Master Naturalist Program Requirements

Overview

The Master Naturalist Program is a high-quality, science-based training program designed to teach adults about New York’s natural resources, empowering them to educate others and participate in on-the-ground conservation management projects. If you would like to learn more about New York’s natural environment and get involved with important conservation issues facing our natural resources today, this program is for you.

Course Requirements

You can become a Master Naturalist by taking the mandatory “Naturalist Trainee” course (16 credits), supplemented by 14 hours of additional coursework and 30 hours of volunteer work tailored to your personal interests. The mandatory “Naturalist Trainee” course is held at Cornell’s Arnot Teaching and Research Forest, and occasionally at other regional locations. Additional courses may be taken through Cornell’s Conservation Education Program at the Arnot Forest, via the internet through regularly held webcasts, or through programs offered by other educational entities and pre-approved by Master Naturalist faculty. Qualifying programs are regularly emailed to participants via our Master Naturalist e-list. Participants are also encouraged to submit local webinars, workshops and trainings they find locally to the Director for approval. Courses must be science-based and focus on organism identification, an ecosystem (or ecosystems), or a conservation issue. Many programs cover elements from each of the above-mentioned categories.

Course credits will be granted in three categories: ecosystems; conservation issues; and identifying organisms.

Below is a list of credit requirements:

- Ecosystems: 6 credits
- Conservation Issues: 6 credits
- Identifying Organisms: 6 credits
- Electives from any of the categories above based on individual interest: 12 credits

**Total:** 30 credits

The “Naturalist Trainee” course fulfills the requirements for 16 (2 ecosystem credits, 6 conservation issue credits, and 8 organism identification credits) of the total 30 credits.
Volunteer Requirements

Volunteer opportunities may include “hands-on” conservation monitoring, habitat enhancement activities, or educational outreach. Examples of possible conservation activities include working with a local land trust to remove invasive species, monitoring wildlife, working at a local deer check station, inventorying wildflowers at a local park or preserve, or participating in a citizen science project. Potential outreach activities may include leading a “woods walk”, writing articles, giving presentations, or developing educational brochures.

Prior to beginning volunteer work, activities must be submitted and approved by the Master Naturalist Program Director. A “volunteer supervisor” from the participating entity needs to be identified and may be contacted to confirm volunteer efforts.

Program Completion

As coursework and volunteer hours are completed, participants should submit each class or volunteer activity completed to our online database via the “Completed Coursework” and “Completed Volunteer Activities” links. Paper forms are provided in your program binder to help you maintain a record of activities and courses completed, as well as which activities you have submitted online.

Maintaining Master Naturalist Certification

To maintain certification, participants must submit coursework or volunteer activity annually to the database. There is no minimum number of hours required each year, however some effort must be submitted.

Achieving Additional Master Naturalist Levels

Once a volunteer has achieved Master Naturalist status, each 8 hours of additional training, combined with 20 additional hours of volunteer service, elevates a Master Naturalist to the next level. For example, Level II Master Naturalists have completed the Master Naturalist requirements plus 8 additional hours of training and 20 additional hours of volunteer service; Level III Master Naturalists have completed the Master Naturalist requirements plus 16 additional hours of training and 40 additional hours of volunteer service, etc.