

# Presque Isle County Advance

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## Students explore, write about threatened and endangered species

Forty-nine seventh-grade students from Rogers City Area Schools visited Thompson's Harbor State Park to complete a six-week unit studying local threatened and endangered species. Joined by community partners through the Northeast Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative (NE MI GLSI), students trekked the shoreline and trails of Thompson's Harbor exploring the diversity of coastal Lake Huron, woodland, and wetland habitats, seeking the rare plants and animals found in these places.

Learning with resource experts from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Friends of Thompson's Harbor State Park, Michigan Sea Grant, and Huron Pines American Corps, students spent their day exploring plants and animals of shoreline dunes, limestone cobble beaches and coastal wetland habitats of Lake Huron. Students ex-

perienced bogs, fens and other woodland habitats within the park while learning about park history and management with DNR parks staff. "What I liked about doing the project," said Brady Hill, a seventh-grader, "was that you got to explore a new animal, figure out what it does, find out a little bit more about it and learn how to protect it."

A fun and valuable day in the field, students celebrated a project started earlier in the school year, where they combined their scientific study of ecology and local habitats with writing skills gained in English class. This field trip "was a unique experience to actually go out in the field and see the species that students researched and wrote about in their reports," says Holly Wirgau, seventh-grade science teacher.

Learning about the ecological and community values of our local natural resources, students each selected a rare species found in Presque

Isle County to research and write a report. Highlighted species included the Hine's emerald dragonfly, Pitcher's thistle, eastern massasauga rattlesnake, and the dwarf lake Iris, among many others. Students applied their science and writing skills to compile their research findings into a report for each species. The completed booklets include photos, status, and ecological information about the threatened or endangered species they studied. To make these resources available to a wider audience, some of the student booklets will find a home in each of the park's two cabins.

From research to writing to field trip, this project was about connecting student leaders with community partners in protecting and promoting our valuable local natural resources and coastal Lake Huron habitats. Through their hands-on outdoor learning and classroom work, the students have been



STUDENTS EXPLORE plants and animals of limestone cobble beach.

developing their educational reports with the purpose of providing the public with valuable information on natural resource interaction and environmental stewardship. These student projects bring

the amazing and rare natural habitats— including plants and animals of these natural areas — to life for anyone visiting Presque Isle County and Thompson's Harbor State Park. This effort was

supported through the NE MI GLSI ([www.nemiglsi.org](http://www.nemiglsi.org)), which seeks to promote and protect our Great Lakes and natural resources through hands-on learning in (and with) the community.



FRIENDS OF Thompson's Harbor State Park volunteer Bill Grigg talks with students about wetlands.



STUDENTS SEARCHING for crayfish on the beach.