



IS Estonia attended the Sea Me (Science Education Applied through Marine Ecology) workshop in Sweden

The 8th graders at the International School of Estonia traveled to Sweden at the end of September to attend the Science Education Applied Through Marine Ecology (SEA ME) workshop at the Tjärnö research station, which is affiliated with Gothenburg University. Three schools including the International School of Lausanne in Switzerland and Strömstiernaskolan, a local Swedish school, came together for four days to cooperatively explore marine habitats and experience the scientific process along with their teachers and leading scientists in marine ecology. The purpose of this trip was stimulate interest in the natural sciences by providing them with the opportunity to carry out experiments in nature of their own design, while being supported by state of the art facilities and a wealth of expertise.

At the beginning of the workshop, students were taken to an island near Tjärnö and encouraged to make observations about the ecological interactions between organisms including different species of algae, marine snails, starfish, jellyfish, crabs, and fish. In mixed-school groups, the students then agreed upon a question that they wanted to investigate, and collected the organisms that they would need for their experiments. Each group then designed and carried out experiments, collecting data for two days. Upon completion of their investigations, the students presented their results and were fortunate enough to have the opportunity to discuss their results with experts in the field.

In addition to their experiments, the students practiced different population sampling methods and learned about microscopy by viewing the various organisms they had collected through different types of microscopes.

This was an invaluable trip for the students as the authentic learning environment combined with the passion and enthusiasm of the scientists provided them with many unique, memorable experiences. The students truly enjoyed interacting with the marine organisms whether they were looking through aqua scopes while wearing waders in the sea, experimenting in the lab, or observing them in the on-site aquarium.

Another highlight of the trip was observing and interacting with bioluminescent plankton in the sea at night. For many this was a first. I guess there is something to be said about being in the right place at the right time!

Hopefully this experience will inspire many of the students and motivate them in the area of natural sciences. Fortunately, this outstanding facility does quite a bit of educational outreach in science. For more information about SEA ME and future opportunities, go to the SEA ME website at <http://www.seame.marecol.gu.se/index.html>.

By Rory Newcomb, Science teacher, IS Estonia