

Introduction to Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society's Wetlands Discovery Program:

{Please read through this information - even if you have participated in a Wetlands Discovery Program in the past - BEFORE calling to schedule a program for your class(es)}

As the flagship educational program for SCVAS, the Wetlands Discovery Program is designed to teach students 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 at Charleston Slough in Mountain View (see additional details below). If not, the cost of the bus transportation would be the only expense for this program.

Information about Financial Assistance and Scheduling are included at the end of this document.

There are four main components overall to the Wetlands program, and we do require participation in all four to be eligible for financial assistance. A detailed description of each component, and how it fits into the program as a whole, is provided below:

The first component of the program is a set of 5 "Pre-Program" activities designed to introduce students to general concepts, to establish some "baseline" information regarding the students' existing wetlands knowledge, and to prepare the students for the subsequent components. These activities are directed by the teachers' themselves, and take place in the individual classrooms at the teachers' convenience. They include a Pre-Program Quiz, a "Wonders of Wetlands" slideshow, a Wetlands Vocabulary List, a set of "Common Wetlands Birds" Flashcards, and a short read-aloud book about the founding of the Audubon Society. The material for all five of these activities are given to teachers during a **meeting** held approximately 2 weeks before SCVAS volunteers are scheduled to come out to the school (see second component information below). This meeting can be scheduled before, during, or after the school day, depending on the teachers' availabilities. **It is very important that all of the teachers whose classes will be participating in the program attend this meeting;** in addition to providing teachers with the 5 pre-program activities, we will discuss the specifics of the program, what needs to happen for each component, and establish a detailed schedule for the 2nd and 3rd components (see below). We will also make available the film "Winged Migration" at this time if you would like to share that with your students.

The second component is the "In-class Activities Session." This component takes place at the school, is directed by SCVAS staff and volunteers (with teacher participation), and encompasses approximately 75 minutes for each session (60 minutes of activity stations, 15 minutes of binocular training). This component must take place on a **Tuesday morning**. We can accommodate up to ~60 students per session (though smaller numbers are highly preferred, if at all possible), and a maximum of

3 sessions on any given day. For example, 4 classes (with an average of 28 students in each class), would be scheduled in 2 or 3 sessions back-to-back, generally starting around 8:30 or 9AM. For this component, students are broken up into small working groups (between 2-4 students each), given a worksheet to complete (SCVAS provides the worksheet at the teacher meeting, and asks teachers to make enough photocopies for each student), and directed to work at various activity stations throughout the room. While it is not required, it is helpful if teachers are able to recruit 1-2 additional adults to help direct the students through these activities.

There are a total of 9 activities for students to work through with their worksheet, and we have 2 sets of each activity, for a total of 18 stations. We generally schedule the in-class sessions in a **multi-purpose room (i.e. cafeteria or gymnasium) that can accommodate ~70 people with room to walk around, can fit 10-12 lunchroom-size tables, and that can be scheduled for the full time** of all sessions (e.g. if we were doing three sessions, we would need the room for ~3 hours); it isn't feasible to change rooms mid-way through the schedule. After the activity stations, students are then taken outside and introduced to the use of binoculars for ~15 minutes per group. The binocular training can take place either immediately after each group's activity session, or all together at the end of the program, depending on the classes' and cafeteria's schedules and the number of students participating.

The third component is an approximately 2 hour Field Trip to Charleston Slough in Mountain View. This field trip should occur the **Thursday morning** immediately after the in-class session if possible; other arrangements can be made for schools where Thursday's are not an option, but there should not be a large time delay between the In-class Activities Session and the Field Trip components. **Each field trip can accommodate 2 classes of students** (up to ~70 students). For 4 classes we would need to schedule 2 separate field trips (for example, the Thursday and Friday following the in-class session). **We do require that additional adult chaperones (teachers, parents, teachers aides, etc.) be present during the field trip** to help us control the group and direct attention as appropriate; for a class of 35 students we would ask for at least 4-5 chaperones. Students are bused to the field trip at approximately 9:30 or 9:45AM, where they are split into 4 or 5 pre-established groups. They will receive a morning snack (which we provide) and then will be given their binoculars. Docents will then take the students on a nature walk around the slough, pointing out the local wildlife and discussing the topics covered in the in-class sessions, and should return to the bus at ~11:45AM. After collecting binoculars, and doing a brief wrap-up, students are generally on the bus by 12 noon. Times can shift a bit to accommodate school schedules, but the field trips are always in the morning.

The fourth and final component is a set of "Post-program" activities, which we ask teachers to do with their students after the field trip. During our initial meeting, I will give all the teachers an evaluation packet that includes both a teacher and student evaluation portion. The student evaluation portion includes a worksheet and web-based activity that serves to both reinforce the ideas and concepts introduced throughout the prior components as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of our programs. **The return of this component is very important for SCVAS' records, and is *required* for both future participation in the program as well as the reimbursement of bus transportation (see below), if that has been previously agreed upon.**

Notes about Bus Reimbursements:

SCVAS *may* have funding to provide transportation reimbursements for ONE bus per school for the first 10 schools that schedule their programs. This funding is available to all who request it (providing funding is still available at the time of scheduling), and dependent on the receipt of the required evaluation materials as described above.

We do ask that any schools which are able to cover any or all of the cost of their own transportation please do so.

This will allow us to reach more schools that cannot cover transportation costs.

How to Schedule a Wetlands Discovery Program:

After reading through this information provided above, please review the Wetlands calendar at <http://www.scvas.org/pdf/WetlandsSchoolCalendar.pdf> to find compatible dates for your school. Dates that are no longer available are indicated. Then, please contact the SCVAS Programs Coordinator at 408-252-3740 or programs@scvas.org to schedule a program. Please keep in mind that programs are scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis as the calendar fills.

If you are unable to schedule a Wetlands Discovery Program with us, but would still like a program, please contact the SCVAS Programs Coordinator - we have many shorter, 1-time options available that would also be appropriate for your students.