



Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Wednesday 12 August 2015

All things sea and science get students excited

Are prawns warm or cold blooded? How could kelp become extinct? Are there seasons under water and how can you tell? Why do some deep sea creatures glow?

These are the kinds of questions that Cayne Layton, a University of Tasmania PhD researcher with the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies, is starting to expect from the bright students at Goodwood Primary School, Hobart.

The marine ecologist, who moved from Canberra to Tasmania to study kelp forests, is a keen participant in CSIRO's Scientists and Mathematicians in Schools (SMiS) program and tomorrow he will be a special guest teacher at Goodwood Primary for the sixth time in as many months.

Principal at Goodwood Primary School Sue Bullen said that Cayne is an integral part of the school's science curriculum and that his next visit co-incides with the start of National Science Week.

"He has helped students understand the importance of science in their lives and raised their awareness of science-related careers," she said.

"He's also helped our students understand the importance of inquiry, collaboration and communication - all critical 21st Century skills.

"Every time Cayne visits the students develop a growing appreciation and love of the natural environment - he talks with such passion about his marine research and brings in amazing props like lobster and crab shells, preserved sea dragons and squid beaks, and the students are captivated."

With gloves and safety goggles in place the students even get to feel like scientists as they study the marine samples.

They are also shown underwater footage collected by Cayne and he has come up with some fun ways to explain the most common question of them all . . . what's a marine ecologist?

Throughout the fun and excitement of hands-on learning Cayne is able to relay some simple but important messages to his young audience.

“Everyone is a scientist and science is about questions,” he said.

“And Tasmania, with its amazing and unique plants, seaweeds, animals and environments is an incredible place to do science.”

“The aim of SMiS is to demystify science and illustrate how science is part of our everyday lives.

“It isn’t just something that happens in a faraway laboratory by old men in lab coats, science is everywhere – it’s when students go bushwalking or fishing, it’s when students cook at home with their parents, it’s when students use the computer or when they look up at the stars.

“Not all of these students will want to study science at university when they’re older, and that’s fine. But I think it’s important that the community becomes more engaged and understanding of science and the amazing world around them.”

Throughout Tasmania there are 80 schools participating in the SMiS program, which has 128 active partnerships where a STEM professional and a teacher pair up to provide a unique learning experience for primary and secondary school children.

SMiS Tasmania project officer Jennifer Hemer said that SMiS provides skilled volunteers the opportunity to have a positive impact and make a difference to science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) education in schools.

“Each partnership is different and allows teachers and STEM professionals to develop their own style and create their own story,” she said.

For more information on the SMiS program please visit: www.csiro.au/education

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