

# Oak Hammock Ecovan pays visit to St. Laurent School

By Jeff Ward

Students at St. Laurent School got a hands on lesson in the environment, ecology and wildlife last week when the Oak Hammock Marsh Ecovan paid them a visit.

The Ecovan is a mobile educational facility packed to the brim with hands on learning, and staffed by two Oak Hammock Marsh interpreters to provide a full day worth of learning to students at the school. The visit took place on March 14 and was sponsored by the West Interlake Watershed Conservation District (WIWCD) — based out of Lundar — who cover the full cost of the visit. The learning is catered to all ages and grade levels from kindergarten to Grade 12 and features presentations like Creatures of the Night, Reptiles and Amphibians, World of Wetlands, Wacky Weather, Plant Ecology and many more.

St. Laurent School principal David Halldorson said that the school has participated in the Ecovan before and that both students and teachers love the interactive nature of the learning provided.

"Anytime you can get the students engaged is a great thing, and we have a lot of students here that spend a lot of time outdoors so they're really interested in this stuff already. It's a really great program that relates directly to our science curriculum," said Halldorson.

Presentations are designed to fit into the specific grade level of what's currently being taught in science at that moment.

"The presentations are really geared towards the curriculum and teachers can

choose which presentations they want based on where they are in the classroom," said Tracy Maconachie, conservation specialist for Ducks Unlimited.

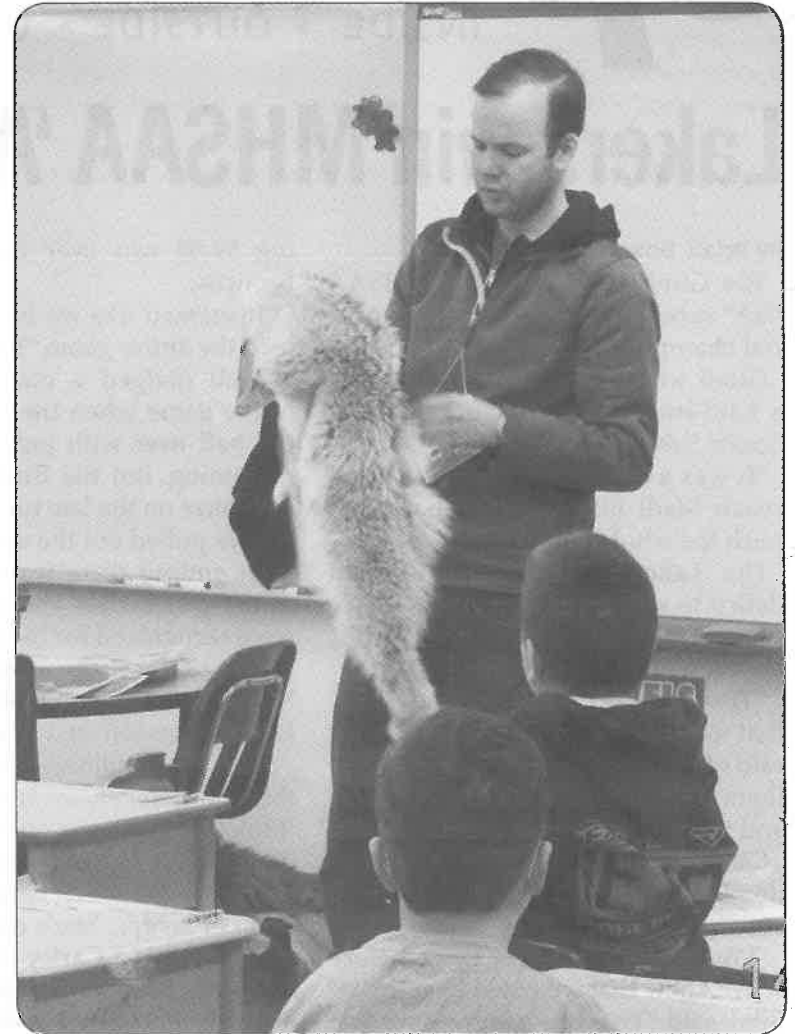
"The education provided by the Ecovan is constantly evolving. We keep many presentations as hands-on as possible because students are more likely to be engaged when they can see and feel what they're learning directly."

Climate Change has become a key presentation topic for the Ecovan due to the prevalence of the issues around the world. Maconachie said that the lessons learned from the interpreters are designed to foster a sense of stewardship in the students participating. For rural residents, though, those senses are likely already there as they grow up surrounded by nature and are exposed to it much more than urban students.

And in that sense, Maconachie thinks that these visits carry more weight with them as students will understand how interconnected the system of a stream by their home relates to larger ponds and lakes.

"They have a different relationship with nature than an urban student does and already have that sense of stewardship. What we try to instil in them is that every small action locally helps the global cause. Somewhere in Lundar or St. Laurent, there is a Grade 2 student asking themselves what they can do, and we hope that we help them find that answer," said Maconachie.

The Ecovan also paid a visit to Lundar School on March 16.



**EXPRESS PHOTO SUBMITTED BY IRINA ZOTTER**  
An Ecovan presenter shows off a pelt to students at St. Laurent School.