



CAMP EBIIL

By Ann Singeo



"I think we found the most diversity in snails!" Imaim 10 yrs

Summer 2018



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Camp Ebiil Explorers

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"One Camp Ebiil is NOT Enough"

Yup! That was the long-time complain by children and their parents! And so to heed to the high demand for Camp Ebiil, we introduced two summer camps- one in early June, and another in July. The first camp had a total of 11 camp counselors and 38 campers, while the second one had another set of 11 counselors and 37 campers. A total of 91 individual participants - 74 campers and 17 camp counselors attended Camp Ebiil. To make things fare we only allow a child to participate in one camp per summer. The camps ran for 1 week each starting with the camp counselors training camp where they learn required skills and knowledge for their role in managing small children. It is the camp counselors who carry the most responsibilities as they care for the younger ones 24 hours for 8 days. Without these kids and the *mamang* from the kitchen, Rose and Antonia, the camp would be impossible.





Uncovering *the mysteries of Ancient Villages...*

“ I want the crescent moon for my hook...” said Tmeloched to his father.

Mr Andrew Shiro, takes the children back in time as they travel the ancient stone paths of Ngkeklau with Ranger Debengek. “Wow!” “This is beautiful!” This is what you hear from the children as they walk through the ancient villages of Ngkeklau and Elab and rediscover where they come from as a people. Walking on the beautiful exquisite stone paths and amongst towering gigantic Ukall trees that look as old as the stone path they recognize the strength and innovation of those who built the structures around them. At the end of the trail, the children walk past where the home of Mengernger (sea snake) and Katuu (cat) stood thousands of years ago and soon come to face the sea where the first “beng” or coral stone fish trap remains sticking out of the reef at low tide. The “beng,” was a learnt fishing technique from the Mengernger as she would curve her body to trap fish for her sister. Later on we move to Elab where we learn the story of Tmeloched and the crescent moon used as a fishing hook that

would get caught at the bottom of the sea as it is swallowed by a “Temekai” or Grouper and later pulled up to surface creating the village of Elab today. The children trace the story from Ngerulmuong the home of the moon people to the stone with the hole made from the crescent moon hook. This would be the same spot where the fish children of Temekai chewed beetlenut with Tmeloched, which left their lips red making them the red lip fish today.



Stone with Tmeloched hook marks

Moving on to *Ulimang*



Ngaraard



The second camp explorers studied the ancient village of Elab and Ulimang. Tracking the story of Ngaremlengui and Ulimang, visiting the stone money remains compensation from the people of Uluang and on to the only remaining diong of Ulimang, a traditional bathing pool. In Elab the kids visited a mysterious bottomless pit located by the Bai stone platform. The mysterious bottomless pit is said to have been created by a small man caught in a fish trap. The fishermen was so stunned by the human like creature that he brought the whole trap back to his village with the small men remaining inside. While he was calling the villagers to come see the creature, a loud rumbling noise was heard moving underground all the way towards the sea up North. All that was left behind was a hole in the fish trap floor and a bottom less pit where if one threw a stone you'll never get to hear it hit bottom.

Mr. Shiro's story telling weaves through the old villages and remaining stones and figures from each oral history displaying such a rich and magical journey taking the children into the world before. He completes the day by taking the children to his own home for a refreshing snack of Ngaraard's own signature dish of *demok*, a delish taro leaf soup with coconut milk and local spices. Thank you Mr. and Mrs. Shiro for your generous gifts of knowledge and food.





“Taking care of our Beautiful Forest and Watershed of Babeldaob...”



Tree planting

Taking care of the Earth means getting dirty! As young as they are, they can say that they have contributed to the saving of our planet by planting some trees in the red soil of Babeldaob to help restore native forests and the reef health in Ngaremlengui. With their teacher Vanray and Ulang they planted over a 200 trees and installed 10 sediment traps with over 400 lemon grass.



Rain or shine, the campers were ready to go by 8:30 every morning including the day for forest restoration and watershed study at Mesekelat River. The day began with a road trip across Babeldaob into Ngaremlengui where they learn about land degradation as a result of poor development, it's effect on our watershed and reef, and how to restore such areas with natural and local solutions.

After planting trees and lemon grass in the hot scouring sun on the ridge of Ngermetengel, Ngaremlengui, the campers are looking forward to a nice cool swim at the Mesekelat River. Thanks to the State of Ngchesar Protected Area management office, Manager Ngirkelau and Ranger Bultedaob, allowed the kids a chance to learn more about watershed protection and witness the pristine environment when managed well. Manager Ngirkelau presented a brief history of the area and their mission to sustain their watershed and forest with better management and resource use, while Ranger Bultedaob guided the hike downstream where the children dove into the cool refreshing river of Mesekelat. MNRET team L. Mueller and S. Hanser gave an awesome presentation on watershed where kids got a chance to create their own watershed model and learn the “what happens at the top affects everything else on its way down,” concept for ridge to reef protection. With Vanray, the campers got to identify and learn of the diverse and rare plant species found within the Mesekelat area.



Exploring *Caves and Origins of Yapese balang...*



On this day neither the weather nor tide was in favor of our trip. But, that did not stop the explorers from getting to Metukrabisech in Airai where the Yapese stone money- balang was mined, as well as the caves of the nearby Rock Islands. The generous office of Airai Protected Areas and their rangers met up with the campers and shared the Yapese history of Anagumang who travelled to Palau to carve what will become the Yapese stone money. It is said that his early carvings first took the shape of a fish, then a crescent moon, and finally the full moon with the hole in the center for efficiency in transporting. This linked well with the campers' previous study of the village of Ngkeklau. According to history Ngkeklau is a name given by the Yapese using the area as a transit space before sailing across to Yap bringing the balang carved from Metukrabisech, Airai. These Yapese were origins of Ngkeslau and while the name was used to speak of the visitors it soon became the new name of Ngotel, what is now known as Ngkeklau. Afterwards L. Mueller gave another incredible presentation on caves and how they're created, their main characters, and names.



Still, there is always time to have more fun at Camp Ebiil after a good learning session out in the field. After all, we live in one of the world's best and most beautiful natural environment. After a good day out in the rock islands the campers return to their Ebiil home for a nice warm meal cooked by Rose and Antonia and a nice cozy sleep in the dorm.





Campout! *Ngerkeklau & Ebiil, here we come!*

Investigate!

- How big is the material?
- How big is the area?
- How thick is the artifact?
- Color?
- Design?
- How many?

These are just some of the many questions that the campers had to answer. As serious as it may sound you can still hear the laughter ringing through the island...

What is a camp without a campout on an island? One of an old time favorite is taking the camp to an island where the kids get to learn about its biodiversity and other special features. Best of all, sit up all night around the campfire, telling stories, and making SMORES! On Ngerkeklau, campers had an opportunity to investigate the huge population of snails, turtles, bekai, and the ancient village of Ngerkeklau. The campers get to record the number of turtle and bekai nests, snail and ants within the forest, mangroves, and beach. Additionally, record remaining stone platforms and structures, including identifying the various types of potteries and tools used by the resident of the ancient village. With the guidance of Elchung, Ksid, and Jesse the kids got to explore till sunset when they would need to shift gear and get into weather prediction and star navigation studies with Mr. Sesario Sewralur.



(Continued)

Sesario takes a sitting position with the kids on the beach as they look towards the western horizon, watching the sunset and learning how to predict the weather for that evening and the next day. Sesario, tells of the origin of his navigation knowledge and how it began with a woman.

Weather prediction; "Beautiful evening for navigation star studies!"

And as such, that was the case, and the planets were easily spotted and aligned, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Scorpio, Little Dipper, Polaris- what a perfect evening it was for identifying planets and stars! Mr. Sesario promises the campers that he would carve a sailboat by next summer so that the kids can learn to sail with him. WAHOO!



On a not so positive note, the campers sadly found an injured Bekai on Ngerkekklau with gun shot wounds and tried to save the bird, but without success. Such a heartbreaking moment for the campers, but hopefully one that can help them see the reality of our home that continues to be threatened by our actions.



The next day -EBIIL channel! One of the most anticipated parts of the camp! This is where most of the campers will be exposed to snorkeling in a successful marine protected area of such size and diversity! Kids return, exclaiming, "I saw, Maml!" "Kemedukl!" "Uel!" "Lot's of colorful corals!" "Lot's of Fish!" This is the very experience of which we want the children to see and feel. What it means to protect critical habitats and what that means in our lives. Kids learn that the factors that make a successful MPA is the size, the years it's been closed, and how well people respect the area by not fishing in it, standing on corals when snorkeling, touching the marine life, and reporting the poachers who maybe fishing in the area. While on Ngerkekklau, the campers saw an individual community member with protected species and reported to Ebiil staff who did contact the rangers and reported what they saw. As a result, the poachers were apprehended by fish and wildlife for possessing protected species of turtles and undersize coconut crab. The Rangers thanked the campers for their assistance and good citizenship.



“We learn to be self-sustained!”

While the girls stroll up the road to the taro fields, the boys prepare to go out for a day at sea. Yup! We have to learn how to be self sustained as our ancestors did! Teacher Ulang Skang and Rteruich Katsusi Skang take their time to teach the campers taro cultivation and fishery skills. Additionally, learn how to use resources sustainably - how to protect the Mesei by protecting the watershed and the forest, and which fish species and size of to take. While this may seem a simple common sense, its practice-based knowledge and is better acquired and retained through application. *What’s your favorite?*

*“Fishing with the boys!” Ngrayobeck, 8 yrs.
“Going to the Mesei!” Kerreng, 10 yrs.*

This time, a new teacher Staci Lewis from Stanford University assisted Ulang with the class. While working with the “Mechas ra Dengitech,” she has picked up the love for cultivating Mesei, and is able to teach the girls. The girls refer to the Mesei as their natural spa, where not only do they learn to cultivate the taro, but also an exclusive space for them where they pick up knowledge of medicine, responsibilities, ethnobotany, girl talk, and swim in the nearby stream that source fresh water into the Mesei. Using the herb they collect from the mesei the girls take a cool dip in Emeraech stream while testing the body scrub with fragrance given by *Iaml and Beraber...*



The boys have been preparing for this day of fishing for days. Learning with their trainer, Rteruich every evening, they familiar themselves with lunar cycles and tides, fishery stories, species and habitats, and tool making. The boys had a good day out at sea and prepared their catch and brought it to Ebiil kitchen to be cooked for dinner that evening including lunch for *Desiil* when their parents would be taking them home.

“To be a successful fishermen, is being prepared in every way!” Rteruich K. Skang

Afterwards the campers have to learn to prepare and cook what they harvested for their dinner, not to mention what their parents will eat for lunch the next day when they would come to take them home- the end of the camp.



“Camp Ebiil is
a life-changing
moment!”

Chiuet Webster, 14 yrs.



Chiuet like many other kids when they first join Camp Ebiil are uncomfortable having to live away from their homes and families, surrounded by new people and a new place. But, like the rest of Ebiil campers, they come to love the camp as their new family and increase their sense of confidence as they build bigger network of friends not just throughout

Palau, but also across the globe. The camp has become an avenue for Palauans abroad to bring their children to, to reconnect with their homeland and culture. Every year these kids return to camp and we watch them grow into positive self-confident young people who care for their home Palau and the planet.

We are hopeful that through these children we can continue the intergenerational sense of pride and value of our traditional knowledge and practices that can nurture positive growth of our people who will be better caretakers of our planet, OUR HOME...

We will continue to improve access to Ebiil programs throughout the year and especially during the summer to ensure that more kids can join the programs.

“Ebiil check!” Ebiilers we will see you again next year!



Camp Ebiil would not be possible without the generosity of so many people in our communities such as, the private businesses, the government, the volunteers, and our trainers. The trainers are people who have dedicated their life to making sure that the next generation will be better prepared to care for our home and make appropriate decisions to sustain our country.

The generous trainers...



THANK YOU – Parents, sponsors & donors!



Ebiil Society

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Camp EBIIL

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