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Environmental Volunteers

Innovative environmental science education that improves student learning

Newsletter for the EV Community

November 2011

EcoCenter



To see pictures of the EcoCenter's restoration journey, click on the photo above.

To learn more about the EcoCenter, click [here](#).

Fun Facts

This is a slimy situation...
Slime Mold



In This Issue

[Because Science Matters...](#)

[School Services Update](#)

[The Immortal Jellyfish](#)

[Who's News: Shannon Petrello](#)

[Share Your Story](#)

[Save the Date: Wild Crush](#)

[EV Snapshots](#)

Because Science Matters....

by Allan Berkowitz, Executive Director



Many think of the Environmental Volunteers only in terms of environmental stewardship. While it is true that we are an environmental organization - and proudly so -- we also are a science education organization. Natural science is very much a scientific discipline and our work is an essential response to the woeful lack of science in our schools.

Did you see the recent depressing headline in the San Jose Mercury News, that reads: "Schools flunk science." The article talked about a new study of California's elementary schools and the state of science education. The study was conducted by the Lawrence Hall of Science and SRI International, through a grant from the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation (by the way, the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation recently awarded the EV a very large grant to evaluate our collaboration project and its impacts on student learning in Mountain View schools).

The state of science education in California is not a pretty picture.

- 40% of elementary school teachers spend one hour or less per week on science instruction.



Leocarpus fragilis, Jack Owicki

Did you know that slime molds are neither fungi nor mold? They are *protists*. There are two types in this area, the plasmodial slime mold and cellular slime mold. As they grow, the slime mold mass moves toward sunlight and "enter an immotile plant-like phase and reproduction occurs." With the warm conditions, the masses transform into "fruit-bearing bodies that will bear reproductive spores." These spores can take on unique shapes such as the one above.

The most commonly seen and well known plasmodial slime mold is the *Fuigo septica*, or dog vomit slime mold (see below).



Fuigo septica displays bright colors, which are found in slime molds.

Marilyn Hornor shares this information from "Open Space Views" by Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District.

Quick Links

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- 60% of school districts have no staff member dedicated to teaching science.
- More than 85% of elementary school teachers received no science-related professional development in the last three years.
- California's fourth-graders ranked at the bottom of all states in science test scores.
- The state sets no standard for minimum hours of science education.

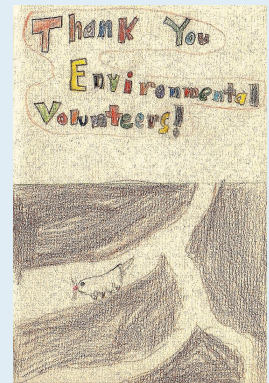
The EV matters because science and stewardship matter. Every day our volunteers challenge hundreds of kids to use scientific inquiry to understand the natural world. Each and every hour of an EV program fills a piece of the gap. Students are introduced to science concepts they'd otherwise miss; we assist teachers in an area many of them feel inadequate to teach; schools are able to embrace affordable lessons in extreme budgetary times.

At the EV, we remain passionate about the importance of natural science education. Each and every day, we see kids' eyes lighting up as they discover the wonders of the natural world. We hear from teachers who integrate our programs with language arts (just today a teacher shared how her English-language learners were inspired to write about their close encounters with marine creatures). We can't change the state of education in the State of California. But we can - and do - change the learning environment of over 12,000 students annually. So there is hope - even if the headline forgets to mention the critical role of community organizations working very hard every day to make a difference.

School Services Update

by Laurie Lopez, Programs Coordinator

October was a great month for the EV! In the Peninsula, we served **24 teachers** and led **16 field trips!** This is double what we delivered last October. In the South Bay, we served **17 teachers** and led **two field trips.** This is right on par with where we were last October and where we need to be to stay on track to meet our year end goals. If we combine both areas, our volunteers were able to reach **1,010 students** this month, bringing us to 1,475 students inspired so far this year. Just how did our volunteers teach 1,000+ students in 6 weeks? By giving a total of 721 hours! In that same amount of time, one could walk from the EcoCenter to Vancouver, and back!



"Thank You" card from one of the children we serve

The Immortal Jellyfish

by Olivia Thomas, Intern



DONATE NOW!

Environmental Volunteers

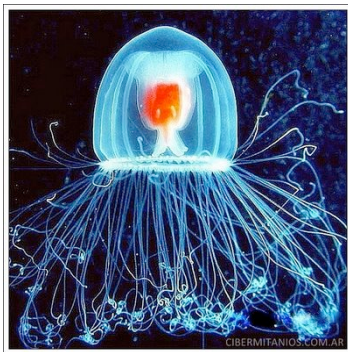
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We are born. We live. We die. Life is generally regarded as a one way street, and immortality is a concept most often reserved for religion or science fiction; however, there may be an exception. *Turritopsis dohrnii*, **the immortal jellyfish**, can potentially live forever. Yes, forever. Turritopsis reproduces through the meeting of sperm and free floating egg, nothing special. It is when confronted with some sort of life threatening emergency that the jellyfish activates a survival mechanism, allowing

it to age backwards.

Often called the "Benjamin Button of the sea," this jellyfish can turn itself into a cyst that resembles a blob. This blob becomes a polyp colony, which is basically the first stage in jellyfish life. In this process, all of the cells of the jellyfish are ...

What happens to the cells of the immortal jellyfish? Read more [here](#).

Who's News: Shannon Petrello

by Jan Whitmer

A woman for all seasons, our new Development Director, **Shannon Petrello**, comes to the Environmental Volunteers with a strong background in fundraising. Her last development position was with Streetside Stories in San Francisco, an educational nonprofit that focuses on advancing literacy through storytelling. There Shannon planned successful fundraising events and substantially bolstered stewardship of the organization's donors.

Born in Los Angeles, Shannon graduated from UC Berkeley with a degree in Film Theory. She went on to earn a graduate degree in Mass Communication and Media Art from Southern Illinois University, doing so on a full scholarship! After working for nonprofits delivering programs, Shannon found she had a knack for grant writing and development, and voilà.

Not only is Shannon new to the EV, she is also newly married-to Nicolas Prade, whom she met on a ...

Find out where Shannon met her husband [here](#).



Shannon backpacking in the Ventana Wilderness in Big Sur.

Share Your Story

by Justyne Schnupp, Development Assistant

We would love to hear from the EV community about your favorite nature memory. Maybe it's sailing on the ocean, hiking on a trail with a friend, or catching a glimpse of your favorite animal. Whatever it is, we want to hear it. EVs, why not share your fondest memory working with a child, whether in be in the classroom or on a field trip?



For example, when I worked in Explore! Summer Camp in 2009, Save the Bay took our campers canoeing in the sloughs of the Baylands. Though I have walked the trails before, this was a completely different perspective. Sharing the canoes with my kids and experiencing the Baylands from the water was amazing. With two to three people per canoe, we went down different sloughs

like a maze. We watched the birds and other animals in their element. We even dined on a floating makeshift cafe by holding our canoes together. My kids and I were so into the experience that many of us got covered in mud. The mud still remains on the clothes I wore.

So will the memories.



If you have a special, funny, and/or interesting memory to share, please send your story to justyne@EVols.org. We will feature stories on our home [page](#) and our Facebook [page](#).

Save the Date

Wild Crush: A Wine and Chocolate Adventure

Join us for a festive evening to benefit the Environmental Volunteers

Sunday, April 29, 2012

5:00 - 9:00 P.M.

Oshman Family Jewish Community Center,
Palo Alto

For ticket or sponsorship information, or for more details, contact (650) 961-0545 x335, or WildCrush@EVols.org



EV Snapshots

What EVs snapped in the month of October!





While on a Jasper Ridge field trip, Jocelyn Blum spotted this image of **shelf fungus**.

Bob "Scatman" Dodge saw this **red cage fungus** on the Stanford Campus near the Arizona Cactus Garden. It's a member of the Stinkhorn family.



Scatman also saw this **Santa Cruz Island Fox** while visiting the research station in the Channel Islands off Santa Barbara. He says they are "about the size of a large housecat."

This is one of three **Lemon Nudibranchs** seen during the Fitzgerald field trip training. It was the largest one and the white ruffles on the end are its "nudibranchs" (or naked gills). Cindy Lockhart captured it.



Thanks to EVs Jocelyn, Bob and Cindy for sharing these awesome pictures!

If you have any images from EV services, field trips or your own excursions, and would like to share them with the EV community,

please send them to justyne@EVols.org.

Photo Credits

EcoCenter Update: Andrei Sarna-Wojcicki

Who's News: Provided by subject

Fun Facts: *Leocarpus fragilis*- Jack Owicki, *Fuligo septica*- Wikipedia

Immortal Jellyfish: CIBERMITANIOS.COM.AR

Share your memory: Justyne Schnupp and Vandy Shrader

Save the Date: Chocolate Weekend NYC

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