



CoastWalk Survey

Objective:

To explore the beach and become familiar with the plants and animals in the marine intertidal habitat while collecting some basic observational data. To build community awareness of the importance of our local marine habitats. To gather data to detect long-term trends in biodiversity and to observe the effects of human impact.

Concept:

CoastWalk is a unique community science and stewardship program that encourages students and community members to participate in general observations about their coastal environments. Stewardship programs promote a better understanding of the environment and a sense of responsibility for its future.

You Will Need:

- ◆ CoastWalk Data Sheets
- ◆ Map of your stretch of beach
- ◆ Pencils
- ◆ Binoculars
- ◆ Identification guides

What to Do:

Introductions:

Review your checklist materials with the class prior to your CoastWalk to familiarize yourself with what you might see on your field trip. Review the tide zones so that students are sure of where they are to be conducting their surveys. Make sure all of your students are dressed appropriately for the weather.

Procedures:

Divide the class into teams of two with one team walking the high tide and the other team walking the low tide zone. Walk a zig zag path between the high and low tide lines. You can also walk the low tide line out and the high tide line back if you need to.

When recording data use tally marks in groups of five, then total when finished. For large groups of organisms, count ten then use that benchmark to estimate the rest. If you are not sure of the identity of an organism - don't record it. If you encounter a dead or stranded animal, make a note of its location and leave it alone.

Walk your designated zone recording your data on the data sheets. Take pictures of organisms and unusual sites for documentation. Pick up trash along the way and take it to a local dumpster. Return your completed data sheets to the Center for Coastal Studies.

Wrap-Up:

When you return to the classroom go over your data as a group. Do the graphing activity to compare low and high tide zone findings. Discuss human impact issues that may have come up on your stretch of the beach. Do the Design and Inquiry activity as a class to explore one issue or have the teams of students develop their own inquiries based on issues they have identified.

Extensions:

Keep some of your more interesting trash finds and hold an art contest back in the classroom. Challenge the students to come up with the most creative display of beach debris art.