

Vol. 53 - May 8, 2025

IT'S ALL CONNECTED

Inspiring ↔ Informative ↔ Actionable
presented by



You Too Can Become a Master Naturalist

"Looking for a new way to connect more deeply with nature and your community? A Master Naturalist course might be just the opportunity - suitable for all ages. I found myself gaining fresh perspectives, practical skills, and a sense of purpose and community that's enriched my life in unexpected ways." - **Michael Hawk, founder of Jumpstart Nature and California Naturalist**

Going back to school doesn't have to be tedious...it can be downright fun and engaging. Field trips were one of the best parts of school and I'm suggesting a course that is chock full of them. In fact, both Michael and I took this course and it is why I am here writing to you today. Which one you ask? In California, this program is called the [California Naturalist course](#), run by the University of California and offered through numerous partner organizations up and down the state. Elsewhere this program is usually known as a Master Naturalist course.

This certification course is not a huge commitment. In fact, I've actually completed two of these courses (there is no limit) and they could not have been more different which is a bonus in my mind since there was almost no overlap, except the handbook. And, frankly, the handbook is a valuable resource worth referring to repeatedly as it covers topics such as biodiversity, climate, geology, water issues, plants and animals, land and resource management, conservation and environmental issues, all with a focus on interpretation, stewardship, and community science.

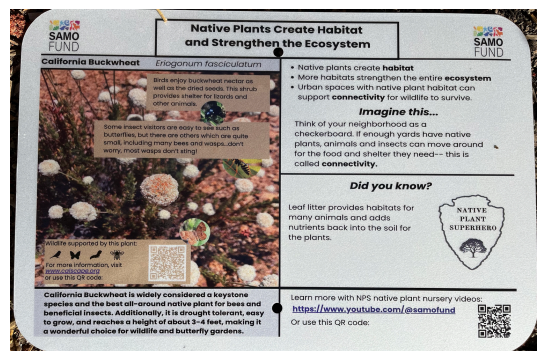
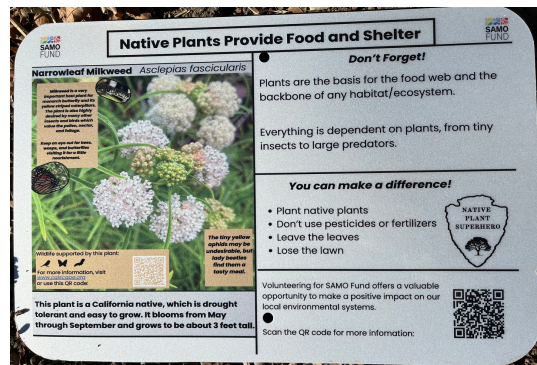
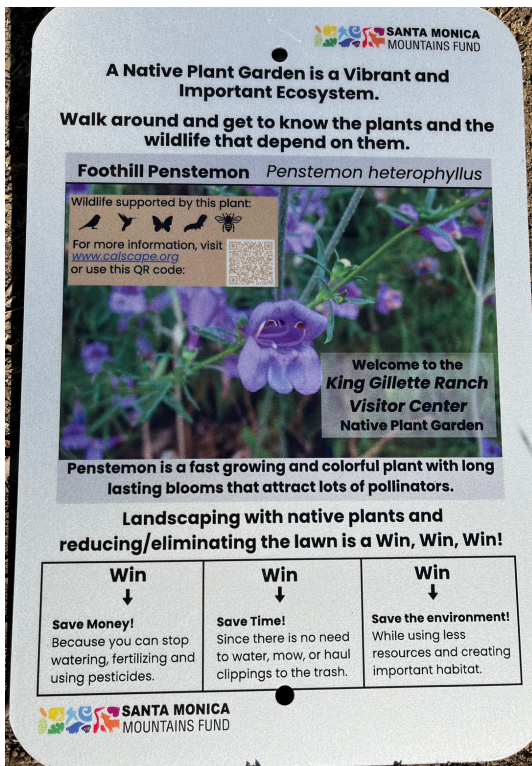
Every partner organization operates the class a little bit differently, emphasizing topics unique to their ecosystem and organizational focus. My favorite part of this course is meeting like-minded people in my area who bring terrific energy into the class which is infectious. Moreover, everyone has a slightly different angle on how they want to contribute which helped me see a variety of ways to view environmental stewardship.

Each person enrolls for their own reasons, but it is clear that we all value nature and want to help sustain our outdoor spaces.

Recently I attended the graduation ceremony for the most recent CalNat cohort from the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and I am so glad I ventured out on that very rainy Saturday morning. Each student presented their capstone projects with an enthusiasm reinvigorating my hope that we truly can carve a path forward toward better sustainability of our precious, limited resources here and elsewhere.

As I mentioned, each organization presents the program a little differently. Here in California, the general requirements include the California Naturalist Handbook, 8 class sessions (in person or online), and a number of field excursions. Each student also develops a capstone project which is presented to the class just before the graduation ceremony.

Some of the capstone projects I've seen include: field guides, trail ambassador program guidelines, new wildfire technology interpretation, easy seed starting setups, a beginner nature journal booklet, hosting a nature walk or bioblitz event, nature photography explorations, listening/recording to sounds out in nature, art inspired by nature, and more. My project last year was creating interpretive signs in the native plant garden at the visitor center where I volunteer. Here are three of the signs:



“The mission of UC Environmental Stewards is to foster a diverse community of stewards building toward sustainability and resilience in California’s communities and ecosystems through education and service.” - From the UC Agricultural and Natural Resources webpage

One of the main points of a [master naturalist certification](#) is to educate more and more people about the environmental issues we face. **Equipping these new naturalists with the tools they need to teach others, get involved, and inspire even more folks to do**

the same. So seek out your local master naturalist course and gift yourself the time to enroll. I am certain you will also experience the surprising benefits of taking a nature class.

The Power Of A Village

Ideas abound about how individuals can make a difference. But the reality is that many folks view these steps as just a drop in the bucket and not likely to affect any real or meaningful change...so why bother. Guess what? The research is on our side and it shows that your actions can start a “social contagion” of action among your friends and neighbors. It turns out that no matter how small, these steps do add up to something big.



Whether it is [installing solar panels](#) or being more [energy savvy](#), what you do impacts your neighbors and their actions. Now that we understand our individual power, it is imperative that we continue to [discuss our climate actions](#) at home, on the sidewalk, at work, and everywhere you have an opportunity. Not only will you help sway others' decisions, but these little changes actually alter us all, translating into a deeper desire to support stronger climate legislation as we begin to view ourselves as [climate advocates](#).

Corporations and political interests intentionally confuse and mislead people, and even use information overload to wear us down. Will using reusable shopping bags or water bottles stop the plastic crisis? Not likely, but as more and more people make the change, the power of the wallet will begin to be noticed by big business. Together, we vote with our dollars, we vote with our habits, and we vote by normalizing important conversations about the environment. And of course, we also vote in elections. *Our individual actions are our votes.*

Remember that our eco-friendly habits are more likely to be adopted by those around us and that societal pressure to conform to norms is quite powerful. **Use your power to create a ripple effect focused on better practices that improve the environment.** Be the catalyst that helps create a broader environmental consciousness within society!

Quick Connections

Books, websites, documentaries, podcasts, events, quotes, and more



[2084: An Oral History of the Great Warming](#) by James Lawrence Powell brings a thoughtful interpretation of earth and what life is like for humans and all other beings while the devastating effects of climate change reshape the planet.



Quote we're pondering

“The proper use of science is not to conquer nature but to live in it.” - Barry Commoner



Get the low-down on pesticides and other yard treatments in this [short article from Xerces Society](#).

Take a peek at this one page infographic highlighting the results and global reach of the [10th annual City Nature Challenge](#).

Community Connections

We want to connect with you.

Have you taken a master naturalist course? If so, what did it mean for you and have you kept involved in the outdoor arena through volunteering, teaching, advocating, or any other way?

We read each and every response and will share selected reader stories in upcoming newsletters.

Share With Us

Support Us

Did you know that most of our funding comes from readers like you? If you enjoy our original curated content, please support us. Not ready to make a contribution right now? Do share our newsletter with family, friends, and colleagues and help spread the word.

Donate Now

Your feedback is important. [Tell us](#) how we are doing and what you would like to see covered in future newsletters.

Every connection counts! Please help grow our community of everyday heroes by sharing this newsletter with a friend or colleague. Click to [subscribe](#).

Thank you,

Laura Schare, Editor

Michael Hawk, Founder

Jumpstart Nature

PO Box 53842

San Jose, California 95153

You received this email because you signed up on our website.

[Unsubscribe](#)

