

# Indiana Master Naturalist™ Program

## Guidelines for Speakers



Thank you for agreeing to instruct an Indiana Master Naturalist class. Regardless of your topic, there are some important guidelines to consider when developing your presentation. We hope the information provided to you below will help ensure that you and your students have a successful and enjoyable experience with this program.

### What is our Purpose?

The Indiana Master Naturalist (IMN) Program can provide participants with many hands-on opportunities to learn about our Hoosier natural resources. It also provides a way for you to share that knowledge, along with your life experiences, through volunteer service to land trusts, soil and water conservation districts, state and local parks, or other natural resource and conservation agencies. The purpose of IMN includes:

- Provide an introduction to Hoosier natural resources through the eyes of resource professionals and experts in the field.
- Provide an educational opportunity to individuals 18 years or older.
- Provide an opportunity for course participants to establish a short or long-term partnership with a natural resources agency or local organization involved in natural resource management by volunteering as a part of the course.
- Provide a financially self-supporting program.

### Who is Your Audience?

The IMN host for your course can provide more detailed information, but in general, course participants are Hoosiers with a genuine love for the out-of-doors, but limited formal science/natural resources training. They take this course to expand their knowledge of plants, wildlife, soils and other natural resources in Indiana. They expect to volunteer in some capacity after they complete the coursework. Some workshops have included individuals who own landscaping or outdoor adventure/teaching businesses; these individuals may be supplementing their knowledge or planning to use the certification in support of their work. Class sizes vary, but usually will not exceed 30 students. Check with your course host for a final count before your class.

### How Do You Fit In?

Each IMN course contains at least eight three-hour classes and the class you are teaching is one of that series. The course host is required to offer classes in the core curriculum, which includes one Geology/Soils, one Water, two Botany, two Zoology, one People and Natural Resources and one Miscellaneous class focused on the resources of the area in which the workshop is held. If an instructor is teaching a "botany" session, he/she may focus entirely on wildflowers, trees, etc. depending on the location, time of year and instructor expertise. Your course host should have discussed with you what your class focus will be.

If you work for an agency that uses volunteers, this may be an opportunity for recruiting, since course participants must complete service time to receive their certification.

## Guidelines for Being a Successful Instructor

You may be wondering how you can possibly cover everything about your topic in a mere three hours. You can't. You can provide basic information and a taste of what people can dig in and learn AFTER the class on their own. Successful field naturalists are constantly looking, learning and seeking new information. We want to inspire that same sense of "finding the next discovery around the bend" in IMN participants, whether they make that discovery in the field, in a book, in handouts from you or through the web. Your job as an instructor is to provide the spark that ignites the flame!

- Ask questions. Make sure you and your course hosts are in agreement about what you are being asked to cover in your class.
- Provide an outline of your session for the participants.
- Provide handouts and other resource materials - people love "take home" materials to read later.
- Be prepared - know your material and be ready to teach it in the established time frame.
- Practice your presentation. That will allow you to be comfortable with the materials and able to focus on the responses you are getting from your audience.
- Focus on accuracy in your content-use only accepted sources for information and documentation.
- Define technical terms if they must be used.
- Use a variety of presentation media. There are several different learning styles. Some people learn best by listening, some by reading, some by talking and some by doing. Find ways to include all of these into your presentation. Ask questions, provide handouts, include hands-on activities, use video/powerpoint/slides, discuss....but don't overdo any one presentation method.
- Focus on Indiana connections to the resources and information you provide. For example, if you are teaching a session on trees, focus on the tree parts and functions and then work on the 10-15 common trees participants are likely to see here.
- Be conscious of any regulations pertaining to your topic and be clear about their use. For example, if you are teaching a session on Indiana reptiles, it is important to discuss the rules for collecting snakes, turtles and frogs and for keeping them in captivity.
- Create a short quiz (5-10 questions) for the end of your session as a review for students.
- Be sure to build in time for questions and answers—they'll probably have lots of them!
- Be sure to make connections for the participants related to volunteer activities in your area of expertise. Can they volunteer with your agency? Where might they volunteer if not with you?
- Be careful to focus on facts and good information—not opinions and conjecture. These classes are *not* intended as a forum for the presentation of your personal environmental, political or religious views.

## Was I Successful?

Class participants complete an instructor evaluation form that is kept by the course host. Copies can be provided to you. *Thank you for helping Hoosiers appreciate their natural resources!*

For more information, contact:

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The mission of the Indiana Master Naturalist program is to bring together natural resource specialists with adult learners to foster an understanding of Indiana's plants, water, soils and wildlife, and promote volunteer service in local communities.