

SCVAS' Wetlands Discovery Program

Volunteer Information



As the flagship educational program for SCVAS, the Wetlands Discovery Program is designed to teach students in Santa Clara County, aged 8-11, the value of and threats to local wetlands. SCVAS volunteers introduce students to wetland habitats, wildlife, and ecology through engaging classroom activities and then guide them in exploring nature and applying their new knowledge during a 2-hour birdwatching field trip at local baylands. The components of this program are also designed to meet many of the California State Science Standards for grades 3 through 6, featuring topics such as adaptations and energy cycles.

In order to serve as many schools as possible, all of SCVAS' programs are offered free of charge (though donations are always greatly appreciated, of course). In some cases, we are able to offer financial assistance for a portion of the bus transportation to the field trip site. If not, the cost of the bus transportation is the only expense for this program. Thus, this program relies heavily on volunteer support.

There are two components to this program in which volunteers take part, and *volunteers can participate in one or both component(s)*:

- 1) In-class Component, which takes place Tuesday mornings from approximately 8AM-12PM, and is held at individual schools. This component involves helping students answer questions on a worksheet as they move through activity stations with topics relating to the Wetlands (e.g. Migration, Energy Cycles, Changes in the Wetlands over time, etc.). Volunteers can either choose a particular station to stay at and help students as they move through that station, or move from station to station with a particular group.
- 2) Field Trip Component, which takes place either Thursday or Friday mornings, from approximately 9:00AM-12:30PM, and is held at the Palo Alto Baylands or Alviso Marina County Park. Docents lead small groups of students on a 1.5 hour nature and bird walk, as they learn how to use binoculars and explore the wetlands. There is a need for both lead docents – those that actually lead the groups, identify the birds, and direct the conversation of the group towards the topics covered in the in-class component – and support docents that help keep the groups together, point out things of interest for the lead docent to discuss, and generally keep order within the groups. *Volunteers can act in whichever capacity they are comfortable.*

Wetlands Discovery Program docents are not expected to begin with a full knowledge of local birds, etc. **Complete training (including a detailed manual) will be provided before the programs begin**, and new docents are always paired with experience docents until they feel comfortable (if ever) leading a group themselves. Even after a docent feels comfortable leading a group, the Programs Coordinator will always try to have docents work together in pairs, unless a docent specifically asks to lead a group solo.

The schedule for each season (Fall or Spring) is provided to Wetlands Discovery Program docents several weeks prior to the first program (or available online). **Volunteers are welcome to sign up for as few or as many programs as fit their interest and schedule**, though more volunteers are generally needed for the Field Trips than for the In-Class activities.

Please email the Education Programs Coordinator at programs@scvas.org with any questions!