

TROUT

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Chicago Area Students Ace “Trout in the Classroom” Conservation Program

What has two antennae, three tails, two eyes and six legs? If you answered a sci-fi alien space invader, you are wrong. However, if you correctly identified a mayfly or damselfly, you are probably either an avid fly angler or your son or daughter recently participated in the TU Oak Brook chapter “Trout in the Classroom” conservation program during the 2015-16 school year across 10 Chicago western and south suburban middle and high schools.

“Trout in the Classroom” started 20 years ago as a national TU grass roots environmental education program in which students in grades K-12 learn to raise trout from eggs to fry, monitor tank water quality, engage in stream habitat study, learn to appreciate water resources, begin to foster a conservation ethic, and grow to understand ecosystems. Most programs end the year by releasing their trout in a state-approved stream near the school or within a nearby coldwater watershed.

The Oak Brook TIC program requires a standard 55-gallon tank setup, filter system, chiller, water pump and gravel. The program is licensed by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and each individual school and teacher is permitted by the state to rear trout. However, they are barred from having any other plants or fish in the tank, for fear of potential contamination. The brown trout eggs and food are provided by the IDNR at no cost. The average cost to set up a program is approximately \$1,200, which is covered by the Oak Brook TU chapter’s conservation and education budget. During the year each teacher tailors the program to fit their curricular needs. Therefore, each program is unique.

“The beauty of the TIC program is its flexibility for each teacher,” said Marvin Strauch, Oak Brook TU youth education director. “We have had participating school programs ranging from 4th grade through 12th grade AP Biology. However, right now, most of our programs are in 6th through 8th grades. Personally, I think that is the sweet spot for our program. The students are far enough along in their education to understand what we are presenting.”



Roosevelt Middle School Aces Trout Class



On Tuesday, May 3, 2016, 42 students from Mr. Cory Kadlec’s Roosevelt Middle School seventh-grade science class concluded their six-month TIC program with the release of over 70 brown trout fingerlings in a coldwater spring creek near Rockford, Ill.

The 42 Roosevelt seventh graders represented Mr. Kadlec’s “Trout Team”—those students who volunteered out of his 190 students to personally take responsibility for raising the brown trout from eggs to fry

to their final “hands on” streamside release.

According to Mr. Kadlec, “The most important lessons provided by the program are: nature is accessible; middle school students can be interested in the exciting world of Life Science; they can be advocates for coldwater fisheries now and into the future; and being involved with trout and other people who care about coldwater fisheries can be inspiring and a lot of fun.”

For Mr. Kadlec, this year marked his seventh consecutive year integrating the program into his science curriculum, which included an April day when Minnesota entomologist Dean Hansen brought his “live bug” collection for his students to hold, inspect and identify by species.

“As Trout Unlimited leaders, we know that the future of our continued success is the next generation of conservation stewards we inspire to take care of our rivers and streams long after we are gone,” said Mr. Strauch, Youth Education Director. “And our Trout in the Classroom is one of the three youth education programs Oak Brook TU supports along with our annual Youth Fly Fishing Classes and summer Illinois Youth Conservation and Fly Fishing Camp.”