

# Coastal North San Diego County California Naturalist Class



**Instructors**

Jimmy Kidd  
Lisa Kuleto

**Email**

calnat.pc@gmail.com

**Course Start & End**

3/3/2026 - 5/5/2026

**Website**

<http://calnat.ucanr.edu/>

**Registration**

[https://www.preservecalavera.org/?page\\_id=1358](https://www.preservecalavera.org/?page_id=1358)

**Course Fee**

\$300

**Course Location**

Buena Vista Nature Center  
(2202 S Coast Hwy,  
Oceanside, CA 92054)

**Course Schedule**

Tuesdays, 5:30PM - 8:30PM

**Course Overview**

UC Environmental Stewards 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 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 the wonders of 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 Preserve Calavera will focus in particular on the unique nature of chaparral and coastal sage scrub which we trust you'll come to love as much as we do. Our area is also home to a number of coastal lagoons from Buena Vista in the north to San Elijo in the south part of our region.

**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 the North County San Diego.
- 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 community/society.
- Meet all course requirements.

**Course Requirements**

- **Contact Time:** Each California Naturalist course consists of a minimum of 40 educational hours (classroom hours and field time), which includes a minimum of 8 hours in the field.
- **Required Reading:**
  - **California Naturalist Handbook** by Greg de Nevers, Deborah Stanger Edelman, Adina Merenlender
- **Class Attendance and Field Trips:** One excused absence is allowable. Please note that, while we understand unexpected demands sometimes arise, it is very hard to substitute a make-up activity that can provide both the depth of information and experience gained in the scheduled session. Be sure to check in when you come to class.
- **Stewardship Project:** Participants are required to complete a Stewardship Project in one of the program's six volunteer stewardship project areas:
  - 1) Education/Interpretation, 2) Participatory Science, 3) Conservation/Restoration, 4) Environmental and Climate Justice, 5) Community Resilience and Adaptation, and 6) Program Support.

The Stewardship Project provides an opportunity for participants to integrate their own personal interests with the in-class material toward the development of an applied work project that is done in conjunction with a natural resource agency or organization. Participants must get pre-approval for Stewardship Projects in the



first four weeks of the course and begin recording their project information and volunteer hours in the UC Volunteer Portal. Participants are encouraged to work in teams when appropriate. Participants will deliver individual or group Stewardship Project presentations (5 minutes long per person) on graduation day. Participants are expected to spend a minimum of 8 hours outside of class time on the Stewardship Project and they are required to upload these hours in the Volunteer Portal prior to graduation/certification.

- **Using a Field Notebook and Journal:** All participants are required to keep a field notebook during the course. The course encourages all participants to develop the skills of systematically recording field observations. At the same time, participants can use a journal to reflect on their observations as well as what they have learned in the course. These are the twin goals of the field notebook and the journal. Field notebooks may be checked by the instructor periodically during the class or at the end.
- **iNaturalist Observation and Partner iNaturalist Project:** during the California Naturalist course, each participant will be responsible for registering for an iNaturalist account (<http://www.inaturalist.org/>) and adding at least ten (10) observations to the class iNaturalist project. Our iNaturalist project is [Plants & Animals in Coastal North San Diego County](#).
- **Class Participatory Science Project:** Each participant must contribute to the participatory science project adopted by the class. Our class participatory science project is Santa Margarita Ecological Reserve eDNA project.
- **Evaluation:** Completion of the online post-course evaluation survey is highly encouraged. You will be provided with a link to the evaluation survey toward the end of the course.

### Course Materials

**The first three course materials are required. Please notify the instructor immediately if you do not have an e-mail account. The last two are helpful but are not required.**

- **Required reading:** The Californian Naturalist Handbook by Greg de Nevers, Deborah Stanger Edelman, Adina Merenlender
- **Required:** Access to internet connected computer or phone and an email account for communication, Volunteer Portal access, and iNaturalist.
- **Required:** Field Notebook (If you don't own one, the types of journal will be discussed during the first course session.)
- **Required:** Pencil(s)
- **Recommended:** Hand lens (10x)
- **Recommended:** Binoculars

### Recommended Resources

- **UC Environmental Stewards website:** View videos from UC Environmental Stewards conferences, meetings, and more. The “Ecosystems of California” video series with Erika Zaveleta, is also available on the channel.  
*Url:* <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGBYG5ShV4VDiUiRbEmmObg>
- **Course Participatory Science Portal:** UC Environmental Stewards developed a StoryMap ([https://calnat.ucanr.edu/California\\_PPSR/](https://calnat.ucanr.edu/California_PPSR/)) about participatory science in the program to highlight the different types of projects and the depth of participatory science in the program. In addition, a three part video training



(<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLBEIahTDJmdnk68AHknKbAPBw7SdEpdFX>) on participatory science drawing on examples from throughout UCANR programs.

### Volunteering and the Volunteer Portal

Participants will be provided with an online account to track their volunteer hours, beginning with hours you spend on your Stewardship Project. You will receive an introductory email invitation to log-into the volunteer portal, set your password and create your profile. Notify your instructor if you do not receive that email. You will be accessing the volunteer portal to record your Stewardship Project title, information and log a minimum of 8 Stewardship Project hours as one of the requirements for certification. The Volunteer Portal website is: <https://apps.ideal-logic.com/ucanr>.

Participants are encouraged to complete at least forty (40) hours of volunteer service each year. Tracking volunteer hours after completing the course is optional but strongly encouraged as an essential way to document the impact of UC Environmental Stewards across the state. Pins are awarded each year for participants who meet this goal, and the pins differ from year to year.

Volunteer activities need to relate to California's natural or environmental history, occur in California, be sponsored by one or more organization, and be unpaid.

- Your 8-hour Stewardship Project will count toward your first year's volunteer hours. You will log these hours into the Volunteer Portal under one of the six Stewardship Project Activities.
  - Stewardship Project (Participatory Science)
  - Stewardship Project (Community Resilience & Adaptation)
  - Stewardship Project (Environmental & Climate Justice)
  - Stewardship Project (Conservation/Restoration)
  - Stewardship Project (Education/Interpretation)
  - Stewardship Project (Program Support)
  
- After recording your 8 hours for your stewardship project, record your additional volunteer hours under the activity that best fits your service. For example:
  - If your Stewardship project involves restoration, then you select **Stewardship Project (Conservation/Restoration)** as your activity. If you continue to volunteer doing additional restoration work or for something different such as creating a plant guide, choose **Restoration** as your activity in the first case and **Education Materials Production** for time spent creating the plant guide.
  
- There are resources available to help familiarize yourself with the Volunteer Portal and commonly used features. View useful help guides and videos at [http://calnat.ucanr.edu/Resources/VP\\_Help/](http://calnat.ucanr.edu/Resources/VP_Help/)

### Course Credit

Upon completing certification requirements, participants are eligible for four academic credits through UC Davis Continuing and Professional Education (CPE) for an additional fee. Eligible participants will receive a link to a website and guidance on the process to request and pay for credits. Credits are only processed at the end of each quarter and may take several weeks to arrive. A Certified Naturalist can only receive credits from one institution. If their community college provides credits for the



**certification, they are not eligible for the UC credits. In some cases, a sponsoring agency or organization covers all participant costs and secures the credits on behalf of the participant.**

**Homework Policy**

In preparation for class, all assigned readings from The California Naturalist Handbook, and viewing any suggested slide decks should be completed before arriving to class.. A series of questions for you to complete as you read each chapter will be posted on the VMS portal (see below). Participants are also expected to be ready for class activities by reviewing any lab/activity instructions beforehand.

**Cancellation Policy**

The course fee is refundable (minus a \$10 processing fee) up to three weeks before the first class and non-refundable thereafter.

**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 Jimmy Kidd or Lisa Kuleto. If you have a learning or physical need that will require special accommodations in this class you will need to notify your instructor in writing of your accommodation needs. Please notify at least 30 days prior to the first class if you require any special accommodations. This will allow us ample opportunity to provide suitable accommodations. We make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Materials will be available in alternate formats (Braille, audio, electronic format, or large print) upon request.

**Statement on Financial Accessibility Cost**

Students are responsible for course fees, purchasing books, and transportation for the field trips Students are also responsible for costs associated with any travel and meals. There are a limited number of partial scholarships based upon need on a first-come basis.

**Class Schedule**

Wk	Date	Topic/Subject	Speaker(s)
<b>Before 1st Class</b>		Homework: Read Ch. 1 and complete homework questions; Create an account on <a href="#">iNaturalist</a>	
<b>1</b>	<b>3/3/2026</b>	<b>Introduction to Natural History &amp; Course Administration</b> Homework: Sit Spot and Journal; Read Ch. 8 and complete homework questions; Log into <a href="#">Volunteer Portal</a> and set up your profile	TBD

<b>Wk</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic/Subject</b>	<b>Speaker(s)</b>
2	3/10/2026	<b>Interpretation, Collaboration, &amp; Participatory Science</b> Homework: Sit Spot and Journal; Read Ch. 2 and complete homework questions	TBD
3	3/17/2026	<b>Geology, Climate and Soils</b> Homework: Sit Spot; Read Ch 3. and complete homework questions	TBD
4	3/24/2026	<b>Water Resources</b> Homework: Sit Spot and Journal; Read Ch 4. and complete homework questions; Submit Stewardship Project Proposal Form	TBD
5	3/31/2026	<b>Plants</b> Homework: Sit Spot and Journal; Read Ch 5. and complete homework questions; Record your Stewardship Project title, short description, Stewardship Project Activity category and first Stewardship Project hour(s) in the <a href="#">Volunteer Portal</a>	TBD
6	4/7/2026	<b>Forests, Woodland and Range Resources and Management</b> Homework: Sit Spot and Journal; Read Ch 6. and complete homework questions	TBD
7	4/14/2026	<b>Animals Part 1</b> Homework: Sit Spot and Journal; Work on Stewardship Project	TBD
8	4/21/2026	<b>Animals Part 2</b> Homework: Sit Spot and Journal; Read Ch 7. and complete homework questions	TBD
9	4/28/2026	<b>Energy and Global Environmental Issues</b> Homework: Sit Spot and Journal; Document a minimum of 8 volunteer hours spent on your Stewardship Project and associated information in the UC Volunteer Portal - <a href="https://apps.ideal-logic.com/ucanr">https://apps.ideal-logic.com/ucanr</a>	TBD
10	5/5/2026	<b>Stewardship Project Presentations, Potluck and Graduation</b>	

See the field trip schedule on the next page.



**Field Trip Schedule:** Bring your nature journals and other items outlined for each field trip.  
(Detailed field trip information and schedule will be provided the week prior to each field trip.)

<b>Date</b>	<b>Subject/Topic (time, emergency contact)</b>	<b>Mtg. Location/Time (map link)</b>	<b>Speaker (Title &amp; Affiliation)</b>
3/14/2026	<b>Dawson Los Monos Canyon Reserve</b>	Buena Vista Park 1601 Shadowridge Dr, Vista, CA 92081	TBD
3/21/2026	<b>Mt. Soledad &amp; San Elijo Lagoon</b>	Mt. Soledad 6905 La Jolla Scenic S Dr, La Jolla, CA 92037  San Elijo Lagoon 2710 Manchester Avenue, Cardiff-by-the-Sea, CA 92007	TBD
3/28/2026	<b>Santa Margarita Ecological Reserve</b>	SMER Field Station 45985 Via Tornado, Temecula, CA 92590	TBD
4/18/2026	<b>Lake Calavera Preserve</b>	Lake Calavera Preserve Oak Riparian Pk, 4625 Lake Blvd, Oceanside, CA 92056	TBD
TBD	<b>Tracking (Optional)</b>	12791 Sorrento Valley Rd, San Diego 92130	TBD
TBD	<b>Birding (Optional)</b>	Whelan Lake, 3850 N River Rd, Oceanside, CA 92058	TBD