



# Wilderness First Responder

Spring 2023

## Description:

This ECS is for students who are serious about the outdoors. Wilderness First Responders are individuals trained to respond to emergency situations in remote locations and the Wilderness First Responder (WFR) is considered the 'gold standard' in wilderness medicine. This course includes 80 hours of skill sessions, hands-on training, and practical scenarios. Each participant will complete not only the physical aspects of the WFR (carrying gear over rough terrain; hiking and performing rescues in both day and night conditions; being able to perform tasks in potentially adverse weather conditions; carrying patients over rough terrain, and more), but must also accept the mental challenges of this program, including working in stressful situations; performing at various times as a participant and a leader; being able to step up and lead a rescue; and maintaining a positive attitude, being a solid team player and completing the curriculum requirements. The WFR course is a challenging, in-depth course requiring a level of maturity and competence far above the WFA (Wilderness First Aid) requirements. Designed specifically to prepare students to provide advanced emergency care, this ECS is perfect for those interested in leading groups in a wilderness setting, and will partner with 4Points Expeditions, an innovator and leader in wilderness medical training. The WFR certification is valid for three years and shows competency as a provider of wilderness emergency medicine.

## Essential Questions:

- How does one persevere through the physical and mental challenges of participating in a Wilderness First Responder program?
- Why are these skills a vital part of being a responsible outdoors person?

# Basics of ER Rescue

By Morgan H. '26 & Kelly F. '26  
March 2, 2023

For the past few days, the wilderness first responder Experienced-Centered Seminar (ECS) has been exploring different wilderness situations, mentalities, and decision-making processes and skills. Students have also researched and presented on different body systems such as the circulatory system, the nervous system, and the skeletal system. Students have been given scenarios and encouraged to think outside the box to determine how they would react and respond to specific unusual circumstances. An example of this being watching a video of an accident and being tasked with figuring out how it could've been avoided and possible proper responses once the accident occurred.

On Tuesday, students visited El Paso County Search and Rescue (EPC SAR). Students met with a professional rescuer who explained the tasks and processes of different types of rescues. By showing the students real accidents and responses, it gave them the ability to understand how one may think when trying to rescue another person in the wilderness. Students were shown equipment and rescue vehicles that are used in rescue situations and how this equipment may be used.

While preparing for their trip, students learned about the history of Santa Cruz island. They learned about the geography, climates, and its wildlife inhabitants. While preparing to travel to the island, students are eager and are prepared to start their wilderness first responder certification process.



# Travel & Trauma

By Morgan H. '26 & Imogen M. '24

March 5, 2023

We traveled to Ventura, California, and walked downtown then we drove up to Ojai, where we slept under the stars, picked oranges, and got CPR certified. Later, on Friday, we took a boat to Prisoners Harbor, and on the way, we saw a group of grey whales. When arriving at the harbor, we worked to move the group's stuff off the boat and into the trucks. On our drive to the Field Station, we saw amazing views and learned about Santa Cruz Island.

We had our first of many class days, where we learned about the basics of patient assessment and how to care for their injuries. After a day full of learning, we walked to a Eucalyptus grove and were put through our first scenario. We had to use these tasks under pressure, where everyone made many mistakes, even the injured who may need to take an acting class. It was hard, and it still is, being thrown into a situation and having to apply and use all the information we've been given. It's an extremely different atmosphere. Even after having done multiple scenarios, it is still challenging, but it is slowly getting easier. Today we walked to Pelican Bay and Tinkers Cove and got to jump into the crystal clear, beyond-freezing ocean water. While writing this, our chefs are in the kitchen cooking a gourmet spaghetti dinner, and after we will have another lesson to end the long, but perfect day.



# Simulated Rescues & a Fox

By Noah B. '24 & Kelly F. '26

March 10, 2023

On Monday, the students hiked to Valley Anchorage on Santa Cruz Island, a secluded rocky beach to learn about hypothermia and hyperthermia. The students saw seals, crabs, starfish, sea urchins, anemones, and octopi. Later, to their surprise, there was an unknown planned scenario, to which the students panicked. Two injured hikers fell down an embankment, where the students had to treat them with restricted space and limited gear

On Tuesday, the students hiked up and over a ridge to Coches beach to enjoy the sunlight and the ocean. There, they learned about drowning, seizures, blood sugar, lightning, poison, stings, and bites. Some students attempted to swim in the 55-degree ocean. One student even got mild hypothermia after a planned drowning scenario. Sound serious? If you've ever started shivering when you've been cold, then you've officially had mild hypothermia. The best treatment is to put on more layers, preferably dry, to warm up.

The following day was the final scenario. The students had to assign roles such as incident commander and group leader to specific individuals in preparation for an unknown scenario. Students had to plan ahead, using all of the first responder





concepts they had learned in order to effectively treat an unknown number of injured patients with limited knowledge and equipment. Before the scenario, the students were all nervous and were patiently waiting around before being summoned into action. This scenario would simulate a real-life rescue situation. The scenario was a car crash with four injured patients, one of which was ultimately carried one-half mile on a makeshift litter made of sticks, rope, sleeping pads, and clothing commonly carried in our backpacks. Due to the limited ability to download pics, we will share more of our rescue scenarios when back on campus Thursday. While we spent many hours on our WFR course, we also explored Santa Cruz history, nature, and geology. The local foxes only found here on the island, are curious and small, the size of a house cat!

Unexpected rain caused plans for hiking and camping across the island to change. The students left the island earlier and returned to the mainland. There, they stayed at a retreat camp to prepare for the final exam. At the retreat, they studied, played games, watched movies, and relaxed. It was a much-needed rest day after long days of study and practice. Best news? As of this afternoon, we all passed our exam and are now officially certified as Wilderness First Responders and in CPR!

