

"On Tuesday, April 9, Ms. Heller's intrepid first grade class ventured to Pillar Point Harbor, just below Half Moon Bay for a morning of exploration, science, natural history, tide-pooling and fun. While some students took this opportunity to get wet, muddy, sandy, and quite excited, everyone (parents included) had their eyes and ears tuned to Chris Giorni, founder of Tree Frog Treks, who led the group, every step of the way. Looking and touching shells, skins, skulls, bugs, rabbits, snakes and tadpoles was just the beginning-and that was even before we left the parking lot!



Walking along the waters edge, the group quickly came upon a sandstone outcropping that was teeming with life. Chris helped students to identify limpets, clams, mussels, and anemones. He made natural sun screen from scrapings of the wet sandstone and he rubbed it over his face. Students with sharp eyes pointed out the lined crab and the brown rock crab and Chris shared with us how to hold them safely to avoid being pinched. Placing one large crab in a bucket of water, the group watched as the crab drank, filling itself up and letting out some bubbles as it gulped water. The Turkish Towel seaweed drew laughs as Chris placed it over his face and used it as a natural

washcloth. Brave students lined up to volunteer to try it, and everyone giggled through the experience.

Just as quickly as students handed Chris a Bull Kelp specimen, he sliced open the bulb at the bottom so that the students could hear the air escaping. This air, he explained helped to keep the kelp floating close to the surface of the water where it needed the sun. As we moved along the shore, students began repeating what they learned from Chris. Shouts of "Oh, here is another Olivella snail!" and "Check out this cool Blenny!" and "Hey is this red algae?" were heard repeatedly. When a rare transparent flounder and then a ghost shrimp was pulled out of a small pool of water, Chris was truly impressed with the student's keen senses and their powers of observation. The students were tuned in and turned on to the marine life all around them. Excitement was in the air and the sun was on the students' backs. The tide cooperated to provide us with wonderful opportunities to see and touch the critters of the tidal zones. And the students cooperated to listen and to learn from a gifted naturalist as he shared his enthusiasm and love of nature with them. With every step of the way there were students handing specimens to Chris who reacted as if it were the first Turbin Snail he had ever seen or handled it as if it were the last hermit crab on earth. Chris imparted a love of nature, a penchant for discovery and encouraged students to turn over rocks and then to put them back in their original position, to feel the sand with their hands and to let the water wash over their feet. And he reminded them to take a moment to just look at the beauty all around them and to remember to share what they learned, and to spread what they know.



The morning was indeed special. The wonders and stories of the tidal community were told, as an extremely inquisitive group of first grade students clambered over rocks and across the sand to discover the beauty and the wonder of nature by the shore. A big thank you to Ms. Heller for preparing her class for such an adventure. Thank you also to the many parent chaperones who accompanied the students. Of course the trip would not have been the same without Chris Giorni to whom we are indebted for his passionate approach to sharing nature with our students."

- Daniel Meyer

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