

Volunteer Naturalist--Position Description

Reports to: Environmental Education Coordinator

Program Description:

The Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge's Environmental Education (EE) program enables students to learn the value of our ecosystems. We collaborate with schools and other environmental groups to extend the learning process beyond the conventional classroom limits, allowing students to make connections with their natural environment. Refuge staff worked with local partners and educators to develop tools to aid teachers in conducting environmental education activities both in the classroom and on field trips to the refuge. These resources include: teacher workshops, comprehensive EE curriculum, field trip equipment, field trip guidelines, and a dedicated volunteer program. With these tools, educators and chaperones are expected to lead their students on field trips. Whereas, Volunteer Naturalists welcome students, accompany field trips, help facilitate opportunistic learning, serve as a resource during field trips, and conduct a select number of lessons.

Responsibilities:

- Welcome and orient students to the refuge
- Help organize students and parent volunteers into assigned groups; assist with group management on trail.
- Prepare field equipment (such as field guides and binoculars) according to teacher requests; ensure return and storage of equipment at end of field trip
- Accompany field trips to facilitate nature awareness and discovery; share your enthusiasm for the natural world
- Remind groups of refuge guidelines and regulations
- Ensure a safe experience for field trip participants, visitors, and other volunteers
- Conduct all indoor classroom activities, as well as the outdoor Wetland Pond Study and Water Quality Survey lessons
- Record observations, questions, suggestions, and concerns after completing a field trip

Qualifications:

- Desire and enthusiasm for sharing nature with children
- Strong oral communication skills
- Completion of refuge volunteer naturalist training
- Ability to commit to 30 volunteer hours to environmental education field trips during the school year. Field trips average 2-5 hours each and occur during weekdays.
- Willingness to work in all types of weather, as well as indoors

Training:

Refuge staff will provide volunteers with a solid foundation for assisting with the EE program. During the training, volunteers will:

- Learn about the refuge's natural history
- Acquire nature observation skills such as animal tracking and plant and wildlife identification
- Learn how to conduct water testing, pond study, and indoor classroom activities
- Practice communication techniques to successfully work with youth and the public

After the training, volunteers will:

- Shadow scheduled field trips with seasoned naturalists
- Participate in additional non-formal trainings (encouraged, but not required)