

# Practice weeks at Natur Senter in Horten

(From 16th to 27th of April) --- Joan Quixal Paes



For two weeks, some of the students in Outdoor education and experiential learning are going to have practice at the *Natur Senter* in Horten.

In our place each day was different, from Monday to Friday we received students from 4 years old to more than 20.

Before coming, some of the teacher send the nature center a message what are they working on, so we were able to prepare activities or projects for them.

The topics we work on, as we were in a Nature Center, everything was somehow connected to the nature, starting with the forest, earth and fire, as well as water activities. This last one, we weren't that able because of the frozen and cold water.

As not all of the students who came were children, some of the activities they did were completely in Norwegian and we couldn't join them.



For working in all these activities we talk, they need different installations. The center is made from two big buildings and 3 garages for storage the stuff. On the main building they have: microscopes, books, projector, kitchen, tables and chairs. Also, they have everything we need for the activities related with nature they make on the area.

In another area near the lake, they have few boats, canoes and a big pier. Also, to being able to make activities during the night, they have a big telescope for observing stars during the Norway nights.

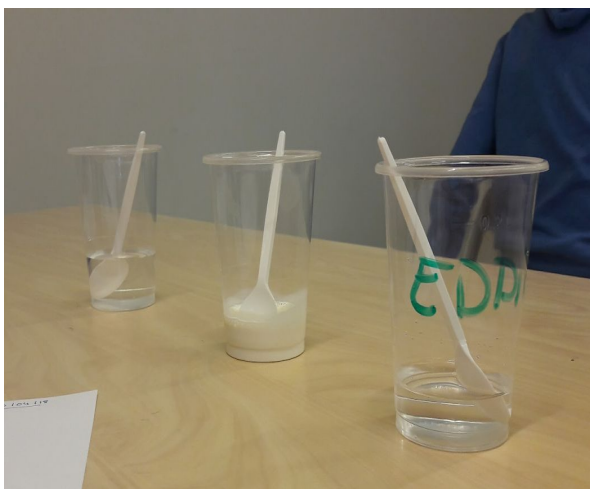


## Monday, 16th of April - First Day of practice

Today to the nature center we had have two groups, one 6th grade (75) and another from high school (15).

After receiving them with 4 big fires we split the group in 3 smaller groups.

The plan for today is making experiments with these three groups, one makes soap bubble, another latex ball or rubber with vinegar, water and latex, and the last put a rope stick in ice with salt and measure temperature of snow.





I can notice that some of the students are not interested at all, they seem to be bored of doing some of the things.

When they finish with the three experiments, all together we check the experiments with Mentos and coca cola. We need to check which combination is the one which makes the bigger explosion. We have fruits and mint Mentos, and normal and light cola. After the experiment we check the Cola light with mint Mentos is the winner. I am very surprised they use one special thing that attached the Mentos to the top of the bottle and it is easier to put them inside, we don't have this in Spain.



After the experiments it is lunchtime with fire, normally every student bring sausages with bread and ketchup.

During the day, a company from Horten kommune come and clean the building they use inside.

On the other hand, the group from the high school is cleaning one area near the center to build a big map of Norway with dust, grass, sticks etc. Is going to be a long-term project using lots of different materials.

## Tuesday, 17th of April

Today a group of students from centrum skole come but we didn't stay with them, they stayed inside the forest.

Also, one group of 28 students from High school (around 17-19 years old) is talking about plants and photosynthesis. They check the cell structures on the microscope, cutting plants examine and make paper task, but they do it everything in Norwegian so we cannot participate a lot on their task and we only sit while they explain all the information.

## Wednesday, 18th of April

Today some students from the college come and while they experience and observe plankton from the lake, we are cleaning the forest with some brooms and start trying to put some things on the pier for the boats, but the lake is still frozen, so we cannot put anything.



## Thursday, 19th of April

Today a group of 75 children from skole around 6 to 8 years old, is working about the environment and rubbish.

We divide them in 3 groups and they have to pick up rubbish from the forest with a bag, after that we play "BINGO" with the rubbish they find. They have to divide the rubbish for recycle in each different rubbish bin. The group with more weight is the winner and receive a bag of sweets.



Once they finish eating the lunch, they have time to explore the area of the forest and try to find worms and other small animals living there.

During this time, one of the teachers find a little snake near the lake and show to the students.





## Friday, 20th of April

Last day of the week, our class today is outside near the hospital in Horten. We have three classes of ages 6-9 from sentrum skole.

The topic for today is Spring but we have bad weather, so It is difficult to find any existence of spring. We try to play Spring Bingo with them but they are not listening to us and they don't know how to speak English, so the communication is difficult. They play, eat and explore. At the end they make the dance of the sun to try the clouds and the bad weather to go.



## Weekend!

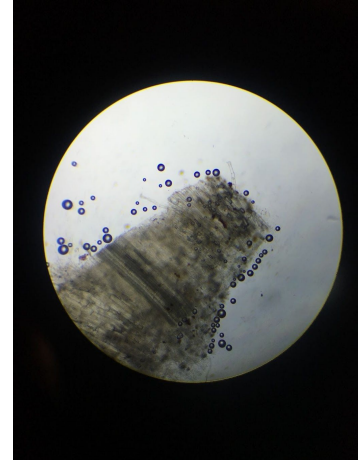
### Monday, 23rd of April

Today another group from Bakkenteigen come and they have this practice with the microscope and trying to see animals from the lake. They have a work in Norwegian to do, and one of the teacher show them how to look for plankton, how the light works inside the water.

While they are learning and observing the plankton, a group of us finish putting the sticks for the boats and the canoes on the pier because all the ice had disappeared during the weekend.

## Tuesday, 24th of April

Today the group of children are around 8 to 10 years old. The task for them today is with sticks and knife trying to make "stick for sausages", they made a vegetable soup with the fire by themselves with some help. And after eating the sausages and some soups, they play on the forest exploring the area. At the end they receive a certificate with the name saying they are able to build this wood stick.



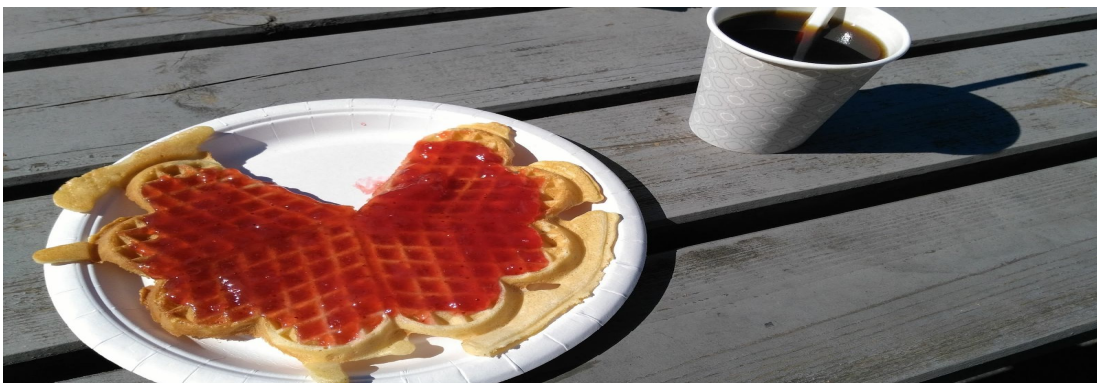
In another of the center there is a group in the tent. They are from high school and they are playing and trying to find spring things on the forest or the lake.

## Wednesday, 25th of April

Today any students come, we clean the area for the boats, put the rest of the boats on the water and bring the canoes near the lake to make it easier to take it. After that, we take each two a canoe and went in the middle of the lake, that was really relaxing and funny thing to do. The nice weather makes in us to be happier and we've wanted to do more things.

Once we finish the canoe trip, we put all in their places, is very important to maintain everything organized and keep all the boats with locks to avoid someone to still them.

After that, we make waffles with the ingredients they provide us and enjoy the good weather all together with some music.



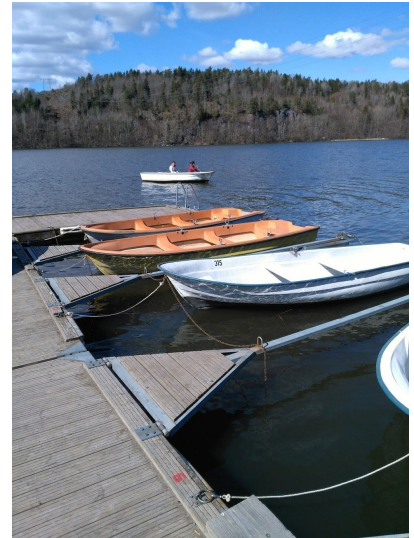


## Thursday, 26th of April

Today 45 students about 9 years old come to learn about plants.

They need to plant seeds on plants, they take a container and put some soil inside, after this, they add some seeds inside and put water on it. Later, they look on the microscope some plants, leaves or natural things they find on the forest.

While they are looking for the plants, a part of us try to find some plastic on the lake with the canoes and boats.



## Friday, 27th of April

Today we have 30 students around 11 years old. They learn about how the heart works. As an exercise they run for increasing the heart pulsations, and also they have to take a gun, shot a balloon and after that take two water jug and run downhill.

After they learn some things about the heart and know how it works with the blood we divide them in two groups, one of them take the canoe and some boats, while the other group, learn about the emergency numbers with a running game and some cards. When they finish, they play hiding waiting for the other group to finish.





During the first hour of today, a part of us, the international students, take a boat and some canoes and we need to look for some plastic on the lake as we did yesterday. It has been quite fun and relaxing because the weather at that time was really quiet.

After all of that had finished, one of the teachers has brought some pizzas as a "good bye party" and we have been telling things about these two weeks we have spent on the Nature Senter in Horten.

## My own experiences and reflections

Once I have finished my practice it is time to look back and see all the things I have learned and observed during these two weeks.

From my staid in Norway, I have learned that in this country, the nature is really an important thing to keep the contact with, since you are a child and continuing it in when you are adult until your last days. So, we can say that Norway really cares about what naturally, the earth provides us.

During the practice, I can see that the main purpose for every activity that we make, somehow was related to the nature and the environment they have on the nature center. They develop nature skills using the risky play, letting them explore the area and every little thing that life or grow in there.

For preparing all the activities, we were told that they use the curriculum to keep a general line in the objectives and goals they want to achieve with the activities they do.

As an opinion from the preparation, during the practice I could feel sometimes that we were not part of the class sometimes due to the language, others because of the age of the students who were from the high school or more.

Also, I can say that I have learned a lot about the organization of a nature center and all the actions that are required to maintain and keep everything under control. But although I have had a really good, fun and busy time, I expected from this practice to learn more strategies and methods to teach children outdoor but unfortunately, that was not the case at all.

Even though, the time I have spent during this two weeks makes me feel more into the world of outdoor learning and teaching from the nature.

“The clearest way into the Universe is through a forest wilderness.” – **John Muir**

**Joan Quixal Paes**