

Wyoming Naturalist Program



Volunteer Handbook & Policy Guidelines

2021

<http://wyomingnaturalists.wyobiodiversity.org/>

Table of Contents

Introduction

- Our Mission
- Who We Are
- Who is a Wyoming Naturalist?

Applicant Information

- Qualification
- Age Limits
- Certificate Requirements
- Selection & Acceptance
- Background Checks
- Informing Applicants
- Course Fees
- Refund Policy
- Confidentiality
- Attendance
- Course Assessment & Survey
- Annual Meeting

Volunteering as a Wyoming Master Naturalist

- Approved Volunteer Activities
- Standard Behavior for Volunteers
- Training
- Reporting Volunteer Activities
- Grounds for Dismissal of a Volunteer
- Procedure for Dismissal
- How May The Title Be Used?
- Contributions
- Additional requirements for Partner Organizations
 - Wyoming Game and Fish Department
 - Wyoming State Parks

Program Compliance Standards

- Nondiscrimination & Equal Opportunity Statement
- Volunteers Working With Youth

Appendix I

- Release of Liability and Use of Image (Adult Participant)

Introduction

The Wyoming Naturalist Program (WNP), established in 2020, provides education and training to participants in biodiversity, ecology, conservation, management, and interpretation, so that they can become leaders in the effort to protect our natural resources and the special places where we live. The organization's website can be found at <http://wyomingnaturalists.wyobiodiversity.org/>.

Mission

The mission of the WNP is to cultivate an educated community of volunteers to deliver environmental education and active stewardship to protect the state's natural resources. We will achieve our mission by bringing together a partnership of organizations in Wyoming to

- Provide training for WNP participants;
- Provide volunteer opportunities above and beyond those already available to the public;
- Provide partner organizations with a trained and educated volunteer force to assist with natural resource projects and outreach.

Who We Are

The Wyoming Naturalist Program is coordinated by a committee of state agencies and non-profits that includes [Audubon Rockies](#), [Wyoming Game and Fish Department](#), [Wyoming State Parks](#), [Volunteer Wyoming](#), the [University of Wyoming Biodiversity Institute](#), and [University of Wyoming Extension](#).

The WNP partners with many more federal, state and local agencies and non-government organizations to enhance trainings and bring a diversity of service opportunities to our participants.

Who is a Wyoming Naturalist?

The title Wyoming Naturalist is awarded to individuals who complete the basic education program and are actively working towards certification by providing volunteer service. The title Certified Wyoming Naturalist is awarded to an individual who has completed the certification requirements and/or the certification renewal requirements, as described on page 4. Persons who complete the education program but do not participate in the service component of the program do not receive a title.

Applicant Information

Qualifications

Anyone over the age of eighteen (see below for youths age 14-17), can become a Wyoming Naturalist. No previous education or experience is needed—only a willingness to learn and to actively steward the land. Successful participants must have an interest in expanding knowledge in natural history, possess a willingness to learn and share knowledge with peers, and must be able to pass a background check.

Age Limits

The WNP is geared toward adult participants. However, there are likely to be some highly motivated youth and parent-child teams who would fit into this program perfectly. Youth who are 14-17 years old may participate, provided that they (1) apply and enroll in the program using the application and enrollment procedures established by the program, and (2) be accompanied at trainings, field trips, and volunteer service events by a parent or other adult who is a WNP participant and who is directly responsible for them.

Certification Requirements

To become a Certified Wyoming Naturalist, a participant must complete and achieve a minimum of the following:

- Completion of the basic training course. This typically includes 40 hours of combined classroom and field instruction. “Completion” means that attendance and assignments fulfill the expectations of the Program.
- 40 hours of approved volunteer service.
- To maintain annual certification and achieve additional advancements in the program, participants must complete 8 hours of advanced training and continue to contribute 40 hours of approved volunteer service each year.

Volunteers have a maximum of 12 months from the first day of their basic training courses to complete the above stated requirements and receive their first certification as a Certified Wyoming Naturalist. Certification is good for one year.

After three years pass between taking the basic training courses and receiving the initial certification without recertification, the basic training courses must be taken again.

Selection & Acceptance

To be considered for the WNP, the application found at <http://wyomingnaturalists.wyobiodiversity.org/index.php/apply> must be complete.

In the event that there is an abundance of applicants, interviews may be conducted by phone, video conference, email, or in-person.

Applicants will be informed by phone or email as to the decision of acceptance or nonacceptance.

When informed of acceptance, applicants must:

- Pay the application fee when informed of acceptance.
- Provide additional information, such as social security number, for required background check if accepted.
- Complete and pass a background check (See below for more information)
- Review and sign a liability waiver/photo release for Wyoming Naturalist Program (if informed of acceptance). (See Appendix for the form.)

Background Checks

Background checks will be required for all WNP participants. WNP participants may need to pass an additional background check for specific volunteer agencies or organizations before volunteering with their projects. Some agencies or organizations may require WNP participants to be fingerprinted prior to volunteering on their projects. Costs of additional background checks are the responsibility of the participants, unless covered by the agency or organization requiring them. Financial assistance may be available.

Course fees

Initial program cost per person is \$175. Acceptable payment includes on-line credit card payment and checks written to the University of Wyoming Biodiversity Institute. All mailed payments should be addressed to Wyoming Naturalist Program, Biodiversity Institute, University of Wyoming Dept. 4304, 1000 E. University Ave., Laramie, WY 82071. The initial fee will cover trainings, including required field trainings (with the exception of personal items including food and travel), and the annual meeting. Program fees and included items are subject to change.

Thereafter, annual recertification will require payment of fees to attend advanced courses held by the WNP, events, and annual meetings. Fees will vary depending on the duration and venue of each event.

Refund Policy

A refund of the course or event (e.g., advanced training, annual meeting) fees will be granted until two weeks prior to the start of course or the date of the event. After the deadline, refunds may be granted if the space can be filled from the waitlist, or at the discretion of the steering committee. No refund will be given after the start of the course or event.

Confidentiality

All personal information received through the program's application and volunteer screening process are considered confidential information. The information provided will be kept confidential within the committee accepting and reviewing applications. Hard copies will be stored in a secured location.

It is the responsibility of the WNP participant to provide current contact information to be kept on file. To update your contact information, please contact a WNP committee member.

Attendance

Wyoming Naturalists must attend all classes and volunteer commitments. Absenteeism will be addressed in a case-to-case situation and will be reviewed by the WNP committee. Participants are responsible for contacting their volunteer supervisor in the organization they chose to volunteer with (this is separate from the WNP committee) in the event of missed volunteer hours. Participants are responsible for informing the WNP committee in advance if classes will be missed, and for arranging for making up any missed classes.

Course Assessment & Survey

During the basic training courses, participants will be asked to complete assignments for each topic taught. These assignments may vary from making observations, writing a journal entry, presenting information in a later class, or doing some independent reading. This list is not exhaustive, and other assignment types may be used. Assignments are intended to expand and strengthen learning, and are an opportunity for the instructors to assess student learning and effort, and the efficacy of the program overall. Assignments are not graded or marked in the traditional sense. If an assignment can not be completed as the guidelines for them are intended, please contact a WNP committee member and they will work with the participant to determine an appropriate alternative assignment.

WNP participants will be asked to complete a pre and post training survey provided by the program committee. Participants are not required to complete the survey; however, voluntary participation will be encouraged. The main purpose of the survey is to gather information that will be used to improve the program in the future. The surveys may be administered online or by paper. Additional surveys may be used throughout the year to collect information that will help improve and guide the program.

Annual Meeting

Each year the WNP will hold a meeting either virtually or in-person. All WNP members, including Wyoming Naturalists, Certified Wyoming Naturalists, and program instructors, are encouraged to attend. The purpose of the annual meeting is to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of the WNP participants. These meetings will also be an opportunity to present speakers, share knowledge, and to evaluate the success of the Wyoming Naturalist Program.

Volunteering as a Wyoming Master Naturalist

Approved Volunteer Activities

Standard Behavior for Volunteers

Wyoming Naturalist Program volunteers shall at all times:

- Uphold the commitment made to the program.
- Be considerate and respect others' points of view.
- Conduct themselves appropriately to context and setting at all times.
- Accept responsibility for actions taken.
- Abstain from alcohol and controlled substances while acting as a Wyoming Naturalist volunteer or while representing the program. Shall not abuse the program's authority, certification, or membership.
- Keep accurate records of volunteer service, training, and report these to the appropriate authorities of the Wyoming Naturalist Program.
- Strictly follow all program rules, regulations, and policies.

Training

WNP volunteers are expected to attend all training sessions required by the agency sponsoring the service opportunity. In most cases, training may be included in volunteer hours. In some cases, training may be applied towards advanced training requirements. Volunteers are responsible for contacting WNP staff to determine which category is appropriate, and for recording hours correctly.

Reporting Volunteer Activities

VolunteerWyoming will be used to record volunteer hours and track certification hours. The recording and tracking of the volunteer hours is the responsibility of the participant. Training and assistance on the use of this program will be provided.

Grounds for Dismissal from WNP

Wyoming Naturalist and Certified Wyoming Naturalist volunteers can be relieved of the title and privileges at any time, at the discretion of the WNP committee, if actions taken by the participant are in conflict with the WNP's mission or objectives. Notice of dismissal will be added to the volunteer's confidential file. Violation of any of the compliance standards may be means for immediate dismissal.

Procedure for Dismissal

The volunteer will be approached and given a warning that their actions are not in accordance with the WNP's mission or objectives. Depending on the circumstances, this step may be revoked.

The volunteer will be notified in writing of their dismissal by the program's committee. This form must be signed and approved by two active members of the committee.

Contributions

Wyoming Naturalists and Certified Naturalists may not charge fees for talks, slide presentations, demonstrations, etc while serving volunteer hours. As a volunteer, they may accept donations for these activities *on behalf of the program*. These gifts should be given to the program for the furtherance of the WNP mission. See Course Fees section above for the mailing address for all mailed donations.

If giving talks or classes while not volunteering for the WNP or using the title, the member may accept payment.

How May The Title Be Used?

After completion of the requirements of the Wyoming Naturalist program, the official title shall be Certified Wyoming Naturalist (CWN). Use of this title is a privilege, and this title is to be used only by individuals trained as a CWN while volunteering under the auspices of the program. This relationship should be clearly stated in nametags, signs, etc.

The Wyoming Naturalist Program is a public service program operated to provide accurate, unbiased natural resources information and education and/or accurate data collection. The CWN title **may not** be identified with any particular political viewpoint and **may not** be used by groups or individuals as they participate in political advocacy. The title is to be used **only** when doing unpaid volunteer work associated with and approved by the program. Any implied commercial endorsement resulting from use of the title is improper. Therefore, the title may not be used for commercial publicity or private business. Participating in a commercial activity, association with commercial products, or giving implied WNP endorsements to any product or place of business is a violation of WNP policies. CWNs may only identify themselves as such while volunteering in conjunction with official/approved WNP programs or activities, NOT for business or personal gain.

WNP education and experience may be given as qualifications when seeking employment; however once employed, credentials may not be displayed by the employee or the employer.

Violation of the policy concerning the use of the title of Certified Wyoming Naturalist is grounds for removing the certification or membership of an offending member. Such violations will be reviewed by the steering committee, who will make a final determination of the disciplinary actions to be imposed.

Administrators of the Wyoming Naturalist Program, the State Program Coordinator, and local Coordinating Committee members, and other members of state sponsoring agencies who are in a direct supporting role, *but who have not certified*, may show or wear the Wyoming Naturalist text and logo in supporting, promoting and/or advertising the program. However, they may not promote themselves as a Wyoming Naturalist or Certified Wyoming Naturalist unless they have completed their education and all volunteer requirements.

Additional Requirements of Partner Organizations

Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Wyoming Naturalists who choose to provide service to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) are subject to all WGFD volunteer requirements, including an additional background check and completion of WGFD's Volunteer Service Agreement.

Wyoming State Parks, Historic Sites and Trails

Volunteers serving Wyoming State Parks (WSP) must complete the Park's Volunteer Agreement and keep a WSP timesheet (in addition to logging WNP volunteer hours) to be submitted to the Park supervisor, or as instructed by the Park supervisor.

Program Policies

All participants, instructors or administrators of the Wyoming Naturalist Program shall abide by all University of Wyoming Regulations, Standard Administrative Policies and Procedures, found at <http://www.uwyo.edu/regs-policies/index.html>, and the University Policies as outlined in the University of Wyoming Employee Handbook, found at <https://www.uwyo.edu/hr/>, regardless of University employment status.

Nondiscrimination & Equal opportunity Statement

The Wyoming Naturalist Program is conducted in a manner that assures equal opportunity for all, based solely on individual merit and fitness of applicants and employees, related to specific jobs and without regard to age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran status, or any other basis protected by the federal and/or state law.

WNP prohibits discrimination and promotes affirmative action for its participants and volunteers as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other applicable laws.

The University is committed to equal opportunity for all persons in all facets of the University's operations and is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer. The University will provide all applicants for admissions, employment and all University employees with equal opportunity without regard to race, gender, religion, color, national origin, disability, age, protected veteran status, sexual orientation, genetic information, gender identity, creed, ancestry, political belief, any other applicable protected category, or participation in any protected activity. The University ensures non-discriminatory practices in all matters relating to its education programs and activities and extends the same non-discriminatory practices to recruiting, hiring, training, compensation, benefits, promotions, demotions, transfers, and all other terms and conditions of employment.

Volunteers Working With Youth

In order to protect young students from those who would victimize them and protect volunteers from unwarranted allegations of abuse, all volunteers will adhere to the following policy:

Suspected abuse - If a volunteer suspects that any student has been subject to physical, mental or sexual abuse (regardless of where it may have occurred), they must report it immediately to their local law enforcement office.

Two-deep supervision - Two adults (volunteers and/or parents) must be present at all volunteer activities.

No one-on-one contact - One-on-one contact between a volunteer and a student is not permitted. In situations that require personal conferences, such as reviews and evaluations, the meeting is to be conducted in the full view of other people.

Respect of Privacy - Volunteers must respect the privacy of all participants in situations such as restroom breaks and may intrude only to the extent that health and safety requires. Volunteers need to protect their own privacy in similar situations.

Proper Preparation for Risk – Activities with elements of risk should never be undertaken without proper preparation, equipment, clothing, supervision, and safety measures.

Constructive Discipline – Discipline used during an activity shall be constructive and reflect values of the program (i.e. respect, courtesy, etc.). Only in the case of self-defense or to prohibit the physical harm of others shall an instructor use physical force.

Sexual Harassment and Bullying – No sexual harassment or bullying, even between students, is to be tolerated. Volunteers who observe or are made aware of any inappropriate behavior involving other volunteers or students are to intervene and talk to the offending person. They are to report the incident to the volunteer coordinator and program director and/or committee member at the earliest time possible.

Appendix I

WYOMING NATURALIST PROGRAM: RELEASE OF LIABILITY AND USE OF IMAGE

In consideration of my participation in the Wyoming Naturalist Program (“the Program”), I state and agree as follows:

I agree and understand that recordings, which may include my image, appearance, voice, name and/or biographical material (“My Likeness”) may be made and/or produced at the Program. I hereby give the Program, the University of Wyoming, and partner organizations permission to use, reproduce, duplicate, broadcast and distribute My Likeness, in any and all media, including but not limited to the Internet, whether now known or hereafter devised, in perpetuity. I agree that I have no claim for compensation, that My Likeness may be used in commercial or advertising materials, that My Likeness may be edited by the Program, the University of Wyoming and partner organization’s sole discretion, and that I waive any right to inspect or approve the finished version.

I understand that my participation in the Program may involve sustained strenuous physical activity. I am in good health and am aware of no physical problem or condition that will limit or interfere with my ability to participate in the Program.

I agree that I am participating in the Program at my own risk, and acknowledge that the Program has made no warranty or representation, expressed or implied, regarding the safety of conducting the Program.

I expressly release and hold harmless the Wyoming Naturalist Program, and the University of Wyoming and its officers, directors, employees, agents, licensees, successors and assigns from and for any and all claims, demands, actions and causes of action whatsoever for (i) libel, defamation, invasion of privacy or right of publicity arising from the Program’s use or alteration of My Likeness (or any part thereof); or (ii) any loss, damage or injury to person or to property suffered or incurred by me in connection with the Program or any aspect of it, including, but not limited to, any transportation arranged by, paid for or provided by the Program.

This release shall be binding upon me and my heirs, next of kin, executors, administrators and assigns. By signing below, I acknowledge that I have thoroughly read and understand this form and that the statements I have made are all true.

Participant Information:

Participant’s Name (print)

Participant’s Name (sign)

Date

Emergency Contact Information:

Emergency Contact Name

Emergency Contact Phone Number