



Lagoon Tidings

Calendar of Events

Bird Counts

Second Monday each month,
7:30 am–12 noon, at Rios Ave trailhead
Contact birds@SanElijo.org.

Docent Meetings

Second Wednesday each month,
10 am–12 noon, at the nature center
Contact docents@SanElijo.org.

Free Guided Nature Walks

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

Volunteer Work Parties

Third Saturday each month,
9 am–11 am
Contact Ralph Achenbach
(760) 436-3944 or ralph@SanElijo.org
for locations.

NEW! Kids' Walks for Young Families

Saturday, February 21, 10 am
"Discovering Dazzling Dabbling Ducks"

Saturday, April 18, 10 am
"Finding Fabulous Flowers"

Meet at Rios Ave trailhead
Contact Tara Fuad (760) 436-3944 or
tara@SanElijo.org.

Lagoon Day with BioBlitz

Saturday, May 16
(see article on page 4)

Birds of a Feather 2009

Saturday, September 26, 5–8 pm
Fundraising gala for SELC's
environmental education program

- Sponsorship opportunities available
- Volunteers welcome
- Auction items currently being accepted

Contact Elaine Dodge (760) 436-3944
or elaine@SanElijo.org.



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Photo: Ralph Achenbach

Ryan Luther enjoys the new San Elijo nature center, a "green" building featuring interactive exhibits.

New Nature Center Opens

Nearly 2,000 excited visitors flocked to the new San Elijo nature center for its grand opening on January 31. The enthusiastic crowd toured the state-of-the-art facility and marveled at the colorful, interactive exhibits on this sunny and warm day. The Conservancy offered free guided nature walks and fun activities, including a nature treasure hunt for children. *See New Center on page 2*

Conservancy Embraces Community

By Amy Trujillo

The San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy, a leader in local and regional environmental matters for the last two decades, will expand its scope of activities in the new year to promote an overall healthier and more sustainable community. This holistic approach is the outcome of a recently completed strategic planning process based on the Whole Measures tool. The tool was developed by the Center for Whole Communities (CWC) as a way for the land conservation community to re-evaluate its notion of conservation success. The CWC asserts that the important questions are no longer how many acres were preserved or how many dollars were spent on conservation, but rather why and for whom are we protecting this land? Buying land alone will not achieve our goals of protecting the places we love, such as the San Elijo Lagoon; our success is dependent on building connections to the land and to each other.

A review based on the Whole Measures tool as part of the Conservancy's strategic planning confirmed that the Conservancy is strong in many key areas. The Education Program, for example, provides opportunities for students, as well as the general public, to develop their relationship to the land by promoting recreation, education, and inspiration. *See Whole Measures on page 4*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Denise Stillinger, *President*
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 Elizabeth Venrick, Ph.D.

STAFF

Doug Gibson, *Executive Director/Principal Scientist*
 doug@SanElijo.org
 Ralph Achenbach, *Outreach Coordinator*
 ralph@SanElijo.org
 Elaine Dodge, *Development Director*
 elaine@SanElijo.org
 Tara Fuad, *Education Director*
 tara@SanElijo.org
 Barry Lindgren, *Scientist*
 barry@SanElijo.org
 Debby Strauss, *Program Assistant*
 debby@SanElijo.org
 Amy Trujillo, *Biologist*
 amy@SanElijo.org

Mailing Address:

P. O. Box 230634
 Encinitas, CA 92023-0634

Office Address:

2049 San Elijo Avenue
 Cardiff, CA 92007

Contact Information:

T: 760 436-3944
 F: 760 944-9606
 E: info@sanelijo.org
 W: www.sanelijo.org

Design: Artefact Design

President's Message

By Denise Stillinger, SELC Board President

It is an honor and a privilege to accept the role of Conservancy board president at the beginning of another exciting year for the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve. With the opening of the new "green" nature center, growth to our education programs, and the potential for more open-space acquisition, 2009 promises to bring both rewards and challenges as the Conservancy continues to preserve, protect, and enhance the San Elijo Lagoon and its watershed.

The Conservancy could not fulfill this important mission without the continued support of its members. Thank you to all who made a contribution to the Conservancy in 2008. Since its inception, and over the course of 22 years, this organization has served as the community's voice in decisions that impact the Reserve. The lengthy donor list that appears in this issue makes me very proud to be a part of this organization.



Conservancy board president Denise Stillinger points the way into the future at the San Elijo Lagoon.

As the Conservancy embraces the concept of "whole communities," (see article on front page) it will continue to "inspire action rather than demand it" when it comes to land conservation. In the words of economist Enrique Penalosa on the topic of open space: "Its value can't be measured with economics or mathematics; it must be felt with the soul." Thank you again for helping the Conservancy continue to do this important work. ❖

GET OUT

**Visit the Reserve!**

The late winter is a great time to visit the Reserve, as the new, pale green, fresh feathery foliage of the coastal sagebrush dominates the trailside, broadcasting the news of its rebirth with heavy herbal scent wafting through the air. Still around are many winter visitors, such as a colorful variety of ducks. February also marks the beginning of courtship and nesting behavior for some early breeding birds like hummingbirds, owls, hawks, egrets, and herons. As February progresses, the first long distance migrants appear. Swallows, for example, will begin to arrive in mid-month; begin to look for them flying overhead and swooping down to take insects on the wing.



Brooke and Kai compare notes on their nature treasure hunt during the grand opening of the new San Elijo nature center. Photo: Ralph Achenbach

New Center continued from Page 1

The mood on the trails and around the building was celebratory: "The new nature center adds incredible value to anyone's visit to the San Elijo Lagoon," said Doug Gibson, Executive Director/Principal Scientist of the Conservancy, "and helps us further enrich the educational experience of schools and other youth groups which come to the Lagoon through our environmental education programs, allowing the community and our children to understand, enjoy and care for our beautiful natural surroundings."

New Directors Add Expertise to Conservancy Board

MiraCosta Professor Denise Stillinger Takes on Presidency *By Ralph Achenbach*

The Conservancy's December board elections brought new energy and a wealth of professional expertise in business, finance, non-profit management and the sciences to the organization. Denise Stillinger was elected as the Conservancy's new board president. The Cardiff resident is a founding member and past vice-president of the Conservancy and a biology professor at MiraCosta College. Stillinger is convinced that the high level of experience of the new board members will further strengthen the organization's leadership in caring for the health of the San Elijo Lagoon. "This is the largest number of directors in the Conservancy's history, and I'm thrilled to be part of such a strong team. I'm confident the Conservancy will continue to improve the overall health of the Lagoon for the native denizen and for our community," Stillinger said.

Newly elected to the board were Janie DeCelles (MBA), Mike Luther (MBA), Steve Fitch (J.D.), Elizabeth Venrick (Ph.D.), and Brys Myers (MT). "The San Elijo Lagoon is the gem of North County, and I have been a huge fan since moving to Cardiff more than 20 years ago," said DeCelles, who earned her MBA from Harvard Business School. Incoming board member Luther holds an MBA with a focus on finance from the University of San Diego and now works as a senior director for Qualcomm Corporation. For him, "the San Elijo Lagoon has provided hours of recreation and a chance to experience and appreciate nature on a weekly basis with my children." Fitch, who received his J.D. in international and environmental law from Northwestern Lewis and Clark



The Conservancy board members bring a wealth of finance, management, legal and scientific expertise to the organization. From left to right: Front row: Board president Denise Stillinger, vice president Celesd F. Willoughby, Mike Luther, Barbara Moore, Steve Fitch, Elizabeth Venrick, Sally Foster, Mark Huffman. Back row: Peter Johnson, Brys Myers, Craig Olson, Kevin Johnson, Jim McCall, Janie DeCelles. Missing: Marissa Marion, Andy Mauro, Bob Moore. Photo: Ralph Achenbach

School of Law, lives above the Lagoon in Cardiff and has been involved with local environmental causes since the 1960s. Myers completed his clinical residency at Georgetown University and later founded a leading biotech company in San Diego. Elizabeth Venrick, Ph.D., is a biological oceanographer at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, where she directed the Scripps component of the California Cooperative Oceanic Fisheries Investigations from 2000–2007, and has been a volunteer naturalist with the Conservancy for the past three years.

Celesd F. Willoughby of Encinitas was elected vice president and the elections confirmed Craig Olson, Ph.D., as treasurer and Barbara Moore as secretary.

For more information and complete biographies of all board members, please visit www.SanElijo.org/board. ❖

The two-story, 5,525 square foot building was funded by San Diego County Supervisor Pam Slater-Price and has been under construction since December 2007. Its museum-quality exhibits interpret the diverse natural resources found at the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve and serve as a gateway to instilling awareness, interest and excitement about the Lagoon. The center, a certified 'green' building, features high recycled content materials, solar panels and recycled water.

The nature center is located at 2710 Manchester Street and is open from 9 am to 5 pm seven days a week. For directions, please visit www.SanElijo.org/naturecenter.html. ❖

The new San Elijo nature center offers innumerable attractions, such as these exhibits enjoyed by young visitors during the grand opening. *Photo: Ralph Achenbach*



What's a 'BioBlitz'?

By Ralph Achenbach

A BioBlitz is a 24-hour inventory of all living organisms in a given area. The first 'BioBlitz' ever to be conducted in North County will take place in May at the San Elijo Lagoon. The Conservancy is organizing the event as part of its annual Lagoon Day on May 15 and 16, 2009. "This event will showcase the amazing abundance of different life forms one can find at the Lagoon," says Ralph Achenbach, the Conservancy's outreach coordinator, "and will be a fun event for scientists and the public alike." The event will help raise awareness of the natural treasures at our doorstep.

All local and regional scientists are invited to participate in their area

of expertise and to assist in the documentation of biodiversity at the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve. Interested scientists can contact Achenbach at (760) 436-3944 or ralph@SanElijo.org.

The public will be invited on May 16 to observe the scientists at work and to witness the diversity of plants and animals firsthand. The Conservancy will also offer free guided nature walks, informational talks, and fun activities for children on that day. The main event will take place at the new San Elijo nature center at 2710 Manchester Avenue in Cardiff.

The first 'BioBlitz' took place in 1996 in Washington, D.C. San Diego had its first BioBlitz last May at Balboa Park, where the San Diego Natural History Museum organized all activities.

For more information, please visit www.SanElijo.org/bioblitz. ❖



Photo of the Week

This photo of a gopher snake crossing the trail at the Lagoon by Ron Ham was winner of the Photo of the Week contest. For more information and submittal guidelines, please visit the Conservancy's website, www.SanElijo.org.

Submit your images to: photos@SanElijo.org.

Whole Measures continued from Page 1

The Conservancy's Habitat Management Program provides for a healthy ecosystem by conserving and restoring healthy wildlife habitats and corridors, protecting water quality, and protecting and enhancing biodiversity. Its Land Stewardship Program has been developing management plans for Conservancy properties.

Based on these strengths, the Whole Measures evaluation identified some areas where the Conservancy's programs, and by consequence the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve, can benefit from a more holistic approach. One review criterion of the tool, "Healthy Habitats for People," stresses the importance of environmental health for the human community. To further strengthen this area, the Conservancy will, for example, incorporate water, watershed, and water source curriculum into school programs in the new year, especially for fifth grade students who are already studying this in class. In addition, the Conservancy aims to provide locally grown fresh food at receptions and other events as a way to educate the

community on the connection between local growers, food security, and our environment. The Stewardship Program will put even greater emphasis on incorporating community input and ways to mitigate for climate change into the property management plans it develops.

Whole Measures urges organizations to use a whole systems approach to solving problems, emphasizing the fact that land conservation is intimately interlinked with other issues such as economic vitality and social equity, and helping organizations become more aware of the unintended consequences of their actions. The Conservancy and its partners have been doing a great job over the past 20 years of preserving the San Elijo Lagoon and its watershed. But we can do a better job of protecting and enhancing it by looking at these broader community issues. As this is an approach embracing the whole community, these enhancements can only happen with your assistance. ❖

New Docents Graduate

By Ralph Achenbach

The new 2009 San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy docents graduated as trained naturalists from the fall docent training on December 4th. During their seven week training, the 24 community members learned about the unique value of the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve from experts through seminars and outings focusing on plant and animal biology and ecology. The naturalists will now join the corps of Conservancy docents to lead free guided walks for school groups and the public at the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve.

"Environmental education is extremely important in the healthy development of a child," says Tara Fuad, the Conservancy's Education Director, who organized the fall docent training. "Our docents play a vital role in helping our children appreciate the beauty of their natural surroundings. I am extremely grateful to the new graduates for their hard work and dedication in enriching the lives of our youth."

For information on the docent training, please call Tara Fuad at (760) 436-3944 or email tara@SanElijo.org. ♦



24 new docents graduated from the Conservancy's docent training program in December at the conclusion of a seven week training.

From left to right: Back Row: Teresa Insero, Kimberly Wesbey, Duane Johnson, Maria Sinai, Elizabeth Taylor, Jayne Lesley, Bob Moore, Cindy Moore, Henry Herms, Anne Geisler, Greg Bishop, Betty Normand, Bryan Jacobson

Front Row: Nancy Jong, Barbara Wallach, Louise Garrett, David Lesley.

Photo: Tara Fuad

KIDS CORNER Become a Duck Detective!

By Tara Fuad

It's that time of the year again when our dabbling and diving friends, better known as ducks, make their annual visit to the San Elijo Lagoon. Ducks (and some people too!) like to get away from the cold north and spend winters in places like San Diego, where the climate is warm and food is plentiful. When we refer to a duck as either a dabbler or a diver, we are describing how the duck eats—and observing this behavior can be a lot of fun. Here are some tips on how to tell the difference between a dabbler and a diver.

Dabblers

Eating: think "Bottoms UP!"

Wings: large wings relative to their bodies.

Flight: helicopter take off and landing.

Feet: located near middle of body, gives them stability to walk in shallow water and along shore.

Examples: mallard, northern pintail, gadwall, wigeon.



Divers

Eating: think "now you see me now you don't."

Wings: smaller wings than the dabblers.

Flight: airplane take off and landing, their small wings require them to get a running start.

Feet: located further back in their bodies, streamlines their body, making diving easier.

Examples: canvasback, bufflehead, lesser scaup.

Now that you are an expert at identifying ducks, let's see what you've learned:

I like to eat with my bottom up, I am a _____

When I fly out of the water, I take off like an airplane, I am a _____

I like to play hide and seek when I am feeding, I am a _____

My large wings allow me to rise out of the water like a helicopter, I am a _____



Send your answers with your name and address to Tara Fuad, San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy, PO Box 230634, Encinitas, CA 92023-0634 or via email to tara@SanElijo.org.

Or bring them to our **Kids' Walk for Young Families** on Saturday, February 21, starting at 10 am from the trailhead at Rios Avenue. On that walk, you will get to be a 'duck detective,' looking for both divers and dabblers. RSVP to tara@SanElijo.org.

Conservancy Honors Major Donors

By Elaine Dodge, Development Director

The Conservancy's 2008 Major Donor Reception, held on November 2nd, was a great success with fantastic food, excellent entertainment and a spectacular speaker. "This was just the best reception," said Martin Staubus, a major Conservancy supporter and Legacy Donor.

The afternoon cocktail party was hosted by Conservancy members Amy Horne and Doug Loeser in their Rancho Santa Fe home overlooking the San Elijo Lagoon. Guests enjoyed catered hors d'oeuvres and salads donated by Ki's Restaurant & Catering. The Stone Brewing Co. donated bottles of their craft beer; Greg Koch, the company's CEO, is a neighbor and Lagoon viewer and joined the party. Professional pianist Rob Girona entertained guests with a live rendition of his own original music composed specifically for the San Elijo Lagoon. Major donors received a DVD featuring video footage of the Reserve accompanied by Rob's marvelous musical score.

The Conservancy was honored to present Frances Hamilton White with a National Wildlife Federation Backyard Habitat certificate in appreciation for her matching gift challenge. With the help of Frances and our President's Council Chair, John Seiber, the Conservancy was able to raise \$171,000 in 2008 for our operating endowment.

As the highlight of the program, Steve A. Kay, Ph.D., UCSD's Dean of Biological Sciences, delivered a riveting presentation on the role of biofuels in our future economy. Dr. Kay emphasized the importance of the conservation work at the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve and elsewhere, because these natural areas may



Outgoing Conservancy President Andy Mauro (right) and Executive Director Doug Gibson present a certificate to Frances Hamilton White.

Photo: Denise Stillingner

contain the key to meeting our future fuel demands. According to Dr. Kay, "generation 3" biofuels created from micro algae can potentially produce more than 1,500 gallons of biofuel per acre per year, compared to only about 18 gallons by the current corn-based system. And, unlike corn, micro algae can grow in salty or saline water.

The Major Donor Reception is an annual event to honor the Conservancy's major supporters, featuring fun, food, and entertainment. For more information on how to become a major donor, please contact Elaine Dodge at (760) 436-3944 or email elaine@SanElijo.org.

Birders Spot Raptors in the Rain By Ralph Achenbach

A majestic osprey feasting on a fish in plain view was, for many, the highlight of the Conservancy's private bird walk on December 7. Nearly 20 supporters braved the rain and cold that day to attend this annual event. Guided by outgoing board president Andy Mauro, board secretary Barbara Moore—both regional birding experts—and outreach coordinator Ralph Achenbach, the hardy group walked from the Rios Avenue trailhead to the outlook point in the Lagoon's West basin.

In addition to the osprey, many other birds of prey treated the group to spectacular views, including a northern harrier, an American kestrel, and a peregrine falcon. "Raptors occur at the San Elijo Lagoon year-round," explained Mauro, "and in

the winter months they are joined by their cousins from up north." Equipped with binoculars and spotting scopes, the walk participants also observed a variety of wintering waterfowl and shorebirds, witnessing first-hand the importance of the Lagoon as a resting place for migratory birds.

The Conservancy's development director, Elaine Dodge, had prepared snacks and a warming cup of tea for all birders at the isthmus, where the conversation was lively with reflections on the sightings of the day. The annual private bird walk is an invitation-only event for Legacy Donors and President's Council members of the Conservancy. For more information, please contact Elaine at (760) 436-3944, or elaine@SanElijo.org.

Ways of Giving

By Elaine Dodge, Development Director

Each year, generous support from Conservancy members and friends has made it possible for us to preserve, protect and enhance the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve. Last year was no different. But the uncertainty of the country's current economy is now threatening our ability to take care of the Reserve in the future. Many people are reluctant to donate to even their most beloved charity.

But did you know that there are many ways to give to the Conservancy that won't impact your current finances? Including the San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy in your will or trust is one such way. During the past year, for example, the Conservancy was included in several members' estate plans. This is an easy way to benefit the Conservancy while leaving a personal legacy. We thank Tom and Donna Golich for most recently including us in their estate plan.

Charitable trusts and gift annuities—gifts that generate income for the donors—are very popular, particularly when the stock market is unpredictable. Many gifts of this nature provide donors with a way to increase their income, receive a charitable income tax deduction, and enjoy favorable tax treatment. We thank Andy and Kathleen Mauro and more recently Craig and Jeanne Olson for creating charitable gift annuities for the San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy in 2008.

I would be happy to discuss these and a variety of gifting options. I can be reached at elaine@SanElijo.org or (760) 436-3944.

An osprey dining at the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve.

Photo: Herb Knufken



San Elijo Lagoon painting by Christina Thurston, www.christinathurston.com

Christina is a painting instructor with San Dieguito Adult Education www.sdadulthood.com, and UCSD Extension <http://extension.ucsd.edu>.

New Grants Awarded

The Conservancy is pleased to announce that it was recently awarded grants from the following foundations and award-making entities:

Merci Fund at The San Diego Foundation

M. House Family Fund at The San Diego Foundation

Royal Bank of Canada Blue Water Project

Union Bank of California Foundation

California Coastal Conservancy

SANDAG/Cal-Trans/Transnet

Please join us in saying thank you for their support.



San Elijo Lagoon CONSERVANCY

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

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Conservancy Goals

Protection & Conservation

90% of California's coastal wetlands are lost forever. The San Elijo Lagoon, too, was supposed to be filled in and paved over. The Conservancy today owns 100 acres of this irreplaceable area, restoring the precious habitat to its natural state.

Education

The Conservancy's environmental education programs for schools and youth groups instill a sense of awe in our children and help raise the next generation of conservationists. Guided walks for the public are also offered.

Recreation

As open space disappears, 'nature deficit disorders' are on the rise. The Conservancy's work keeps the San Elijo Lagoon as a place to hike, walk, run or simply sit and take a deep breath.

CONSERVANCY COMMUNITY

"Thankfully this group of citizens had the foresight to preserve the Lagoon."
John Seiber, Conservancy President's Council

"Thank you to the Conservancy for teaching me how important it is to take care of the Lagoon and all of nature."
Heidi Hogan, 3rd Grader

"The commitment of the Conservancy's members and staff keeps the Lagoon accessible to our entire community."
Kaley Swift, Patagonia Cardiff

"Thank you for the great job the Conservancy does for its neighbors."
Faith Price, Conservancy volunteer



California gnatcatcher
Poliophtila californica