

# Students get hands on at BioBlitz

## Jeffers surveys Lake Perrault biodiversity

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DAN ROBLEE , Mining Journal

ADAMS TOWNSHIP - Jeffers High School moved Tuesday's classes to Lake Perrault and the Robert Brown Nature Sanctuary, where 7th- and 12th-grade students participated in the Keweenaw's first BioBlitz, an intense biological survey designed to identify as many species as possible in the area.

"Our goal is to look for as many different things as we can. We're not counting them so much, we just want to see what's here," said Joan Chadde, a Michigan Technological University education program coordinator and Lake Superior Stewardship Initiative project adviser who co-coordinated the event with Jeffers teacher Cindy McCormick.

Chadde and McCormick recruited a dozen local scientists from Michigan Technological University, the Michigan Nature Association and other groups to share some of their expertise with the students.

### Article Photos



Adrienne Bozic of the Michigan Nature Association speaks to Jeffers students about some of the plants they're finding during the BioBlitz species survey Tuesday at Lake Perrault and the Robert Brown Nature Sanctuary. (Houghton Daily Mining Gazette photo by Dan Roblee)

McCormick said the students have had regular educational and cleanup events at their adopted school forest - actually owned by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources - for several years, but that bringing so many outside educators for the BioBlitz made Tuesday's the biggest event ever.

"They come out once in the spring and once in the fall every year, and they just have a blast," McCormick said. "They learn so much more when they have the experiential leaning, and who wouldn't want to be outside."

Each student participated in three scientific activities during the day. Freshman Grace Laitala's first was slightly peripheral to the species count - chemically testing the dissolved oxygen of pond water from a fen near Lake Perrault, as well as the water's temperature and clarity.

### Fact Box

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- CINDY MCCORMICK, Teacher, Jeffers High School

The fen turned out to have 12 parts per million of oxygen, which students explained was "about right," according to volunteer naturalist Denise Landsberg.

Laitala, who hopes to follow her father's footsteps by someday working for the DNR, said she definitely prefers fieldwork to science in the classroom.

"You get into the habitat, and can see what you're doing and how it relates to science," she said.

Laitala said her dad is in the DNR's fisheries department, while she's currently leaning towards wildlife biology.

"I'd like to study animal behaviors and why they adapt to around here, and why they fit," she said.

The water tests used test tubes and other chemistry apparatus to gather data. Other students used less traditional tools.

Katri Rajala, found taking a picture of a plant with her smart phone, explained that she was actually doing much more.

"I was using an app called iNaturalist," she said, "recording the type of plant that we found, where it was found, and a picture of it."