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Students Study Ecological Impacts in OA Summer Class

By Jennifer Wake

Future Orinda Academy (OA) junior Annika Hagelin has always been interested in environmental issues. When she signed up for OA's Ecology of the San Francisco Bay Area summer class, she liked that it would get her outdoors. She got out, all right, and then some.

Since beginning the course on June 22, Hagelin and other students in the summer ecology course have gone to Pt. Reyes, Fitzgerald Marine Reserve, Mt. Diablo, The Marine Mammal Center, Muir Woods, as well as Alameda and Fremont to the Bay.

Course instructor Vicky Guarracino - who taught environmental science, earth science and middle school math at OA for seven years - chose these locals because they were so vastly different from each other.

"We went to Pt. Reyes to not only talk about the ever changing geology of our area by experiencing walking on the San Andreas fault, but to also talk about how these changes have influenced the soil, the plants and the animals that call Pt.

Reyes home," she said. "We went tide pooling in Fitzgerald

Marine Reserve to do a species account of the area. We created one meter by one meter plots and took an account of all the species in that plot. We wanted to check the levels of biodiversity."

Guarracino hoped to impart to students that humans are a part of the ecosystem, not merely living in it. "We play a part in not only the productivity but the ever present destruction of our ecosystem," she said.

Hagelin enjoyed learning about plant life along the Oakland Estuary in Alameda, and was surprised when she saw the San Andreas Fault Zone up close. "You could see so dramatically where the land has moved," she said. "It's always interesting to know more about what is being done and what needs to be done to protect these areas."

For Guarracino, it's important for us all to know our role and understand what surrounds us, so our impact is less severe. "If we understand and make connections to our surroundings, we will be less likely to destroy it, and find ways to conserve it."

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