

Mid-Cape Sanctuaries

Programs can also be scheduled at our other nearby sanctuaries. At Skunknett River Wildlife Sanctuary in Osterville, students can study a river, a rare Atlantic White Cedar Swamp, Oak Pine forest, the historic site of mills and cranberry bogs and observe wildlife such as kingfishers, ospreys, and herons.

Ashumet Holly Wildlife Sanctuary offers a rare coastal plain pond featuring endangered wildflowers and dragonflies, and a very active vernal pool where students can see breeding spotted salamanders, frogs, and their egg masses in spring.

At Popponesset Spit in Mashpee students can visit a thriving barrier beach ecosystem and observe shorebirds, including threatened least tern colonies and endangered piping plovers.

Long Pasture Wildlife Sanctuary also offers public kayak trips and Cuttyhunk and Elizabeth Island tours in season.



Mid and Upper Cape Sanctuaries ***Long Pasture - Ashumet Holly - Skunknett***

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Long Pasture Wildlife Sanctuary School Programs



Cape Cod Ecosystem Explorations

Educational Philosophy



Long Pasture Wildlife Sanctuary is a spectacular 110-acre sanctuary on Cape Cod Bay, featuring 2.5 miles of trails through woods, salt marsh, fields, freshwater wetlands, and sandy beach habitats. Our teacher/naturalists provide interactive, hands-on learning experiences, in which students make observations, ask questions, conduct investigations using real science tools and skills, record their findings, and draw conclusions from their research.

Our field studies are organized around four critical ecosystems - tidal flats, salt marsh, freshwater pond, and vernal pool - which are home to a rich collection of plants and animals. We provide teachers with pre and post field trip activities (and/or classroom visits) to help prepare their classes for sanctuary trips. The goal of our outdoor programs is to explore the ecological concepts of food web/energy transfer, adaptation and lifestyle, diversity, and human interrelationships with these Cape Cod habitats.

We have designed complementary classroom units which focus in-depth on specific organisms within each ecosystem. Our teacher/naturalists bring living plants and animals into the classroom for observation whenever possible. Many of these lessons incorporate math and writing skills as well as life and earth science topics in the Massachusetts Curriculum Standards. Programs can be modified for different age groups and time requirements. All of our programs seek to inspire children to look at Cape Cod's natural environment in new ways and to empower them as scientists.

The Tidal Flats

On the Sanctuary's tidal flats, students investigate how creatures survive in an environment that is inundated by the tides twice a day. They will use dip nets, digging tools, and magnification to collect and observe many species of marine organisms. Through discussion and games students will study the anatomy of these creatures, where they live within the habitat, and their role in the community.

Classroom Units

Horseshoe Crabs: For millions of years they have migrated to shore and spawned during the spring tide. Students will study the horseshoe crab's anatomy, life cycle, and critical connections to other species and threats to its future. They will also learn how volunteers are helping to determine the crabs' annual spawning locations and population in Barnstable Harbor.

Seashell Investigations: Students will learn to classify mollusks, discover the mysterious causes of holes in shells, and observe living specimens feeding and moving.

Protecting the Piping Plover: Children will compare how different shorebird species adapt to life on the beach and focus on the unique niche of the endangered piping plover, why it is so susceptible to human activity, and how Mass Audubon is participating in its recovery. Children may create decoys and shelters and take a spring beach fieldtrip to see how the Coastal Waterbird Program monitors these threatened birds.

The Salt Marsh

Students will discover that the marsh is more than expanses of cord grass - it is a dynamic nursery for a myriad of creatures. Using seines, dip nets, and fish traps, they will encounter a diversity of marine life including fiddler crabs, eels, and shrimp and consider how each contributes to the life of the marsh.

Classroom Units

Crustaceans of Cape Cod: Students compare the anatomy and behavior of hard-shelled marine scavengers, such as shrimp, amphipods, crabs, and barnacles.

The Pond

Students will uncover the world of aquatic invertebrates that are often concealed under rocks, lily pads and the mucky pond bottom. After collecting samples with buckets and nets, they will use magnification and guides to identify and describe pond creatures, such as dragonfly nymphs and water striders, and determine their place in the food chain.

Classroom Units

Turtles: Students observe these ancient, secretive reptiles and consider how their shells, claws and other anatomical features help them survive in different habitats.

Aquatic Insects: Colorful and carnivorous, dragonflies and damselflies are important indicators of the health of aquatic ecosystems. Students will explore the intriguing life cycle and metamorphosis of these and /or other aquatic invertebrates.

The Vernal Pool

Students will become active participants in our vernal pool certification and monitoring program by searching for egg masses, tadpoles, and adult salamanders and frogs, taking measurements of the physical characteristics of the pool, and recording their data for further discussion of how organisms behave and adapt in this fluctuating habitat.

Classroom Units

Amphibians: Students learn how these fascinating creatures survive in both the worlds of water and land during their life cycle, look at their embryonic development, and consider what declines in amphibian populations teach us about the environment.

