

## **Matagorda Island National Wildlife Refuge** **Environmental Education Courses**

Recommended Age: High School, College, Adult

Environmental education classes are limited to 25 students

Overnight stays are limited to 20 students

Groups must secure transportation to and from Matagorda Island from a private carrier.

### **Matgorda Island National Wildlife Refuge Introduction and Orientation**

Learn about the mission of a National Wildlife Refuge System to preserve a national network of lands and waters for the conservation and management of fish, wildlife, and plant resources for the benefit of present and future generations. Why is Matagorda National Wildlife Refuge important? How did Matagorda Island become a Refuge? Tour the headquarters. Go out into the field and see various management problems and solutions. Get a behind-the-scenes tour. What does it take to operate a National Wildlife Refuge?

### **Beach Habitat**

Matagorda Beach is where the island meets the sea. Learn to recognize the several zones that make up the beach, then use shovels, sieves and seines to get a hands-on introduction to the array of specialized creatures that live on the beach. Identify and classify your specimens. Discuss adaptations, food chains, survival strategies. Appreciate how humans interfere with the natural cycles on a beach. Participants must be prepared to get wet to the knees; no bare feet; adequate clothing and sun block required.

### **Tidal Flat Habitat**

The Tidal Flat is where the island meets the bay. Visit an estuary, the nursery ground and food basket for much of the island's fauna. Watch and identify birds. Identify the salt-tolerant plants. Muck through the muddy shallows, sampling the fishes, crustaceans, worms and mollusks that call this brackish wetland home. Speculate why this is a bountiful habitat; what threatens its existence. Participants must be prepared to get wet to the knees; no bare feet; adequate clothing and sun block required.

### **Beach Scavenger Hunt**

Visit the Gulf Beach of Matagorda Island. Go on a scavenger hunt. Identify the types of waste on the beach. Learn what different types of plastic find their way to Matagorda Island. Discuss the problem; where does all this come from? Why? What can we do? Are we part of the problem or part of the solution? How can litter be a danger to animals? Are there any endangered animals that are affected by the litter? What will you do with your litter? Do you think beach clean-up programs do any good? Participants must be prepared to get wet to the knees; no bare feet; adequate clothing and sun block required.

### **What's in the Seine!**

Seine the bay! Conduct a biological field investigation to determine the biodiversity of the bay. Participants will gain knowledge of the aquatic habitat as a unique environment teeming with an astounding diversity of organisms. Participants will catch and release

aquatic organisms while developing an awareness of the need for conservation of aquatic habitats. How many did we catch? I have never seen that before! Go aquatic at Matagorda Island. Participants must be prepared to get wet to the knees; no bare feet; adequate clothing and sun block required.

### **Endangered Species**

What does endangered and threatened mean? Spend one hour learning about sea turtles in the laboratory classroom at Matagorda Island. Experience an interactive hands-on learning environment. Learn how turtle patrol uses tracks and other signs to identify a turtle nest. What are some human factors that affect sea turtles? Learn what to do if you find an injured sea turtle. What are we doing at Matagorda Island to help sea turtles? Have any sea turtles nests ever been found on Matagorda Island National Wildlife Refuge? What other endangered or threatened species occur on Matagorda Island. What can you do to help save endangered species?

### **Matagorda Island National Wildlife Refuge Tour**

Tour Matagorda Island National Wildlife Refuge on the Conestoga wagon. Walk a trail. Visit the fresh water ponds and view the animals that live there, you may see an alligator or two. Visit the observation platforms and keep your binoculars ready to spot birds, mammals, reptiles, insects, plants, and amphibians. Matagorda Island is located along the Central Flyaway and is a critical staging area for many flocks of migrating birds. The Island offers a wonderful wildlife viewing opportunity. This environmental education experience offers an outdoor excursion in a unique remote habitat that has had limited human interaction.

Click on the request form to request one of the environmental education classes offered at Matagorda Island National Wildlife Refuge. Requests for environmental education must be made three weeks prior to your visit. Reservations can be made by calling (361) 286-3559.