

ASSATEAGUE STATE PARK

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAM FLYER



The Maryland Park Service and Maryland Conservation Corps offer the following field trip opportunities at Assateague State Park beginning Spring 2025.

We welcome you and your students to discover the unique ecology of a saltmarsh barrier island and the abundance of creatures that inhabit them. Through a series of rotating stations, lasting approximately 30 - 45 minutes and selected by you in advance from the following descriptions, we can set up a program schedule to meet your needs. We can generally accommodate student groups up to 100. For groups over 100 we would need to schedule 2 days. Scheduling dates and times are flexible, but are reserved on a first-come, first-serve basis.

A picnic area is available for bag lunches, and accommodations for individuals with disabilities will be provided upon request. Suggested appropriate age ranges are listed but some programs may be adapted for other grades.

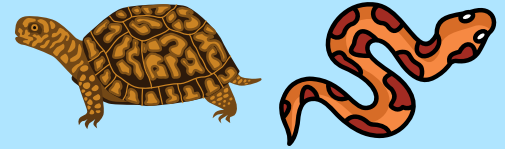
Activities will take place at the Beach (oceanfront or Nature Center location); or State Park Marina (bayside/saltmarsh location on the mainland just before the island bridge). Our staff can assist with logistics involved in transporting students between sites.

A service charge for Assateague State Park field trips of \$3.00 per student covers costs of materials and supplies and supports Assateague Interpretive Programs.

For 2025:
Due to changes within the Scales & Tales Program and the threat of Avian Influenza, we are unable to offer bird of prey programs at this time.

Oceanside/Beach Programs: located at the Nature Center

Program: Reptile Round Up
Location: Nature Center Area
Grades: All ages



Description: Explore the wild world of reptiles! As masters of disguise, reptiles are often misunderstood or feared, but serve an important role in the ecosystem. Learn what makes them special in a reptile meet and greet program with live animals!

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Program: Wildlife CSI
Location: Nature Center Area
Grades: All ages



Description: Calling all investigators! Do you think you can solve the mystery of who ate who? Learn about Assateague animals and the food chain. Collect evidence and clues to determine the 5 W's of a critter crime scene.

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Program: Treasures of the Beach
Location: Nature Center Beach
Grades: 3rd+



Description: Let's go for a walk! Learn about Assateague's beach by exploring the various zones of the beach and collect various treasures along the way. The type of sand and shells found on the beach tell you a lot about how the island moves and is constantly changing. Discover the importance of the various treasures as well as the sand you're walking on!

This program requires a teacher or chaperone to enter the water up to their knees.



Program: Can You Be A Shark Dentist?

Location: Nature Center Area

Grades: 1st - 4th

Description: Could you imagine reaching your hands into the jaws of a shark? Shark teeth may look scary but in fact they are a very important adaptation for these apex predators. Your students will get the opportunity to examine jaws from a real shark and we will even be taking a step back in time to examine fossilized sharks teeth. Join us as we extract the truth about the shark's toothy smile.

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Program: Horsin' Around

Location: Nature Center or Pavilion

Grades: Pre-K - 2nd

Description: Students will role play the stories of the origins of the horses coming to Assateague and use interactive tools to participate in activities to learn about the Assateague horses and their habitat. Students will make a horse craft to take home after defining "what is wild?" and how to stay safe around the Assateague horses.



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Program: Beach Scavenger Hunt

Location: Nature Center Beach

Grades: Pre-K - 3rd

Description: Students explore the beach at Assateague in search of its natural treasures. Using a "Common Shells and Artifacts Discovery Guide," students are challenged to find examples of the shells and artifacts pictured, then return to a sharing circle to learn about and share their finds.



Program: The Pony Patrol

Location: Nature Center or Pavilion

Grades: 3rd+

Description: Come out and join The Pony Patrol! We will explore the life of a horse, from horse characteristics to habitat to wildlife safety. Engage in several “hands-on” activities to explore the wonderful world of the Assateague horse. Learn about where they came from and how they survive in this unique coastal environment.



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Program: Recycled Assateague Crafts!

Location: Nature Center or Pavilion

Grades: 2nd - 6th

Description: The average American throws away about 4.5 pounds of trash each day. This adds up to over 1400lbs of trash per person per year. With 37 miles of coastline, Assateague sees trash not only from visitors but has more and more marine debris washing in from the ocean and bay. Students learn about recycling, re-using, and renewing and explore everyday items made from recycled materials. Then students will get to make their own recycled sea life creature. (For this activity we ask each student to bring a 16-20oz plastic water bottle or soda bottle.)



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Program: Castles in the Sand

Location: Beach

Grades: Activity can be adapted for grades 1- 8

Description: Barrier islands are dynamic ecosystems whose sands are always shifting and moving, eroding in some places and accumulating in others. Winds, tides and storms are constantly reforming their shapes. In this activity, students will construct “developments” on a strip of barrier island. Simulations will demonstrate to students the effects of coastal storms and the importance of a well-vegetated dune line.



Program: Critter Talk

Location: Nature Center area

Grades: All ages

Description: Meet some of Assateague's most interesting aquatic inhabitants. Check out our aquariums and observe horseshoe crabs, whelks, snails, terrapin, fish and more. Get a close-encounter aquatic animal program and learn more about the special features that allow these amazing creatures to survive in the waters around Assateague Island.



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Program: Goodnight Owl

Location: Nature Center area

Grades: Pre-K - 2nd

Description: Learn all about native birds, specifically owls, during a story time reading of "Goodnight Owl". Students will learn bird sounds while participating in an interactive reading, get to play owl dress up to learn about the different parts of an owl, and make an owl craft!



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Program: Backyard Habitat

Location: Nature Center area

Grades: Can be adapted for grades 1-8

Description: Parks aren't the only places for students to see wildlife - learn to look for wildlife all around you as we discuss the importance of local reptiles and amphibians in the ecosystem. Demonstrations will show simple ways to create inviting homes for wildlife and ideas for students to build habitats to attract animals to their own backyards and schoolyards.



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Program: Critter Story Craft

Location: Nature Center area

Grades: All ages

Description: Horseshoe crabs, snakes, turtles, fish... Sit back and enjoy a story about one of the critters residing in our Nature Center. Students will learn about a fascinating local animal, where it lives, what it eats, and how they can help to protect their habitat. After getting a closer look, each student will create their own critter craft to take home.



Program: Can you be an Assateague Animal?

Location: Nature Center beach area

Grades: Pre-K - 2nd

Description: Younger students will learn about the animals that live on and around Assateague Island. Using pantomime and body poses, students will imitate some of the common critters found on the beach and in the water to learn about their unique body shapes and sizes, behaviors, and adaptations. Learn the sign language for some sea creatures and hear the sounds they make.



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Program: Rescue Me

Location: Nature Center area

Grades: Pre-K - 2nd

Description: Discover the importance of keeping beaches clean and of not disturbing wildlife when you help one of Assateague's animals follow clues to return to its habitat. The needs and obstacles faced by Diamondback Terrapins on Assateague are discovered through clues, relays and an interactive story.



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Program: Turtle Hurdles

Location: Nature Center beach area

Grades: 4th - 8th

Description: Did you know sea turtles migrate past Assateague Island on their yearly migration? Learn about the sea turtle's life cycle, explore their migration route, and find out how climate change is impacting the turtles. You will get a close up view of what a sea turtle looks like by examining skulls and bones.



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Program: Whale Tales

Location: Nature Center area

Grades: 3rd - 8th

Description: Whales are often seen from the beaches of Assateague. Sometimes their bones even wash up onto the shore. Learn fascinating facts about these large mammals, touch and see real whale bones found at Assateague, and compare their size to humans to see how big these animals really are.



Program: Winged Migration

Location: Pavilion

Grades: 3rd - 6th

Description: There is a fascinating monarch migration that starts in the north east and ends in Mexico, where Assateague Island is an important rest stop along the way. Experience what it is like to migrate across the country and weigh less than a penny. Learn how climate change and human impacts are affecting their migration and how you can help the monarch in its travels.



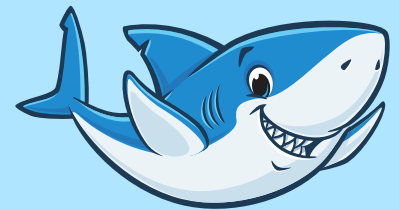
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Program: Sharks! Fact or Fiction

Location: Nature Center area

Grades: 4th - 8th

Description: Just like they say in “Finding Nemo”, a shark is more than just a mindless eating machine! Using artifacts, photos, and models, students will learn to identify sharks according to their external parts and similar features. An activity will demonstrate how tooth shape matches food sources. We’ll discuss ancient shark species as well as how environmental conditions will determine the survival of shark species today.



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Program: Killer Trash

Location: Nature Center area

Grades: All ages

Description: Want to include a service project with your visit? How about a coastal cleanup? Not just about picking up trash, this lesson teaches students 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, students comb the beach and collect debris, tallying their finds on Ocean Conservancy’s Coastal Cleanup Data Cards.



Bayside/Marina Programs: located at State Park marina on the west side of Verrazano Bridge

Program: Saltmarsh Exploration

Location: Marina beach

Grades: Can be adapted for grades 1-8

Description: Not afraid of getting muddy? Come with us to discover the bay side of Assateague Island. Students explore the complexities of a saltmarsh, one of the most productive ecosystems on earth. Use seining and clamming equipment to collect mollusks, fish and shrimp for observation and identification, and investigate the differences between salt, fresh, and brackish water. Students can also use monitoring equipment to collect data about the health of the bay. (For this activity, students will wade into the saltmarsh. We recommend wearing old clothes/bathing suits and closed-toed shoes are required for all participants.)



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Program: Blue Crabs! More than Just All You Can Eat!

Location: Marina dock

Grades: Can be adapted for grades 1-8

Description: 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 does a crab grow? 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 might just bring in a keeper!



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