



# 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)

### Docent Meetings

Second Tuesday each month  
9–11 am at the Nature Center

### Guided Nature Walks

Every Saturday  
10–11 am at the Nature Center  
*Wildlife Walks*—Explore New Habitats  
Second Saturday each month 9–11 am  
December 12: Rios Avenue Trail  
January 9: Santa Helena Trail  
February 13: Rios Avenue Trail  
March 12: Santa Inez Trail  
April 9: Rios Avenue Trail

*Sunday Fun Day*—First Sunday of the month, 11:30 am–1:30 pm at the Nature Center

*Sunday Strolls*—Third Sunday of the month, 3–4 pm at the Nature Center

### Family Discovery Days

“Wings Over Wetlands” January 23 & 24,  
1–4 pm at the Nature Center  
“Eggucation” March 19 & 20, 1–4 pm  
at the Nature Center

### Community Habitat Restoration

Volunteer Restoration Events  
Third Saturday each month 9 am–Noon  
December 19  
January 16  
February 20  
March 19  
April 23 (fourth Saturday)

[RSVP@SanElijo.org/RestorationEvents](mailto:RSVP@SanElijo.org/RestorationEvents)  
*Stewards Restoration Workshops*—Every  
Wednesday 9:30 am–Noon  
Contact [Platoon@SanElijo.org](mailto:Platoon@SanElijo.org) to join



## Sowing Native Seeds: San Elijo Nursery Unveiled



Supporters of the new San Elijo Nursery cut the ribbon on October 21, 2015. Photo: Bill Wechter

The San Elijo Nursery, a 1,500-square foot workspace for community conservation, was unveiled in a supporters’ ceremony this fall. “Our family is delighted to be able to support San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy’s native habitat restoration through the development and use of the plant nursery,” reflected John Leonard, whose family foundation established seed funding. “This facility will allow volunteers working with conservancy staff to maintain and expand the native plant populations in this important coastal ecological reserve.” The nursery is a meeting place, located near Santa Inez trailhead, to engage the community in the art and science of horticulture. Already, over 350 volunteer hours helped build the nursery and we look forward to many more students *continued on page 4*

## Internships Promote Future Environmental Leaders

In early 2016, we will be launching the new Sage Environmental Leadership Program. This program will be the foundation for all conservancy internship positions and is made possible by a generous gift by the Anthony Cerami and Ann Dunne Foundation for World Health. This multi-year gift will provide the additional resources needed to grow future environmental leaders. One of our goals is to ensure that *continued on page 4*



the  
**ANTHONY CERAMI  
and ANN DUNNE**  
FOUNDATION FOR WORLD HEALTH

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# President's Message

By Doug Gillingham, Board President

*grat·i·tude* ('gra-tə-, tūd, -, tyüd)

- the quality or feeling of being grateful or thankful
- readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness

'Tis the season . . . if you can pause with me for a moment from all the attendant obligations. . . for gratitude. The word derives from the Latin *gratus*, meaning pleasing and thankful. (I know, I know, you are grateful to no longer be obligated to study Latin.)

At the conservancy, year-end 2015 finds us grateful for many things:

- **Lagoon Restoration:** For all those whose work and support has brought our long-dreamed-of San Elijo Lagoon Restoration project almost to the finish line.
- **Harbaugh Seaside Trails:** For The George and Betty Harbaugh Charitable Foundation and all the community donors who helped us acquire and preserve this property at the southern edge of the lagoon.
- **Our Volunteers:** For the 5,354 hours of time gifted to the conservancy by our wonderful community volunteers, who led walks and activities, restored native habitat, tested water quality, supported the *Birds of a Feather* gala, and provided dedicated leadership and governance.
- **The Next Generation of Lagoon Protectors:** For the 4,000 kids who participated in our conservation education program, gaining the confidence and skills to begin life-long actions to protect our lands.

Thank you to all of you, whose continuing support makes possible our work. We are grateful.

Best wishes for a joyful and peaceful holiday season,

Doug



Doug Gillingham

## Editor's Farewell

After eight years on staff and five years as newsletter editor, I am retiring from the conservancy. One of the pleasures of being editor has been selecting from the many beautiful photos we receive taken in the lagoon by local photographers. This photo, 'Hummingbird and Baby' by Karen Straus, appeared in the Summer 2013 issue and is one of my favorites. *Debby Straus*



*Hummingbird and baby*

Photo: Karen Straus/San Diego Audubon Society

# Browsing in the Lagoon—*The Elusive Mule Deer*

San Elijo Lagoon is a world renowned birding destination. But what of the mammal populations that also inhabit the reserve? The southern mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus fuliginatus*) is the largest mammal in the reserve. Its range extends from Orange, Riverside and San Diego Counties in Southern California and into Baja California. The name *mule deer* refers to its large ears and sturdy physique—as compared to more slender species.

According to Jennifer Miller, county supervising park ranger at San Elijo Lagoon, the size of the current herd living in the reserve is from a dozen to more than 20 deer. She has seen up to eight at a time toward La Bajada in the northeast area of the reserve. The average lifespan of a southern mule deer in the wild is 9–10 years.

Deer sightings often delight visitors. Trail visitors in the east basin of the reserve are likely to see southern mule deer, well camouflaged, in freshwater marsh and along creeks in the lagoon. They browse on meadow grasses, berries, fruits, twigs and buds. Fawns are born in late spring to mid-summer and the does nurture their fawns on a protected island best viewed from Santa Carina trail. The best times of day for mule deer sightings are early morning and dusk.

To learn more about some of the most common mammals that call San Elijo Lagoon home, visit the Animal Guide on our website at [SanElijo.org/AnimalGuide](http://SanElijo.org/AnimalGuide) and click on “mammals”. ❖



*Southern mule deer browse in San Elijo Lagoon. Photo: Steve Brad*



*TVIA volunteers pitch in at September 2015 Coastal Clean-up Day.*

## Steward of the Season— Teen Volunteers in Action

In this issue of *Lagoon Tidings* we have chosen to recognize a group of habitat restoration volunteers rather than an individual. One of the reasons our monthly Lagoon Platoon restoration program has been successful over the years is because of the commitment of community groups like Teen Volunteers in Action (TVIA). TVIA is an organization of young men, grades 7–12, who participate in volunteer events in their communities. Since January 2013, TVIA has attended a total of twelve Lagoon Platoon events and is currently signed up for five more through May 2016! Not only are they our most consistent volunteer group, they always come with a great work ethic and a positive attitude. Over the years they have performed a wide variety of projects at the reserve, such as planting native plants, removing and controlling invasive non-native

vegetation, and collecting native seeds for future propagation and seed banking.

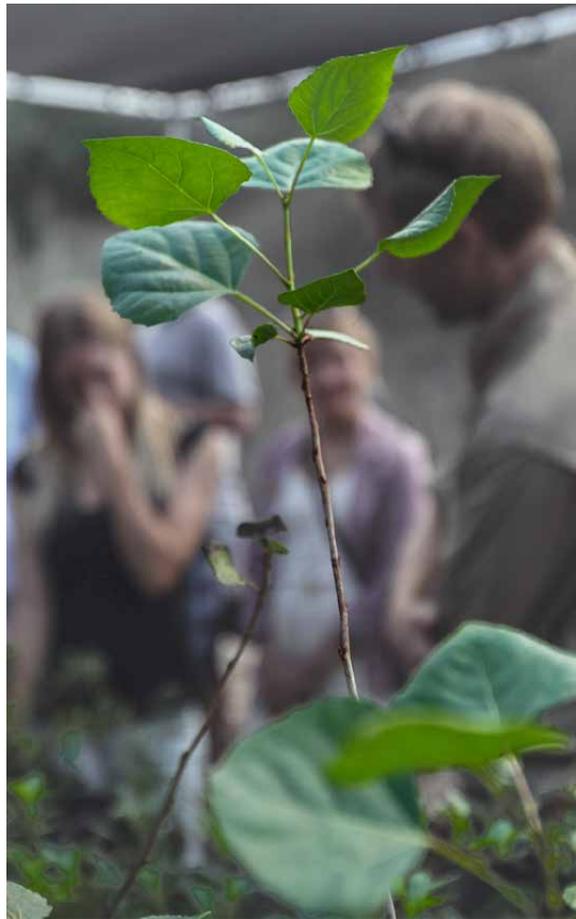
Mara Bickett, liaison for a San Diego TVIA chapter, loves signing her group up with the Lagoon Platoon. “Our TVIA boys enjoy working the Lagoon Platoon events. They are not accustomed to this much labor and generally leave the events feeling satisfied in a way they don’t usually experience! Working outdoors in the lagoon is SO good for them, and the best part is they are helping too!”

We are very fortunate to have such a dedicated group of volunteers involved in our community-based restoration program. So we extend a BIG thanks to Teen Volunteers in Action for helping keep the reserve such a beautiful place!

Continued from page 1, *Native Plant Nursery* and volunteers getting their hands dirty propagating and growing native plants.

Many plants native to the reserve are not commercially available. Protecting genetic integrity is an important aspect of our restoration efforts. The majority of the reserve's plant species have large ranges that encompass a variety of geographic regions and climates. The best seeds to collect and grow are here from local established plants. With native seed propagation, many species require some sort of environmental cue to germinate. Factors such as fire, day length, seed planting depth, and temperature affect seed germination. For certain species, we have to mimic those cues in the nursery. For example, in order to optimize germination of black sage (*Salvia mellifera*) we added charred wood to the seeds and soil to mimic wildfire.

The nursery will continue our emphasis on environmental stewardship by using reclaimed water to irrigate the plants. Reclaimed water is perfect for irrigation while saving the nursery from using precious potable water. We are currently



*Western cottonwood (populus fremontii) sapling grows in the San Elijo Nursery. Photo: Bill Wechter*

in the review phase of our application to the Department of Environmental Health and hope to have reclaimed water installed by January or February.

The nursery is a partnership of San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy and County of San Diego Department of Parks & Recreation. It became a reality through the collaborative efforts of private, corporate and government entities. Besides the John & Elizabeth Leonard Family Foundation, seed money was also contributed by Ned & DeeDee Reynolds. David Kramer, conservancy board member and owner of Oakhurst Builders, donated the labor and materials to design and build the storage shed and fencing. The Rancho Santa Fe Garden Club awarded a generous grant that provided nursery, irrigation, and seed processing equipment, while neighborhood reinvestment funds directed by County Supervisor Dave Roberts provided other essential equipment.

We invite members to join Lagoon Platoon at the San Elijo Nursery. More info: [SanElijo.org/PlantNursery](http://SanElijo.org/PlantNursery). ❖

Continued from page 1, *Future Environmental Leaders* the high school and college students who participate have a valuable and rewarding experience that enriches their education and future professional development. This gift will also allow us to increase the number of participants and the amount of mentoring time that participants receive by conservancy professionals in the fields of science and environmental education.

Ann Dunne, a director of the foundation, said, "It is natural to protect what we love. To fall in love with nature we need the personal connection of our senses—we need to be physically involved. My hope is that future leaders in conservation will be inspired by the chance to have an intimate hands-on experience with our great local gift—the San Elijo Lagoon, through a Sage Internship". The conservancy believes that we can increase the experience of college and college bound students with interests in the life science and environmental education fields and thereby encourage future environmental leaders.

Over the past two decades we have supported many interns who have moved on to completing higher degrees in the field of life sciences. As we continue to grow as an organization, we are shining a new light on the importance of mentoring our youth. Beginning January 2016, we will be accepting applications for several intern positions such as Water Quality, Land Stewardship, Community Volunteer Restoration/Native Plant Nursery, Annie's Canyon Trail (New), Conservation and Environmental Education, and Summer Camp. More info: [SanElijo.org/Internships](http://SanElijo.org/Internships). ❖

## #Love Your Lagoon Photo Contest

San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy is committed to a future for people and nature—and we want to see it through your eyes. For our 2016 Photo Contest, we'd like to know: "What does San Elijo Lagoon mean to you?" Is it having nature accessible in an urban area? Is it the flora and fauna? Is it the panoramic vistas or macro details? How do you live nature? Capture those vibrant moments that express what the lagoon means to you. See page 8.

More info: [SanElijo.org/PhotoContest](http://SanElijo.org/PhotoContest).

# Docent in the Spotlight—Sally Stoffel



*Sally measures her wingspan during a school program.*

Sally Stoffel lived in Solana Beach near the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve for almost three decades before moving a few years ago. She hiked through the lagoon with her two children, treasuring the experience of communing with nature and enjoying the remarkable natural wonders of the watershed. It wasn't until a developer planned

to build houses in Holmwood Canyon almost three decades ago that Sally became involved in the preservation of this wondrous area. In those days, it was clear that it would take serious effort to save the watershed. Along with other dedicated community members, Sally worked for the incorporation of Solana Beach, an important step to local control around the lagoon.

Sally continued her love of the outdoors, and especially San Elijo Lagoon, by becoming a docent three years ago. "I truly love the experience...especially watching the wonder of the kids who are spellbound by the birds, the jumping fish, the *Argiope* spiders and other insects and animals," explains Sally. She feels it is an honor to be involved with the lagoon staff and docents, who are dedicated to nature and love to share their knowledge and passion with grade school children. With the inquisitive mind of a scientist, Sally enjoys exploring and discovering the mysteries of the reserve as much as the students do, and thereby keeps them engaged and learning. In her free time, Sally enjoys traveling with her husband Al to places far afield like the Galapagos Islands and Croatia, and spending time with her three- and five-year-old grandsons who live in the Bay Area. Thank you, Sally, for passing your love of nature to the next generation—we appreciate the many years you have dedicated to protecting the reserve! ❖

## Student Volunteers Bring Youth and Enthusiasm to Family Discovery Days

Family Discovery Days (FDD), a joint Conservancy-County sponsored family event offered three times per year and attended by hundreds of community members, has continued to grow in attendance since initially launched in 2011. To accommodate the event's popularity and volunteer needs, we reached out to San Pasqual High School in Escondido and developed a volunteer-mentorship program. Student participants are required to spend a day at the lagoon the weekend prior to an event, learning about wetlands and getting trained on the interactive exhibits. On the day of the event, students spend a full day volunteering side-by-side with their peers and conservancy docents, engaging with visitors and serving as role models to the children coming to explore and learn about nature.

Since the inception of the program in 2013, over 100 high school students have participated in one or multiple events. "Volunteering is a wonderful experience. I love observing the young kids and their joyful reactions...It makes me feel good about the impact I can have on a child's experience," said Lizeth Martinez, a junior and seasoned volunteer who has already participated in five FDD events. When junior Samantha Craven, another regular volunteer, was asked why she keeps coming back, without hesitating she enthusiastically responded, "I love seeing the kids' eyes light up when they see or learn something new... and since the expert docents working by our side are always encouraging us and full of information, I leave each event bursting with new knowledge and feeling excited to pass it along."

Having the same students return for multiple events and seeing them take 'ownership' of the mentorship program makes this a rewarding experience not only for the students, but also for conservancy staff and docents. In the upcoming year, our high school student volunteers will be taking the program one step further by designing their own exhibits for the event. Mark your calendar for "Wings Over Wetlands" to be held January 23 & 24, 2016 and come see these talented and dedicated high school students in action.



# RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

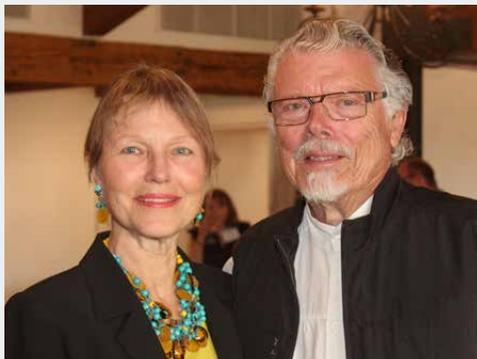
## *Birds of a Feather Soars With Success*

The sold-out benefit for kids in nature was held at Lomas Santa Fe Country Club on September 19.

We are grateful to everyone who attended and enjoyed the evening celebration.

Together, with gala donor support and program investors, we raised more than \$200,000 for conservation education at San Elijo Lagoon.

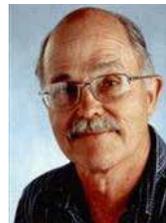
We thank Presenting Sponsors & Honorary Gala Chairs Carol Childs and Peter House and Major Gala Sponsors: Hoehn Motors, ACS Habitat Management, and Ki's Restaurant, along with every sponsor and donor who joined in to benefit action-oriented conservation education at San Elijo Lagoon.



*Presenting Sponsors and Honorary Gala Chairs Carol Childs and Peter House.  
Photo: Jennifer Nelson*



*Gala Co-Chairs Paul Worthington and Sally Foster  
Photo: Jennifer Nelson*



### **Al Shenk's Life Honored**

We honor and remember Al Shenk of Solana Beach who passed away in July. He was a long-time member of San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy.

The family of Al Shenk named San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy as the recipient of donations gifted in Al's memory. His legacy will continue through these memorial gifts and in the hearts of all who knew him.

Al and wife Genie often spent their weekends walking the lagoon trails with their daughters, observing birds and insects. Genie recalls this connection with nature as being critical to their family's quality time together.

Al was passionate about protecting the lagoon from development and actively participated in the "Save the Lagoon Rally" in the mid-80s and most recently *The Campaign to Save Gateway Park*, now Harbaugh Seaside Trails.

Because of the efforts made by Al and others, our beautiful lagoon remains protected and the views of the Pacific will remain open for generations to come.

# Ways of Giving



## Legacy Circle

### Making a Lasting Contribution

Many people leave a charitable gift in their will. Our Legacy Circle members believe in the importance of preserving open spaces for the enjoyment and education of the community. The Legacy Circle was established to honor the lagoon's friends who have included the conservancy in their will, trust, or estate plan. Long-time conservancy supporters Bill Miller and Ida Houby share their story of increasing their connection to the conservancy through Legacy Circle membership:



“We became involved in 1983 with The Friends of Holmwood Canyon, which partnered with San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy to save the canyon. We had just bought our home close to the lagoon and felt strongly about preserving both the canyon and the wetlands that we came to love.

We both grew up in communities surrounded by farmland and unspoiled nature, and we both love the outdoors. For Bill, this love grew from playing in the woods and fields, sailing and canoeing on the rivers and lakes, and hiking the mountains of upstate New York. For Ida, it was summers spent in the family summerhouse on the shores of The Great Belt between the Danish Isles, swimming and walking the seashore meadows.

Our favorite trail is from the top of Holmwood Canyon to La Orilla Trailhead. We have been blessed most recently to finally see the Light-footed Clapper Rail, and we have enjoyed early morning sightings of the Hooded Merganser. When we walk the trail we always look for mule deer, Black-shouldered Kites, Ospreys and Northern Harriers. In springtime, we love to watch the successive bloom of the many flower species, and are particularly fond of the Chinese houses, monkey flowers and sea dahlias.

Unspoiled nature is becoming increasingly rare in our modern society. However, because of the benefits it bestows upon the body and soul, it is also increasingly needed by humans, and it gives our fellow species a home. Leaving a legacy with San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy is one of the best ways to act locally to preserve open spaces for future generations.”

~ Bill Miller & Ida Houby

Gifts of all sizes are welcome, as they ensure the lagoon's natural beauty and vitality in perpetuity. We invite you to begin the conversation about how a planned gift can benefit you now and the lagoon in the future. Please contact Jennifer Bright, Development Director at (760) 436-3944 x705 for more information.



# San Elijo Lagoon CONSERVANCY

Connecting communities. Protecting nature.

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Please check your renewal date. If it is soon or expired, please use the enclosed envelope to renew your membership.  
Thanks!



## GO GREEN!

Conserve resources by opting for e-delivery of *Lagoon Tidings*.

Simply send an e-mail to [newsletter@sanelijo.org](mailto:newsletter@sanelijo.org) with 'Subscribe' in the subject line and your mailing address in the message.

Thanks for helping to save paper!



## #Love Your Lagoon Photo Contest

**People & Nature**  
(1 winner)

Illustrates how people and nature can thrive together.

**People's Choice**  
(1 winner)

Overall winner selected from among the honorable mentions based on public voting.

**Youth Photographer**  
up to age 18 (1 winner)

Captures best vibrant moment in nature.

**Honorable Mentions**  
(50 selected)

Amazing images that showcase our natural world.



Submissions accepted January 1, 2016–March 31, 2016.  
For more details visit: [SanElijo.org/PhotoContest](http://SanElijo.org/PhotoContest).