The Sun is Shining, the Birds are Singing...

The past month has been very busy for ECOEE. Since the last newsletter, we learned mountaineering practices and backpacked in the Ansel Adams Wilderness Area of the Sierra Nevada mountain range, stayed at Summit Adventure in Bass Lake, California, spent a week as cabin leaders at the Los Angeles County Outdoor Science School in Malibu, stayed at San Diego State University, traveled into Baja California, Mexico where we spent two weeks exploring the Bahia de Los Angeles area and sea kayaking in the Sea of Cortez.

Upon our departure for Baja California, we came upon the realization that the semester was nearly over—the home stretch was only a few weeks away. Determined to make the most of the time that remained, we had a truly wonderful time enjoying the warm sun, the salty waters, and the abundance of wildlife.

As you read the following articles, we hope you enjoy reading about the many learning experiences we have encountered as we progressed through the past weeks. Thank you once again for your support in our journey.

“The sun is shining, the birds are singing; it’s a great day to be alive.” - Doc Lupton

~ Publications & Promotions Committee

The following articles are written by the students of ECOEE 2013. The Publications and Promotions Committee compiles the entries; how they are written and any errors are at the fault of the writer.

An Excerpt From Our Journal

“Grown’ with the Flow”
Written 10/26/13

“A tree will never simply grow, if it is always left alone
The wind, the rain, and great sunshine help its friend grow with time
Year after year the tree stands tall, always trying not to fall
Breaking through rocks with roots running deep, not one person can make the tree weep
For you see the tree can’t weep when it endured all that you see
Standing tall its reached the top, strong and firm now ready to flop
Patiently waiting, the tree thanks all, happy to lived, but happy to fall
Growing was great and the tree couldn’t wait, to start all over because growing was great.”

Like the tree, each group member needs not just their own determination but also they need the help from others, as the tree needs rain, wind, and the sun. Here on ECOEE we’ve endured much, growing strong like the tree and deep like its roots, we are building a solid foundation for the rest of our lives. As we continue to live and grow, accomplish goals, and pursue dreams we’ll hopefully smile with great satisfaction of our lives. Like the tree, I hope we see that growing is great and it will make us better human beings.

“Life’s what you make it, so let’s make it right.” -Miley Cyrus

~ Kevin Williams
Adventures with 5th Graders

Remembering back to 5th grade I remember sitting in different classes being told all about my different subjects and being expected to memorize all the information and then regurgitate it all for tests later. This seems to be the common way to teach students here in the U.S. But for some schools in the L.A. area this is not so. Schools will find ways to gain money either through grants or through the students paying for their own way to attend a program called LACOSS.

LACOSS is an outdoor education school that has two locations in the L.A. area and invites schools and parents to send their students for an educational experience that should not be passed up. When the students attend LACOSS they are able to get a whole new experience with the outdoor world. When the students first begin their 5 day adventure here they get assigned to a teacher from LACOSS who will then become their permanent instructor. The instructors teach the students on subjects in outdoor education ranging from geology, plant life, and the water cycle all the way to birds, mammals, and creatures of the deep blue sea.

During our stay at LACOSS we got the privilege to spend the 5 days of that school week in the different cabins that the kids would be living in as Cabin Leaders. As Cabin Leaders we spent all day taking care of the kids as well as following them around during their different lessons. When we were with the instructors we watched as the instructors taught the kids with hands on methods to get the students fully involved with subjects as well as the environment around them. Subjects like geology were taught in settings were different types of rocks could be found and the kids would be able to pick them up and actually feel and see how they were shaped and formed. And while they may have been teaching one subject, the unpredictability of nature allows for the chance of new and exciting things to happen to the classes. A time that was spent learning about shrubs and plants on a mountain side may have a small lesson tossed in about the dolphins that could be seen off in the ocean swimming. With this available the students are able to experience nature in person and not just through a text book or PowerPoint.

When we were not attending the lessons with the students, the cabin leaders would make sure that the students made sure to do their homework and get ready for dinner when it was time. This was challenging for some and easy for others. But while we did this you could see how the students would point out different things that they saw and learned about during the lessons they were a part of. With these kinds of experiences it was apparent that the style of teaching LACOSS imprinted onto the students of the L.A. area allowed for them to really memorize and understand what they were being taught about the outdoor world.

~ Kyle Pickett

Chores in the Outdoors

For the Travel Workshop course each one of us in the group has a “chore” for the day and it alternates daily throughout the whole semester. There are many chores; there is a chef for the day, a sidekick, dessert person, water person, three cleaners, vans and trailers person, someone who writes in the journal, fire and light person, and tarp and shelter person. If a certain chore isn’t needed for that day like, tarp and shelter is only needed when rainy, windy, or really hot and sunny, that person can help with other chores. Everyone has a list of who does what on each day and this list is also taped on the inside of the back trailer door for easy access, so there are no excuses for those who lost their list. Each individual is responsible for their chore that day and when it’s forgotten or not done right they are quickly informed by the other group members who are picking up their slack.

Being chef is one of the toughest chores because they’re responsible for making great meals for the group that day. This is where you learn who’s picky and who’s not, who has an endless pit and who gets full on very little, and also who’s vegetarian and who’s not. So once you figure all of those in then you need to make sure it’s nutritional, this seems like a simple task but once one has been chef for the day they know it’s not simple at all. One lesson that has been learned here on ECOEE 2013 is that Dutch oven cooking is very yummy but it takes way too long. We have definitely learned to become more efficient with our cooking and in many other areas as well.

One of my favorite meals was definitely a dinner that we had recently in Bahia de Los Angeles when we got back to Casa Azul from sea kayaking. The Leaders of The Week decided to cook us dinner and they made delicious hamburgers, it was very good. Francisco (our instructor there) shared with us his words of wisdom, “If you love your group then feed them good food”. He shared this with us because our meals so far that week had not been good at all. Our meals have improved a little bit since then and hopefully they will continue to improve!

~ Shayla Hill

“Any glimpse into the glimpse the life of an animal quickens our own and makes it so much the larger and better in every way.”

John Muir
Learning to Lead

School on the road is by far the best educational experience I have had yet in my life. Reading books about group development, leadership, and group facilitation makes a lot more sense when you’re able to see and apply what you have learned to real life situations at hand. Not only are we learning from books, we are learning responsibilities from our daily chores such as: cooking, cleaning, vehicle maintenance, and other responsibilities that aid in our expedition. All these lessons learned carry over into life even after our ECOEE experience. Understanding how to work with and communicate effectively with others is a crucial skill needed in the workplace, family setting, and relationships in general. After getting off the river in Canada the group had problems transitioning and adjusting to our daily chores and responsibilities. We slowly began to improve as the weeks carried on but not to the degree that we wanted to. Once we got to California and got up into the Sierra Mountains, lessons and ideas from inside our manuals were put into play. Changing the way we ran our debriefs and how they were facilitated, changed the way the group thought about things and resulted in positive behavior change. Discussing positive qualities and emotions allowed the group to view our experience and group mates in a more positive light. This positive influence plus the power of the mountains carried over as we got out of the mountains and into the front country. The group began to show more togetherness, enthusiasm, and enjoyment working together on daily duties and responsibilities. As we continue to work and grow together we will become more efficient and closer to reaching our goal of hitting the performing stage, where we would run like a single, well-oiled machine. This stronger sense of togetherness will also help us help one another become better outdoor leaders as we learn, demonstrate, and apply skills and duties necessary to help the expedition run more smoothly.

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader.” –John Quincy Adams

~ Kevin Williams

John Muir’s Perspective

Many great men have had an impact on recreation and leisure. They have developed ways for individuals and groups to enjoy themselves through various activities. Without their impact the world would be less enjoyable. Throughout the semester we have had the privilege to visit National Parks. One man that has had a great influence on my personal recreation and leisure experience is John Muir.

“The mountain winds, like the dew and rain, sunshine and snow, are measured and bestowed with love on the forests to develop their strength and beauty”, John Muir wrote. Muir’s passion for life in the woods still echoes through the lands. Miracles subside in nature and if you open yourself to them you will be touched and understanding. One can experience the beauty through a hike, backpacking, biking, paddling, or even just sitting on a bench in the pristine wilderness. The intrinsic value of nature represents freedom, love, adventure, wilderness, health, history, and passion. Don’t think of the negative, but rather, think of the positive. Feel the brisk wind touch your face, the smell of pine, and the varying tones of trees. Listen to the music of the forest and realize why we must protect the natural environment. From efforts to preserve Yosemite Valley, the Grand Canyon, to Sequoia National Park, his impact is still being read and discussed. During his lifetime he was a significant figure as he vehemently opposed exploitation of natural resources at a time when many believed the resources of the earth were infinite.

John Muir has greatly impacted my life in the essence of leisure, recreation, along with personal morals and values. Without his efforts to protect natural beauty I would have not been able to experience Yosemite for all its brilliance nor make our next stop at Grand Canyon National Park. Where would the United States be without Muir, how would my life be different?

“Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul alike,” John Muir stated.

~ Elizabeth Flesher

Guess Who...

1. Has a laugh that sounds like a California gull
2. Collected a bunch of shells only to discover they couldn’t keep them? (hint: there are two culprits)
3. Was stung by a stingray
4. Left their passport in the wrong van
5. Danced like a robot during his talent show performance
6. Nearly had their backpack and its contents destroyed
7. Wore flip-flops on a desert hike
8. Was lost in the Ansel Adams Wilderness
9. Who wanted to being Francisco, our guide and instructor while in Baja California, to the disco
10. Asked if a seal was running when he noticed something moving across a faraway beach

Answers on Last Page
Aztec Adventures

Aztec Adventures based out of beautiful San Diego State University is fairly similar to our own Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration (RP TA) department back home at Western Illinois University. Jim Lustig, a cohort of our own Jeff Tindall also hails from the Wilderness Education Association; for this reason, our two programs are rooted in the same solid foundations of administrative style.

The one major difference between our two fantastic programs is the scale and range of activities that are presented to students throughout the course of the semester. Aztec Adventures offers anything and everything under the sun, including: Backpacking, camping, rock climbing, canoeing, snowboarding, sea kayaking, Baja California adventures, and opportunities in outdoor leadership.

As well as offering a wide variety of programs for students to delve into throughout the semester, in a summer course, or over spring break; Aztec Adventures is large enough in the size of operation to have the opportunity to employ student workers who lead weekend expeditions throughout the mountainous west. These student workers are fortunate enough to be able to do and spread the joy of what they love, all while getting valuable experience, and making a little extra cash. This experiential learning for student instructors is a cornerstone of the WEA curriculum, and further demonstrates the connection between WIU’s and SDSU’s parks and recreation programs.

One of the major differences between our two programs is the size of the operation itself. San Diego State University simply operates on a much larger scale. Both the attendance and budget of their parks and recreation department vastly exceed that of Western Illinois University. For example; every year the student association at SDSU gives Aztec Adventures $110,000 subsidy for operations expenses. This money is available to Aztec Adventures because of the huge numbers in attendance they pull consistently year after year during weekend, spring break, and summer courses.

Both Aztec Adventures and WIU’s RPTA department offer a spectacular array of curriculum for their respective students. Their tourism administration programs offer a great deal of structure and educational opportunities for a wide range of students. The Wilderness Education Association is a very strong program to be rooted in, and it has been a pleasure to be able to learn the ways of both Jim Lustig, and Jeff Tindall.  

~ Tyler Schrapf

Love What You Do and Do What You Love

Imagine a life getting paid to do what you love. A life going from being a rock climber who lives out of your van to owning and running your own outdoor adventure agency; such as Jason from Jackson Hole Wildlife Safari. Or maybe teaching adventure courses is not something you could see yourself doing; instead you might like to just attend one of these sessions. You could take some courses at NOLS; maybe take a semester long course in Alaska. Or maybe you are looking for a one day adventure at Yellowstone, in that case Jason would be your man. It is easy to see why adventure businesses are flourishing; they draw all kinds of people from rich/poor, old/young, novices/experts, men/women. Now this all sounds like fun and games. I mean what could possibly be hard about going into the outdoors and having adventures every day? The answer is simple, as ECOEE 2013 has learned, because adventure recreation businesses are still just that; businesses. They have to deal with costumers and how to secure them as well as with costs, weather, and competition. Another large aspect of the adventure business is being able to actually plan out your trips. Our ECOEE group especially knows how rough this is as part of one of our core classes has us planning our own 10 day trip plan; and let me tell you it is no easy feat. If is has shown us anything it is that the businesses would not be working without hard work and a lot of man hours. So if you love the outdoors take a trip, enjoy what adventure programs have to offer. Go on a NOLS adventure, take an amazing trip through Yellowstone with Jackson Hole Wildlife Safari, send a troubled loved one to Red Cliff Ascent, or even attend San Diego State University and take advantage of their Aztec Adventure courses. Get out there and do it, and maybe you will enjoy it so much a new passion will be born and a new business can be started.

~ Cassandra Roy

“Until he extends his circle of compassion to include all living things, man will not himself find peace.”

Albert Schweitzer
Learning from Paul

Throughout the expedition we are responsible for giving our outdoor education lessons, with our introductions in Manitoba, Canada and then the closing lessons in Baja California. Throughout the United States the body of our material and teachable moments to the group about specific ideas that are within our topic are presented. For instance, my topic is plants, flowering, cacti, and shrubs. Our group went to LACOSS, which stands for Los Angeles County Outdoor Science School, for a week before we headed to Baja California. LACOSS is a school that provides outdoor scientific school teaching to fifth and sixth graders in the outdoors.

When we were there, each person was paired up with a naturalist, which is outdoor science teacher; but some of us had the same naturalist. Each day we went somewhere different around the property of school, and the kids were taught a different topic each day by the naturalist. One of the days that I really gained a lot of knowledge from was when we went to top Ice Cream Mountain to learn about plants. This field trip provided me a great opportunity to have a chance to teach a miniature lesson to my group of kids. My naturalist, Paul, had done a really good job at teaching, and the way he would engage with kids when he would be teaching was excellent. For example, he would ask questions to kids and not expect them to have the right answer, but giving them chance to think about it, he would gauge the kids on how much they knew at that point. In addition, another way was keeping them on task and not having them get distracted or lose interest. Which was great teaching style I really enjoyed; so when I gave my miniature lesson which was indentifying the parts of a cactus. So I started off with asking questions to the kids of what they thought the different parts were. Then from that point they would say the term and then I would have them repeat it back to me so I knew they were listening and that could retain information more by saying it out loud.

In conclusion I enjoyed giving my lesson and interacting with the kids by asking questions and teaching them the parts of the cactus. As a result of my time at LACOSS, I really gained a lot of insight about different teaching styles, and that as outdoor science teacher it takes time to feel comfortable and confident about topic that you might have to teach. But the main thing to remember when feeling uncomfortable is to be enthusiastic and make it enjoyable for the students no matter what. A result this school has given me an experience that follows into one of the courses that we are taking on ECOEE which is RPTA 444- Outdoor Education.

~ Emily Chathas

What Exactly is This?

Do you remember the story about the turtle in the hare? While the hare was much faster than the turtle, in the end the turtle proved victorious. How exactly does a hare loose to a turtle? I have no idea but the story makes a connection to us in some form or another. When I read the story I think about patience and how important it is to us as a species. Patience is something we cannot physically touch, but it is a major part of our being. When you are behind a slower driver on the road, and you are running late to work, or prior obligation how much patience do you really have? Anyone can say they have a lot of patience, but how much patience do you have if you are in a waiting room in a doctor’s office? How about when you are stuck at a cash register and your credit card won’t scan? How fast does one run out of patience in times of minor stress like these? I know that on some days I lose my patience faster than others. I don’t know why this is the case but it just happens. Patience in the outdoors isn’t much different.

~ Quinn Moore

Quotes from Our Journey

“One intrepid climber discovers that sometimes the journey is the destination.”

~ Robert Earle Howells

“Hope is the thing with feathers that perches on the soul.”

~ Emily Dickenson
To Touch A Heart

Our group came together in January 2013. It was during this first month that we all choose our topics that we would be teaching over our semester long expedition. One of these topics was for our interpretation. They ranged from water, to predator and prey, to how a place got named, to environmental issues, to indige- nous people and legends. All 12 of us choose one, some before we even knew what giving an interpreta- tion meant. I choose to do mine on “how this place got its name”. I remember thinking, “Oh how awesome, I can research how each place got its name and then just give a quick lecture to everyone.” I could not have been more wrong; little did I know that giving an interpretation is so much more than just giving facts.

Through Jeff, Shane, and Francisco’s lesson’s I learned that interpretation is our view on a certain subject. It is within this our views that we must tell a story, but not just any story, one that will make them think as well as feel. Imagine trying to take a subject and a group of 13 people, each different and unique in their per- sonal beliefs and trying to make them feel for something that they might not even know about. This was our mission, some accomplished it and some did not. But the im- portant thing that we all learned is that less- ons shouldn’t only make you use your brain instead it should trigger ones emotion as well.

As our expedition moved from Canada, to the west, to Baja California we all got the chance to attend professional interpretations at various state parks, such as Yellowstone and the Badlands. It was at these talks that our group once again learned the do’s and don’ts of giving our own talks. I have discovered though that the best way to learn is through doing, and it really shows in the difference from our Canada interpretations and our Baja California Inter- pretations.

~ Cassandra Roy

“Life is a series of surprises.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Life on the Coasts of Baja California

During our time down in sunny Baja California our group was able to attend a very special conference that was being held in the museum in the town of Bahia de Los Angeles. This con- ference had gathered many intelligent and inspiring individuals who represented groups and organizations who wanted to help in some way shape or for the natural world of Baja Cali- fornia. The main speaker of the conference was a professor from California named Daniel An- derson. Professor Anderson talked about and taught about the brown pelican and how and why it had become an endangered animal. His inspiring talk was able to inform the audience of the importance of the birds as well as motiv- ate us to continue preserving them and mak- ing sure that they do not become endangered again. Another one of the main speakers that attended the conference was a man who was there to talk about the migration patterns of the sea turtles that came to Baja California. The man talked about how his group had tracked a turtle for 15 years and discovered that the turtle migrated all the way to Japan from the coasts of Baja California. With this he talked about the importance of keeping these magnificent animals alive and safe in the ocean by keeping the beach- es and oceans clean so the very few young turtles that make it past the beach they are born at can make the migration to Japan and back.

Being able to visit this conference we were able to learn from many different people about the importance the coast of Baja California was to not only the wild life but to the locals as well. Many people there are fisherman and make their living off of the Sea of Cortez as well as the Pa- cific Ocean. When the animals of the sea are affected by the depleting populations of birds and fish, they also lose a valuable part of their life. The conference also had a woman who talked about the importance of teaching the children of why these animals are so important.

With that education, it will be able to help pre- serve and protect the animals of the Baja Cali- fornia area.

~ Kyle Pickett

Quotes from Our Journey

“Everything has its own perfection, be it higher or lower in the scale of things.”

~ John Henry Newman

“The most beautiful and most profound emotion we experience is the sensation of the mystical.”

~ Albert Einstein
The Conclusion of the Backcountry

We have just returned from Baja California, Mexico and concluded our final backcountry experience on our expedition and nearly completed all of the Interpretation lesson we had been planning since the Spring. Prior to the presentations we had visited the Bay of Los Angeles museum for presentations for an entire day, and after our discussion we discussed how all of the presentations had lacked the interpretive qualities dealing with the cultural and environmental resources. Our guide in Baja California, Francisco, stressed the importance of us training to become outdoor leaders in being able to reach your audience by engaging their minds dealing with the information were sharing and then connecting it to their hearts causing them to care about the place or resource you are discussing. Lesson taught by group members included interpretive presentations talking about the historical great explorations of Hernán Cortés resulting in the naming of the Sea of Cortez, the predator-prey relationship between Killer Whales, the importance of the Cochimi indigenous people in the region and their cave paintings that have been left behind till now, and more. Certain group members were able to do a good job at the difficult craft of Interpretation, to where even though lessons have concluded I will attempt to practice interpretation for the rest of my life because being a good story-teller is a valuable quality. Throughout the history of oral communication and to this day by being great at story-telling you can change people views and their lives personally. I know that my life has been impacted greatly by the lessons taught through stories by elders. The only interpretation left to be completed is mine, which is the multimedia presentation of our expedition and carries lots of importance because it will be screened at the banquet put on YouTube, and shared with many people. Thank you for your donations it has helped us greatly and you still have another newsletter coming your way!

~ Norris Andriuskevicius

Why We Adventure

While sitting on top of the granite rocks in the Ansel Adams Wilderness one afternoon, Jeff asked us why people go climbing. We pondered this question for a few days and we had many answers, even after we climbed up the rocks ourselves. Why do we adventure, do risky things, put ourselves face-to-face with our fears? Adventure recreation programs work with this question on a daily basis. To some, it all boils down to making a difference in another’s life.

Summit Adventure, a nonprofit in Bass Lake, California, provides wilderness and adventure programs for teens, college students, and adults. Their courses range from summer programs to semester programs to international trips and they are entirely interested in the experiences that change someone for the better. As Tom Smith, the Executive Director, explained, Summit Adventure is about fabricating challenging experiences so that participants can grow; and to clarify, fabrication is not a negative concept here. By participating, an individual is accepting the challenge to embrace the adventure-based, service oriented experience Summit Adventure courses offer. According to Summit Adventure, making a difference in another’s life is why they provide their programs.

On the southern end of the Sierra Nevada resides Aztec Adventures, the adventure recreation and wilderness outing wing of Aztec Recreation at San Diego State University. When talking with Jim Lustig, the Outdoor Program Coordinator, he emphasizes that many organizations talk about the “whats” and “hows” of their programs but few actually talk about why they do what they do. Just like Summit Adventure, Aztec Adventures strives to make a difference in the many students who register for the multitude of programs occurring each weekend and throughout the week. Jim explains that “people don’t buy what you do; they buy why you do it.”

As we near the end of our semester-long journey, we realize how much we have changed since the beginning, how much ECOEE has made a difference in our lives. In this life full of dangers, risks, and struggle, why do we adventure? We adventure so that we too can learn how to make a difference in others.

~ Andrew Busker
Paddling in the Wind

Paddling 60 plus miles of remote desert coastline is not a typical day for many students back at Western Illinois University. Kayaking to distant locations, checking gear and equipment such as Paddles, sprays, skirts, and personal flotation devices. It was just another day of planning, making the right decisions, and looking out for the group. Baja California, Mexico was an experience that challenged the way I perceive different leadership styles, different ways to teach, and understanding the risk involved when making weather condition decisions. Each day was designed to give each expedition member the responsibility to increase their skills and experience. The first thing when arriving to Baja California, was learning the skills to paddle in a kayak. Francisco, our instructor was a great help in coordinating lessons for the expedition group. Not only were many of these skills transferable, but were used during our canoe expedition.

These skills were lessons that people taught during the Canadian backcountry portion. Skills, such as planning a route, navigating on the water, setting up camp and planning and cooking meals. All skills, techniques, and methods that are transferable in any situation. Along the way, Jeff and Francisco gave us the opportunity to continue our expedition, but of course with a twist. Jeff and Francisco left the group to give the lows the opportunity to lead the group in kayaking, and get back across to Casa Azul in the morning. This gave the low’s time to decide on different outside sources as well as to reflect and intergrade into the group. At the end of the two week period, group members were able to maximize their independence and decision making as the leaders of the week wanted to acquire confidence and skills for each group member could understand the concepts.

Much of Baja California, was working on making the difference. The difference in people’s lives, the difference to work on universal concepts to not only better each group member, but to become a better leader, student, friend, and family member.

~ Rogelio Hernandez

Our Day at the Museum

During our backcountry Baja California expedition ECOEE ran into yet another plot twist as we were stranded at Casa Azul for 4 days waiting for the wind to die down in anticipation of our kayaking adventure that we have been patiently waiting for all semester. Luckily enough for us, in Bahia de Los Angeles, a small town of ~1,000 people, there was a major meeting of the minds taking place at the museo de cultura y historia. Presentations from a wide array of ecologists were presented, ranging from kelp harvesting, to the preservation of Brown Pelicans and the study of DDE over the past 40 years.

The ecological presentations gave unique perspective into the development of how outdoor recreation will occur in Baja California in the years to come. Presently, Mexican multi-billionaire Carlos Slim has major plans to outfit the coastal regions of the peninsula with the necessary infrastructure to support a major tourist industry. From an ecological perspective however, the impact of a large influx of tourists would be disastrous for the many endemic organisms that live in the Sea of Cortez. An endemic species, simply put, is a species of animal that is found in only one area of the world. For the Sea of Cortez there are two kinds of coral that are only present in this region of the world. By attending this day long seminar, the awareness of our expedition was greatly raised on the impact of tourism on a given area.

Presently, it is the aim of a plethora of non-government agencies within Mexico to work with their federal government in order to create political pathways to slow down or stop the development of this potentially massive industry.

However, the towns that line the Sea of Cortez are currently in a rough transition period between mining and Industrial development, moving towards a scarily uncertain period of development. Without the implementation of a tourist industry, the towns lining the gulf could be forced into disbanding. As always, there must be a delicate balance between human development and environmental sustainability. Thus, it is the job of people like those who presented at the museum in Bay of L.A., and ECOEE members alike, to weigh the pros and cons of such heavy decisions.

~ Tyler Schrapf

Quotes from Our Journey

“Wonder is the beginning of wisdom.”
~ Greek proverb

“Treat the earth well. It was not given to you by your parents. You are only borrowing it from your children.”
~ Kenyan Proverb
It’s Not the Critic Who Counts

“It’s not the critic who counts. Not the man who points out where the strong man stumbled or where the doer of great deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena. Whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood. Who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again. And who, while daring greatly, spends himself in a worthy cause so that his place may never be among those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.” -Theodore Roosevelt

We reached our last mode of travel in Baja California—sea kayaking. Sitting on the beach with our feet in the sand, waves brushing the shore and stirring up the sea as the tide rises and falls we sit with the sun on our faces. We have come a long way as a group; from canoeing, climbing, rappelling, backpacking and now sea kayaking. We have learned many different travel modes, but the most important thing is how we have grown and changed as individuals.

Becoming an outdoor leader and leading a group is no easy task. What makes an overall successful outdoor leader isn’t just one personal trait or one skill. What does it take to make a leader? Decision making and problems solving, outdoor living, planning and logistics, risk management, leadership, environmental integration, and education are all things we have learned and are putting into practice.

According to our manual leadership is “the ability to accurately self-assess as well as those essential skills concerning or involving relationships between people; the ability to effectively implement a decision.” Understanding and working with different individuals takes patience and love. Every day you have to strive to do your best and not fall into group norms. Jeff taught us about a saying called “blazing the trail”, which means take the lead and exceed.

Every day you have a choice either you can step up and make a difference by being a leader. Or you can sit and wait for orders to be given and be a follower. Every day is a new day and each day you have a chance to change, try new things, and grow. “The way to do is to be.” -Lao Tzu

~ Elizabeth Flesher

Guess Who Answers… The ECOEE Crew

Emily was known as the Queen on the Gulls while in Baja California

Liz & Shayla disobeyed Leave No Trace principles

Norris did the Stingray Stomp instead of the Stingray Shuffle

Cassie could have been detained at the border

Tyler sang the Ratlin Bog during the talent show

Quinn’s backpack was partially ran over by Jeff’s van

Andrew forgot to change into his hiking boots

Rogelio was only 7 minutes from camp before being lost

Kevin asked Francisco to the disco

Kyle asked if that was a seal running across the beach