

Walnut Ridge students participate in trout package



VERNON — Walnut Ridge Primary School in Vernon participated in the Trout in the Classroom program again this past school year.

Co-sponsored by New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife and Trout Unlimited, this program provides brook trout eggs from the Pequest Trout Hatchery to classrooms throughout the state so students may learn about the development of this environmentally sensitive species. At Walnut Ridge, the specially chilled tank is in the artroom, offering an opportunity for all the kindergarten and first-grade students to observe the development of the young trout. Eggs are delivered in October of each year.

First-grade students viewed the eggs through a microscope, noting that the eyes and spine were visible. Students practiced their representational drawing skills as they drew pictures of the eggs. The eggs hatched in early November, and the students observed the alevin stage, when the yolk sac is still attached to the newly hatched trout which cannot yet swim.

In December, the tiny fish began to swim up from the gravel and developed vertical lines which would help them hide in the weeds of a stream. This is called the parr stage. By late spring the trout were developing spots on their backs which provide camouflage among the rocks in the stream. Kindergarten students observed each stage of development; first graders drew each stage and created booklets depicting the parts of the brook trout life cycle that they witnessed.

Some students also worked on a mural that documented the trout's growth. On a sunny Saturday morning in May, students and their families were invited to join Walnut Ridge art teacher Denise Docherty, to help release approximately 75 young trout



into Wawayanda Creek.

Rob Henry from Glen Meadow Middle School, who also raised trout in his classroom, attended with his students to release their trout. Following a mini-lesson on trout development, about 60 Walnut Ridge students and siblings received clear cups containing brook trout fry and released the fish into the stream, assisted by family members and teacher volunteers. Artwork by several of the first grade students has appeared on the New Jersey Trout in the Classroom website and in their monthly newsletters.