



Bringing the Adventure and Science Communities Together

Media Contact:

Jordan Holsinger

jordan@adventureandscience.org

(406)624-9152

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Inner city students from West Oakland Middle School return from adventure-science outing in the Desolation Wilderness.

Lake Tahoe, CA, 1 October 2013 - [Adventurers and Scientists for Conservation](http://www.adventureandscience.org) (ASC) recently led a group of middle school students from California's West Oakland Middle School (WOMS) through the Desolation Wilderness above Lake Tahoe on an adventure-science outing. Students endured sleet and snow and were empowered to become citizen-scientists while collecting valuable data for conservation efforts in the region. "I want to stay out here for more than a week" remarked 7th grader Jimmie Thomas. For many of these students this was an eye opening experience including Dajonique Simmons who saw snow for the first time. Howard Nathal, a chaperone on the trip said the group endured "a torrential rain, hail and snow storm" yet "the group of students were enthusiastic and high spirited through the trip." During the course of the trip the students worked on ongoing ASC projects including collecting water samples containing [diatoms from high mountain lakes](#) and documenting [pika observations](#) in the higher elevation ecosystems of the Desolation Wilderness.

Pika are the smallest member of the rabbit family and are both keystone species and indicators of ecosystem health. These cold-obligate animals thrive in cold alpine environments like the High Sierra, but populations struggle in warm temperatures. Because coyotes, foxes, hawks, eagles and other animals rely on this prey species, understanding how they will be affected by a rapidly changing climate is an essential piece of any management plan. Diatoms, single-celled algae

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with silica cell walls, are also indicators of ecosystem health as an important organism at the bottom of the food chain. Many diatom populations are largely uncharacterized and there remain great possibilities for discovery and improved understanding of freshwater ecosystems across the world. In 2012, ASC was integral in the discovery of four new diatom species, with initial reports of four more in 2013.

Students, many of whom have never spent time in the wilderness, were trained in backcountry skills and the scientific method by trained ASC staff in order to successfully collect data for each project. This included teaching students to identify plant and wildlife species and educating students on the larger scientific and conservation contexts of these projects. Hands-on science education experiences like this have proven to be invaluable for encouraging students to pursue STEM careers.

This is the second year we have led students from WOMS in the Desolation Wilderness. To learn more about ASC and what we offer to these students, watch our [video on youtube](#).

This project was supported by Clif Bar, Osprey Packs, Oakland Rotary Fund and the Foundation for Youth Investment. For more information about how to be involved with ASC's pika or diatom projects as well as other projects please visit www.adventureandscience.org. Follow up with other ASC programs on our [blog](#), [facebook](#) and [twitter](#).

About Adventurers and Scientists for Conservation

Adventurers and Scientists for Conservation was founded in January of 2011 with the understanding that many people traveling in the outdoors genuinely want to do more for the places they visit but often struggle with how to help. ASC exists to bridge this gap by pairing adventure athletes already traveling to some of the earth's most difficult-to-reach places with the scientists who need information from these areas. ASC also has the goal of creating unique and innovative learning experiences about science while also saving the scientific and conservation communities millions of dollars in data collection costs. For more information visit www.adventureandscience.org

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