



Biodiversity around us: El Saler (Valencia)

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This research project has been performed by 14-15 years old students of 3th year ESO (Compulsory Secondary Education) who attended an Environment Science course in our school. In May 2009, we travelled to the Natural Reserve of *El Saler*, located on the outskirts of our city, València, in order to make a field study of its biodiversity, especially plant biodiversity. *El Saler* is a natural area belonging to the Albufera (coastal lagoon) National Park, located just 8 Km from downtown.

Our work is part of the "Science Across the World" project, an international organization in which schools from 150 countries have been "exploring science locally and exchanging their insights globally" in many languages. Our students performed during the year 2009-10 a series of environmental science activities following the CLIL methodology (Content and Language Integrated Learning). Students had not a high level of English and the group was very heterogeneous. The project was also attended by the department of English. Our students learned new vocabulary while improved their English skills, especially comprehension, writing and oral expression. Another important aspect was the collaborative work in which students took an active part in developing the project.

We worked the topic "**Biodiversity around us**". In this topic students explore the biodiversity of a small area near their home and become aware of the importance of biodiversity to humankind. The topic provides opportunities for students to make a survey of the plants and animals in a local area, study interesting species and its relationship with our own local culture. They can also investigate changes within the local area over time through local records, interviews with older people and so on. In addition they can investigate the impact of non-native plants and animals on the local environment and study of the legislation to protect local biodiversity. This leads to them producing their own local action plan.

After exchanging their findings and views with students in other countries, students compare and discuss the responses received from classes in other parts of the world. It is also an opportunity to share knowledge on different cultures of the participating schools and introduce our school and our city to students from other countries.

The main aspects worked were:

1. What is biodiversity?
2. Why biodiversity is important to us
3. Factors affecting biodiversity today
4. Addressing the issue
5. Exchanging information
6. Comparing information from other countries

This topic covers the following aspects of biology:

- An understanding of the concept of biodiversity and why it has become an issue today.
- The basic meanings of species, habitat and ecosystem.
- Observation and recording techniques for biodiversity in a given area, through basic habitat survey and organism identification techniques, and mapping skills using keys and scales.

Further resources :

- Science across the world website:

<http://www.ase.org.uk/resources/science-across-the-world/>

- Our project's website:

http://cassany.cat/mediambient/residus_2.html