

Voyage of Discovery

Terri Richardson Marshall News Messenger | Posted: Wednesday, July 27, 2011 8:37 am

Raindrops pooled on lily pads that filled up slowly before tipping the contents carefully into Caddo Lake.

"It's a good morning for a boat ride," said Capt. Ron Gibbs as 13 children boarded the Graceful Ghost, escaping sprinkles from the sky.

Tuesday was the last day of the nature camp held at Caddo Lake National Wildlife funded through the Healthy Habitats grant for growing appreciation in young people for the great outdoors in their own backyard.

"It was cool, and fun," said Tristan Bartley, 10, of Karnack. "I learned a lot of things and just being out on Caddo."

Campers ages spanned from preschool through sixth grade, all well-behaved on the boat as Capt. Gibbs taught them about being "gator bait" as soon as they boarded.

While touring the lake, the children learned about the history of the region, of the Caddo Indians, how the lake formed, how old the bald cypress trees are and that "Spanish moss blooms a tiny light green flower."

Gibbs pointed out the American lilies and the North American wood storks as they appeared prevalent on the lake.

"Cypress is one of the slowest growing trees in the world," he said, sharing that some of the trees found deep in the forest were estimated to be 1,700 years old.

"I got to drive the boat and got to spend time with my friends before school starts back," said Tristan.

All of the kids who wanted a turn driving the boat were allowed to take the big wheel as Gibbs directed them "a little more to the left, a little more left."

"I loved when I got to drive the boat," said Rashaud McCoy, 10, of Karnack. "It felt easy, but I was scared because I thought I might crash it."

Rashaud Als said he was glad to explore the lake and learn about the ancient trees.

"Nature camp has been great, and these kids will continue learning thanks to the Healthy Habitats grant and become the Wildlife Rangers this fall," said Endsley.

They ended the journey back at Shady Glade Marina for ice cream cones in the rain. Gathered round, one of the little ones said happily, "this was fun, and amazing."