

Llama Class

Newsletter for November, 2011

It was a fast and somewhat frightening month of October in the Llama's classroom! We studied nocturnal animals that are sometimes misunderstood – owls, spiders, and bats. We wrapped up the month by examining everything we could about pumpkins. Here is a closer look...

Owls – We learned about how these silent hunters eat their food and even got to dissect a real owl pellet! We also enjoyed making owl puppets and masks.



Spiders – We examined the body parts of these arachnids and learned what makes them different from insects. A game where we pretended to be spiders hunting in webs was a class favorite.

Bats – We studied the 7 kinds of bats that live in Minnesota and even got to carefully look at a bat specimen and skeleton.

Pumpkins – We learned about how a pumpkin grows and made a book illustrating that process. We measured pumpkins and cooked and ate plenty of pumpkin treats!

Even as the weather started to feel a bit more like a real Minnesota autumn, we spent ample time outdoors. We are having fun working with pumpkins in the Messy Materials Area of the Lower Maka, even weighing them with a giant balance. We worked hard raking up the leaves into huge piles in the front yard and we cleaned out the gardens (eating every last tomato and raspberry, while also preparing the gardens for winter). Of course, we played hard with friends too!

In November we look forward to themes focusing on hibernation, migration and turkeys.

WINTER IS COMING!: Despite the beautiful fall we have had, cold weather is on its way (and it will stick around for a while). We do try to get outdoors daily if weather permits, so it is very important for each child to have a warm jacket, hat, and mittens. . We have found that waterproof mittens really work best. As the snow begins to fall and winter sets in, snow pants and boots will be essential. Also, please be sure your child's change of clothing box contains weather and size appropriate clothes. And, as always, please **LABEL EVERYTHING**. Thanks!



We have started using the back closet to hang up our jackets (with hats and mittens tucked up a sleeve). Please help your child remember to do this as you drop-off in the morning, if the children are indoors, and it would be great if they could practice this skill at home, too. Thanks so much!

-Claire and Lora

**Class
Pictures**

**Nature
News**

**Remembering
Sylvester**

**Music and
Sign Language**

Nature News:

Nature Pictures

October has been an amazing month in nature class exploring trees, different types of animals, and cranberries. In pre-2, students started out the month by learning the difference between wild and domestic animals. The kids showed off their acting skills in a lively game of animal charades and categorized each animal as wild or domestic. Students also had to choose pictures from magazines that represented the two different kinds of animals. We talked about why wild animals would not make good pets.



Trees: We then moved on to a thorough study of Minnesota trees. Students learned to differentiate between deciduous and coniferous trees. We got to know the trees on a more personal level when students were blindfolded and had the opportunity to meet a tree. The kids were divided into partners for this activity. One partner was blindfolded while the other guided him or her around the front yard to a specific tree. After feeling the tree with their hands, the blindfolded partner had to guess which tree they had felt using the memories of what they felt. We made bark rubbings in our nature notebooks and used a dichotomous key to identify a few CCDS trees. We continued on

our tree study by learning about how paper is made and making some of our own! From the paper exploration, we were ready to learn about fall leaves. Together we completed a science experiment that extracted leaf pigments so students could actually see the 3 different pigments responsible for fall foliage. We collected a number of leaves of all different colors and shapes to press in the flower press.

Mammals, reptiles, and birds were next on our list of topics. Students learned to differentiate these three different kinds of animals from one another. For our mammal study, we measured the length of an elephant, the height of a giraffe, and the length of a blue whale. For reptiles we viewed and touched a number of artifacts from the Bell Museum, including an alligator skin and snapping turtle shell. We practiced moving like lizards, snakes, turtles and alligators. Digger the snake, Zeus the tortoise, and Charlie the lizard helped us learn about different kinds of reptiles. In our bird unit, we made pine cone bird feeders for our feathered friends, and spent some time using the binoculars to identify the birds around school.



Cranberries was the final topic of the month. Students had the chance to practice being cranberry farmers. We tested their ability to float and corralled them into a boom in our man-made ponds. Students participated in a cranberry taste test where they ate berries, craisins, and some drank cranberry juice. We also learned to bounce cranberries to test their ripeness.

(Nature news continued)

Pre-1 students learned to differentiate between pets and wild animals. Students learned about the different parts of the tree by creating chalk drawings using outlines of their body. They also helped collect leaves for the flower press. Pre-1 students also had the opportunity to feel the reptile artifacts, practice reptile movement, and meet some of the school reptiles. They also had the opportunity to learn about the cranberry farming, float cranberries and taste.



The toddler class helped collect leaves for leaf pressing and learned the different parts of the tree by creating a large tree drawing. We spent time collecting pumpkins and gourds in the garden. To study reptiles, toddlers were able to meet Zeus, the Greek tortoise, and see the different Bell Museum artifacts.

Upcoming Units: We are about to begin an exciting month exploring the amazing capabilities to withstand harsh winters. Parent involvement is always welcome and appreciated. We also appreciate any artifacts that you would like to share.

-Emily

Remembering Sylvester the Rooster



Our dear friend Sylvester the rooster disappeared at some point on October 23rd. We are unsure whether he was attacked by a predator (fox, hawk, cat), or disappeared for other reasons, but he appears to be gone from our school. Thankfully Sweet Pea is still with us, and though she seems a little out of sorts, she is otherwise in good health.

Sylvester has been an important part of the children's time at Country Day for many years. We have caught worms for him, followed him around the playground, and held him in our laps. He has been with this school since 2004, and was eleven years old which is ancient for a free ranging outdoor chicken. He will be missed by the teachers and students of Country Day.

We have already spoken to many of the children at school about Sylvester, but it's only natural if they have questions or concerns about his disappearance. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me any time.

-Seth



Sign Language and Music with Sylvia

Music

In **Music**, we've had fun singing with the piano, guitar and autoharp. October is a great month to learn songs about colors, autumn and Halloween. One of their favorites is "We See a Pumpkin Patch". In this song the children act out going to the pumpkin patch, getting a pumpkin and carving it into a jack o' lantern. They also love to sing "Steppin on a Raindrop" where we follow the music tempo as we walk around the room. Ask your child about the "Rainbow Song" where the children sing and sign the colors. It's great to see how quickly the children are able to use their sign language in some of the songs that we sing.

Rainbow Song

Red and yellow and pink and green
Purple and orange and blue
I can sing a rainbow,
sing a rainbow,
sing a rainbow too.

Sign Language

In **Sign Language**, the children have been learning signs for colors as they've been talking about autumn leaves. They especially enjoy signing a book about the colors in a rainbow and will be bringing home one of their own that I'm sure they'll want to sign for you. (They love signing without any voice) We continue to review the animal signs and will begin signing numbers in November.

-Sylvia

