

UTMSI Educational Programs

R/V Katy

Trips aboard the R/V Katy are offered to classes from 5th grade and up. Students will learn about the coastal marine environment through sampling marine life at three different levels. Plankton tows, benthic mud grabs and trawls are conducted. Students examine and help sort the organisms collected while they learn about adaptations, taxonomy and ecology. An understanding of the marine environment that supports such abundance is gained through measurement, observation and sampling. In addition, students get to observe other coastal marine life such as dolphins, brown pelicans and sea turtles as the Katy travels the bays and channels where sampling takes place. A half-day trip takes 3 to 4 hours with a maximum of 25 people. If your group has more than 25 people, we offer two 2-hour trips in order to accommodate your entire group.

Grade levels: 5 & up

Wetlands Education Center Guided Tours

The Wetlands Education Center is a 3.5 acre constructed wetlands that highlights different habitats within coastal areas wetlands, including dunes, salt water marshes, sea grasses and oyster reefs. Students will gain an understanding and appreciation for the role each facet of a wetland plays in supporting and maintaining the productivity of the coastal zone. The tour focuses on adaptations of organisms, the importance of these areas to both nature and people, and the incredible variety of plants and animals that are supported by these very important habitats.

Suggested grade levels: 4 & up

Jetty Walk

The location of the Aransas Pass ship channel adjacent to UTMSI provides the perfect opportunity to study life on a rocky substrate. On the jetty walk, students will get the opportunity to observe the adaptations that organisms have developed to be able to live in an area subject to high energy waves, changing water levels and exposure to sun and air. We will examine different zones on the jetty and contrast it with life in a low energy, sand beach habitat and possibly collect some organisms from each habitat. Algae identification and pressing can be added.

Suggested grade levels: 6 & up

Beach Exploration & Scavenger Hunt

An in-depth look at beaches, the forces that shape them and the organisms that live there. Activities include a variety of topics (depending on teachers' needs) and can include a sand study, an examination of the different zones on the beach, shore birds, and the organisms and their adaptations that live on the beach. Time is also given for students to conduct a beach scavenger hunt, with time at the end to discuss and identify the "treasures" that they find.

Suggested grade levels: K – 12

Birding 101

These introductory classes are designed for students to learn basic techniques that will help them identify birds by using field marks. Students can play an interactive game using "beaks" to determine the best adaptations for different habitats. In our wetlands/salt marsh, students will view wild birds and record species and numbers. Other activities included are making a bird feeder or sketching a bird or a plant, just like the famous ornithologist, James Audubon.

Suggested Grade: 2-12

Salt Marsh Plant Lab

Students will examine the unique adaptations that many salt marsh plants have evolved to help them survive in the salt-marsh habitat. Students will examine zonation and distribution of plants, as well as learn how to identify

different plants using a field guide. Students will also have the opportunity to make a field notebook, and learn how to make sketches and field notes for later reference. Plant printing can be added.

Suggested grade levels: 5-12

Plankton Survey

After using a plankton tow to collect local marine plankton, students will examine and learn to classify the major types of phytoplankton and zooplankton. They will describe general adaptations and structures which characterize different groups. They will also make observations about abundance and discuss contributing factors for numbers and types of plankton. At the end, students will design their own "plankter" and participate in "The Great Plankton Race."

Suggested grade levels: 4th-12th

Marine Tours

Guided tour of our aquarium habitats as well as touch tanks with local sea creatures.

Suggested grade levels: k-5

Fish Adaptations Lab

Students will examine different fishes to learn about how mouth, tail and body shape can help you determine where a fish lives and what it eats. Students work in small groups examining a real "mystery" fish to make educated guesses about its habitat and food. Fish printing or dissection can be added.

Suggested grade levels: 3-8

All classes are designed to suit appropriate grade levels. Activities may vary depending on grade and total group size.