



SONOMA ECOLOGY CENTER

Beautiful. Sustainable. Sonoma

Fall 2025 UC Environmental Stewards California Naturalist Course Syllabus

Welcome and congratulations on enrolling in the Fall 2025 Sugarloaf Ridge State Park California Naturalist/UC Environmental Stewards Program, which is facilitated by Sonoma Ecology Center.

Instructor Contact:

- **Course Instructor:** Tony Passantino, Education Program Manager, Sonoma Ecology Center
 - **Email:** Tony@sonomaecologycenter.org
 - **Education & Experience:** BA in Geography/Environmental Studies, UCLA; chair of the Sonoma Environmental Education Collaborative (SEEC); certified through Project WET, Project WILD, Project Learning Tree, and Aldo Leopold Foundation. Tony has led educational programs since 2012 and specializes in watershed education and conservation.
- **Field Instructor/Subject Expert:** David Herlocker, retired naturalist for the Marin County Open Space District
 - **Education & Experience:** Known as the “Google of Nature,” Retired Interpretive Naturalist for Marin County Parks, and winner of the 2016 Terwilliger Environmental Award. He has 45 years of experience and interpretive skills providing training and field trips for various educational programs including Audubon Canyon Ranch, S.T.R.A.W., Point Bonita YMCA, Slide Ranch, Headlands Institute, Marin Conservation League and Sonoma Ecology Center.

Refund Policy

If you need to cancel your registration, please contact Tony@sonomaecologycenter.org as soon as possible. We aim to accommodate changes in participant availability while ensuring program resources are managed effectively.

- Full refunds, minus a \$50 processing fee, are available if your cancellation request is received by **September 1, 2025**. Any later cancellations will result in loss of registration fees.



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Course Description

*The UC Environmental Stewards/**California Naturalist Program** aims to cultivate a community of volunteer naturalists and community scientists dedicated to natural resource conservation, education, and restoration. This course explores local ecology through a science-based curriculum combined with lectures, field trips, and hands-on projects.*

Course Objectives:

- 1. Understand the role of a naturalist.*
 - 2. Grasp the biotic, abiotic, and cultural elements of Sonoma Valley ecology.*
 - 3. Develop skills in field observation and record-keeping.*
 - 4. Interpret and communicate natural resource information.*
 - 5. Connect local ecosystems to broader environmental challenges.*
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Course Components

Class Schedule

Weekly Zoom Classes: Wednesdays, 6:00pm – 8:30pm

*Each class includes lectures by guest speakers, discussions, and activities. Please complete assigned readings from *The California Naturalist Handbook* before each session.*

Field Trips

Field instruction takes place on Saturdays from 8:00am – 12:00pm. These field-based sessions reinforce course themes through direct observation, journaling, and data collection.



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<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Guest Speaker(s)</i>	<i>Location & Time</i>
<i>Wed, Sept 17</i>	<i>Ch. 1- Course Intro & Natural History</i>	<i>Tony & David</i>	<i>Zoom – 6:00 PM to 8:30 PM</i>
<i>Sat, Sept 20</i>	<i>Ch. 8- Community Science & Nature Journaling</i>	<i>David & Stanton</i>	<i>Field Trip 1 – Location: Sonoma Garden Park: 8:00am – 12:00pm</i>
<i>Wed, Sept 24</i>	<i>Ch. 3 – Water</i>	<i>Steve Lee</i>	<i>Zoom – 6:00 PM to 8:30 PM</i>
<i>Sat, Sept 27</i>	<i>Ch. 2 – Geology & Soils</i>	<i>Scott Lawyer</i>	<i>Field Trip 2 – Sugarloaf Ridge SP: 8:00am – 12:00pm</i>
<i>Wed, Oct 1</i>	<i>Ch. 5-Forest, Woodland, and Range</i>	<i>TBD</i>	<i>Zoom – 6:00 PM to 8:30 PM</i>
<i>Sat, Oct 4</i>	<i>Ch. 4- Plants Field Trip</i>	<i>David</i>	<i>Field Trip 3 – Sugarloaf: 8:00am – 12:00pm</i>
<i>Wed, Oct 8</i>	<i>Ch. 7- Energy & Global Environmental Issues</i>	<i>Caitlin Cornwall</i>	<i>Zoom – 6:00 PM to 8:30 PM</i>
<i>Fri, Oct 10</i>	<i>Capstone/Stewardship Presentations (Special Event)</i>	<i>Students</i>	<i>Location TBD- 6:00 PM to 8:30 PM</i>



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Sat, Oct 11	Ch. 6- Animals & Ecology	David Herlocker	Field Trip 4 – Location Sugarloaf: 8:00am – 12:00pm
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Field Trip Essentials:

- *Sturdy shoes, field journal, layered clothing, hat, sunscreen, water, cell phone (for iNaturalist), snacks, daypack, personal medications, optional binoculars and field guides and hand lens.*

Capstone/Stewardship Project Requirement:

Each participant is required to complete a Capstone/Stewardship Project as part of the UC Environmental Stewards/California Naturalist Program. This project provides a hands-on opportunity to apply what you've learned by engaging in a meaningful service project that contributes to local environmental efforts. Here are the key requirements:

- **Project Areas:** *Choose one of the following focus areas for your project:*
 - **Conservation/Restoration:** *Activities that help conserve, restore, or enhance natural habitats.*
 - **Education/Interpretation:** *Developing and delivering educational materials or programs to share knowledge about natural resources.*
 - **Participatory Science:** *Contributing to community science efforts by collecting data for research and conservation projects.*
 - **Program Support:** *Assisting local environmental organizations with tasks that support their mission and programming.*
 - **Community Resilience and Adaptation:** *Any community efforts to reduce or sequester carbon, to build community resilience, and/or prepare communities for potential climate change impacts.*
 - **Environmental and Climate Justice:** *Civic engagement and advocacy that advance changes in rules, practices, policies and legislation.*
- **Volunteer Time Commitment:** *Dedicate a minimum of 8 hours to your Capstone/Stewardship Project. This time must be outside of class sessions and can be divided over multiple days or completed in one day, depending on your project.*



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- **Individual or Group Work:** Projects can be completed individually or in small groups. If working in a group, each participant should contribute equally.
- **Final Presentation:** On **October 10**, each participant (or group member) will give a 5-minute presentation about their project, sharing their work, insights, and any outcomes or challenges faced. This is an opportunity to celebrate your efforts and learn from the experiences of others in the class.

Your instructor will provide a Capstone/stewardship Project proposal form and offer feedback on your project ideas. Participants are encouraged to connect with local environmental organizations to identify suitable projects or propose their own ideas for approval.

Other Course Requirements

- **Field Notebook:** Required for documenting observations, checked periodically by the instructor. We recommend the Strathmore Visual Journal, but a simple spiralbound notebook could work, around 5"x7" or 6"x9" so it's easy to carry in a field pack.
 - **iNaturalist:** Register at [iNaturalist.org](https://www.inaturalist.org) and upload at least 2 weekly observations. Download the app for use during fieldwork.
 - **Attendance:** Full attendance at evening classes and field trips is expected. If a class is missed, make-up activities may be assigned where possible.
 - **Volunteer Hours:** Log hours in the UC Volunteer Portal to track program impact.
<https://apps.ideal-logic.com/ucanr>
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Required and Suggested Reading

Required Text:



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- *The California Naturalist Handbook by Greg de Nevers, Deborah Stanger Edelman, and Adina Merenlender*

Suggested Resources:

1. *Secrets of the Oak Woodlands - Kate Marianchild*
2. *The Laws Guide to Nature Drawing and Journaling - John Muir Laws*
3. *Laws Pocket Guide Set to San Francisco Bay Area - John Muir Laws*
4. *An Island Called California - Elna Bakker*
5. *A Natural History of California - Allan A. Schoenherr*
6. *Introduction to California Plant Life - Ornduff et al.*
7. *Trees and Shrubs of California - Stuart and Sawyer*
8. *Mammals of California - Jameson and Peters*
9. *The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Western North America - David A. Sibley*