



Lagoon Tidings



Long-billed Dowitchers

Photo: Ray Spencer

Calendar of Events

Bird Counts

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

Docent Meetings

Docent Graduation:
Tuesday, December 7
10 am–Noon, potluck at the
Nature Center

Monthly Docent meetings will
resume in January
Second Tuesday each month
10 am–Noon at the Nature Center

Guided Nature Walks

Second Saturday each month
9 am–11 am, at Rios Ave trailhead
Every Saturday
10 am–11 am, at the Nature Center

Volunteer Work Parties

No work party in December

Work party in January
Contact workparties@SanElijo.org for
date, location and signups

Volunteers Revitalizing the Reserve

By Joel Kramer

Caring for the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve takes many forms, from members and major donors making contributions to businesses sponsoring our newsletter and gala. Many people also help by volunteering their time and talent on restoration projects that improve the habitat in the reserve's wetlands and riparian areas. Here are some of their stories.

Laura Liedtke had always been a self-declared environmentalist, but recently she decided to become more actively involved in conservation education. "What was the catalyst for me, was the gulf oil spill...I thought 'it isn't such a remote possibility that this

Monthly Bird Count Reaches New Heights

By Joel Kramer

Bird data at the lagoon are now incorporated into international database eBird

The international database at Cornell's Lab of Ornithology, eBird, has recently accepted San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy Monthly Bird Count sightings. This development makes local data available to birders and conservation biologists worldwide. The Conservancy is proud to share the renowned abundance and diversity of bird life at San Elijo with birders throughout the world. This achievement would not have been possible without the dedicated participation of our volunteer community and the support of our members.

Lead Bird Count volunteer Robert Patton began the monthly counts in 1986 as County Parks staff of the reserve. After leaving the County, he continued as a volunteer, coordinating expansion of the surveys to lagoon-wide monthly bird counts using Conservancy volunteers.

In order to perform the bird count, the lagoon has been divided into nine sections. Teams led by experienced birders hike through their assigned sections to document every bird they can see or hear. Next, they congregate at the Nature Center to compare their lists, tell stories and eat lunch. Subsequently, the data is entered into a spreadsheet by a volunteer and submitted electronically to eBird. "The data show the current status and distribution of birds in the lagoon and allow comparison within recent years and with the similar dataset from 25–30 years ago," said Patton. *See Bird Count on page 4*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Denise Stillinger, *President*
 Celed F. Willoughby, *Vice-President*
 Doug Gillingham, *Secretary*
 Paul Worthington, *Treasurer*
 Stephen Fitch
 Sally Foster
 Scott Griffiths
 Pastor Bill Harman
 Mark Huffman
 Kevin Johnson
 Peter Johnson
 Linda Jones, Ph.D.
 Jim McCall
 Bob Moore
 Joyce Pickersgill, Ph.D.
 Elizabeth Venrick, Ph.D.
 Art Yayanos, Ph.D.

President's Council

Neil Hokanson, *Chair*

STAFF

Doug Gibson, *Executive Director/
Principal Scientist*
 doug@SanElijo.org
 Elaine Dodge, *Development Director*
 elaine@SanElijo.org
 Tara Fuad, *Education Director*
 tara@SanElijo.org
 Joel Kramer, *Habitat Management
Program Technician*
 joel@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-by-the-Sea (Cardiff Town Center,
 next to Seaside Market)

Contact Information:

T: 760 436-3944 F: 760 944-9606
 E: info@SanElijo.org
 W: www.SanElijo.org
 FB: www.facebook.com/sanelijo

Editor: Debby Strauss

Design: Artefact Design

President's Message

By Denise Stillinger, President

This issue of *Lagoon Tidings* showcases how the community continues to be an integral part of the Conservancy's work. Read on to learn about the corps of volunteers that assist in the monthly bird count, restoration projects and various school programs. Many Conservancy members also support our mission literally in their own backyards. This ever-growing group is enthusiastically creating a more desirable environment on their property for native wildlife. Several individuals have earned specific recognition from the National Wildlife Federation for their endeavors. When members of the community enhance their property with "Backyard Habitats" they are in a real sense expanding the size of the reserve by providing critical areas for local flora and fauna alike. The Conservancy applauds those who have made the effort to be good neighbors to the seedy, winged, and four-legged members of our community. To learn more about the Backyard Habitat Program visit www.nwf.org. ❖



Denise Stillinger Photo: Sally Foster

FEATURED PHOTO



Snowy Egret Landing

Photo: Bob Turner

Submit your own photo taken in the lagoon! Send as an attachment with a description and your name in the subject line to photos@SanElijo.org

Images for submission: We prefer uncompressed RGB TIFF or PSD at 300 ppi with minimal file manipulation before submission.

DID YOU KNOW...

Horses are allowed on the trails of the lagoon. Hikers, runners and other visitors should exercise caution to avoid spooking horses they encounter. Step aside to let the horse pass, maintain a safe distance, and greet the rider so he or she, and the horse, know you are there.

Stepping Lightly in the Dunes

By Barry Lindgren

In the southwestern corner of San Elijo Lagoon, just north of the Encinitas-Solana Beach border, is one of the few surviving areas of coastal dune strand in San Diego County. Now isolated from the nourishing sands of south San Elijo State Beach by Pacific Coast Highway and from the resources of the Central Basin by the Santa Fe railroad, this small, four-acre site is the home of native dune species such as beach sand verbena, Nuttall's lotus and silvery legless lizard. In the past, it has also been the nesting site for two of California's most threatened bird species: California Least Tern and Snowy Plover. This remnant of a natural community that was once widespread is now, especially in Southern California, acutely threatened.

With help from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Patagonia and the CA Department of Fish and Game, the Conservancy is restoring this rare habitat. The project will remove exotic invasive plants and replace them with native species, remove trash and debris, create additional nesting sites, and add fencing to minimize human disturbance and signage to educate the public about this unique area.

One distinctive component of this particular restoration is the need for a "light touch", and this is where our volunteers come in. Not unlike the southwestern deserts, dune habitat is uncommonly fragile with very porous and erodible soils. If you are a plant or a small animal that lives in the sand, survival is not an abstract concept. This is not a good place for mountain bikes or heavy equipment. Vegetation control has to be done carefully, and by hand. With



This silvery legless lizard was spotted on the Dunes during a work party earlier this year. Photo: Barry Lindgren

supervision from Conservancy and County park staff, small groups of dedicated citizens have been highly effective at removing the invasive plants that have over-grown large sections of functional habitat. Our trained volunteers watch where they step and come to recognize quickly what belongs here, and what does not.

While the size of this site, the numerous sensitive species and the proximity to actively nesting birds preclude access by the general public, the Conservancy does need help from those volunteers who are willing to look, listen and learn. If you like to pull weeds (who doesn't!), and can appreciate the sometimes subtle allure of what a landscape once was and what it can be again, we'd like to hear from you. The birds start nesting again in the middle of February; so it's time now to get back to work! ♦

NEW BOARD MEMBERS

We are pleased to welcome Scott Griffiths and Joyce Pickersgill to our board of directors. Scott and Joyce bring a wealth of knowledge and skills and an abundance of enthusiasm to the Conservancy.

Scott Griffiths

Scott began his involvement at San Elijo Lagoon as a docent and has been proselytizing the wonders of the lagoon ever since. He leads regular walks at the visitor center on the third Saturday of each month. Living in Encinitas since 1983, Scott cycles the Coast Highway each week, gardens with native plants, surfs occasionally and follows the natural Southern California seasonal changes in the lagoon. Scott is a CPA, has been a member of the defense industry for thirty years, and is currently President of RF Products in San Marcos.



Joyce Pickersgill, Ph.D.

Joyce earned a Ph.D. in economics at the University of Washington and moved to Southern California to become a professor at Cal State Fullerton. She taught for many years, chairing the Economics Department, before co-founding a forensic economic consulting firm. Joyce has been walking the trails of the lagoon since 1985. When she saw her retirement in the not too distant future, she took the docent training course. Joyce lives in Del Mar and works as a docent at the San Elijo Lagoon Nature Center, as well as at the San Diego Zoo and Wild Animal Park.



At the Conservancy, this data is used to monitor effects of dredging, as well as to inform lagoon restoration plans. A comparable regional database has been the Christmas Count, but that is limited to an annual snapshot of birdlife at the lagoon.

“Birding at San Elijo is so rewarding because of the rich diversity of habitats,” remarked Patton. San Elijo birders have seen more than 330 species, including endangered species like the California Gnatcatcher, Belding’s Savannah Sparrow and Least Bell’s Vireo. Regular birders like board member Elizabeth Venrick have been involved in the reintroduction of the Light-footed Clapper Rail, the progress of which can now be tracked publicly online. “There is a growing awareness of the power of accumulating small data sets. The eBird... has the power to determine range changes, migration patterns and long-term population trends, all of which can be related to changes in climate [or] local changes in habitat,” Venrick said.

Community members are the backbone of the database and both experienced and novice birders are welcome to volunteer. A group of alert observers is often more effective than a lone master bird watcher and counting alongside an advanced birder is a great opportunity to improve one’s identification abilities. You can join the bird counters on the second Monday of each month at 7:30 am at the Rios Avenue trailhead in Solana Beach.

A monthly electronic newsletter of San Elijo bird count data is emailed to Conservancy \$100+ donors and to the volunteer bird counters. You can access all submitted data from all sources on eBird.org by registering as a new user. With your own account, you can upload data from wherever in the world you may be. ❖

NEXT BIRD COUNT!

When:

Monday, December 13, 7:30 am–Noon

Where:

Rios Avenue trailhead, Solana Beach

For more information:

E-mail Robert Patton at birds@SanElijo.org



Bob Chaddock, Linda Jones, and Paula Theobold counting birds

Photo: Geoffrey Smith



Volunteers removing brush Photo: Geoffrey Smith

Volunteers continued from Page 1

could happen here,” Liedtke said. Now a docent-in-training, Liedtke and her eight peers will soon lead public walks for the Conservancy.

SELCL board member Paul Worthington prefers to get his hands dirty at our restoration events clearing invasive plants and reseeding with natives, removing debris and maintaining the trails. Sixteen year-old Kelsey Navis has attended three consecutive restoration events. “When people litter and degrade the lagoon, I don’t think they realize how one small piece of trash can affect every species in the area. Volunteering allows me to fix these problems and keep a balance within the lagoon,” says Kelsey.

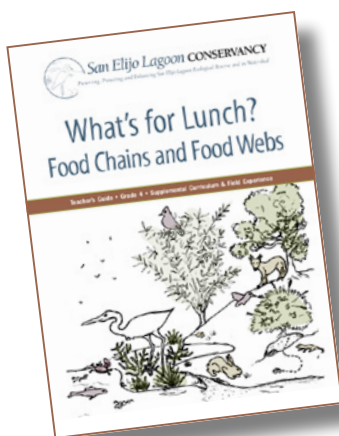
Birders volunteer as citizen scientists at our Monthly Bird Count where they hike the trails recording all the observed bird species (see *Monthly Bird Count Reaches New Heights*, page 1). They record their observations in a dataset that goes back almost 30 years. Bird Count volunteer and SELCL board member Elizabeth Venrick recently uploaded the last six months of bird count data to the international database at Cornell University’s eBird website (www.ebird.org).

Our Conservancy volunteers yield impressive results. This year, docents helped lead over 3,000 people on walks throughout the reserve, including elementary school students from as high up in the watershed as Escondido. Recently, restoration volunteers removed invasive plant stalks and spread native seeds in their place, providing habitat for birds and preventing further erosion. The data collected at the Monthly Bird Count informs conservation and restoration programs not only at San Elijo Lagoon but throughout the greater Pacific Flyway which runs from Alaska to Chile.

These results depend entirely on the efforts and enthusiasm of volunteers. Liedtke, Worthington, Navis, and Venrick find inspiration from the beauty of the lagoon and also from their fellow volunteers. By sharing their passion with neighbors and friends, the message is clear that volunteers make a difference at San Elijo Lagoon. ❖

Education Update

By Tara Fuad, Education Director



As the school year kicked in, so did the Conservancy schools program as hundreds of energetic students arrived for their field trips, eager to explore and take in the sights, smells, and sounds of the reserve. Of the nearly 1000 students who participated in programs this fall, approximately one-fourth of those students came from the Escondido Union School District. As part of our ongoing pilot program, 250 fourth graders from Central and Lincoln elementary schools

visited the lagoon for their second time after having visited in the spring of 2010 as third graders. This year's visit focused on food chains and food webs and coincided with the completion of our third Teacher Guide titled "What's for Lunch?" Docents led students along the Rios Avenue trail examining producers, consumers, and decomposers. Students had many opportunities to observe the food chain in action and were wowed by diving and dabbling ducks, hunting hawks, sunning lizards, patient great blue herons, sedentary snails, preying spiders, and the ever-entertaining jumping mullet.

Docent of the Quarter

By Tara Fuad, Education Director

In August 2008, an announcement in a local newspaper for Docent Training caught Kimberly Wesbey's attention. The description brought back fond childhood memories of camping and hiking with her sister and dad. Just a few weeks earlier Kimberly had lost her sister to cancer—she was only 48 years old. "From an early age, my father was able to instill in us the importance of respecting nature and caring for the land...he was very good about cultivating that, and it is something my sister and I had carried with us throughout our lives," said Kimberly. A self proclaimed shy person, Kimberly wasn't completely confident that becoming a docent would be a good match for her, but she was willing to give it a try. Not only did it turn out to be a good fit with her interests, it also served as an important component in her overall healing process.



Kimberly Wesbey Photo: Tara Fuad

Understanding the food chain can be a difficult concept to grasp, but the lagoon provided many ideal teachable moments. One student wrote in her thank you letter "I learned that a berrie (sic) tree gets energy from the sun and a little bird eats the berrie; a bigger bird eats the smaller bird ." The students' follow up letters and drawings to the docents are priceless.

Over 3,000 visitors benefited from docent-led walks in 2010. As the education program expands geographically and the number of visitors increases, our need for docents active in the program increases as well. Luckily, we have a promising group of docent trainees who will graduate in early December. All docents are invited to attend our third annual potluck graduation to be held on Tuesday, December 7 between 10 am–Noon at the Nature Center. A hearty thanks to all of our docents for their countless volunteer hours and for helping strengthen the education program. Your work is making a difference in our community. ❖

"It was cool absorbing (sic) plants and looking at the woodrat's nest. My favorite animal was a crab. You are the best docent ever."

4th Grade Student, Central Elementary, Escondido



In the two years since Kimberly became a docent, she has contributed significantly to the program. She leads walks on almost a weekly basis, serves on the Education Committee, and is always willing to share a laugh. "I've always enjoyed working with kids and I love watching their faces light up when they are discovering something for the first time," added Kimberly. And indeed there is evidence that Kimberly is making an impression on the kids who visit the lagoon. When fourth graders returned to the lagoon this year after visiting as third graders last year, they not only recognized Kimberly, they knew her name and were eager to share with her all that they learned the previous year. "I really found that rewarding," noted Kimberly, "and was surprised by all the things they remembered."

Volunteering has always been a big part of her life. She has been active in the March of Dimes, Special Olympics, and at her church. We are fortunate that she has added volunteering at the lagoon to her list. In her free time she enjoys hiking or going to the beach with her family, reading, and hanging out with other docents. Thank you, Kimberly, for sharing your love of nature with hundreds of school children. Your commitment to the program is much appreciated! ❖

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Memorial Bench Installed

By Elaine Dodge, Development Director

Visitors hiking along the Santa Carina trail can rest on a recently installed bench honoring Ron and MiMi Baer. MiMi passed away in January 2010 from complications related to Alzheimer's disease. Together Ron, son Richard and daughter Sandee, their spouses, children and their many friends made donations for a memorial bench.

The location was selected within sight of Ron and MiMi's home in Solana Beach, a site of happy memories for the Baer family. Ron used to take his grandsons Adam, Jason and Aaron on a treasure hunt not far from where the bench is installed. He relied upon the markings from a piece of eucalyptus bark as his "treasure map" to locate abandoned bricks—which he told the boys were made of gold.

The bench is located adjacent to where a farm house used to stand. At the turn of the last century, dry farming—especially lima beans—was a common agricultural mainstay. Long before there were farmers, Native Americans resided in the lagoon. An abundance of broken shells along the Santa Carina trail are evidence of a Kumeyaay midden.

Watching members of the Baer family carry, assemble and install their bench were a Say's Phoebe and a Black Phoebe. Everyone agreed it was the ideal location to bird watch and remember MiMi.

If you are interested in a memorial bench, contact Elaine@SanElijo.org or call (760) 436-3944 x 708.



Ron & MiMi's bench

Photo: Joel Kramer



The Baer family enjoys a quiet moment during bench installation.

Photo: Joel Kramer

Newsletter Sponsor

by Linda K. Kitchens, Director, Client Services, Hokanson Associates

Hokanson Associates has proudly assisted the Conservancy with the management of SELC endowment and operating funds since 2002. With offices on Lomas Santa Fe Drive in Solana Beach, Hokanson Associates is a wealth management firm serving high net worth families in the San Diego area since 1987. The firm has been named a top wealth advisor by a variety of national financial publications, and its strategists have been quoted in publications which include The Wall Street Journal, Fortune, Forbes, Barron's, U.S. News, Business Week and Worth.

Neil Hokanson currently serves as Chair of the Conservancy's President's Council, which seeks to expand knowledge of the Conservancy's mission, its circle of supporters and its endowment fund. Neil is also a Director of the Rancho Santa Fe Foundation and serves as Chair of its Investment Committee.

A native Californian, Neil lives with his wife Clarice in Cardiff and enjoys gardening, beach volleyball and the outdoors.

Hokanson Associates sets aside a portion of the firm's revenues to support local non-profits, and we are pleased to support the Conservancy and its efforts by sponsoring this newsletter.



Neil Hokanson

Ways of Giving...

By Elaine Dodge, Development Director

Membership Drive

One of our organizational priorities in 2010 has been the recruitment of new members. Helping us with this endeavor have been Peter Johnson and Dave Murphey, owners of Las Olas, who generously donated discount coupons to their Mexican restaurant. We've been giving those coupons as thank you gifts to existing Conservancy members who recruit new members.

Nearly through with our 2010 membership campaign, we have 54 new members—and only a few discount coupons remaining.

We invite you to be a part of our 2010 membership drive by taking the membership recruitment flier in this issue of *Lagoon Tidings* and asking your friends, neighbors, and family members to join the Conservancy. If they join—we'll send you a complimentary discount coupon to Las Olas where you can celebrate having helped preserve, protect, and enhance the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve.

Endowment Campaign

Members of the Conservancy's President's Council held their final meeting of 2010 at the home of Rita and Brys Myers. The Myers along with Ilse Epprecht put up a matching gift challenge for this year's endowment campaign. Chaired by Neil Hokanson, the President's Council raised just shy of \$120,000 from 49 individual donors increasing our endowment total to \$922,151.

The Conservancy's board of directors established a permanent operating endowment to ensure the financial future of our flagship environmental education and habitat management programs. Our endowment funds are held at the Rancho Santa Fe Foundation and The San Diego Foundation.

The President's Council meets three times annually at the home of one of its members. Refreshments are served and a presentation given. At the last meeting, Les Braund, past president of the San Diego Mycological Society, gave a slide show featuring the abundance of lichens, liverworts, and mushrooms in the lagoon and where to see them.

In addition to the three meetings, President's Council members are treated to two private walks culminating in catered refreshments served trailside in the lagoon. Their next walk featuring migratory birds is scheduled for December 5th.

If you would like to donate to the endowment or are interested in joining the President's Council, contact Elaine@SanElijo.org or call (760) 436-3944 x 708.

Grants Received

The Conservancy gratefully acknowledges this grant awarded in September:

Qualcomm Corporate Giving—to continue implementing the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade curriculum-based environmental education program



California scrub oak acorn
Quercus berberidifolia



Find us at www.facebook.com/sanelijo.



San Elijo Lagoon CONSERVANCY

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

P. O. Box 230634 | Encinitas, California 92023-0634

Change Service Requested

Nonprofit
Organization
US Postage
PAID
Encinitas, CA
Permit No. 23

TAKE ACTION!

Go Green!

Conserve precious resources by opting for e-delivery of *Lagoon Tidings*. Same great news, less paper.

Simply send an email to newsletter@SanElijo.org with 'Subscribe' in the subject line and your mailing address in the message. You will then receive all future editions of *Lagoon Tidings* paperless delivered directly to your inbox, wherever you are!

Thanks for helping save paper!



Independent, client-centered wealth management

Hokanson | associates

Family Wealth Management

*Selected as One of America's Top Wealth Advisors
2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, Worth Magazine*

Assisting the San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy
with Investment Management Since 2002

201 Lomas Santa Fe Drive, Suite 360, Solana Beach, CA 92075 Tel: 858 755 8899
info@hokansonassociates.com www.hokansonassociates.com

Your family. Your dreams. Your partners along the way.