

Assateague State Park

Youth Group Environmental Education Programs

Maryland Park Service and Maryland Conservation Corps are offering the following Youth Group Programs at Assateague State Park. We welcome you and your youth group members to discover the unique ecology of a salt marsh and barrier island and the abundance of creatures that inhabit them. Program descriptions are listed below and may be scheduled from mid-June through early October.

Contact Information:

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If you reach voice mail, please leave a message including your group name, phone number, email, grade or ages, number of participants expected, program/s requested, and potential dates. **Email is suggested for fastest reservation confirmation.**

Bayside Kayak Tour – Join our Naturalist staff for a guided kayak tour of Assateague’s back bay areas. Learn basic paddling skills and water safety, then embark on a coastal exploration. All units are sit-on-top kayaks (single or tandem); paddles and PFDs provided. **Close toed shoes with a back strap are required!** Participants should wear clothes that can get wet. We recommend bringing sunscreen, bug spray, and water. For ages 12+; parent/guardian permission slip is required. Service charge of \$60.00 for groups up to 12 participants, more than 12 up to 24 is \$100.00 for the two-hour program.

Saltmarsh Exploration and Kayak Demonstration- As an alternative to our Bayside Kayak Tour, we’ve designed this program for younger groups or larger groups who would like to practice kayaking skills in the coastal bays and participate in our popular saltmarsh exploration program. We will bring a limited number of kayaks to our bayside saltmarsh and mark a course with buoys where small groups of participants can practice skills like balance, turning, and maneuvering kayaks in the bay. When not using the kayaks, participants will be exploring the saltmarsh using seine nets, dip nets, and clam rakes for collecting mollusks, fish, shrimp, snails, and more for observation and identification. All units are sit-on-top kayaks (single or tandem); paddles and PFDs provided. **Close toed shoes with a back strap are required!** Participants should wear clothes that can get wet. We recommend bringing sunscreen, bug spray, and water. For ages 9+; parent/guardian permission slip is required. Service charge of \$60.00 for groups up to 12 participants, more than 12 up to 25 is \$100.00 for the two-hour program.

Saltmarsh Exploration

Not afraid of getting muddy? Come with us to discover the other side of Assateague Island- we are not just the beach! Participants will explore the complexities of a saltmarsh, one of the most productive ecosystems on earth. We will use seine nets, dip nets, and clamming equipment to collect mollusks, small fish, shrimp and more for observation and identification. For this activity, participants will wade into the saltmarsh. **Close toed shoes with a back strap are required!** Participants should wear clothes that can get wet. We recommend bringing sunscreen, bug spray, and water. Service charge \$60.00 per program (for groups up to 25 participants, and an additional \$2.00 per participant after 25) for the one-hour program. Program for ages 9+.

Techniques in Surf Fishing- Try your hand at a favorite Assateague beach activity. Our naturalist staff will set your group up with equipment, bait, and instructions in the techniques used to catch the rich diversity of ocean species found in the inshore environment. We'll also give you a lesson on ocean ecology, tides, and beach dynamics as these are directly related to how to be successful at fishing. Although we can't guarantee a catch, we're sure you'll enjoy the process. For ages 12+. Group size limited to 15 participants. Participants will be allowed to wade into the surf but will not be allowed to swim during the interpretive program. Service charge of \$60.00 for the one-hour program.

Blue Crabs- We know we love to eat them, but how much do you really know about this famous bay critter? Learn about its fascinating life cycle, and the role blue crabs play in managing the populations of animals they prey on. What's the difference between soft and hard crabs? How do crabs grow? What do newborn crabs look like? How can you tell a male from a female? We'll answer these questions and more as we try our hand at crabbing. Using hand lines, some bait and a little luck, we just might bring in a keeper! Service charge of \$40.00 per one-hour program (for groups up to 25 participants, and an additional \$2.00 per participant after 25).

Beach Scavenger Hunt

Explore the beach at Assateague in search of its natural treasures. Using a "Common Shells and Artifacts Discovery Guide", participants are challenged to find examples of shells and artifacts pictured and return to a sharing circle to learn about and share their finds. Then venture to the Nature Center where we'll meet some of the live animals who create these amazing shells as part of their bodies. Service charge of \$40.00 per program (for groups up to 25 participants, and an additional \$2.00 per participant after 25) for the one-hour program. The program can be adapted for any age group.

Campground Critter Encounter

Would you like to invite some special guests to your campsite or group site? Our Campground Critter Encounter lets you enjoy an up-close visit with some of our Scales & Tales animals- and the best part is we bring the program to you! Gather your friends and family right at your home away from home and we'll bring a group of aquatic or scaled friends to meet you. You'll learn about how these animals survive on and around Assateague Island and how you can help to protect wild animals. We'll even have time for a photo shoot with you and your new friends! Service charge of \$40.00 per program (for groups up to 20 participants) and is 30 minutes in length.

Killer Trash

Want to include a service project with your visit? How about a coastal cleanup? Not just about picking up trash, this lesson teaches participants specifically about marine debris, how long it takes common trash items to decompose, and its danger to seabirds, fish, and marine mammals. Armed with this information, a data collection sheet, and some hefty bags, participants comb the beach and collect debris, tallying their finds for the Ocean Conservancy's Coastal Cleanup Data Cards. Earn volunteer hours and help to beautify the beach at Assateague at the same time. Service charge \$40.00 per program (for groups up to 25 participants, and an additional \$2.00 per participant after 25) for the one-hour program. Program for ages 9+.

NOT AVAILABLE AT THIS TIME

Hoots & Hisses

By presenting live animals, this program emphasizes human interaction with nature and wildlife and encourages participants to practice responsible stewardship in parks and nature everywhere. An Eastern Screech or Barred owl, reptiles such as snakes and turtles, or aquatic species will be used to introduce participants to native species of Maryland, their habitat, diet, and unique adaptations for survival. Service charge of \$60.00 per program (for groups up to 25 participants, and an additional \$2.00 per participant after 25) for the one-hour program. This program can be adapted for any age group.