



Año Nuevo Docent Training

Class Outline

Our twelve week training program (class meets on most Sundays) is one of the most comprehensive within the California State Parks system. We utilize experts in their respective field of study to teach our classes. If it looks like a trip back to college we couldn't agree more. It is our goal to train all of our docents to have a complete knowledge of the natural and cultural history of Año Nuevo State Park. Many discover that elephant seals aren't the only captivating attraction to the park; there's so much more!

New Docent Orientation An Introduction to Año Nuevo State Park



The first training class is dedicated to introducing new docents to park staff and to each other. The class will take place in the historic Dickerman Ranch horse barn. We'll cover what it's like to volunteer for California State Parks, what to expect during training, pass out docent manuals, and get pumped up to be a volunteer with a slide show by **Ranger Ziad Bawarshi**. After a lunch break we'll hit the trail

for a hike and discover the amazing classroom that Año Nuevo is.

Meet Your Mentor Potluck

Along with in-classroom lectures and field training, we offer the services of our **veteran docents** as mentors to new docents. With years of field experience leading tours, mentors can help get new docents up to speed on what it takes to guide 20 visitors through the sand dunes. After getting assigned a mentor, new docents will have lunch with them and then go for a hike in the park to talk docenting.



*Docents in training should expect to work with their mentor outside of class at least once a month.

Interpretation Workshops



Throughout our training new docents will be given loads of comprehensive information. Everything from seal migration routes to Native American diets will be covered. With the weight of this information swimming in one's head, it can be difficult to know how to unload it all to park visitors. With the help of **State Park Interpreter Mike Merritt** these workshops help decipher what information is relevant to share, how to organize an interpretive hike, ways to make everything fun, and how best to deliver it. In a matter of a few weeks, new docents become masters at connecting Año Nuevo to our visitors.

Elephant Seals on Land



Over eighty percent of what docents talk about with park visitors will involve elephant seals. After all, these marine mammals are the main attraction of the park! This class, taught by **Pat Morris**, one of the leading elephant seal researchers from the University of California at Santa Cruz, will be a crash course into the world of the Northern Elephant Seal. Topics covered in class will include fighting, births, life cycles, molting, weaning, seal identification, and much more.

Marine Mammals



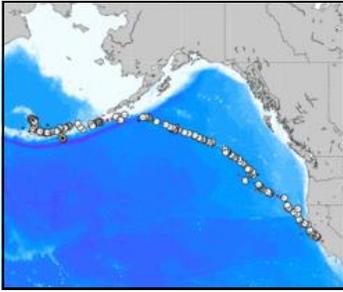
You can easily find out that elephant seals aren't the only marine mammals inhabiting Año Nuevo. Sea otters and harbor seals can be seen alongside the shoreline and often the calls of seal lions are easily heard clamoring from the island. All other marine mammals that are often seen from the viewing points will be covered in this class. **Ranger Frank Balthis** will be instructing this class and will draw from his many years patrolling the shoreline of the San Mateo Coast.

Working With Children



It's estimated that 1 out of 3 visitors who come to Año Nuevo is a child. Some children arrive with school groups, others come with their families. This class will prepare new docents to work with all ages of kids in the unique environment of the park, including the sand dunes. Emphasis will be put on group management, grabbing their attention, helping kids to learn, and how to handle discipline. It's easy to become a kid again when working with children at Año Nuevo.

Elephant Seals at Sea



What do elephant seals do in the ocean? Where do they go? Utilizing the park as a living classroom, biologists are constantly learning more and more about elephant seals. This class aims to educate new docents on how researchers work with the animals, what they have recently learned, and what mysteries they are still working on. Veteran researcher **Patrick Robinson**, director of the UCSC Año Nuevo Natural Reserve, will also dive into what elephants seal life in the ocean is like, what their migration patterns are, and what they eat.

Ohlone Native Americans



With historic Native American villages and midden sites scattered throughout Año Nuevo State Park, the Ohlone past is a rich part of the park's history. Ohlone interpretation is an important subject on our tours, right behind the excitement of the elephant seals. To help understand this important aspect of our park's past, this class will be taught by storyteller and **State Archeologist Mark Hylkema**. With never enough time to tell the full story, Mark will highlight the important aspects of the Ohlone culture for new docents.

Año Nuevo Wildlife

Scattered throughout the 4,200 acres of Año Nuevo State Park lives a cornucopia of small and large mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, etc. With a careful eye, visitors can find evidence of these creatures by searching the sand for tracks, the skies for wings, or the trails for scat.

Retired Ranger Gary Strachan leads this class that explores who is living deep within the park as well as those who interact with the elephant seals.



Geology of Año Nuevo



Unknown to most, Año Nuevo is a prime location to find examples of our geologic past. From earthquake faults to shifting sand dunes, the park is easily a rock hound's dream. **Jerry Weber**, a long time geologist, has studied the park for decades and will share what he has learned in class. He will be covering basic rock cycles, ocean terraces, faults, beach erosion, and sand dune migration including the formation of Año Nuevo Island.

History of Año Nuevo



From historic dairies to light stations, Año Nuevo contains multiple aspects of California's history. This class, taught by State Park Interpreter **Mike Merritt**, will use old photographs, maps, and the latest historic research to unlock the hidden stories of the park. However, it will only scratch the surface of what can be told about the people who once lived here. New docents will obtain an overview of relevant park history with an emphasis on interpreting the history of Año Nuevo Island.

Introduction to Seal Tours



Not everyone is instantly prepared to lead 20 visitors on a hour and a half tour into the wild sand dunes of Año Nuevo. Trails can be tricky to find, time can go by fast, and let's not forget about the 5,000 pound seals that are perpetually wandering around. Bringing everyone up to speed on operating inside a wildlife preserve, this class will teach new docents the in's and out's of leading elephant seal tours. Docents will join **Ziad Bawashi**, a long time Año Nuevo park ranger who has logged countless hours working amongst

the seals. New docents will learn how to safely lead visitors along the trails, how to make the best use of their time, and how to read seal behavior and more.

Docent Day



The weekend before the start of the seal tours docents are able to take a sneak peak at the action before the preserve becomes alive with seal tours. It's a great way to meet and mingle with other docents. This special access is only open to active docents.

Final Rehearsal Walk

As the end of the docent training classes draws near and the start of elephant seal tours approaches, new docents will have one last chance to rehearse their tour with their docent mentor. It's a time to fine tune what you plan to say, walk the trails throughout the dunes and spot some large elephant seal males to interpret.



Sharks of Año Nuevo



What is the main predator of elephant seals? Sharks! And as it turns out, they like to spend their time just in the waters beyond Año Nuevo Island. Sharks are a popular topic with park visitors and we will be learning more about them with shark scientist **Taylor Chapple**. Taylor will breakdown common misconceptions about our finned friends and give docents a basic overview of their natural history.

Marine Protected Areas



California is leading the way in protecting it's offshore waters. In fact the area around Año Nuevo State Park is home to a Marine Protected Area, commonly called an MPA. **Rikki Dunsmore**, Marine Ecologist for the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Foundation, will explain what these “underwater parks” are all about and what they mean for the future of ocean and shorelines.

Año Nuevo Docent Training

Additional Training

Mock Walks

It's tough to know exactly what to expect when building an elephant seal tour. Throughout the fall training experienced Año Nuevo docents will lead Mock Walks. These walks showcase what information is given, where docents stop and talk, and how they might interact with the public. Although the real life experience of leading walks comes later in the winter, these Mock Walks provide a head start into the world of leading elephant seal tours.

Shadow Walks

Once the elephant seal tours begin in December, opportunities to observe actual tours becomes an important training tool. New docents are assigned to accompany various tours so that they can see how experienced docents interact with the visitors, park staff, and of course the elephant seals.



Roving Season Training



After March 31, Año Nuevo shifts gears and ends the elephant seal tours. From April to November visitors are able to explore the park on their own and interact with docents at three different overlooks inside the preserve. In this class, docents are trained on the logistics of how to operate during this time of year and what kind of interpretive opportunities to expect. This training is usually the first weekend day in April.

Docent Graduation



New docents will be treated to a special graduation celebration. Here, successful docents that have completed their training will be recognized.