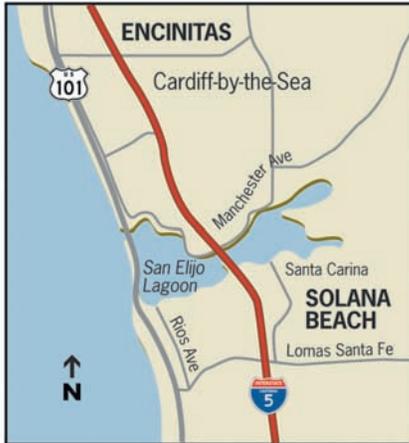




Lagoon Tidings

Calendar of Events



Bird Counts

Second Monday each month
 7:30 am–noon
 Meet at Rios Ave. trailhead
 Contact birds@SanElijo.org

Docent Meetings

Second Tuesday each month
 10:30–noon
 Meet at Cardiff Public Library
 Contact docents@SanElijo.org

Free Guided Nature Walks

Second Saturday each month
 9 am–11 am
 Meet at Rios Ave. trailhead

Volunteer Work Parties

Third Saturday each month
 9 am–11 am
 Contact Ralph Achenbach at
 (760) 436-3944 or ralph@SanElijo.org
 for locations
 Please note: no work party in December
 The next event takes place on Jan 17th

2009 Lagoon Day

May 16, 2009



Homecoming on Horizon for Threatened Birds

New Conservancy Project Restores Sensitive Dune Habitat, Aims to Attract Rare Plovers, Terns

By Ralph Achenbach

A young Snowy Plover can leave its nest just three hours after breaking through its eggshell. Unfortunately, ever fewer chicks of this tiny shorebird hatch in our region. With the destruction, disturbance and disappearance of the coastal strand habitat the plover needs for nesting, *continued on page 4*



© William Dalton

Least Tern with chick. Photo © William Dalton, with permission

Docent Training Attracts Record Numbers

By Tara Fuad

Conservancy board member and MiraCosta biology professor Denise Stillinger explains the fascinating adaptations of local plants to the docents-in-training during a field trip as part of the fall docent training.

Photo: Janine Free



A record-breaking 25 new volunteers are attending the Conservancy's fall docent training, promising a stimulating and active education program for 2009. "I am really looking forward to getting involved," said new docent Betty Normand, a retired school principal. "This is something I've been wanting to do for a long time, and I just love the Lagoon," Normand added. This tremendous commitment to contribute to one of the Conservancy's cornerstone programs is shared among all of the docents-in-training, who dedicate seven Wednesday mornings to learning about the plants and animals of the Lagoon. Once they complete the training, the docents will lead school groups on walks following the opening of the new Nature Center in early 2009. *continued on page 5*

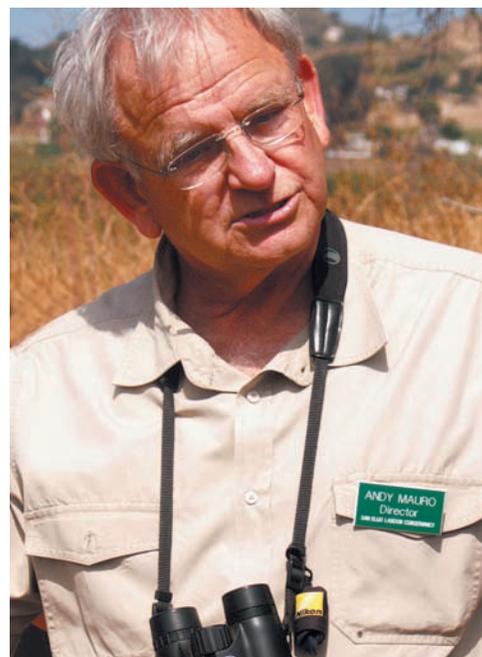
President's Message

By Andy Mauro, SELC Board President

As we get together with our families for the holidays, we reflect on the year that passed and contemplate the year ahead. We may mourn losses and celebrate achievements, and exchange gifts to show our love for one another.

In many ways, the San Elijo Lagoon is like a large family: It is both nourishing and demanding, providing us with clean water and a place for recreation and contemplation, and requiring our love and attention in return.

The Conservancy has enjoyed a year of significant progress in its work to preserve, protect and enhance the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve. We added new staff to improve our education and outreach, continued to expand our biological monitoring efforts, and launched new programs to protect and restore critical habitat. Our accomplishments have set the stage for continued growth in our ability to further our mission in the year ahead. The much anticipated opening of the new Nature Center in early 2009 is symbolic of many new milestones on the horizon, as well as the Lagoon's immense value to the community. This exciting time gives us an opportunity to consider our commitment to the Lagoon-family and how we can play our part. In this issue of Lagoon Tidings, you will find highlighted many creative ways to give back and incorporate the Lagoon into your giving. I invite you to explore these ideas as



Conservancy President Andy Mauro

Photo: Ralph Achenbach

you contemplate the gifts you will give during this holiday season.

The end of the year 2008 also marks the end of my tenure as the Conservancy's Board of Directors President. It has been a great pleasure and a tremendous privilege to serve this stellar organization, and I look forward to my continued involvement on the Board of Directors and as a docent leading some of the Conservancy's community nature walks. With founding member Denise Stillinger slated to take over, we can be assured of fine leadership at the head of our Lagoon-family in the years to come.

I wish you and your families a peaceful holiday season and a great start into the New Year. ❖

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GET YOUR



Visit the Reserve!

Fall and winter are a great time to visit the Reserve. Watch for Ospreys snatching mullet from the water surface and perching on the exposed fence posts in the Lagoon to eat their catch, or marvel at the bright red berries of the toyon bush and the rusty tones of the alkali heath. Also look for the many winter visitors around the Reserve, from ducks in dazzling colors to gregarious geese, adding to the tremendous diversity of wildlife in and around the Lagoon.

Volunteers Improve Nature Center Trail

By Ralph Achenbach

A massive mound of dirt was leveled in less than two hours by 25 enthusiastic volunteers during the Conservancy's August work party. The volunteers spread the decomposed granite on the loop trail around the Nature Center at 2710 Manchester Avenue to improve access for wheelchairs. Laying down bender board and using shovels, rakes and wheelbarrows, the volunteer work team widened the trail and solidified its surface. The trail, part of the seven-mile San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve trail network, connects to the boardwalk, which is the only Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) approved nature trail in a county-managed coastal wetland. The success of the August volunteer work party was made possible by a donation from Audrey and Mac Elliott, and Trader Joe's of Encinitas generously provided snacks and refreshments for all the volunteers. "We are very grateful to the Elliott's and to Trader Joe's for their generous support and hope that these trail improvements will serve the community very well and for a long time to come," said Ralph Achenbach, the Conservancy's Outreach Coordinator, who organized the work event.

The boardwalk was completed in 2006 and is constructed of recycled plastic lumber. Leading through a riparian corridor and crossing a drainage area that had become impassable in the wet season, it allows year-round passage to the salt marsh while protecting sensitive plants and habitat. It passes over a restoration area that was once infested with invasive weeds and is now growing back into a high quality habitat.

The Conservancy volunteer work parties take place every third Saturday of the month from 9 to 11 am. Locations vary throughout the 1,000 acre San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve, and activities include trail maintenance, habitat restoration and trash pick-up. Snacks and refreshments are provided, and volunteers enjoy an optional free guided walk through the Reserve with Conservancy staff or County Park Rangers after the work event. If you would like to participate or need further information, please contact Ralph Achenbach by calling (760) 436-3944 or send an email to ralph@SanElijo.org. ❖

The new Nature Center, opening in early 2009, will be a major attraction in the community. Photo: Ralph Achenbach



Conservancy volunteer Brad Lineberger assists in improving the nature center trail to make it fully wheelchair accessible. Photo: Ralph Achenbach



After the work was done, Conservancy volunteer Scott Rey surveys the improved nature center loop trail. Photo: Ralph Achenbach

Nature Center Nearing Completion

By Ralph Achenbach

Construction at the new San Elijo Lagoon Nature Center is making great progress. With the exterior of the structure nearly complete, the Nature Center is well on track for its scheduled opening early next year.

County Supervisor Pam Slater-Price says that "the new San Elijo Lagoon Nature Center will offer tremendous recreational, environmental and educational opportunities for the community and the region. I applaud everyone's hard work, and I look forward to the grand opening." Slater-Price has been the chief champion of the new Nature Center and a supporter of the protection of the San Elijo Lagoon. The Nature Center will feature interactive displays on local watershed ecology and informational exhibits about the plants and animals found in the Reserve. ❖

Dunes *continued from page 1*

'Snowies' are among the scarcest and most threatened breeding birds in San Diego, and fewer than 330 individuals remain.

In the southwestern corner of the San Elijo Lagoon, four acres of dunes comprise one of the few surviving areas of coastal strand in the county. Squeezed between the train tracks and Pacific Coast Highway and subject to littering, human disturbance, and invasive non-native plants, this remnant of the once widespread and now all but non-existent natural communities is acutely threatened, and with it the many endangered plants and animals that need it for survival. Just 30 years ago, for example, 12 pairs of Snowy Plovers raised their families at the San Elijo Lagoon, but in 1999 only one was left.

The San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy will now begin to further protect the dunes area and restore it to its natural state, in hopes of reestablishing the Snowy Plover and other rare plants and animals, such as the endangered California Least Tern. Made possible by funding from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, a grant from Patagonia and support from landowner CA Department of Fish and Game, the project will replace exotic invasive plants with native species, systematically remove trash and debris, and provide a fence and signage to minimize human disturbance and educate the public about this unique area. "In addition," says Barry Lindgren, the Conservancy's staff scientist and project principal, "because dune habitat is so fragile, we need to carry out ongoing monitoring to ensure not only a successful result, but that the many existing,



The Snowy Plover is among San Diego's rarest and most vulnerable breeding birds. Photo: Herb Knufken

healthy resources are not harmed."

Similar to the Snowy Plover, the Least Tern is dependent on coastal strand to build its colonies of nests. "If a site is overgrown," states Phil Unitt, Curator of Mammals and Birds at the San Diego Natural History Museum and author of the *San Diego Bird Atlas*, "it becomes unsuitable [as a colony site]," underscoring the importance of the Conservancy's restoration project. The Least Tern used to nest at the Lagoon, but following disturbance and habitat degradation has not been able to do so for several years. Nonetheless, individual birds continue to use the Lagoon and its environs to forage and roost, making it likely that they will readopt the dunes area as a nesting site once the Conservancy's 'home improvement' project has returned it to its natural state. Tim Dillingham, Reserve Manager for the South Coast Region of the CA Department of Fish and Game, is convinced of the great potential of this project, saying that the Conservancy's efforts "will most certainly enhance the property and optimize its value to wildlife." ❖



The dunes habitat restoration is hoped to attract Least Terns to the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve, where they have not been able to nest for several years.

Photo © William Dalton, with permission



Least Tern chicks can take as much as 30 minutes to swallow a sand eel, which is longer than they are.

Photo © William Dalton, with permission

World Wide Web Fosters Local Philanthropy

By Ralph Achenbach

GoodShop.com, an online mall, donates up to 30% of sales made through its website to the Conservancy. More than 500 retailers, from Nordstrom to Old Navy and from Target to Travelocity, participate on this Internet site. Each time you order a book, buy a CD, purchase an item on someone's wedding registry, get your office supplies, send flowers or book a flight, the Conservancy benefits automatically. Simply go to www.GoodShop.com (or look for the GoodShop logo on the

Conservancy website: www.SanElijo.org) and in the field "Who do you GoodShop for?" enter "SEL.C." You then make your purchase securely through the online shopping site of the merchant you choose. Mark Huffman, Conservancy board member, says "this is great—a true 'win-win'." Even if you have already done all your shopping, you can still raise money by using the GoodSearch.com search engine whenever you need to look something up on the Internet. ❖



Docent Training *continued from page 1*

On the first day of training, Conservancy board member and MiraCosta College biology professor Denise Stillinger condensed a four-week ecology course into a riveting one hour seminar, followed by a field outing to the Rios trailhead. Even the hot midday sun on the trail did not stem the enthusiasm of the participants, many of whom were being introduced to cordgrass, pickleweed, and bulrush for the first time. There is always something interesting to see at the Lagoon, and this visit was no different: The pickleweed displayed its talent as an “accumulator” with its salt-laden red tips in full “bloom,” ready to be dropped, and the ever-present sagebrush rested in an utterly dormant state as a drought-deciduous plant awaiting the winter rains.

The fall docent training kicked off on October 8th and will go through November 19th. The new docents and the diversity of skills and high level of enthusiasm they possess are an invaluable addition to the Conservancy’s corps of talented veteran docents. Together, the team of trained amateur naturalists will enrich our children’s educational experiences, ensuring that future generations know about and appreciate the marvel that is the San Elijo Lagoon. The Conservancy offers docent trainings on a regular basis. Please contact Tara Fuad by calling (760) 436-3944 or send an email to tara@SanElijo.org if you would like further information. ❖



Conservancy docent Peter Ash shows local school children the marvelous plants and animals found at the Lagoon.

Photo: Danielle Vinland/San Diego Suburban Newspaper Group



Conservancy Wins Big In Roxy Surf Contest

By Elaine Dodge



Local surfer Cori Schumacher was among the winners at this year’s Roxy Jam Cardiff surf contest. The Cardiff resident earned a heat total of 16.50 out of a possible 20 point score.

Photo: Kat Borchart

The San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy came out a big winner at this year’s Roxy Jam Cardiff on September 19–21, as Roxy donated the proceeds from the event to support our education and outreach programs. Five shapers donated surfboards that were raffled off raising \$8,466. Through the sale of Roxy flip flops, hats, and T-shirts, Roxy raised another \$2,310 for the Conservancy. Meanwhile, stylists from Paul Mitchell wearing T-shirts that read “Giving Back is the New Black” collected an additional \$1,260 for the Conservancy. “We owe a big debt of gratitude to local legend Linda Benson for helping select the Conservancy for the third year in a row as the sole recipient of funds raised at the Roxy Jam Cardiff contest,” said Doug Gibson, the Conservancy’s Executive Director/Principal Scientist. Linda Benson is a former Women’s World Longboard Surfing Champion.

Donations from the Roxy event support the Conservancy’s education and outreach programs. The programs connect students with nature through guided walks led by trained naturalists, California State standards based curriculum education, and hands-on experiments in the Reserve as well as in the classroom. Proceeds from the event will enable us to offer the experiences and information that will inspire the next generation to become scientists and stewards of San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve.

The Roxy® apparel company, along with Schick® Quattro for Women® and the Association of Surfing Professionals, has held a weekend-long women’s world longboard surfing contest at Cardiff Reef for the past three years. Each year, the popular event attracts huge crowds to the beach against the backdrop of the Pacific Ocean to one side and the inlet of the Lagoon to the other. This year, local surfer Cori Schumacher won the top prize and title of Women’s U.S. Regional Longboard Surfing Champion. ❖

Economy Affects the Lagoon By Elaine Dodge

Our slumping economy is creating numerous challenges: Businesses are struggling, retirement accounts are losing in value, and many people's jobs are looking increasingly shaky. In times like these, people instinctively become cautious about parting with money—probably wise to keep those funds on reserve, we think.

This also results in significant problems for organizations that depend on the financial contributions from hundreds of community members to sustain their activities. And the Conservancy is one of those organizations.

At the SELC, we are doing some creative belt-tightening in an effort to weather these difficulties. Expenditures for new office equipment to replace ancient machines are being deferred. Hiring is on hold. New programs are being reevaluated.

But there are some activities that simply cannot be deferred without devastating consequences. The Conservancy has fought a years-long battle against invasive species—a campaign that has restored native flora and fauna to much of the Lagoon, returning its ecology as nearly as possible to its natural state. If a lack of

funds forces us to suspend this work, much of these hard-won gains will quickly be reversed.

Our education work in our region's elementary schools has raised the awareness and knowledge of thousands of school children, primarily at the elementary grade levels. If we have to suspend this work for a few years, thousands more will be deprived of this valuable educational experience, and the opportunity to raise future generations of conservationists will be lost.

And so we ask you: If you are fortunate enough to remain economically secure, please make a special point of helping the Conservancy to continue its crucial operations. The reality is that in these difficult economic times, we must look to those who are still able to provide support to carry us through. So please, if you can, consider increasing your support for the SELC. In the face of these challenges, your personal commitment to the preservation, protection and enhancement of the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve has never been more important.



New Legislation Creates Opportunities for Charitable Giving

The historic \$700 billion bailout or rescue plan passed to address the economic crisis contains important provisions relating to charitable giving. The extension of certain portions of the Pension Protection Act of 2006, which had expired on 12/31/2007, makes IRA Rollovers the centerpiece of the legislation from a gift planning perspective.

The law provides that owners of a traditional or Roth IRA may instruct the trustee to distribute directly to a public charity up to \$100,000 each for the years 2008 and 2009 without the distribution being included in taxable income, and that this distribution will count toward the IRA owners' mandatory withdrawal amount.

To qualify for IRA rollover treatment, the donor must direct the IRA manager to transfer funds directly to a charity. A withdrawal followed by a contribution will still have to be reported as income. The donor must be at least age 70½ and the donee must be a tax-exempt organization to which deductible contributions can be made. The Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit

organization and qualifies as a donation recipient. Donor-advised funds and supporting organizations are not eligible.

Because this law does not include the terms of proposed legislation such as the Public Good IRA Rollover Act, only one-time gifts qualify and rollovers to a planned gift, such as a gift annuity or a charitable remainder trust, do not. The law only applies to traditional and Roth IRAs, and distributions to a charity from employer-sponsored retirement plans, such as Simple IRAs, 401(k)s, and 403(b)s, do not qualify. Also note that IRA rollovers may be includable in a donor's income for state and local tax purposes and may not earn an offsetting charitable deduction, depending on state and local law.

The bailout package is the main feature of the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008, which was signed into effect by President Bush on October 3rd, 2008. To find more detailed information on this legislation and its implications for planned giving visit the PG Calc website at www.pgcalc.com/pdf/EESA2008.pdf.

Ways of Giving

Matching Gifts Double Donations

By Debby Strauss

Would you like to double or even triple the value of your contributions to the Conservancy **at no additional cost to you**? Many companies match the gifts their employees give to charitable organizations as a way to encourage employees to actively support their communities. By taking advantage of your employer's matching gift program, you can maximize your contributions to the Conservancy and dramatically increase the impact of your gifts. Your \$150 donation to the Conservancy, for example, will grow to \$300 with you employer's 100% matching gift. That's twice as much habitat preserved, invasive species controlled, nesting sites restored, and children enjoying their Lagoon through the Conservancy's education program.

The box below contains a list of some of the local employers who have provided matching gifts in the past. If you are unsure about your employer's matching gift policies, contact your human resources office for details and information on how to apply for the match. If your employer does not yet have a matching gifts program, please encourage them to begin one. As always, if you have any questions, please call the Conservancy at (760) 436-3944.

Allstate	Federated Dept. Stores	Johnson & Johnson
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AT&T	Guidant Corporation	Nokia
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Callaway Golf	HSBC—North America	Qualcomm
Chevron	IBM	Sempra Energy
Computer Assoc. Int'l.	Intel	Sharp Healthcare
Copley Press Inc.	Jack in the Box	Sun Microsystems
Dow Chemical		Taylor Made Adidas Golf

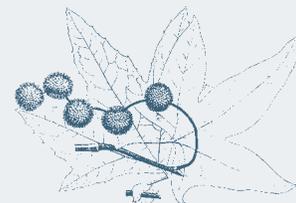


Dreaming of a Green Christmas

The Solana Beach Presbyterian Church (SBPC) selected the Conservancy as one of the featured organizations for its 2008 Alternative Christmas Market (ACM), which took place on November 23. The catalogue of holiday gifts accompanying this gift drive is intended to decrease "consumer frenzy" while increasing church members' opportunity to support causes they care about.

The catalogue explains that "Christmas is one time of year when our purchasing habits have a big negative impact on the environment. [A] gift that will restore wetlands in San Diego" will be a more meaningful present than "a gift with lots of packaging." Just \$15, for example, will buy a magnifying glass and a 'bug box' for use in the Conservancy's education program.

The Conservancy is grateful to SBPC for their generous support. For more information on the ACM call (858) 509-2580. If you would like ideas for a similar alternative giving project during the holiday season for your family, company gift exchange or congregation, please contact the Conservancy at (760) 436-3944.





San Elijo Lagoon CONSERVANCY

Preserving, protecting and enhancing the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve and its watershed

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