



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
Agriculture and Natural Resources

Environmental Stewards



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Agriculture and Natural Resources
Research and Extension Center System

Hopland Research and Extension Center California Naturalist Certification Course

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Course Dates: February 21, March 7, March 21, April 11, April 21, May 2

Course Schedule: Saturdays, 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM

Location: Hopland Research and Extension Center, and TBD

Registration: <http://hrec.ucanr.edu/> - [UC Environmental Stewards Website](#)

Course Overview:

UC Environmental Stewards courses use education and service to inspire and empower individuals to create more sustainable and resilient communities and ecosystems. The California Naturalist course introduces you to your local ecology and engages you in the stewardship of California's natural communities. It combines a science curriculum with guest lecturers, field trips, and project-based learning to immerse you in the natural world.

This California Naturalist course offered through the Hopland Research and Extension Center (HREC) will focus on the ecology of the inner California Coast Range, including oak woodland, grassland and stream ecology, and the wildlife that live in these places.

Learning Outcomes:

- Understand what it means to be a naturalist.
- Integrate knowledge about the interconnectedness of abiotic, biotic, and cultural factors and their influence on the natural history of California.
- Demonstrate skills in making and recording natural history observations in a field notebook.
- Apply knowledge of the local bioregion to local and global environmental issues.
- Recognize the value of natural and cultural resources to our society and community.
- Meet all course requirements.

Statement on Inclusion and Accommodations:

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 Hannah Bird.

Instructional Methods:

The course will integrate a range of instructional methods that promote active adult learning such as experiential learning, inquiry-based approaches, and learning from multiple perspectives of local ecologists and traditional knowledge practitioners.

Course Requirements:

Contact Time: The HREC course has a minimum of 48 hours of classroom and field time. Each UC California Naturalist course consists of a minimum of 40 educational hours (a combination of classroom and field time), which includes a minimum of 8 hours in the field.

Required Reading:

- The first or second edition of the course textbook, *The California Naturalist Handbook* by Greg de Nevers, Deborah Stanger Edelman, Adina Merenlender. The book must be acquired by participants. The book is available through the [UC Press at a 30% discount](#), through the [Mendocino Book Company](#) (you can also order on their [website](#)) or any place you order books. For CCC courses, books are available on loan through Noah Wall-Torres.
- UC ANR California Naturalist Publication Series: [Natural History of the California Current](#)

Required Course Materials:

Email account for communication, Volunteer Portal access, and iNaturalist. Please notify us immediately if you do not have an email account or internet access.

- Field notebook or nature journal with pencils. If you do not own one, the types of journals will be discussed during the first course session.

Recommended items but not required include: Colored pencils, Binoculars

Participatory Science Project:

The California Naturalist curriculum includes participation in a participatory science project selected by the organization offering this course. We will participate in the class Participatory science project, collecting data for the Hopland Research and Extension Center's ongoing phenology project. Details on plant day.

Class iNaturalist Project and Observations: Participants are required to register for an iNaturalist account at <http://www.inaturalist.org/> and add two projects to their account: "[UC Environmental Stewards Certified Naturalists](#)" and our class iNaturalist project "[UC Hopland Research Extension Center](#)." Participants are required to contribute at least ten observations to iNaturalist.

Attendance Policy: Participants must complete a minimum of 48 hours of instruction during the class. If you must miss a class, reach out to your instructor ahead of the date you plan to miss to plan for make-up activities.

Stewardship Project: California Naturalist course participants are required to complete a Stewardship Project that includes 8 hours of volunteer service. Each project must fit under one of the following UC Environmental Stewards volunteer service categories:

1. Collective Climate Mitigation & Adaptation.

This includes any community efforts to reduce or sequester carbon, to build community resilience, or prepare communities for potential climate change impacts;

2. **Conservation & Restoration.**

This includes on-the-ground collective actions to protect, clean-up, or restore resources and environments;

3. **Education, Interpretation, & Communication.**

This includes any type of collective activity that increases information, awareness, and understanding of environmental issues;

4. **Policy, Systems, & Environmental Change.**

This includes civic engagement and advocacy that advance changes in rules, practices, policies, and legislation but not actions for specific legislation or candidates;

5. **Participatory Science.**

This includes activities that involve community or layperson collaboration with scientists or scientific tools or protocols such as community and citizen science projects;

6. **Other Support.**

This includes any general, administrative, or organizational support not associated with the other five categories of activities.

An important aspect of the Stewardship Project is the concept of service learning, in which participants contribute to community welfare by addressing locally identified issues and gain insight into their local environments. We encourage participants to work in groups, but it is not required.

Participants must have their Stewardship Project pre-approved by their instructor during the first two classes of the course. Participants are required to record their Stewardship Project information and volunteer hours in the Volunteer Portal. Use this link to access the Volunteer Portal: <https://apps.ideal-logic.com/ucanr>.

Participants will share their individual or group Stewardship Projects at the end of the course. Each participant will have 5 minutes to present their project to the class. In addition to the minimum 40 hours of coursework, you are expected to spend a minimum of 8 volunteer service hours on their Stewardship Project. You must log their 8 volunteer service hours and project information before the last day of the course in the UC Environmental Stewards Volunteer Portal.

Using a Field Notebook or Nature Journal: We will keep a field notebook or nature journal during the course. The course encourages all participants to develop skills of systematically recording field observations. At the same time, participants will use a field notebook as a nature journal to explore their observations and reflect on what they learn during the course. Field notebook assignments may be checked by the instructor periodically during the course.

Homework Policy: Reading assignments are based on the daily topics. The completed homework assignment is due on Tuesday morning. Participants are expected to read the chapters assigned for that day before the class meeting times. There will be short quizzes or group exercises to reinforce the material in class.

Evaluation: Time will be provided for participants on the last day of class to complete a longer End-of-course Evaluation survey using your password and the information above.

Class Registration and Getting Started:

You should have received an invitation to your own UC Environmental Stewards Volunteer Portal account. *Notify your instructor if you do not receive this email by the first day of class.*

The link to the UC Environmental Stewards Volunteer Portal is: <https://apps.ideal-logic.com/ucanr>. You will continue to have access to this account after your course.

Accept the Volunteer Portal invitation and complete the simple pre-course survey. Create a password using your favorite color, your favorite animal, and any four digit number: color/animal/####. Record your unique survey password where you can find it later. You will need the password for your End-of-course evaluation and to log your volunteer hours.

Complete the six questions in the pre-course survey using the following information:

- Course: California Naturalist.
- Organization: Hopland Research and Extension Center
- Beginning month: February
- Course Year: 2026

Open your profile to confirm that your name reflects what you want to appear on your California Naturalist certificate. You can also add an alternate email address and other information, such as preferred pronouns, mailing address, and photo or image.

Academic Credits: After completing all course requirements, you have the option to purchase 4 undergraduate credits for this course through UC Davis Continuing and Professional Education (CPE). The University processes the credits quarterly and credits take several weeks to arrive. Learn more: <https://ucanr.edu/program/uc-environmental-stewards/uc-academic-units>.

Volunteering and Your Volunteer Portal Account: Your online account allows you to track your volunteer service, beginning with your Stewardship Project during the course and all future volunteer service as a certified California Naturalist. You will access the Volunteer Portal during the course log your Stewardship Project information and service.

Volunteer Service After Being Certified: When you log 40 hours of volunteer service in a calendar year, you will be eligible for a unique [annual service pin](#), featuring a California native organism. The initial 8 hours from your Stewardship Project will count toward your 40 hours of service during the first year. For more information about annual recognition pins: <https://ucanr.edu/program/uc-environmental-stewards/certification-and-service-pins>.

Qualifying Volunteer Activities: Volunteer activities recorded in the Volunteer Portal must be related to one of the six categories of activities listed above, occur in California or in a county bordering California or be associated with an approved Stewardship project. Activities should occur in association with an organization or official organized purpose (such as Biodiversity Day, or attending a city council meeting). The activities cannot be a personal or individual activity, and should be unpaid or community service conducted as part of a subsidized workforce development program such as the California Conservation Corps, Local Corps, AmeriCorps, or California Climate Action Corps.

Volunteer Portal Help: There are resources available to help familiarize yourself with the Volunteer Portal here: <https://ucanr.edu/program/uc-environmental-stewards/volunteer-portal-help>.

Class Schedule - This schedule is compatible with screen readers.

First Class – Saturday, February 21, 2026

Getting Started, Pre-Course Survey, and Introduction to California Natural History

- 8:30 Welcome, Introductions, Course Overview, register in the Volunteer Portal (Make sure your name is correct!) and complete pre-course survey – Jen Riddell and Hannah Bird
- 9:30 Nature journaling
- 10:30 Introduction to California's biodiversity
- 11:30 iNaturalist practice
- 12:00 Lunch
- 12:30 Traditional Ecological Knowledge with Corine Pearce
- 3:45-4:30 Stewardship project introduction and Chapter 8 discussion

Homework: Log into the Volunteer Portal and set up your profile. Review Chapters 1, 2, and 8.

Saturday, March 7, 2026

Interpretation, Collaboration, & Participatory Science, Geology, Wildlife Cameras

- 8:30 Group discussions about TEK and Geology
- 9:00 Reading topographic maps and understanding watershed principals
- 9:45 Introduction to California's geology – Morgan Jones
- 10:45 Angle of Repose Exercise
- 11:30 Geology in the landscape - bring your notebooks, lunch and maps, Community science app practice
- 12:00 Lunch
- 2:00 Lichens – if there's time – yay!
- 3:45-4:30 Stewardship project Q&A - and potential project partners

Homework: Movie - A River's Last Chance (<https://caltrout.org/news/rivers-last-chance>), review Chapter 3

Saturday, March 21, 2026

Hydrology (Chapter 3)

- 8:30 Small group review: Geology and River's Last Chance movie
- 9:00 Watersheds from the landscape level - lecture and exercise - Jen Riddell
- 10:15 Walk in Parson's Creek, visit ponds, discuss watersheds
- 12:00 Lunch
- 12:30 Dams, fish, and rivers
- 1:30 Journal and iNaturalist observations
- 2:15 Wildlife cameras
- 3:00 Plant names and basic keying, Oak ID and keying – Jen
- 4:30 Wrap up

Homework: Review Chapter 5 - Forest, Woodland, and Range Resources and Management.

Saturday, April 11, 2026

Forests, Woodland and Range, Chapter 5. Guests: Mike Jones, UC Extension Forest Advisor

- 8:30 Small group discussions + Enter your first record into the [Volunteer Portal](#) for time spent on your Stewardship Project.
- 9:00 Fire modeling and behavior, and Prescribed burns – Jen, Hannah, Emily, Mary, Mike
- 10:00 Lecture on forestry with Mike Jones
- 11:00 Field trip around the Center with Mike and Mary
- 12:00 Lunch in the field
- 2:30 Niche discussion, skull ID/owl pellets, journaling
- 4:30 Wrap up

Homework: Review Chapter 4 – Plants.

Saturday, April 18, 2026

Plants, Chapter 4

- 7:30 Small group discussions and reviews
- 8:00 Phenology and Citizen Science - go outside to take data
- 8:45 Plants and Plant Communities – Jen Riddell
- 10:00 Plant walk (amble, saunter): Who are these plants, ecological roles, and human uses.
- 12:00 Lunch in the field
- 2:00 Plant ID
- 3:30 Climate Stewardship and bigger environmental issues

Homework: Review Read Chapter 6 – Animals, and Chapter 7 - Energy and Global Environmental Issues.

Saturday, May 2, 2026

Energy & Global Environmental Issues, Chapter 7 Wildlife, Chapter 6

- 8:30 Final discussions, log volunteer hours in volunteer portal
- 8:00 Birding, frogs, wetland restoration with Marisela de Santa Anna, visit ponds
- 12:00 Lunch
- 12:30 Stewardship Project Presentations of Stewardship Projects and Graduation.

Congratulations, Time to Celebrate!