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Splash in the mud ends school year

Staff Report, *The News Messenger*

The kindergarteners from Lincoln Crossing Elementary School found themselves elbow deep in wetland mud on field trips to a private mitigation bank owned by Riley Swift (president and founder of Restoration Resources) on May 29 and 30. Hosted by the Restoration Resources Learning Center and the Wildlife Heritage Foundation, the trip gave the 111 children an up-close and personal look at nature and the wetland ecosystem.

The field trip served as the culmination to the kindergarteners' science curriculum which includes using their five senses and learning about animals and their habitats. The day started with a feather hunt where students used their eyes and ears to locate animal signs, namely feathers, along a trail. Next, they listened to a Native American story that involved wetland animals, which included passing around items that represented the animals such as a fox skin, beaver skull and turtle shell. The classes ended the day with a play in the mud—wetland mud, that is.

Students used their sight, smell and touch senses to investigate the properties of wetland mud and then finger-painted a picture of what they saw during the day using the mud.

“The kids had a great time,” kindergarten teacher Dayna Swanson said, “They said this was the best field trip we have had all year because of the mud. They will do anything to get dirty.”

The field trips area free service offered by the Restoration Resources Learning Center (a local environmental consulting firm) and the Wildlife Heritage Foundation (a Lincoln based non-profit). Environmental education programs are offered through both businesses as a community outreach effort and are available to all schools throughout the greater Sacramento area. Next year's plans include expanding education services into the Chico area and providing curriculum in Spanish. The education programs are run by credentialed teachers and other lessons in wetlands, animal habitats and biology, insects, biodiversity and conservation.

For more information on these environmental education programs or to sign your group up for a field trip, go online at www.citizenscientists.com