

A Review of the Mountain Lake Exploration Class
By Jack Wooldridge

In the Mountain Lake Exploration Class at Pequest Fish Hatchery, we started by taking our seats, taking out our notebooks and pencils, and getting ready to take notes. First, the presenters, Liz and Jessica, asked us how we defined a “lake community”. As people gave their opinions, three habitats, near and in the lake, the mountain above the lake, the shore of the lake, and the lake itself, were formed on the white board.

After we had created those areas, we were each assigned to one of three different groups, which were tasked with drawing the three different habitats. My group got the lake shore, and we drew rocks, silt, mud and plants along the shore. I kept breaking the crayons accidentally.

When we had finished our drawings and talked about the different habitats in more detail, we moved on to the creatures that we most associate with lakes, fish! After discussing what defines a fish, we each formed a group that got two fish cards. We were tasked with figuring out what level of the lake they would live in. My group got a sunfish and Brown Trout, both of which lived around the middle depth of the lake.

Next, we went on a tour of the fish hatchery area, which taught me quite a bit. I learned how the fish are given anesthetic, removed from the water, have their eggs or sperm removed, and put back in. The eggs and sperm are mixed together and put in tub with moving water and nutrients. Afterwards, we went to the viewing platform and watched the fish in the tanks being fed, which was very cool. They would jump high into the air and snap the food out of the air.

After watching the fish for a while, we went back and learned about the animals that live in and around the lake. We had to match the animals to their habitats. Lastly, we played a game that illustrated predator/prey relationships. The class was excellent, and I learned a lot!