landowners find grant programs to help them with the projects they are doing, or are planning to do, to protect water quality.

About 100 students, parent/guardian volunteers, and teachers are expected to attend the Ausable Bayfield Biodiversity Day event.

For information on ABCA visit abca.on.ca, e-mail info@abca.on.ca or call 519-235-2160 or toll-free 1-888-286-2610.



22 May 2012
INTERNATIONAL DAY
FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
Marine Biodiversity