

Seagrass/Mangrove Ecology for 1-2 Day Programs

This program was specifically created for school groups who are with us 1-1.5 days. The seagrass and mangrove ecology programs are a part of MarineLab's core curriculum. Seagrass beds make up the largest benthic habitat in the waters surrounding the Florida Keys and mangrove forests make up the majority of the natural coastal habitat in the Florida Keys. We want all students who visit MarineLab, regardless of the length of time they are with us, to experience Florida Bay and understand the interconnection these inshore habitats have with the coral reef. The boat and the outdoors are our classroom for this program which includes a discussion of the importance of these habitats and identifying characteristics of our mangroves before snorkeling a site providing a glimpse of both seagrass and mangrove habitats. Instructor will collect samples of seagrass, algae, and representative invertebrates to bring back to the boat for observation and discussion.

Grade Level: All

Timing: 3 hours

Concepts Covered:

- Function of the seagrass and mangrove habitats in the overall keys ecosystem
- Distinguishing characteristics of algae and grass
- Seagrass and algae identification
- Three species of mangroves in the FL Keys and their identifying characteristics
- Mangrove adaptations
- Bird identification

Vocabulary: calcareous, obligate halophyte, facultative halophyte, prop root, pneumatophore, adaptation, zonation, salt exclusion/excretion, exotic species

Resources: www.seagrasswatch.org, <http://seagrass.fiu.edu/>, <http://floridakeys.noaa.gov/plants/seagrass.html>