

COBWEB

Newsletter

Communicating
the Baltic together
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Sustainable development
Environmental educational materials
Outdoor learning techniques
Latest knowledge
Arts
Friendship between different cultures

Why is learning outdoors important?

Maija Venäläinen

The overall goal of environmental communication is to help people live more environmentally sound and to help individuals and groups begin a self-directed, lifelong learning process towards sustainability. An important part of these processes, for the needed change in understanding, attitude and behavior, are learning activities taken place outdoors

The importance of outdoor learning is today widely acknowledged. The recent studies have proven that the outdoor education have positive health effects. Activities and learning environments outdoors have among other things shown to reduce stress levels, contribute to less overweight, prevent brittle-bone disease and reduce concentration problems. Also in natural environments children have noticed to play more social games and discuss richer about different subjects than in ready build environments.

All these are up most important in paving way to better learning results via diverse learning strategies. According to the theory of biophilia these good

results can be understood via our born, genetic tendency to be in contact with our natural environment. Theory connecting brain research, development psychology and research on primate behavior explains that natural environment helps us to create emotions, deep in our brain structure, connected to our senses of affection, belonging to a place, feeling safety, personal identity and status and also exploring and discovery. The importance of touching people's feelings and senses is a well known fact among environmental interpreters. The facts and loose observations about environment are hard to remember but with the right feeling it is possible to get the gained understanding grow to a value.

In Central-Baltic region the Nature Schools are one of the key actors offering these excellent learning opportunities. Project COBWEB's second Expert Forum took place in Nynäshamn Nature School in Sweden. With this Newsletter we are happy to share some of the highlights of the Forum with you. Let them encourage you to spend more time outdoors in natural environments.

...natural environment helps us to create emotions connected to our senses of affection, belonging to a place and feeling safety...



Expert Forum in Nynäshamn, Sweden 15.-18.3.2010

Photos: Robert Lättman



"The Nature School is neither a building nor a place; it is a method of learning."

Expert Forum participants are learning to build common understanding about the challenges and solutions for sustainable lifestyle in the Baltic area.

How far can we reach? The sustainable future lies with our own ability to educate children and adults to take responsibility for the common environment. Tons of information contributes kilos of knowledge, hectos of wisdom but only grams of change. By creating models for cross-border cooperation we can produce programs and materials which are based on the latest knowledge of environmental and sustainability issues and effective environmental communication but also touching to people's feelings and senses.



Contact with nature gives us a feeling of nature and understanding of ecosystems, which is the foundation where we can build the learning of sustainable development and lifestyle.



Lena Kautsky:
**"Why do we treat
 the Baltic Sea so badly?"**
 - The pollution doesn't
 disappear even though we
 can't see under the surface.

Professor Lena Kautsky from Department of Botany at Stockholm university gave a presentation about the unique brackish water ecosystem and the fascinating life of the Baltic Sea. Prof. Kautsky also presented a set of local examples on what can be done to improve conditions in shallow coastal areas and bays as well as examples of experiments and small field studies that can be performed with students.



Dr Anders Szczepanski from the Outdoor Environmental Education Centre at the University of Linköping used hula-hoops to illustrate how the outdoor education is in the center of the work of learning towards sustainable development. Through outdoor activities our mental landscape meets the landscape outdoors and they together form a "learnscape" where the health of the environment, human health, personal development and environmental education are all present.



The eco-municipality of Nynäshamn takes the environment and well-being seriously. Among other advanced solutions, the sewage water of Nynäshamn runs from treatment plant through artificial wetland Alhagen before ending up to the sea, removing almost all the phosphorus. At the same time the wetland acts as a recreation area for citizens and provides an important learning environment for Nature School programs.



Cobweb materials

Salmon Spawning game

Salmon is one of the most important species for human life in the whole Baltic area. Salmon has great economical and cultural importance all over the Baltic catchment area. The fact remains that salmon populations of the Baltic have suffered a lot from human activities during the last century and the amount of natural born salmon has reduced dramatically.

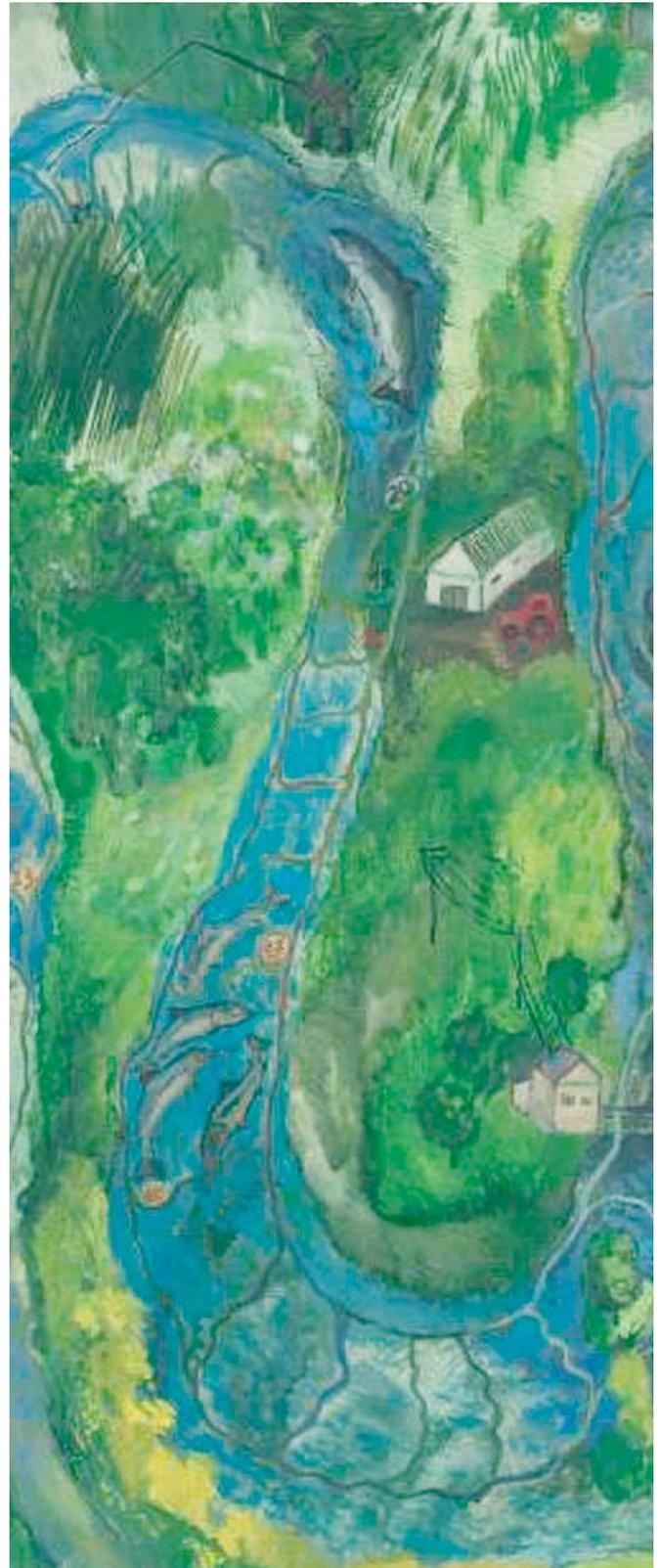
The Salmon Spawning Game is about life of salmon and how do they manage to get from the sea to spawning sites in river environment full of man-made obstacles, human activities and ecological interactions. The game is made by Natural History Museum of Latvia in co-operation with Riga Natural Sciences School and Youth Environmental Club 11. The original idea for the game comes from young people inspired by Salmon Ludis, the main actor of practical courses for children during the Baltic Sea exhibition in Natural History Museum of Latvia. The artistic work is done by Ilze Aulmane.

The game offers a practical and fun way to explore human impact and also ecological interactions in aquatic environment. It highlights the interrelation of the sea and its drainage basin and how do we impact the ecological balance of the sea also far away from the coastal zone. Maintaining the ecosystem services offered by the complex network of the sea and its tributaries needs careful planning of human activities all over the Baltic catchment area.

Geological learning materials

Institute of Geology at Tallinn University of Technology has created E-learning materials about Earth's internal structure and tectonic processes and about the geological evolution of the Baltic Sea.

The materials are available in Estonian at www.geoeducation.info/cobweb/



*A part of the Salmon game.
Artistic work: Ilze Aulmane*



**Cobweb Expert Forum participants
from Estonia, Finland, Latvia and Sweden**

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Steering Group * **Chair** Mr Markku Loiskekoski, Hyria Education Ltd * **Other members** * Ms Kaisa Pajanen, City of Helsinki * Ms Riitta Pulkkinen, City of Espoo * Ms Tuovi Kurttio, Helsinki Metropolitan Area Recycling Centre * Mr Peep Pobbull, City of Tallinn * Mr Alvar Soesoo, Institute of Geology at Tallinn University of Tehcnology * Mr Ivar Puura, University of Tartu * Mr Robert Oetjen, Tartu Environmental Education Centre * Ms Guna Bagrade, Latvia Natural History Museum * Ms Tiina Keinänen, Representative of the Joint Technical Secretariat

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