

## California Naturalist Volunteer Capstone Project

California Naturalist volunteers are required to complete a volunteer service project prior to graduation from the course. It is designed to provide a bridge from class to service. California Naturalist Volunteers are encouraged to work in teams when appropriate, and on the final night of class will present their projects to their peers. Presentations will be 5 minutes long per person (so 15 minutes for a 3 person group) and are to summarize the work that the group has done.

What is a Capstone Project?

A Capstone Project is designed to provide an opportunity for participants to improve their knowledge and abilities through a work project of use to the partner organization. It also helps volunteers to come up with creative ideas for their 40 volunteer service hours in a structured setting with assistance from California Naturalist Instructors. The Capstone Project provides a transition from being a California Naturalist student to a full-fledged volunteer.

Volunteer Projects may be completed in one of four areas:

1. Citizen Science- Citizen science projects involve California Naturalist Volunteers in data collection for researchers. Such projects could include:
  - Participating in the Audubon Bird Censuses
  - Helping monitor water quality in a local watershed
  - Collecting Monarch larval monitoring data
2. Program Support- Program support engages volunteers in the everyday operation of programming at a sponsoring center. It includes such activities as:
  - Working in a store or office of the California Naturalist or sponsor
  - Writing newsletter articles
  - Developing and distributing brochures promo material
  - Serving as a local chapter organizer
3. Education/Interpretation- Education/interpretation projects involve volunteers in the development and/or delivery of information. Examples could include:
  - Development of a public presentation on monarch butterfly migration in California
  - Design a self guided trail map
  - Design and teach a preschool program on the salmonid life cycle
4. Stewardship Projects - Stewardship projects involve volunteers in natural resource management projects. Examples include:
  - Removing non-native vegetation by hand
  - Collecting seeds for germination in a greenhouse
  - Planting seeds and tending plants in a native plants nursery

- Planning and conducting a creek clean-up
- Building or maintaining hiking trails and bridges

Project requirements:

- ·Volunteers should work in teams when appropriate.
- ·Volunteers must report results to peers and California Naturalist program staff.
- ·Partners: the volunteer must work with an established restoration or conservation group, nature center, park system unit, or a similar established organization.
- ·Time counts towards the service hour component.

Testimonial for Capstone Project:

According to a Missouri California Naturalist, “The Capstone Project is a good transition into volunteer work in conservation. The experience provides an application for the naturalist training we received. The experience also provided an avenue to expand knowledge into areas of interest.”