

The Guide
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Environmental Education in our schools: A workshop on mammals and their habitat

In early December, 5th and 6th grade students from the Mansonville Elementary and Le Baluchon schools transformed their outing on the North Missisquoi River Peninsula into a series of interesting discoveries.

Equipped with compasses and binoculars, the children explored this small reserve located in the hearth of the village, looking for animals track and sign.

Evidence of fox tracks found on the snow cover, confirmed animal presence. This was just the beginning of an amazing adventure as they ran into a huge moose skull, probably the remains of a hunter's prey that may have been dragged there by a dog, fox or coyote. The students also noticed beaver teeth marks on branches by the river side, as well as fresh tracks of a red fox with its characteristic odor. Coyote tracks and numerous deer tracks were also clearly identified.

The excursions conducted by two Ruitter Valley Land Trust instructors, Isabelle Grégoire and Gaétan Champagne, were preceded by a workshop in class that prepared the students to recognize animal tracks and observe nature's wonders. While combining fun with education, the excursions allowed the children to understand that the presence of mammals can be a good indicator of the richness and health of local biodiversity. This reinforced the importance of habitat and ecosystem preservation for the protection of flora and fauna as a first step toward the protection of the environment for present and future generations.

These activities were carried out as part of the Ruitter Valley Land Trust environmental school program for a fourth consecutive year. They are a good example of integrating specialized scientific education into school programs as a complement to the teaching curriculum.

The Ruitter Valley Land Trust is a non-profit organization. One of its objectives is to promote the concepts of conservation of the wilderness in schools. More information on the land trust's projects can be found on its website: www.ruittervalley.org

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