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Kids Help Protect “Boggies” and Other Endangered Species

Nature Program Explains How to Protect Animals like the Bog Turtle from Extinction

Philadelphia, PA — Area children learned today about steps they can take to help protect local threatened and endangered species as part of the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education’s “Pond and Beyond” summer camp. A group of about fifteen 8 and 9 year-olds received a special presentation on Bog Turtles, tiny creatures found in area bogs, marshes and ponds that seldom grow to more than four inches. The children participated in a “Bog Turtle Hurdles” game to learn about the challenges facing the turtles and how those challenges can be overcome. They showed their support for endangered species by signing their names on construction-paper turtle cut outs that will be delivered to elected officials.

“When people think about endangered species, they often imagine exotic animals on the plains of Africa or in the rainforests of Brazil. Most kids are surprised to learn that there are endangered species living right in the Philadelphia area,” said Adelia Hwang, a presenter from Clean Air Council, an area nonprofit that has been educating people about endangered species and the importance of environmental protections. “Once they discover that endangered species live in the region, kids seem eager to learn how they can help protect them.”

Affectionately called “boggies,” Bog Turtles are one of the smallest turtles in the United States. Found throughout southeastern Pennsylvania and other pockets of the east coast, the species was once fairly abundant, but is now extremely rare. As part of a role-playing game, kids learned that the biggest threats to Bog Turtles’ survival include habitat destruction and illegal collection as pets.

“We teach kids to enjoy watching animals in nature only from a safe distance. A lot of damage can be done by tromping around an animal’s nest site or bringing something home as a pet,” said Camila Rivera-Tinsley, environmental educator at the Schuylkill Center. “We also teach about the value of environmental protections that make it illegal to kill or collect endangered species and that help protect rare species’ habitats.”

The Bog Turtle was listed as “threatened” under the federal Endangered Species Act in 1997. The law makes it illegal to “harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture or collect” species listed as threatened or endangered, and also works to prevent habitat loss and degradation. The Act is credited with the recovery of species like the bald eagle, the American alligator, the Florida manatee, the whooping crane and the green sea turtle.

The Schuylkill Center is a nature preserve of over 400 acres in the city of Philadelphia. Its mission is to promote the preservation and improvement of the natural environment through environmental education. It disseminates information on current environmental issues and encourages appropriate public response to environmental problems.

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