

## Trip to Menagesha

From Wednesday February 8<sup>th</sup> to Friday February 10<sup>th</sup>, the students of 2nde 3 went on a pedagogic field trip to “Suba Forest”. Considered “the oldest park in Africa”, this scenic mountainous area situated at 50KMs from Addis Ababa, proved to be a very peaceful getaway from the city. The trip was organized by Mr. Simon (Chemistry and Physics teacher) and Mr. Valy (Biology teacher). The objectives of the trip involved the verification of certain scientific hypotheses and the development of essential moral values within the students of 2nde3

February 8<sup>th</sup> marked the day of departure. We all came to school with packed suitcases. School comrades, unaware of what was going on were curious as to why our class was equipped with such luggage. Jealousy was written on the faces of the students from other sections that did not get the chance to join us. 7:55A.M, as our peers entered their classrooms, 2nde3 students gathered around the science building to help pack the resources necessary for the following three days.



We then got into the bus that had been parked outside, waiting for us. You could hear some students whispering about their excitement for the trip .It took us no longer than an hour and thirty minutes to get to the park.

Soon after the arrival at the campsite, everyone unloaded their belongings and settled in their dorms. Happier moments haven't thus far been recorded in 2nde3!



12:00P.M, we were briefed about the activities we would be undergoing throughout the stay and had started having lunch by the tree centered on the campsite. Shortly after, we went on a short hike accompanied by our teachers, discovering new plants and animals that had formerly been strangers to us. By 5:00P.M, we were back to the dorms. Some of us assisted the cooks in preparing dinner while others set up dining tables. The ambiance at dinner was indescribably pleasant. Laughter and humor accompanied our meal under the splendid beauty of the moonlight. Few students even joined Mr. Valy and Mr. Simon on a little walk lit up by the moonlight (Flashlights would scare away wild animals).

The rest of the evening was spent around the campfire and in the dorms. A stranger would have described the scene as a “family reunion” rather than a school field trip. Day 1 had set a joyful start to the adventurous trip and had provoked un-wipeable smiles on everyone’s face.

**T**hursday, February 9<sup>th</sup>, 5:00 A.M., The students of 2nd3 were wide awake in the comfort of their dorm beds. You could hear the whisperings and laughs all the way to the tents of the teachers, set up just a few meters across the dorm rooms. The early morning chattering didn't seem to disturb anyone until Mr. Valy and Mr. Simon decided to put an end to it by proclaiming absolute silence until 7 AM, the official waking hour.

7:15 A.M, students and supervisors collaborated to prepare a light breakfast that consisted of jelly sandwiches, tea and hot chocolate –not all were lucky enough to get some- . No one acknowledged that this light meal would hold us up through the uphill hike of several kilometers.



We packed our lunches in our backpacks and headed to the base of the mountain for a briefing of the day's activities. The scientific researches involved:

- Validating the forest's slogan - "The oldest park in Africa (500years old) " (Mr. Valy)
- Measuring the impact human activities such as deforestation has had on the forest. (Mr. Valy)
- Understanding the correlation between altitude and atmospheric pressure. (Mr. Simon)
- Understanding the correlation between altitude and water boiling temperature. (Mr. Simon)

The hike began at around 9 A.M. The students were divided into a few groups consisting of 5-6 students per group and a leader for each one. This was mainly an effort to develop a sense of teamwork and responsibility within each student of the class – An effort which was definitely challenging, yet rewarding. After having done several student innovated scientific experiences on the verification of the forest's age and measures of altitude, atmospheric pressure and boiling temperature, lunch time had arrived and everyone was excited to gather around trees for shade and take out all that had been packed for lunch to share. Some even came up with creative meals using basic ingredients such as boiled eggs, tomatoes, fruits, spices and sauces.



Later that afternoon, everyone got a chance to visit the stuffed-animal exhibition at the top of the mountain. This was also a way to get some rest and share conversations over freshly sliced watermelons. The descent back to the dorms was quite rapid and everyone was excited at the sight of their cozy beds and dinner being prepared by on-sight cooks. Students and teachers queued up to take unbelievably freezing showers (Keep in mind that there was no electricity throughout the totality of the trip). Some had never taken cold showers before and some were uncomfortable considering the lack of privacy at the shower stalls. Nevertheless, this was one of the many experiences the students and teachers will never forget and will hopefully cherish throughout their lives.

6:00 P.M, dinner was set on the dining tables and everyone gathered around for a savory meal. Pasta with Bolognese sauce, delicious beet salad and fresh fruits were on the menu for the night. The campfire was being set up by Mr. Valy while students were finishing up with dinner. We all sat around the campfire with our adorable pajamas and came up with creative games and activities to keep us away from boredom. We even tuned in to an exceptional a cappella performance led by our class vocalist Elshadai Dawit. It was getting late as the students entertained themselves throughout the night. Everyone went to bed at their own pace, most were sound asleep by 10:00 P.M; some made it their objective to stay up later than midnight.



Day 2 was definitely by far the most tiring, educational, challenging, yet fun and uplifting day.

Friday, February 10<sup>th</sup>, the generally well-rested students and teachers were all awake by 7A.M. Breakfast followed shortly after the awakening of everyone, perhaps the fun-filled previous evening had starved the 2<sup>nd</sup>3 students. The scene at breakfast was a bit more calm and mellow in comparison to the previous day's morning scene.

The morning briefing carried out smiles on the faces of the young pupils whose bodies were aching from all the physically challenging work they so heroically performed on Thursday. It stated that only minimal physical activity was going to be needed for the day. However, Friday consisted of an intervention by an inspiring ecologist named Shimels who had a lot in store for the intellects of the students and teachers. The first hour with the students enabled Shimeles to get to know every student individually through an interactive session where everyone gathered around in a circle and presented themselves. Shimels then asked everyone to briefly talk about an animal or plant that marked each of them. He was amazed by the fact that most of us were talking about non-Ethiopian wildlife. He then shared his stories, mentioning his worldwide ecologic expeditions and his love for his country's wildlife offerings. We then hiked up a few hundred meters to see the so called "oldest tree in the park" that we dated to be over 400 years old.



Shimels proposed a few activities for us to do in the hopes of strengthening our bond with nature and with the environment as a whole. This man's friendliness, respect for others and love for nature were some of his traits that marked us all.

We marched back down to our campsite with Shimels, who had renewed everyone's view of nature developing respect and a sense of responsibility for the preservation of the environment within the audience he lectured. Students and teachers gathered around for what would be the last meal of the trip. The scholars of 2<sup>nd</sup>3 were exhausted and craved the comfort of their homes but were melancholic to face the end of what would be one of the most memorable experiences of their scholar life. All the bags were packed and the rooms swept clean by 4:00 P.M. The bus was warming up its engine as the students and teachers slowly drifted away from the dorms. The ride back to Addis Ababa saw the majority of its passengers asleep even through the bumpy roads of the rural areas. You could hear some

students gossiping about the previous days, nostalgically evoking some unforgettable moments of the trip.



As a final statement, we can affirm that this trip has proved to be an intellectually and educationally enriching experience that will remain a cherished memory within the fortuitous participants it had. The three day stay at the wildlife-surrounded mountain base of the Suba Forest was a remarkable journey that developed respect towards collective responsibility and wildlife as a whole. The pedagogic activities were made a lot more amusing by the beautiful scenery that permanently accompanied us through the stay. The cuisine empiricism was also a notable point of the trip considering the fact that meals were moments of laughter and friendly gatherings. Moreover, this remarkable event of the 2011-2012 scholar year transformed the class of 2nde3 into “The 2nde3 Family”.

Halleluya Negussie

Biniam Shimels

Abel Girma