

Channel Islands Naturalist Corps Volunteer Program

Introduction

Channel Islands Naturalist Corps (CINC), established in 2001 by NOAA's Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, are a group of volunteer ocean stewards dedicated to educating passengers on board whale watch vessels visiting the sanctuary (CINMS) and the Channel Islands National Park (CINP). Volunteers participating in the program are trained by CINMS and CINP to educate the community about the culturally rich and biologically diverse resources found within the 1,252 square nautical miles of the sanctuary and the five Channel Islands within the park.

Program Overview

Channel Islands Naturalist Corps volunteers educate local school children, residents, and tourists, monitor sanctuary and park resources, and conduct research on board local whale watch vessels departing out of Santa Barbara Harbor, Ventura Harbor, and Channel Islands Harbor. The field season runs from January – October capturing the presence of migrating gray whales and foraging blue and humpback whales. In addition, to field interpretation and research, CINC volunteers also offer slide presentations for local schools and community groups and represent the sanctuary and park at marine-related community outreach events.

Volunteer Training

CINC volunteers receive training from scientists and other experts in the field of marine science, marine mammals, seabirds, island ecology, oceanography, geology, and cultural history of the Santa Barbara Channel. Training classes also provide information on current sanctuary and park issues, resource management tools, interpretation techniques, and field research techniques. The 5-week training course includes lectures, field trips, and a certification exam. CINC training is divided between Santa Barbara and Ventura to provide an opportunity for community members to volunteer from both regions. In-service training lectures and field trips are offered monthly throughout the field season. CINC volunteers may receive additional training to become island interpreters in the CINP.

Requirements

The volunteer commitment is for a period of one year. 80 hours of field interpretation are required plus initial training and monthly meetings. Volunteers must be at least 18 years of age, be able to handle up to 8 hours at sea, and attend the required training program. The annual 5-week training class is conducted in January. Volunteer applications and information about the next CINC program are available on the sanctuary web site at channelislands.noaa.gov.

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