

Creepy Crawlers Don't Bug Students at FLEE Festival

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TOWN OF RICHFIELD - Rocks and leaves, bugs and creatures were the big draw at the first FLEE (Friess Lake Environmental Education) Festival, hosted by Friess Lake School Saturday. Exploring the school's prairie and forest, making T-shirts and visors was fun, and along the way, visitors and students learned a few things about the natural world.

Tessa Nicpon, a second grader at Friess Lake, said the "funnest" activity was making a leaf print on T-shirts. "You paint the leaves and press them down on the T-shirt. I used red and orange and yellow - they are fall colors," said Nicpon.

"I liked the scavenger hunt," said Cy Brehm, 7, of Hubertus. "If you get four things in a row you get a bingo. I got two bingos, but I didn't get any prize. The best part was just walking. We saw a bunch of turkey feathers and my mom thinks she saw turkey tracks," said Brehm.

Inside the school's common area, seventh-grader Melissa Anderson helped visitors match up animal track prints to casts. "I never knew sea otters have a big foot like this," said Anderson as she handled the otter cast.

Sixth-graders Olivia Kula-szewicz and Jamie Christenson picked their favorite rocks. Fossilized snails make cool rocks," said Kulaszewicz. "I never knew critters could make rocks. "This is Galena," said Christenson as she hefted a piece of the shiny, faceted lead. "I never knew lead could be this shiny."

Brittney Fleischer is a student in Mary Ellen Schuetz's fifth-grade class. We went searching for insects on the prairie," said Fleischer. Fleischer had no fear of the creepy crawlies. Neither did classmates Anna Farina and Brianna Hall, although Farina did say the boll weevil is the "grossest" bug she'd encountered. It's like all roundish and brownish, and I do not like beetles at all," said Farina. I don't like crickets," admitted Hall, who managed to capture a leaf-cutting bee and hornet wasp for the display.

The event was made possible by a Wisconsin Environmental Education Board (WEEB) grant. The grants are awarded for the development, dissemination and implementation of environmental education programs.