



Fort Wilderness Marine Biology **Welcome to the Keys!**

My name is Michael Lane and I am the Director of the Nature Center at Fort Wilderness Ministries. During the 1980's I began a program that allows high school students to experience a special dream of studying Marine Biology on site in the semi-tropical water of the Florida Keys. As a former Biology teacher, past instructor and curriculum developer at the John G. Shedd Aquarium in Chicago and a resident of the Bahamas, I can give students a solid foundation in marine science.

Picture this: The temperature is a balmy 85 degrees and a light breeze comes off the ocean. You don your dive mask and your fins. Then comes the signal from your group leader to jump in and begin observing and collecting marine life. Through your dive mask you see a kaleidoscope of living colors in the form of fish and marine invertebrates. Off in the distance a barracuda swims by, curious of the expedition.

Sounds like a Discovery Channel video? Well, this is an average day for those enrolled in the Fort Wilderness Marine Biology Program.

Each Easter season for over 30 years I load up a chartered bus with around 30 students and adults to travel to the only coral reefs you can actually drive to in the U.S. Once there, we move into a hotel and convert it into a biology research station for 9-days.

I am a national and state award recipient in education and I will take you on a learning experience of a lifetime. Sharing my expertise with that of other instructors, you will encounter hands on laboratories that have only been a dream in your past. During the 9-days on site, you will spend one day swimming with stingrays and visiting the world famous Theater of the Sea, just a short distance from where we stay.

Besides those experiences, you will be placed in a group that carries a habitat name such as Coral Reefs, Mangroves, Grass flats, etc. Together with other members in your group you will participate in responsible collecting, snorkeling, chemical analysis of water samples, excursions to habitats, lectures on the beach and many other activities. And this is just an average day!

One of the habitats we study is a coral reef six miles off shore called the Coffin Patch. We travel to the reef by boat and there, participants get to see up close hundreds of varieties of colorful fish, corals, and invertebrates.

I am in the process right now of forming the 2018 class and I would like you to be included too. Whether you want to see if Marine Biology is a career for you, if you are just wanting a great hands-on learning experience, or if you want to experience a closer look at God's creation, this trip is for you. I am looking for students that want a challenge, are willing to learn, and want to experience God's ocean world first-hand while deepening their relationship with God. For further information, you can contact me at Fort Wilderness at 800-338-3678 or 715-277-2587. You can also email me at michaellane@fortwilderness.com or visit our site at fortwilderness.com. So come along for the best leaning experience of your life. Room fills up fast, so don't wait.