

# Seaworthy

Beach combing, whale watching, and fresh-caught tuna. U-High students take a working vacation at the Marine Biological Laboratory.

by Sean Carr, AB'90

Maeve. "My grandma is Lebanese," she adds to clarify. They had caught the tuna earlier that day.

The students were up by 7 a.m. to shower and have breakfast and be at the dock by 8:30 to board the MBL's collecting vessel, the Gemma. For the next four hours, they dredged the bottom of the ocean, catching urchins, sea stars, sponges, crabs, and other creatures. After lunch they took their haul to the lab for study. That was the basic rhythm of their days: trip in the morning (two by boat), lab in the afternoon. Not that the students always obeyed the clock. "We would have to kick them out of the lab to go to dinner," says Ms. Housinger, "and then after dinner, when they had free time, they would frequently go back to the lab."

Other trips included visits to a salt marsh, where they piloted drones to help map the terrain; a whale-watching voyage to the tip of Cape Cod (a first even for Maeve); a walk to the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution; and—a highlight for students and teachers alike—a visit to Naushon Island, owned by the Forbes family. There's only one house on the island, and visitors must stay below the high-tide line. It's "basically wild, undisturbed beach," says Mr. Calleri, who guided the students through a "really exciting diversity of algae and seaweed." Dragging their nets on Naushon, they caught baby purple sea urchins, mini sea bass, and pike sh—"at sea horses," explains Owen. "Similar head structure, similar anatomy."

Another highpoint was MBL researcher Kristin Gribble's presentation on rotifers—microscopic marine organisms with similar DNA to humans. Ms. Gribble studies how diet and temperature affect rotifer lifespans, hoping to gain insights on human aging.