



Blue Thumb—In Pictures

February 2018



Winter Bug Collection Season!



Ice covering a very elevated Lightning Creek makes any kind of monitoring impossible.

Bug collecting is in full swing, with the season lasting until March 15th. Kim, Candice and Rob are crisscrossing the state, meeting with volunteers and completing benthic macroinvertebrate collections at a wide variety of streams. They are also braving some very, very cold temperatures for the collections and the quality assurance sessions that usually occur at the same time.



On a chilly day, Hodgen students collect bugs in the Black Fork of the Poteau River.



Oklahoma School of Innovation and Experiential Learning students brave chilly temps at Twill Hills Creek.



The chill doesn't stop volunteers from having fun collecting bugs in Little Deep Creek in Weatherford.



The water is cold but insulated gloves help our volunteers find all the bugs under the rocks at Rock Creek in Cleveland County.

Quality Assurance Sessions



One aspect of the winter quality assurance session is making sure volunteers take temperatures correctly. For example, air temperature must always be taken before water temperature, as demonstrated here by OCC's own Karla Spinner, who is also a Blue Thumb volunteer, monitoring Little River with her mom.

Bug collections are the perfect time to conduct quality assurance sessions with volunteers. This time around, volunteers are being asked to fill out the data sheet they use every month when they do their monitoring tests and habitat assessment at their stream site. This way, Blue Thumb staff can ensure volunteers are following proper procedures for their monitoring and tests as well as filling out the data sheet properly.



Volunteer John Holman of Murray County demonstrates another important part of winter quality assurance, proper use of a Secchi disk. The disk, a method for measuring water clarity, must be used at the deepest point the volunteer can access close to their monitoring spot.

Highly Successful First Training of 2018



During the first day of training, volunteers learned about a number of educational activities they can use to teach about water in their community, including this one, "Water Quality? Ask the bugs!"

We had an excellent training in Norman on the weekend of January 27th and 28th, very successful for a few reasons. It was the first-ever training using our brand new format. The first day featured an all-day introduction to Blue Thumb with a focus on educational activities that volunteers are encouraged and empowered to use to educate in their own communities. For day two, volunteers who were interested in monitoring a creek took part in an all-day training focused on learning about water quality and all of the chemical tests that volunteers utilize every month to measure the quality and health of their streams. Both days featured a visit to Little River in Norman, where volunteers collected bugs and fish on the first day and conducted stream-side monitoring procedures during the monitoring training day.

New Volunteers Get Creek Experience



One of the best parts of a volunteer training is getting the participants out to a creek, to kick for bugs (left) and seine for fish (right), as we did in Little River for the training in Norman. These are experiences many of the new volunteers haven't had before and they often leave the training excited to do it again.



Education, Education, Education



Kim brought live creek bugs to Oklahoma Mentor Day in Norman, where Blue Thumb volunteer Karen Chapman also had a table, using the EnviroScope to teach about nonpoint source pollution.



At the Environmental Education Expo, Candice joined OCC soil health educators Blane Stacy and Greg Scott to teach educators how to use a rainfall simulator to teach about runoff in their classrooms.