

# Ecology Specialty Programs

## Student-Level Programs

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### I. Intent

The SSI Ecology specialty programs provide students with basic knowledge and skills needed to identify various species of marine organisms and explains their role in the ocean's ecosystems.

#### a. Ecology Specialties

- Coral Identification
- Fish Identification
- Manta And Ray Ecology
- Marine Invertebrate Ecology
- Marine Ecology
- Marine Mammal Ecology
- Nudibranch Ecology
- Sea Turtle Ecology
- Shark Ecology

*Note | These programs do not have mandatory in-water training requirements. SSI Professionals are encouraged to add in-water training to increase the value of the program. If in-water training is conducted, the standards must be followed based on the type of activity (scuba, snorkel, freedive).*

### II. Minimum Instructor Rating

An active status SSI Professional with the applicable certification may conduct the Ecology specialty programs.

### III. Student Prerequisites

**If in-water training is conducted:**

#### **Snorkel students**

- Minimum age | 6 years old.

**Have the following SSI certifications or equivalent from a recognized training agency:**

- Snorkel Diver

#### **Scuba students**

- Minimum age | 10 years old.

**Have the following SSI certifications or equivalent from a recognized training agency:**

- Referral Diver

*Note | Students may enroll in SSI specialty programs and complete all academic and pool/confined water sessions. Open water training dives for all specialties cannot be combined with open water training dives for entry-level programs, and must be conducted after completion of all in-water training for the entry-level program.*

### IV. Duration

- Recommended hours for completion | 3–6.

### V. Depth Limitations

**If in-water training is conducted:**

#### **Snorkel students**

- Maximum open water depth limit | 5 meters.

### Scuba students

- Maximum pool/confined water depth limit | 5 meters.
- Maximum open water depth limit: 30 meters.
- Maximum open water depth limit for 12- to 14-year-olds | 18 meters.
- Maximum open water depth limit for 10- and 11-year-olds | 12 meters.

## VI. In-Water Ratios

### 15 years and older:

- The student-to-instructor ratio is 8:1.
- The ratio may increase to 10:2 with one (1) certified assistant.
- The ratio may increase to 12:3 with two (2) certified assistants.

### 12- through 14-years old:

- The student-to-instructor ratio is 6:1.

### 10- and 11-years old:

- The student-to-instructor ratio is 4:1.
- No more than two (2) participants per instructor or certified assistant may be under the age of 12, and none of the remaining participants may be under the age of 15.

### Snorkel students

### 6- to 9-years old:

- The student-to-instructor ratio is 8:1.
- The ratio may increase to 10:2 with one (1) certified assistant.
- The ratio may increase to 12:3 with two (2) certified assistants.

## VII. Proximity

- During in-water skill evaluations, the students must remain under direct supervision of the SSI Professional so that physical contact can be made at any time.

## VIII. Requirements For Completion

- Complete all academic sessions and assessments outlined in the applicable instructor manual.
- Complete the program's final exam.

## IX. Certification

- Upon completion of all academic requirements, the SSI Professional may issue the program's digital certification card.
- Certified SSI divers can dive with an equally- or more-qualified buddy in environments equivalent to their training and within the recommended depth limits of their certifications.
- Students younger than 15 years old will be certified as an SSI Junior Diver in the applicable program, and can dive under the direct supervision of a dive professional, or with a certified adult, in environments equivalent to their training and within the recommended depth limits.