



# Lagoon Tidings

## Calendar of Events

### Bird Counts

Second Monday each month  
7:30 am–Noon at Rios Ave trailhead  
Contact [birds@sanelijo.org](mailto:birds@sanelijo.org)

### Encinitas Environment Day

Sunday, June 5  
10 am–4 pm  
**FREE!**  
Visit SELC's booth



### Docent Meetings

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 Restoration Events

Saturday, June 18, 9 am–Noon  
Saturday, July 16, 9 am–Noon  
Contact [info@sanelijo.org](mailto:info@sanelijo.org) for location and signups

Find us at [www.facebook.com/sanelijo](http://www.facebook.com/sanelijo)

••• SAVE THE DATE! •••

## Birds of a Feather

### SELC's 25th Anniversary Birds of a Feather 2011

Saturday, September 17, 5–8 pm

- Fundraising gala for SELC's environmental education program
- Sponsorship opportunities available
- Volunteers welcome
- Auction items now being accepted

Contact Denise Stillinger  
[dstillinger@miracosta.edu](mailto:dstillinger@miracosta.edu)  
(Further details on page 7)

## Spring Camp Delights Kids

By Tara Fuad, Education Director

Lagoon Nature Discovery Camp kicked off on April 4th with sixteen excited budding naturalists ready to explore and learn about the lagoon. Campers honed their sensory skills and became familiar with some of the common sights, sounds, and smells of the reserve. Initially, the tussock moth and the fence lizard were the featured highlights, but as the kids became more familiar with the lagoon, they began to notice the less obvious: picking up the drumming of a distant woodpecker, detecting a well-camouflaged juvenile Black- *continued on page 5*



Campers play bird bingo as they explore the lagoon.

Photo: Tara Fuad

## Lagoon in Bloom

By David Varner, Restoration Ecologist

This is the time of year for blooming! Plentiful winter rains (more than 13 inches in the reserve) have stimulated a vibrant display of spring flowers in San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve. Most of our plants take advantage of this time of year, using their colorful and conspicuous flowers to attract pollinators. Soil moisture is still high, air temperature is warming, and pollinators are prolific as they busily acquire nutrients and energy to get to the next stage of their own reproductive cycles. A list of twenty-six native, flowering plants recently seen in bloom in the reserve follows this article.

But it is not just blooming time for native plants. Lots of naturalized and invasive, non-native plants are blooming, too. One of the most conspicuous plants we see in the reserve is what we call 'nasturtium' (*Tropaeolum majus*), although it is not a true member of *Nasturtium* (the scientific name for the watercress genus), which also resides in the reserve. As most of us know, nasturtium is an attractive, trailing vine-like plant with round, delicate leaves and bright yellow and orange flowers. It is a prostrate plant that uses its long petioles to twine through and over the ground and existing vegetation.



*Nasturtium* (*Tropaeolum majus*) Photo: Debby Strauss

*Nasturtium* is the result of cultivated hybridization of other species in the genus, originally from South America. One of its close relatives produces an edible tuber often seen in Andean markets. The leaves and flowers of *nasturtium* are often eaten here in salads and their seeds are sometimes used as a substitute for capers.

*continued on page 4*

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Tara Fuad, *Education Director*  
 tara@sanelijo.org

Joel Kramer, *Habitat Management  
Program Technician*  
 joel@sanelijo.org

Barry Lindgren, *Science Director*  
 barry@sanelijo.org

Debby Strauss, *Program Associate*  
 debby@sanelijo.org

Amy Trujillo, *Associate Director*  
 amy@sanelijo.org

David Varner, *Restoration Ecologist*  
 david@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  
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**Editor:** Debby Strauss

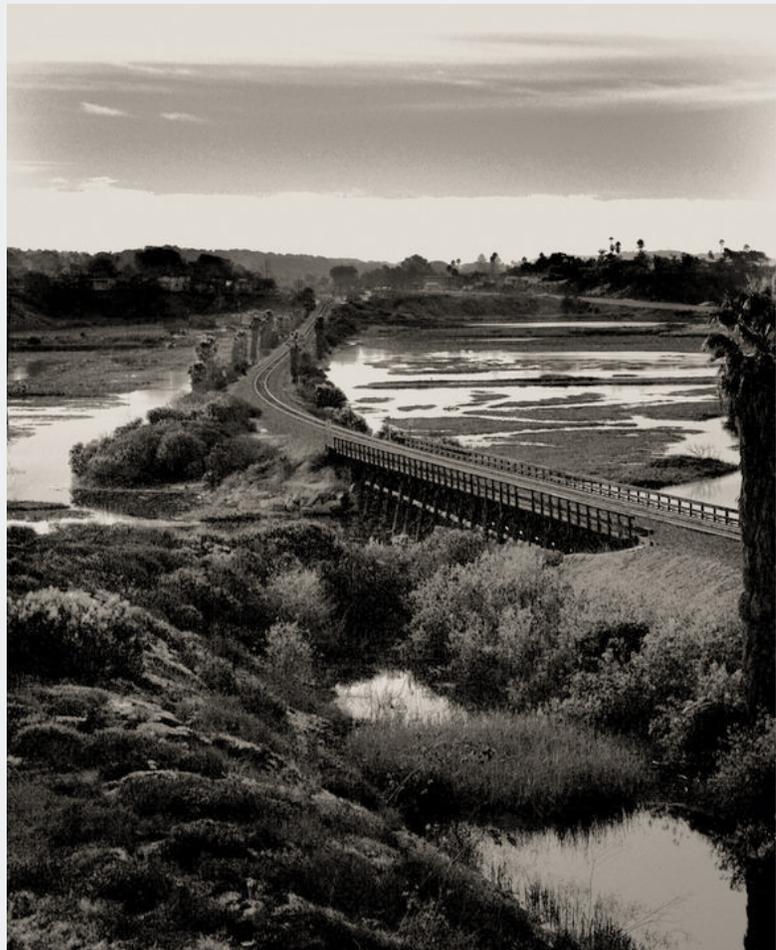
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# President's Message

By Denise Stillinger, *President*

Spring has arrived in all its colorful glory at San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve. I hope you are able to enjoy the splash of wildflowers that have popped up over the last few weeks. They won't be around for long, so don't delay! The Rios trail is awash in cream cups, wind poppies, baby blue eyes, fiesta flowers, and snapdragons as well as other California natives. The reserve also hosts a long list of bird species, some of which are endangered, that safely nest and forage within its boundaries. Free to the public, our signature "Second Saturday" docent-led tour of the reserve starts at the Rios trailhead at 9 am. I encourage you to bring your family and friends out to see the natives in all their springtime brilliance. The Conservancy is hard at work to preserve and enhance our native flora and fauna. These efforts require constant vigilance against invasive, non-native species that can crowd out many of these irreplaceable treasures. Your membership allows us to be consistent and thus successful in these conservation efforts and we are extremely grateful for your continued support. Happy Trails!

## FEATURED PHOTO



January 2011 by Robin Shook

Submit your own photos 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 RGB files with minimum pixel dimensions of 2100 x 1600, minimal image manipulation and no recompression before submission. Please see image submission info at [sanelijo.org/lagoon-image-drop-box](http://sanelijo.org/lagoon-image-drop-box)



Least Tern and chick

Photo: © William Dalton, with permission

## A Patch of Ground for Ground-Nesting Birds

By Mona Baumgartel, Docent

The most common reason that bird species become endangered is because the ways in which they live or raise young have been disrupted (for example, habitat loss and increased predation). There are at least five threatened or endangered bird species found at San Elijo Lagoon. Let's look at two of these: the California subspecies of Least Terns and the Pacific coast population of Snowy Plovers, called California Least Terns and Western Snowy Plovers, respectively.

Both of these species make their nests, lay their eggs, and raise their chicks in our coastal areas during the summer. Both make nests that are simple hollows in the ground—out in the open, so the nests are totally exposed. These nests are called “scrape” nests and, occupied or not, are hard to see even if you're standing right above them! And, to make matters worse, the ground they choose is often right on the beach or on the dunes.

Beaches, of course, also attract human visitors. Do you walk carefully across open areas, looking at your feet constantly to make sure you're not stepping on eggs? Probably not. This is one reason that these two species are in trouble. But it's not only foot traffic; it's also building activities, vehicle traffic, and other human activities that destroy beaches. We've done a pretty good job on this coast of invading what used to be the nesting habitat for these two birds!

The eggs of both birds are sand colored and spotted, that is, camouflaged, so that predators can't see them easily. The adults incubate them for 3–4 weeks by both warming and cooling them, as needed. When the eggs hatch, the emerging chicks are also spotted—they already have fluffy down feathers. Western Snowy Plover chicks are truly “precocial,” meaning they are out and about, feeding themselves within hours of hatching. California Least Tern chicks, however, are “semi-precocial” since they still have to be fed for several weeks. Neither can fly until they are about three weeks old, so they are stuck on the ground—first as eggs, then as chicks—for almost two months! Whatever protection they have is limited to the camouflage of the eggs and chicks and the defensive actions by the parents, and this is the second reason they're in trouble. All this time,

## WELCOME

The Conservancy extends a warm welcome to Jennifer Miller, the new San Diego County Supervising Park Ranger at San Elijo Lagoon, replacing Susan Welker who retired. Jennifer has been with the County Parks and Recreation Department for nine years with previous assignments at Rancho Guajome Adobe, Heritage Park and the Ramona Preserves. Having grown up on 40 acres of coastal wetlands in New Hampshire, Jennifer says she is thrilled to have the opportunity to help local kids make a similar connection to this precious and unique ecosystem. Jennifer graduated from Tufts University with a BS in biology and environmental studies and lives in Solana Beach with her husband and two children.



## Rules for Rover

Many dog owners enjoy bringing their dog to the wonderful natural open space of San Elijo Lagoon. Following the rules of the reserve insures the outing is safe for both the dog and the natural resources of the reserve. Dogs must stay on leash (no more than 6' long) and on trails at all times. Also, owners must pick up after their dog and dispose of waste properly.

A recent survey revealed 40% of dogs in the reserve were off leash. Dogs roaming off trail are a major threat to the wildlife the reserve was created to protect. They disturb nesting birds and other native animals and trample native plants. They also encounter threats to their own well-being: western diamondback rattlesnakes live in the reserve, as do coyotes, skunks and ticks. Foxtails can painfully embed in a dog's skin, ears and nasal canal.

Dog waste is more than a nuisance on trails; it's a biological time bomb. Parasites and bacteria present in the waste pollute the lagoon and ultimately the ocean, contributing to beach closures. Within the lagoon, diseases and parasites can be transmitted to wildlife and to other dogs. Some owners place dog waste in a plastic bag, and then leave the bag on the trail even though trash cans are provided at the Rios and Santa Helena trailheads, the Nature Center and the dike. Please respect the rules of the reserve and have a safe and enjoyable walk with your pet.

they are vulnerable to being eaten by predators: natural ones like owls and crabs, but also craftier ones, like cats and crows.

In order to provide one more level of protection for these two species, a new fence has been erected at San Elijo Lagoon to protect a small sandy area the birds may like to nest in. This is a little piece of ground that has survived between two major coastal invasions, the highway and the railroad tracks, built on what used to be a huge, shifting beach between Cardiff and Solana Beach. Thus, these little birds may re-find a little bit of their historical homeland. ❖

continued from page 1, *Lagoon in Bloom* The plant reproduces naturally by seed, but as any gardener knows, its rhizomes can spread over quite a large area. Its presence in wildlands is uncommon in most of California as it only inhabits areas near the coast, but it can frequently be observed near the lagoons and canyons of our region. This is because it is often used in ornamental landscapes, from which it escapes into adjacent disturbed areas. Nasturtium is also considered an invasive plant in Hawaii, New Zealand, and numerous other Pacific Islands.

Where it inhabits our local wildlands, including San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve, the plant grows over shrubs, smothering what is underneath by blocking sunlight, thus preventing the establishment of native plant seedlings. Some of the plants displaced by nasturtium infestations include sea dahlia (*Leptosyne maritima*) and miner's lettuce (*Claytonia perfoliata*). If you have nasturtium (*Tropaeolum majus*) growing in your yard, please actively contain it to prevent it from invading nearby riparian areas!



Cream cups  
Photo: Janine Free



Wind poppy  
Photo: Janine Free



Sea dahlia  
Photo: Janine Free



Truncate leaf lupine  
Photo: Janine Free

California native plants recently seen flowering in San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve:

**Annuals:**

- Popcorn flower (*Plagiobothrys collinus*)
- Yellow fiddleneck (*Amsinckia menziesii*)
- Fiesta flower (*Pholistoma auritum*)
- San Diego fiesta flower (*Pholistoma racemosum*)
- Large flower phacelia (*Phacelia grandiflora*)
- Common phacelia (*Phacelia distans*)
- Cream cups (*Platystemon californicus*)
- Wind poppy (*Stylomecon heterophylla*)
- Woodland star (*Lithophragma affine*)
- Bicolor everlasting (*Pseudognaphalium bioletti*)
- California everlasting (*Gnaphalium californicum*)
- Sea dahlia (*Leptosyne maritima*)
- Wall flower (*Erysimum capitatum*)
- California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*)
- Golden yarrow (*Eriophyllum confertiflorum*)
- Chinese houses (*Collinsia heterophylla*)
- Miner's lettuce (*Claytonia perfoliata*)
- Blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium bellum*)
- Beach suncup (*Camissonia cheiranthifolia*)
- Chalk-leaved dudleya (*Dudleya pulverulenta*)

**Shrubs:**

- Parish's nightshade (*Solanum parishii*)
- Monkeyflower (*Mimulus puniceus*)
- Deerweed (*Lotus scoparius*)
- Truncate leaf lupine (*Lupinus truncatus*)
- Black sage (*Salvia mellifera*)
- Lemonadeberry (*Rhus integrifolia*)



David Ignacio and Jose Banuelos remove invasive tree tobacco.  
Photo: Joel Kramer

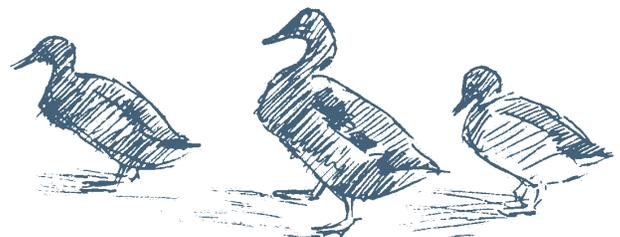
# Summer Heats Up With Habitat Restoration Events

By Joel Kramer, Habitat Management Program Technician

On a misty Saturday morning, the volunteers stood before one of the last remaining coastal dunes in San Diego, answering the spring call of the Snowy Plover, which prefers to nest on soft, open sand rather than thickly clustered vegetation. With careful footsteps, they plucked sea lavender (*Limonium* spp.), arrowweed (*Pluchea sericea*) and tree tobacco (*Nicotiana glauca*) from the road berm beside Highway 101. Their efforts will increase biodiversity by clearing space for species such as the silvery legless lizard and Killdeer.

Now summer is approaching with three more habitat restoration events. On June 18th, the plots that volunteers planted in January will be tended for mustard and fennel, while on July 16th we will march through the narrow passages of the sandstone caves to scrape graffiti. And mark your calendar for the restoration party of the year—Coastal Cleanup Day on September 17th! Teams will scour for trash from every edge of the lagoon and report the data to our policymakers in order to prevent marine pollution in the future.

Check out our website calendar to see how you can restore habitat with us! ❖



# Inlet Spring Cleaning

By Doug Gibson, Executive Director/Principal Scientist

Spring is the time of year when we apply a new coat of paint, sweep out the cobwebs, and add color to our gardens. For the lagoon, it's time to clean out the sand and cobble that has built up in the inlet channel over the past year. In mid-April, equipment began moving sand from the inlet back to the beach. Every year we conduct this same maintenance operation in which about 25,000 cubic yards of sand is removed from the inlet and placed back on the beach. This annual operation creates several positive benefits for both the community and the lagoon.

The main goal of the project is to ensure that tidal flow is maintained in the lagoon. This brings oxygen-rich water into the shallow-body system, benefiting not only the fish and invertebrates living in the water, but also other species, such as birds, that depend on those organisms as food. This is critical to the overall health of the entire reserve because if water quality is poor, there is less food for all of the species. Secondly, without a constant connection to the ocean, the fish populations that depend on the lagoon as a nursery will not succeed. Lastly, the project supplies the beach with much needed sand, providing beachgoers a place to lay their towel and the material to build sandcastles.

We hope you had a chance to see this interesting operation in action. If not, you can count on the Conservancy being back next year for a little spring cleaning. ❖



## Docent of the Quarter

By Tara Fuad, Education Director

Since graduating from docent training slightly more than a year ago, Kris Vensand has regularly participated in the school program and more recently signed up as the lead docent for guided walks. Although teaching through the Conservancy is new to her, using the lagoon as an outdoor classroom is not. “When I homeschooled my daughter

several years ago, I would take her to the lagoon to introduce her to nature and use the watershed model to teach her about our local water resources,” recalls Kris. Interacting with children comes very naturally to Kris as she spent 18 years as a pediatric occupational therapist working with disabled and physically challenged infants and children. When asked why she decided to get actively involved in the Conservancy, she noted that she wanted to gain a greater understanding and appreciation for the scrubby flora and fauna of the region. “Although I grew up in this area, I spent most of my adult

*continued from page 1, Spring Camp...* crowned Night Heron high up in a tree, identifying animal tracks and scat, and being able to confidently describe the difference between a duck and a coot. Hikes were complemented with nature crafts and activities such as making animal track molds, creating recycled art, and making paper. The campers were also introduced to our traveling worm exhibit and learned the important role worms play as nature's recyclers.

Sophia the Kingsnake proved to be a big crowd pleaser, as was the demonstration beehive that docent Suzanne McAllister shared with the inquisitive campers. Each morning concluded with singing nature songs led by docent Cindy Moore, with the kids becoming quite animated by the end of the week. Everyone had a great time—and who wouldn't enjoy a week spent exploring the lagoon?



Photo: Tara Fuad

A big thanks to the following docents, County Rangers, and community members who helped make this camp a great success: Rachel Carter, Karen Larson Gordon, Irina Gronborg, Nancy Kamp, Carol Rayes, Suzanne McAllister, Jennifer Miller, Cindy Moore, Erica Peterson, and Ed Slater. Also, thank you to the City of Encinitas and the Mizel Family Foundation Community Grant program for helping launch this successful pilot program. ❖

years in Northern California where I became accustomed to tall trees. When we moved back here to be closer to family, I realized I knew very little about the local vegetation.”

“Being a docent allows me to get out and explore nature, and you get the added benefit of the students' spontaneous reactions to nature... you never quite know what they are going to say or how they are going to react, which is what makes it so interesting,” says Kris.

Although Kris accepts the fact that she will always be competing with the lizards when it comes to an elementary school walk, she still believes she has something to offer. “I think when students or your own kids see that you are truly passionate about something, it naturally rubs off on them, and it is one way to help kids make that important connection to nature.”

Kris lives near the reserve with her husband and daughter. When not volunteering at the reserve, she enjoys walking her terrier-mix, Murphy, playing the piano, sewing, scrap-booking, and chauffeuring her daughter to synchronized swim practices and meets. Thank you Kris for joining the SELC docent family and sharing your leadership talents. ❖

# RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

## Spring Flower & Fungi Walk

By Elaine Dodge, Development Director



Les Braund shares his knowledge of lichen, liverworts, fungi, and mushrooms. Photo: Janine Free

President's Council and Legacy members were treated to a guided walk along the Rios trail on Sunday, March 28th. Leading the walk were Elizabeth Venrick, Conservancy board member and docent, and Les Braund, past president of the San Diego Mycological Society. Participants were introduced to native wildflowers like sea dahlia clinging to the hillsides, small patches of cream cups, stands of Chinese houses, and occasional baby blue-eyes and wind poppies. Unbeknownst to many of us, the reserve is also host to lichen, liverworts, fungi, and mushrooms. Les pointed out two species of bright yellow lichen growing on

trees, varieties of mushrooms including shaggy mane and bird's nest (aptly named because of spores that look like eggs) and a fungus called puff balls. The two-hour walk concluded with refreshments served at the Gemma Parks bench in Holmwood Canyon.

The Spring Flower Walk is a stewardship event offered to our President's Council and Legacy members in appreciation for their financial contributions to the Conservancy's operating endowment. The operating endowment was established to ensure the financial future of the Conservancy's programs in perpetuity. The endowment is held in two funds, one at the Rancho Santa Fe Foundation and the other at The San Diego Foundation. President's Council members meet three times annually. Legacy donors are those members who have included the Conservancy in their estate plan. All planned gifts, unless otherwise indicated, when realized become part of the Conservancy's endowment fund.

If you'd like to learn more about the President's Council or are interested in including the Conservancy in your estate plan, please contact Elaine Dodge, Development Director at (760) 436-3944 x 708 or elaine@sanelijo.org.

## Grants Received

The Conservancy gratefully acknowledges the following recent grant awards:

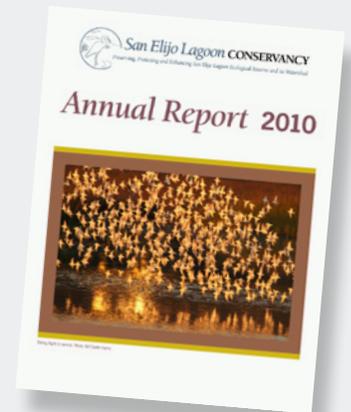


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Please join us in saying thank you for their support.

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Annual Report available at [SanElijo.org/publications](http://SanElijo.org/publications)

## Our New Website Has Launched [www.SanElijo.com](http://www.SanElijo.com)

Have you checked out the brand new SanElijo.org? Our new website went live in March and features stunning nature photography, improved access to public programs and videos, and detailed trail descriptions with maps. You'll also find information about the plants, animals, and history of the reserve and the Conservancy's current work. We hope you enjoy browsing the many ways you can experience San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve, and learning how you can support our mission to protect and enhance the reserve for future generations.



# Ways of Giving

## Please join us

for a memorable evening of music, gourmet cuisine, friendship and fun as the Conservancy celebrates its 25th Anniversary.

Proceeds from the event will continue to support Conservancy education and outreach programs in the community.



Rita and Brys Myers, Honorary Auction Chairs of the 2011 Birds of a Feather Gala.

### Birds of a Feather Sponsorship Levels

<b>Great Blue Heron</b>	<b>\$25,000</b>
<b>Peregrine Falcon</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>
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For sponsorship details, please visit our website (SanElijo.org) or contact Elaine Dodge (760) 436-3944 x 708 or Elaine@sanelijo.org.

### 2011 Honorary Gala Chairs: Doug and Libby Scott

2009 Honorary Gala Chair: Elizabeth Keadle

2007 Honorary Gala Chairs: Jack & Patty Queen

San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy's 25th Anniversary Celebration

# Birds of a Feather Gala

**SAVE THE DATE**  
**SATURDAY**  
**SEPTEMBER 17, 2011**  
**5 PM - 8 PM**

All Proceeds to Benefit SELC's Environmental Education Programs.

San Elijo Lagoon CONSERVANCY  
 25 years of watershed moments

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### Birds of a Feather Requested Auction Items

Thank you for your support of San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy. The *Birds of a Feather* auction committee is requesting donated items for our silent and live auctions. Please contact Denise Stillinger (dstillinger@miracosta.edu) or Linda Jones (lljnew@sbcglobal.net) to discuss auction items you wish to donate, or can procure for us, before obtaining them on our behalf. We want to be careful not to duplicate our requests in the community. Thank you for all your help!

### One-of-a-kind opportunities/experiences

- Unique merchandise
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  - Concert tickets
  - Sporting event tickets
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  - Wine tasting
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  - Airline ticket vouchers
- And the list goes on ...

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Rita and Brys Myers



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Underwriters: Dave and Denise Stillinger



# San Elijo Lagoon CONSERVANCY

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

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Thanks for helping save paper!



## San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy's 25th Anniversary Celebration

# Birds of a Feather Gala



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SAVE THE DATE  
**SEPTEMBER 17, 2011**  
5 PM - 8 PM

All Proceeds to Benefit SELC's  
Environmental Education Programs.

*Join us for a memorable summer evening of music, gourmet dining and live & silent auctions under the stars at the Olivenhain home of Doug and Libby Scott.*

*It is sure to be an affair to remember, especially with you there!*



San Elijo Lagoon CONSERVANCY  
25 years of watershed moments