

Looking and Truly Seeing: Nature Artist Teaches a New Skill

During her visits to South Hill Elementary School as an additional innovative part of the "Trout In the Classroom" program, professional artist Camille Doucet helped 51 fourth graders not just to look, but to really "see".

Doucet shared her nature illustration techniques with the students as part of their year-long study of brown trout fry that they raised themselves in aquariums in their classrooms.

"Trout in the Classroom," which is sponsored by the Cayuga Lake Floating Classroom and Trout Unlimited and implemented at all eight ICSD elementary schools, teaches students to maintain and monitor a cold-water aquarium and raise trout fry for release to a local stream.

Doucet's scientific illustration lessons, funded by a \$1,450 Teacher Grant from the Ithaca Public Education Initiative (IPEI), were added to the program at South Hill this year.

Her three classroom visits coincided with important first-year developmental stages of the brown trout.

Working in pencil and crayon, the students sketched heads, fins, tails, gills and eyes, using dots or circles for the trout's mottled skin. They carefully blended colors, trying to duplicate exactly the hues they saw.

"Children rarely learn to question and then trust what they see," says Doucet, a watercolor instructor whose own work in nature illustration has been exhibited in museums in Minnesota, New York and Connecticut.

"By the third class," she said proudly, "the children were drawing what they saw, instead of what they thought they should see."

