

[From Fall 1998]

Refuge Academy is a Smash with Kids!

Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge's public use staff is continually trying to develop new and exciting activities for the visiting public. To keep this tradition alive, this summer, assisted by Public Use Interns Nathan Swem and Carl Hung, we launched Refuge Academy.

Refuge Academy is an environmental education "camp" that encourages children ages 8 to 13 to explore the Refuge and learn about the important role refuges play in conserving fish, wildlife and plants. Participants, through hands-on activities, learn about refuge management, endangered species, bioaccumulation, biodiversity, population fluctuation, predator/prey relationships, fresh and salt water plants and animals, and data collection . Most importantly, kids learn how to have fun in the great outdoors.

Refuge public use staff employed a variety of teaching methods during the Academy including presentations, games, field studies and lectures. According to participants, one of the most enjoyable parts of the Academy was learning what a refuge biologist does. Refuge staff believe that the experiences children got during the Academy will help to foster an appreciation for wild things and wild places, as well as make them advocates of the national wildlife refuge system.

As a matter of fact, this year's Academy was so popular that some children were unable to participate because of limited space. Be sure to keep your eyes and ears open for information about next year's Academy which promises to be bigger and better than ever.

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