

## Field Trips at the Redwood Nature Area Are a Great Success!

By Owen Carroll

On Wednesday, July 27<sup>th</sup>, TreeUtah hosted our fourth Redwood Ranger Adventure Day Field Trip at Redwood Nature Area. Nine participants from the Boys and Girls Club of Great Salt Lake Teen Program joined Gena, super-volunteer Eric Freeman, and myself for a three hour long session focused on how native trees along the Jordan River improve water quality.



We began the field trip by touring the site and discussing how native trees and other vegetation in the wetlands and riparian forest along the river filter and store water, and why this is important to humans and wildlife. Then we took a quick tour of the Trees for Eagles Wildlife Spiral in order to learn more about the native trees and shrubs found along the river, and how they contribute to the health of the ecosystem.

The last and most exciting part of the field trip consisted of a scientific experiment where the Boys and Girls Club participants surveyed three water samples in order to determine which contained the highest quality water. The samples were collected from the Jordan River, the wetlands in Red-winged Marsh, and Beaver Pond. Most of the participants hypothesized that the pond or marsh would have the cleanest water based on their knowledge that plants help filter water. They then tested their hypothesis by observing the turbidity of each sample, the abundance or lack thereof of aquatic organisms, and the diversity of aquatic organisms. Finally they observed whether each sample contained species of aquatic organisms that were more or less tolerant of low quality water. Insects in their nymph stage such as mayflies, caddis flies, and stoneflies require very high quality water while other invertebrates like water snails, mosquito and midge larva, and leeches are extremely tolerant of low quality water. To their surprise, the participants found that the highest quality water was actually found in the Jordan River sample. They quickly surmised that although the wetlands had an abundance of vegetation, that sample was dirty because the water hadn't been fully filtered, unlike the Jordan River water.

As we wrapped up the field trip, I asked the participants what their favorite part of the experience was. Almost all replied that it was more fun than they had expected. They said that they had no idea that wetlands and native trees were so important to keeping water clean, that there were so many things living in water, and how cool "bugs" could be. Every reaction was positive, and the participants left the site feeling a sense of wonder and amazement about their experience. This feedback is the best possible kind since it shows that we have developed a successful education program and are generating community support and interest that are vital to the restoration and preservation of the Jordan River.