



Felix Neck Wildlife Sanctuary - School Programs

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Overview:

The programs at Felix Neck offer island children the opportunity to experience nature and wildlife through hands-on learning in the outdoors and classroom. By building awareness and knowledge of their natural surroundings, we hope that children will appreciate and respect the island, develop a “sense of place” and carry this ethic through life.

Mass Audubon’s Felix Neck Wildlife Sanctuary has been providing environmental education to the Martha’s Vineyard school district since the 1970’s. Felix Neck naturalists lead approximately 170 classroom and field trip programs annually at no charge to individual classroom teachers. The programs are partially funded through a contract with the school system, a grant from the Edey Foundation and contributions from Felix Neck.

Below you will find a list of the programs that we offer, but we are also willing to work with educators to create new programs aligned with the curriculum frameworks that will help you reach your teaching goals.

A Sense of Seasons (Pre-K, K, Gr. 1): (1 hour field trips) Students visit Felix Neck three times, in the fall, winter and spring. This program reinforces what our five senses are and how we can use them to study nature. Classes observe plant and animal life as the seasons change.

Turtles (K, Gr. 1): (45 minute classroom presentation) Felix Neck brings live native turtles into the classroom which provides an opportunity for students to learn about the unique characteristics of reptiles. This program also emphasizes actions that children can take to protect these animals.

Seashore Discovery (K, Gr. 1): (1.5 hour field trip) With nets, buckets and curious minds, students explore the waters of Sengekontacket Pond for marine life. Classes may take specimens back to the classroom to set up aquariums for long-term study.

Animals in Winter (K, Gr. 1): (1 hour classroom presentation and/or field trip) This program introduces students to the ways that animals have adapted to survive winter. Through discussion, games, and a close-up look at animal specimens, students become familiar with animal’s food needs and begin to understand the terms active, dormant, migrate and hibernate.

Insects (Gr.1): (1.5 hour field trip) Students discover the unique characteristics of insects, search the Felix Neck fields for insects, and discuss insect adaptations such as camouflage, life cycles and body structure. We will emphasize the importance of insects to people and wildlife, as well as the importance of respecting even the smallest living things.

Snakes (Gr. 1): (45 minute classroom presentation) During this classroom visit, students learn about the characteristics of reptiles and their island habitats. We hope to dispel any fear of snakes and help students understand how to protect snakes in the wild.

Endangered Species (Gr. 2): (45 minute classroom presentation and 1 hour field trip) A slideshow in the classroom and a field trip to piping plover and tern nesting sites at State Beach in Edgartown provide a forum for students to learn about human and natural factors that threaten animal and plant populations.

Bats (Gr. 2): (45 minute classroom presentation) This classroom presentation dispels myths about these flying mammals and discusses the differences between mammals and birds. The different ways that bats can find food is explored and a group activity to help students understand echolocation. Felix Neck naturalists bring in a bat specimen and pictures for students to get an up close look at these interesting animals.

Freshwater Pond Life (Gr. 3): (1 hour classroom presentation and two 1.5 hour field trips) A classroom visit introduces students to freshwater pond ecology and prepares classes for field trips to Felix Neck and Cranberry Acres, where we collect samples of aquatic invertebrates and amphibians with nets. Students learn to identify, count and record their findings, and discuss the intricate life cycles, food webs, and survival adaptations of pond organisms.

The Night Sky (Gr. 4): (45 minute classroom presentation and 1 hour field trip) After an introduction to astronomy in the classroom, students and their families meet at Felix Neck for an evening of stargazing, star lore, and night sky viewing through a telescope.

Mammal Adaptations (Gr. 4): (1 hour classroom presentation) Felix Neck brings mammal skins and skulls into the classroom. Students discover which mammals can be found on Martha's Vineyard and work in groups to identify mammal skulls. The focus is mammal teeth adaptations for food preferences.

Forest Ecology (Gr. 4): (1 hour field trip) Students brainstorm the living and non-living components of a forest, learn about the vegetation layers, and take part in a scavenger hunt for forest items. Group discussion focuses on the role of producers, consumers, and decomposers in a forest.

Bird Beaks and Feet (Gr. 4): (1 hour classroom presentation and/or field trip) Examples of real bird beaks and feet are brought into the classroom for students to observe. Students discover why birds have different beaks and feet depending on their feeding strategies and participate in a group activity to find out which beaks are adapted for which food and the group graphs the results. During a nature walk at Felix Neck students use binoculars to identify birds and their unique adaptations.

Moon and Tides (Gr. 4): (45 minute classroom presentation) Living on an island, we sometimes live our life by the tide. This program starts with a demonstration of the phases of the moon using Oreo cookies. Students discover how the phases of the moon and alignment of the sun, moon and earth cause the natural phenomenon of the tide. This presentation can be followed with field trips to look at the effects of the tide.

Watersheds (Middle School): (1 hour classroom presentation and 1 hour field trip) Students locate their "watershed address" using Martha's Vineyard watershed maps, and then as a group build their community with our watershed model. The model demonstrates the interaction of land use and water quality. A field trip to Felix Neck provides the opportunity for students to learn how to do basic water quality testing and take a closer look at the Sengekontacket watershed.

Owls/Raptors (All Grades): (1 hour field trip) Students examine raptor specimens and learn about their adaptations. Barn owls can be seen in the live Barn Owl cam. An owl pellet dissection allows students to take a closer look at the owl's diet.

Salt Marsh Ecology (Middle & High School): (2 hour field trip) Students explore the salt marsh and tidal creeks for marine life. Discussion focuses on the geologic processes that create marshes and the value of wetlands to people and wildlife. This program can also be done by kayak.

PROGRAMS can be customized for any grade as requested by teachers. We can create programs to meet your needs. Some other topics include monarch butterflies, animal classification, bird walks, habitat studies, nature writing, whales, migration, plants, the scientific method, taxonomy and classification, populations, wildlife tracking, geology and more!