Saints Survey Species by the Seashore (on the 2025 Environmental Science Camping Trip)

August Ryan
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Late last month, this year's senior environmental science students joined in on what has become a favorite tradition among Saints: EnviSci Camping Trip!

For Saints, environmental education can be a day at the beach—that is to say, students can learn about the natural world while camping under the stars, walking waterways and forest trails, wading in the surf, and following in the hoofprints of wild horses.

St. Andrew's 2025 Environmental Science camping trip took four adults and about two dozen VI Form science students to Assateague Island National Seashore, a 48,000-acre barrier island that stretches between Virginia and Maryland. Saints made camp in Assateague's Maryland district and spent a little more than 24 hours exploring its beaches and salt marshes, and walking trails lined by a wide array of hardy plants.

Will Rehrig '11, Associate Dean of Students and a chemistry and engineering instructor,

helped lead the 2025 outing. He says the camping trip has two core goals—the first, to help students enjoy time in nature; the second, to help them apply classroom knowledge to the real world with a short field study.

“The trip continues a long tradition of cultivating in students a love of the outdoors, which has been a fundamental part of the St. Andrew’s science experience,” Rehrig says. “That effort began with teaching legends like Bill Amos and Peter McLean—Bill even wrote the national park guide to Assateague.”

Photo by Christopher Lewis—scroll down for a complete photo gallery.

Rehrig co-led the trip with III Form Dean and environmental science and biology instructor Alex Horgan ’18. The teachers guided students as they surveyed and learned more about Assateague’s vital environmental role and its ecological variety.

“On the island, students are able to explore a unique and diverse barrier island ecosystem, looking at the life of the dunes, forest, and marsh along with the island's famous wild ponies,” Rehrig says.

Barrier islands form and are then constantly reformed by waves coming to shore, and the islands protect coastlines—and coastal communities and ecosystems–from extreme weather. Plant and animal species across the island have to adapt to harsh conditions for continued survival.

Assateague is best known as a home to wild horses. Their presence is a ripple effect from

1600s colonists' decision to graze livestock on the island—domesticated horses are a far-back branch on the family trees of Assateague's wild ponies.

Photo by Christopher Lewis—scroll down for a complete photo gallery.

The horses are beautiful, and they are biology lessons in motion. Fieldwork on Assateague is a valuable change of pace, offering memorable real-world examples of classroom concepts that can't be found on our home turf. Biology courses at St. Andrew's often take students into the field—but on Noxontown Pond's freshwater ecosystem, into inland rather than coastal woods, into the habitats of very different flora and fauna.

Of course, Saints brought a little St. Andrew's style to their seaside campsite: taking time in nature for quiet reflection, and sharing stories, jokes, and community around a campfire. Over the years, Rehrig has seen environmental science campouts become core memories for students.

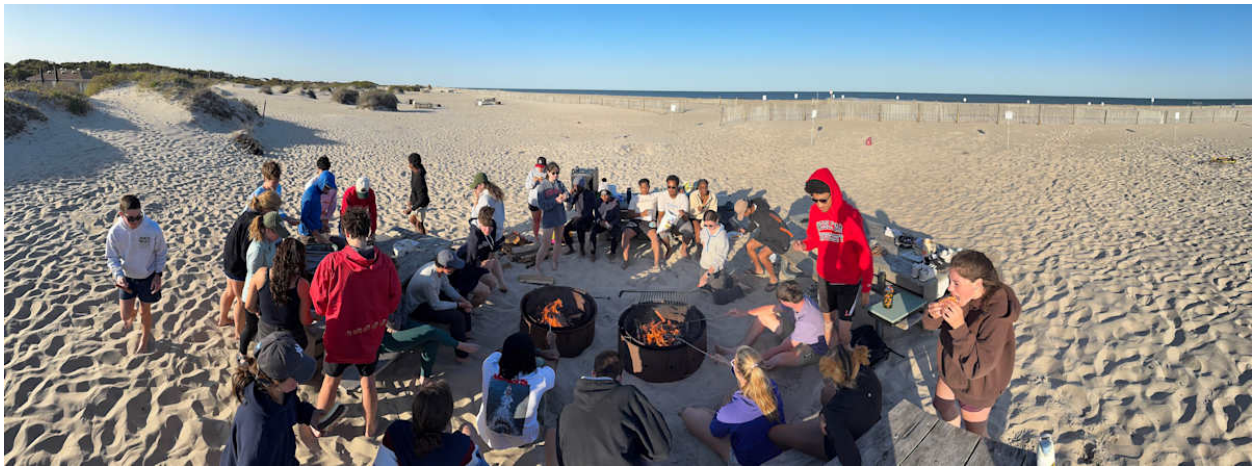

Photo by Christopher Lewis—scroll down for a complete photo gallery.

“Students make their own dinner, enjoy a campfire, and sleep right among the beach dunes,” Rehrig says. “While students might be a bit sleep deprived after their trip to the island, many comment that it is a highlight of their senior year and St. Andrew's science experience.”

Thank you to Technology Coordinator Christopher Lewis for helping guide students on the trip, and for taking the beautiful pictures included in this story and on our Instagram page.