

# UTAH MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM

## PROGRAM INTRODUCTION

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Thank you for your interest in participating in the Utah Master Naturalist Program! Before you register for the program, it is important for you to understand what the program is all about. This letter will help answer some commonly asked questions so that every participant will have a clear understanding of the program prior to the first class.

### What is the Utah Master Naturalist Program?

By participating in the Utah Master Naturalist Program, you will be initiating or continuing your own personal journey - a journey that will increase your knowledge of Utah's natural systems, of the plants and animals that depend upon those systems, and our role in shaping our past, in determining our future, and as stewards of the land.

The Utah Master Naturalist Program is a certification program developed by Utah State University Extension with the partnership of over 25 other organizations in Utah. The mission of the Utah Master Naturalist Program is to develop a corps of well-informed volunteers and professionals who provide education, outreach, and service promoting citizen stewardship of natural resources within their communities. The program consists of 40 hours of training, with at least 50% of the time spent in the field. Registration fees for the program are \$200, and \$150 for full-time students.

### Who should enroll in the Utah Master Naturalist Program?

The Utah Master Naturalist Program was designed for anyone who is interested in learning more about Utah's natural world. However, the program is tailored to amateur naturalists, volunteer naturalists, and possibly even beginning professional naturalists. Our assessment and evaluation data have indicated that amateur naturalists not only clearly learn more than professional naturalists, but they also consistently enjoy the program more. So, this is one of those cases where the less you know, the more fulfilling this program will likely be for you. If you have been a professional naturalist for many years, or if you have formal training in a naturalist field, you may not find this program as fulfilling.

Everyone who enrolls in the Utah Master Naturalist Program brings with them a unique set of knowledge and experiences. We will learn not only from the instructors, but also from each other. By sharing our knowledge with each other, we gain from everyone's experiences in Utah's natural world. Most importantly, the Utah Master Naturalist Program is never about who knows the most.

### What will I learn about?

The focus of the Utah Master Naturalist Program is to learn about and explore Utah's natural systems, including Watersheds, Deserts, and Mountains. For each of these systems, we will discuss watershed functions, physical characteristics, representative organisms, management techniques, and current issues. We will strive to understand these systems as a whole throughout Utah, so the program will not focus heavily on organism identification. While some of the time will be spent in the classroom, we will pair each discussion with hands-on activities and explorations in the field.

The Utah Master Naturalist Program is more than just a program designed to increase knowledge. It is also a knowledge-sharing program. A goal of the Utah Master Naturalist Program is to prepare persons to share their knowledge with others, to act in a positive manner, to help others feel a greater connection to the land, and to help others develop their own sense of stewardship. As such, we will be spending some time learning about effective methods for being an environmental educator or

interpreter. You might not be employed as an educator, but if you at least enjoy being outdoors with friends and family and sharing your knowledge with them, then you *are* an educator.

What are the program requirements?

Everyone who enrolls in the Utah Master Naturalist Program must commit to attending the full 40 hours, with one absence allowed due to unavoidable circumstances. Take-home quizzes will be distributed and must be completed by the beginning of the each session. In addition, each participant must participate in the group volunteer project or complete their own individual project and conduct a short presentation to the group. Final projects must have some educational or management value and must not already exist. Some examples of past final projects include invasive species fact sheets, volunteer monitoring programs, field trip curricula, interpretive displays, and slide shows.

What are the program benefits?

Upon completing the requirements of the Utah Master Naturalist Program, you will receive a certificate and badge identifying you as a Utah Master Naturalist. While volunteer hours are not required, we will be providing volunteer incentives at different levels. You will also have the opportunity to earn three credits (undergraduate or graduate) from Utah State University for an additional recording fee of \$90. In addition to receiving a certification, you will have the opportunity expand your knowledge, interact and network with fellow naturalists, and learn about organizations who can not only help you learn more, but also need your help in promoting stewardship of Utah's natural world.

If you think that the Utah Master Naturalist Program is right for you, I encourage you to register. If you have any questions regarding the Utah Master Naturalist Program, including the registration process, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I look forward to meeting you!



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