



Conservation course students with their native bee catches. Top row, lt-rt: Emily Zetkovic, Chris Fohringer, Lindsay Warne, Dr. Don Rolfs (bee specialist), Valentina Coy Arias, Sonia Barba Herrera, Elissa Williams, Daniel McGill (PBI intern), Rusty Sprouse, Elisabeth Bergman; bottom row, lt-rt: Vivian Le, Anna Fornili, Erin Barton, Samantha DiGiulio, Dina Schwartz

Pacific Biodiversity Institute Welcomes Students Conservation Science and Leadership Course

By Dina Schwartz

From the snow-capped peaks to the clear waters of the Methow River, the last four weeks have been nothing short of the adventure of a lifetime. On May 22, 2016, thirteen strangers from around the world rendezvoused in the Methow, a quiet valley that many of you call home. Many of us came from a metropolis far removed from a rural lifestyle, to a place where our residency was in a town of only one street. The North Cascades Basecamp of Mazama, Washington, has become a home for us all. A place where we study, cook, sleep, and day by day grow as individuals and as a family.

The course has exceeded many of our expectations. In the first week we hiked Goat Wall and studied Ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, and the wildlife that also call the Methow home. We engaged in discussion about environmental law and land management of national forests by the US Forest Service. We went birding every morning soon after sunrise and caught over 50 native bees to help identify one of the most abundant, least studied insects in the Methow. We tackled each day—from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.—with the energy and curiosity that only

flows through the veins of a passionate scientist. By the end of the week we were nothing short of exhausted, but we weren't about to slow down as many of us woke up early Saturday morning for the Mazama 10k and 5k fun run and world famous pancake breakfast.



Basecamp runners. Lt-rt: Emily, Erin, Vivian, Valentina, Anna, Chris, Kim and Steve Bondi



Learning about wolverine trapping methods by the US Forest Service featuring Scott Fitkin with the Washington State Dept. of Fish and Wildlife.

Week two came at us fast and flew by swiftly as we explored environmental issues in the Arctic, forest entomology of the Methow, and some got our first ever overview of Geographic Information Systems (GIS), a global mapping system. We spent three days camping in Squaw Creek, where we acquired knowledge of field techniques that interns at Pacific Biodiversity Institute (PBI), the organization sponsoring this course, are currently using; how to set up a plot for their forest fire impact study; and about the current and historical fire regimes in the Methow. At the end of the week some of us hiked Cedar Falls and Cutthroat Lake trails while others attended a presentation on the native Okanogan tribe at the Methow Valley Interpretive Center. The lecture was presented by Arnie Marchand of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation. It was a very humbling experience.

The third week was jam packed with lectures on the Methow Beaver Project, shoreline conservation law, climate change, salmon conservation and habitat restoration, the Yakama Nation's rights and roles in the conservation of the Methow, and lamprey's unlisted endangerment. We all got behind the scenes at the Winthrop fish hatchery, Twisp waste management facility, and the Methow Valley Native Plants Nursery. Over the weekend a couple of us volunteered at the Kid's Fishing Day at the Winthrop fish hatchery.

The fourth week disappeared as we worked on our student projects, and I can say on behalf of us all that none of us are ready for this adventure to end. With long nights of writing reports and creating presentations, we took advantage of daylight hours to go on hikes and make the most of our time left. We hiked Pipestone Canyon and perused the valley in search of amphibians and reptiles. It sure has been bittersweet.

We have been in the field every single day, whether that be pacing through a wildflower meadow, hiking through the woods, or rolling up our pants and crossing rivers. In the last four weeks many of us have spent more time actively outdoors than we have in the last few years being bound to university lecture halls. We have learned to cook for 20 people when some have never known how to cook for ourselves, we've hiked Sun Mountain in the middle of the night in hopes of seeing the Northern Lights, we've been white water rafting, and we've competed to build a successful zipline across the yard of the Basecamp. All of us have grown from this experience as leaders, scientists, and stewards of the environment.

If you have seen us around town, whether while rolling very slowly through town in the Nordic team's bus, at Sherri's, the Twisp farmer's market, the Methow Valley Interpretive Center, the kid's fishing day at the hatchery, the Winthrop rodeo, or hiking; or, if you were among the many that took time out of your day to teach us about your passion, I would like to say thank you on behalf of us all. You live on the most beautiful land many of us have ever seen, and we know it wouldn't be so if you did not care for it the way that you do. You have all made us feel at home in this foreign land. We will always have the Methow in our hearts.



Students working together to take down a WA Department of Fish and Wildlife camera for the Wolverine Project. Put up during the winter, it was ten feet off the ground after the snow melted.