

# California Naturalist Training

Spring 2024 Syllabus

September 4 to October 23, 2024



**Lead Instructor: Jennifer Ortega (she/her)**

[jen@friendsofthedunes.org](mailto:jen@friendsofthedunes.org)

**Teaching Assistants:**

TBD

**Admin & Co-Instructor: Suzie Fortner**

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*Zoom "Office Hours" will be announced in class*

## Course Description

The Coastal Naturalist Training, a California Naturalist certification course through the [UC Environmental Stewards program](#), will introduce participants to the wonders of Humboldt's coastal ecology and engage them in stewardship of California's natural communities. This course combines a junior college-level introductory science course curriculum with classroom and field experiences, guest lecturers, and project-based learning to immerse participants in the natural world of the Humboldt Bay region and coastal dune ecosystem. The UC Environmental Stewards Program seeks to foster a committed corps of volunteer naturalists and community scientists trained and ready to take an active role in natural resource conservation, education, and restoration.

## UC California Naturalist Program Goals

- To promote environmental literacy and stewardship of California's natural resources
- To increase participation in resource conservation and participatory science projects throughout the state
- To develop a core constituency of committed and educated citizens motivated and trained to participate in resource conservation, preservation, and restoration efforts
- To provide participants with the knowledge, skills, and confidence they need to educate others and participate in many aspects of resource management, such as public education, resource planning, and public decision-making
- To provide the communication experience and critical thinking skills necessary to grow a citizen base that supports environmental protection and sustainable growth in California

## Participant Learning Outcomes

*By the end of this course, participants will:*

- Understand what it means to be a naturalist
- Have increased knowledge of the natural history of the Humboldt Bay region
- Have integrated knowledge of the interconnectedness of abiotic, biotic, and cultural factors and their influence on the natural history of the Humboldt Bay region and coastal ecosystems
- Demonstrate skills in recording natural history observations in a field notebook and on iNaturalist
- Demonstrate skills in communicating and interpreting natural science information
- Be able to apply knowledge of the Humboldt Bay region and coastal ecosystems to local and global environmental issues
- Be equipped and empowered to become active volunteers with Friends of the Dunes or other local environmental organizations

## Program Costs

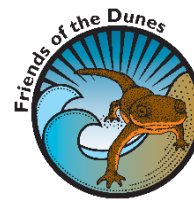
- Program Fee: \$400 or \$350 for students & Friends of the Dunes members
- Kayak Rental (Optional): Approximately \$30 for a kayak rental through Center Activities
- Academic Credits (Optional): \$80 for Four UC Davis Continuing and Professional Education academic credits upon course completion and certification. More information will be provided in class.

*Scholarships are available based on need. Please contact [suzie@friendsofthedunes.org](mailto:suzie@friendsofthedunes.org) for more information.*

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## Time and Location

- **Course Dates:** September 4 to October 23, 2024
- **Classroom Sessions:** Wednesday evenings from 6 to 8 p.m. at the [Humboldt Coastal Nature Center](#)
- **Field Sessions:** Sunday mornings from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.\* Locations vary, carpooling is encouraged.
- **Capstone Presentations & Graduation:** Wednesday, October 23<sup>rd</sup> from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m.

*\*Exact times for field sessions may vary depending on activities for the day*

## Course Requirements

- **Contact Time:** Participants are required to complete a minimum of 40 hours of educational contact time. Information about making up missed sessions is included on page 3 of this syllabus.
- **Required Reading & Homework:** Participants are required to complete reading and homework assignments, which will include reading the entire texts *The California Naturalist Handbook* and *Coastal Naturalist Manual*. A detailed schedule of class sessions and associated homework assignments will be available at least 2 weeks prior to the course start date.
- **Stewardship Project:** Participants are required to complete a Stewardship Project focusing on one of six areas: Stewardship, Education/Interpretation, Participatory Science, Program Support, Community Resilience & Adaptation, or Environmental & Climate Justice. Participants will present their Stewardship projects to the class on graduation day. More information about Stewardship Projects is provided on page 3 of this syllabus.
- **Using a Field Notebook:** All participants are required to keep a field notebook during the course to keep notes from field sessions and field observations. Field notebooks may be checked by the instructor periodically throughout the course. Participants are also encouraged, but not required, to keep a Nature Journal. The difference between a field notebook and a nature journal will be discussed during our first field session.
- **iNaturalist Observations & Course iNaturalist Project:** Participants will be responsible for registering for an [iNaturalist](http://www.inaturalist.org/) account (<http://www.inaturalist.org/>) and adding at least 2 observations to the course iNaturalist Project. Our iNaturalist Project is [FOD Coastal Naturalist Training](https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/fod-coastal-naturalist-training) (<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/fod-coastal-naturalist-training>)
- **Volunteer Portal:** Participants are required to set-up a profile in the UC CalNat Volunteer Portal which is used to manage California Naturalist course participants and graduates across the state. Before graduation, participants will need to add their capstone hours as volunteer hours, as well as submit their capstone title and category to the Volunteer Portal.

## Course Materials

### Required:

- *The California Naturalist Handbook* by Greg Nevers, Deborah Stanger Edelman, & Adina Merenlender ([Available through UC Press 30% off with Discount Code: 17M6662](#), at College of the Redwoods Bookstore, or order in advance from a local bookstore)
- *Coastal Naturalist Manual* published by Friends of the Dunes (Available as a PDF, print versions expected to be available at the Humboldt Coastal Nature Center in March)
- Field notebook and pencil or pen for class notes and field observations
- Access to internet and an email account

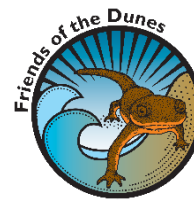
### Optional:

- Nature Journal for reflections & observations (we recommend a multimedia art spiral notebook)
- Colored pencils and/or watercolors
- Binoculars
- Hand Lens – 10x (Available at the Humboldt Coastal Nature Center)

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## Field Sessions

Participants must be able to walk in soft sand, up steep dunes, and along uneven trails while carrying their field supplies. Please bring a lunch, drinking water, sunscreen/hat, comfortable walking shoes, layers, rain gear if needed, and note-taking materials. Field sessions are rain or shine, only extreme weather conditions will cause a field session to be canceled. If any sessions are canceled, we will do our best to reschedule. Participants may not bring guests, children, or pets to any field sessions. For service animal accommodations, please contact [suzie@friendsofthedunes.org](mailto:suzie@friendsofthedunes.org) before course start date.

## Graduation Day

Our Graduation and Stewardship Project Presentations will take place on **Wednesday, October 23 from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m.** at the Humboldt Coastal Nature Center. More details will be provided in class.

## Homework

Reading is assigned for each class meeting based on the topic to be covered that week. Participants are expected to complete the assigned reading prior to coming to class. Other homework assignments include field notebook entries, registration with the California Naturalist Volunteer Portal, downloading the iNaturalist app, and working on Capstone projects.

## iNaturalist

iNaturalist Apps are available for free on both Android phones and iPhones. Observations can also be uploaded to [iNaturalist.org](https://www.inaturalist.org) from a computer. Having a smartphone is not required for this course, participants without a smartphone can share with others who do have one or upload their observations from a computer or tablet.

## Stewardship Project

Participants are required to complete a project in one of six areas: Participatory Science, Program Support, Education/Interpretation, Stewardship, Community Resilience & Adaptation, and Environmental & Climate Justice. The Stewardship Project provides an opportunity for participants to integrate the course content with an applied work project that is done in conjunction with a natural resource agency or organization. Stewardship projects should be completed in a relatively short time (8 hours). Participants are encouraged to work in teams when appropriate. On graduation day, all participants will present their projects. Presentations will be approximately 3-5 minutes for individuals and 5-8 minutes for group projects. The course instructors will provide a Stewardship Project proposal form, project ideas, and feedback as necessary throughout the course.

## Attendance Policy/Making-up Missed Sessions

Participants must complete a minimum of 40 hours of instruction during the course. If a session is missed, it can be made up by attending any special topic walk, workshop, lecture, or service learning opportunity that is relevant to the course, and writing up a brief description for the course instructor. These make-up sessions can be, but do not need to be through Friends of the Dunes. Please check with the instructor ahead of time to confirm the make-up session will be acceptable. All make-up sessions must be completed by October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024 at the very latest. Preferably, make-ups should be completed by graduation on October 23<sup>rd</sup>.

## Volunteering

Participants are encouraged (but not required) to participate in **10 hours of volunteer service** with Friends of the Dunes or another local organization while enrolled in this course. Please keep in mind that hours spent working on your Capstone project count as volunteer time and should be logged as volunteer hours in the CalNat Volunteer Portal. Participants who complete 10 hours of volunteering before graduation day (October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024) will be eligible for raffle prizes during graduation. Please note that the UC Environmental Stewards program recommends at least 40 hours of volunteering per year and offers incentives to reach this goal, including a [California Naturalist pin](#) with a new design each year. Examples of volunteer service include, but are not limited to: restoration or trail maintenance, coastal clean-ups, visitor services in the Nature Center, leading field trips for

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school groups, assisting at special events such as Wine by the Sea, and leading or assisting with guided walks, workshops, and lectures. Examples of other organizations that offer coastal education programs and volunteer opportunities include: Friends of the Arcata Marsh, Humboldt Baykeeper, California Native Plant Society, Northcoast Regional Land Trust, Trinidad Coastal Land Trust, Northcoast Environmental Center, Humboldt Trail Stewards, California State Parks, Sequoia Park Zoo, Redwood Region Audubon Society, PacOut Green Team, Humboldt Fish Action Council, Humboldt Surfrider, Cal Poly Humboldt Natural History Museum, and Cal Poly Humboldt Natural Resources Club.

## Volunteer Portal

Participants will be provided an invitation to set-up an online account to track their certification status and volunteer hours, including hours spent on their Capstone project. Tracking volunteer hours and capstone projects is an essential way to show need and impact of a program like California Naturalist Program. Please visit the [CalNat help page](#) or connect with Suzie if you are having trouble navigating the Volunteer Portal.

## Cancellation and Refund Policy

We reserve the right to cancel or modify any activity due to inclement weather, insufficient participation, or other conditions beyond our control. In the event that Friends of the Dunes cancels the program, all fees collected are fully refundable. Should any participant cancel at least one week before the beginning of the course, a full refund will be issued. If the participant withdraws before the second class meeting, a 50% refund will be issued. No refunds will be issued after the second class meeting.

## Instructional Methods, Inclusion, and Accommodations

The course will integrate a range of instructional methods including lecture, presentations, peer-to-peer discussion, small group activities, hands-on and inquiry-based activities, and experiential learning. Field sessions will take place in coastal environments and participants will be expected to walk on soft sand at a reasonable pace. Two optional field sessions will take place on boats. Requests for reasonable accommodations for disabilities or limitations should be made prior to the date of the program or activity for which it is needed. Please make such requests as early as possible by contacting [suzie@friendsofthedunes.org](mailto:suzie@friendsofthedunes.org).

## Instructors

Jennifer Ortega, Ed.D. has a variety of interpretive and environmental education experiences beginning as a middle school science teacher to education ranger for Redwood National & State Parks to education coordinator at Cal Poly Humboldt's Natural History Museum. Currently, Jen is a faculty member at Cal Poly Humboldt teaching Environmental Education and Interpretation. She is a Master Certified Environmental Educator and Project Learning Tree, WET, and WILD facilitator. Her favorite place to be is the outdoors with family and friends.

Suzie Fortner, Friends of the Dunes Programs & Operations Director, has over 18 years of experience in the fields of natural resource interpretation and environmental education. She has a B.S. in Marine Biology from U.C. Santa Cruz and an M.A. in Social Science through the Environment and Community Program at Cal Poly Humboldt. Suzie has been working with Friends of the Dunes since 2008 where she has been developing, teaching, and overseeing educational programs that connect people of all ages to Humboldt's coastal environments while engaging the community in the stewardship of these special places.