



Lagoon Tidings

Calendar of Events

Bird Counts

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

Docent Meetings

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

Guided Nature Walks – (see page 5)

Every Saturday
10–11 am at the Nature Center
Wildlife Walks—Explore New Habitats
Second Saturday each month 9–11 am
July: Santa Helena Trail
August: Rios Avenue Trail
September: Santa Carina Trail
October: Rios Avenue Trail
November: Santa Helena Trail
December: Rios Avenue Trail

Summer Evening Walks—Third
Wednesday each summer month,
5:30–7 pm at the Santa Carina Trail

Family Fun Days—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

NEW! October Sunday Stroll has a
seasonal twist

NEW! Heart Healthy Holiday Hike
November 7, 8–10:30 am, Rios Ave Trail

Family Discovery Days

“Not So Scary Estuary” October 3–4,
1–4 pm at the Nature Center

Community Habitat Restoration

Volunteer Restoration Events
Third Saturday each month (no August
event) 9 am–Noon

July 18, September 19, October 17,
November 21, December 19

RSVP@SanElijo.org/restoration-events

Stewards Restoration Workshops—Every
Wednesday 9:30 am–Noon
Contact Platoon@SanElijo.org to join

> **Buy your Tickets Now!** <

SanElijo.org/Gala

Birds of a Feather

Saturday, September 19, 2015

Birds of a Feather Gala to Benefit Childhood Nature Connections

Guests will soon flock together in celebration of current and future environmental stewards. Tickets are on sale for Birds of a Feather gala, themed “Growing Future Stewards”. This eco-benefit for connecting children with nature is on Saturday, September 19 from 5–8:30 pm at Lomas Santa Fe Country Club. Peter Puppington will perform live contemporary and acoustic jazz. Savory tray-passed light bites and a plated full course menu will be paired with wine and craft beer options (full bar on site). *continued on page 4*



Conservancy Education Coordinator Elayna Flanders leads middle school students in conservation education program that inspires future stewards.

Inspiring Youth to Act

Students from 3rd grade through middle school are taking conservation into their own hands by taking action on behalf of their watershed. The lagoon field trips are used as inspiration to become aware of conservation practices, while back at school teachers provide guidance and support for student-driven classroom projects. As we begin to implement the new Conservation Education 5-year Strategic Plan, we are working closely with partner teachers to ensure lessons learned in the lagoon are reinforced in the classroom and implemented through projects that help protect water, land, and air.

This year's student projects included recycling, beach, community, and park clean-ups, and reducing household water and energy use. Student Olivia Archambault of Rincon Middle School recounted, “As I was picking up trash, a couple of people said, ‘thank you for helping our *continued on page 4*”

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President's Message

By Doug Gillingham, Board President

e·phem·er·al (ə'fem(ə)rəl)

- Lasting for a short period of time
- (geology, of a body of water) Usually dry, but filling with water for brief periods during and after precipitation.

Ephemeral is one of those poetic terms of natural science that in a mere four syllables tells a whole story, one of seasons and life-cycles, of patterns in the natural world. Ephemeral. Deciduous. Anadromous. Three rich four-syllable stories right there, available for leisurely review on your next walk or run through the lagoon.

As the Executive Director notes in his column, Escondido Creek in its pre-industrial setting was ephemeral, flowing through Harmony Grove and reaching San Elijo Lagoon during wet periods, drying up in summer months. But with development, with imported water irrigating citrus and avocados and lawns throughout the watershed, the creek flows year-round into the lagoon. A little less so this year in drought, but no longer ephemeral.

Over the past 100 plus years, the lagoon ecosystem has shifted and adapted to man-made changes caused by construction of the railroad, Highway 101, and I-5, by the altered hydrologic regime of Escondido Creek, by sedimentation, by sewage treatment operations, and more. The natural systems that exist today in the lagoon do not operate exactly as those of the pre-industrial lagoon, but they are no less vital, and there is still much we can do to restore and enhance their value. The lagoon restoration project, described elsewhere in this newsletter, will go a long way in that direction.

The conservancy, just to be clear, is not ephemeral. We are here for the long haul, working consistently to protect and restore the resources of San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve, its watershed, and related ecosystems for the benefit of current and future generations. Your support makes it all possible. Thank you for that.

Cheers,
 Doug



Doug Gillingham

Wetlands During Drought

By Doug Gibson, Executive Director/Principal Scientist

Because of water's importance to California's agricultural production, this drought is international news. Stories cover the economic conundrum of transferring water for agriculture and personal consumption from one part of the state to another. There are few insights covering the drought's impacts on local wetlands. How are places like San Elijo Lagoon affected by a prolonged lack of fresh water?

Upland habitat has adapted in Southern California to be drought resistant. Wetlands, on the other hand, need to be wet. There are several different types of wetlands. Some are impacted by drought more than others. Drought-tolerant marine wetlands consist of an ocean shoreline with ocean as the constant water source. Estuarine wetlands, such as San Elijo Lagoon, occur where tidal ocean waters meet riverine waters. The drought does not have a large impact to estuaries unless the connection to the ocean is blocked. This is why it's critical that we conduct annual dredging of the lagoon's inlet to ensure that tidal flows into the system give plants the ability to survive. But even this habitat requires some precipitation to help seeds germinate.

Riverine wetland habitat is associated with streams and rivers. In Southern California these habitats have been artificially enhanced due to urban runoff. Under historical conditions, many of these small creeks and streams would have flowed only during rain events; we call *continued on page 4*

A Regional Resource for Restoration

By Angelique Herman, Restoration Ecologist

Did you know that in addition to the habitat enhancement performed in San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve, the conservancy is also committed to protecting natural resources within adjacent watersheds? In 2004, in partnership with Carlsbad Watershed Network, SELC created The Carlsbad Hydrologic Unit (CHU) Invasive Species Control and Habitat Restoration Program with the goal of extending the reach of SELC into adjacent watersheds. The CHU consists of seven coastal watersheds from Oceanside south to Solana Beach and east to Escondido.

Performing invasive species control and habitat restoration on a landscape-level is important for many reasons. The invasive plant populations targeted for control are not restricted to just the boundaries of the 'Conserved Lands' system. Invasive species populations can and do extend from conserved lands, into private lands and downstream along the waterways within the watersheds. Controlling an infestation upstream and on adjacent properties increases the success of the treatment by decreasing the ability of the invasive species to recolonize the conserved area. Designing a landscape-level habitat restoration program also benefits wildlife that have very large home ranges. This is because improving habitat quality on privately owned lands adjacent to conserved lands provides connectivity corridors and increases the area of suitable habitat.

Another reason this work is important is that there are conserved lands with native habitats which may not have sufficient land management funds or personnel to tackle invasive species control and habitat restoration efforts. This program seeks to fill these gaps. In addition to



Pampas grass thrives in recently burned area of Poinsettia fire.

performing the work directly, the program provides consultation to partner organizations that have funding and initiative to perform restoration but rely on the 10+ years of experience that SELC staff offers.

To illustrate the impact of this program, last fall the conservancy's habitat management team engaged in a partnership with the City of Carlsbad. With our recognized successes in native habitat restoration, the city requested a staff biologist to perform invasive plant species abatement in response to the May 2014 Poinsettia fire. Poinsettia burned 317 acres of open space, 295 of which were either existing or future habitat management plan reserves.

After the fire, invasive plant species pampas grass and castor bean regenerated at a faster rate than native shrubs. These dominant and water-hoarding plants threaten recovery of this vulnerable area. The first round of treatments protected nearly 20 acres of sensitive habitats. Ongoing treatments are helping to conserve five rare plant species, an endangered bird species, and a rare species of lizard. We continue to monitor these recovering sites and plan to re-treat the targeted invasive plants this fall. ❖

Steward of the Season – Peg Engel



Peg Engel protects coastal dune habitat by removing European sea-rocket in the reserve.

What does it take to be a Lagoon Platoon Steward? Excitement for San Elijo Lagoon's unique ecology and a resolve to protect the extraordinary biodiversity in the reserve. As one of our longest volunteering Lagoon Platoon Stewards, Peg Engel exudes both of these characteristics. She brings her fascination for native plants and animals and her long-standing support for wildlife and habitat conservation to our Wednesday Steward Workshops. Peg enthusiastically states, "Feeling that we are contributing to a humbling but ambitious undertaking—where people are trying to learn enough about complex ecosystems to help sustain and even restore them—is what I enjoy most about the community habitat restoration program".

Outside of Lagoon Platoon events, Peg is an advocate for conservation. Three years ago, she and husband David started *Stay Cool 4 Grandkids*, an alliance of citizens dedicated to protecting San Diego's extraordinary biodiversity, extensive open space, sparkling beaches, and intriguing canyons with a focus on mitigating global climate change.

The community habitat restoration program is fortunate to have Peg as a hardworking steward focused on protecting and restoring native habitats. "Peg's passion for conservation and bright attitude are a joy to have during our weekly steward workshops," avows Associate Biologist Nick Regoli. We thank Peg and all the committed volunteers who help make San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve an extraordinary place.

Continued from page 1, *Student Conservation Projects* beach.’ When they told me this I felt really proud of myself, and I also felt as though I was making a big difference in the world.” Olivia’s advice to others: “Next time you go to the beach, if you see a piece of trash, pick it up. It may not seem like a big deal but it will make a difference.”

Mekayla Narino of Rincon Middle School took educating others to a new level. She created a five minute water conservation video and presented it to three classes at her former elementary school, Reidy Creek. “I wanted to show kids how important water really is. I wanted them to be aware that they can help save water,” said Mekayla. After showing her water saving video, she asked the students to make pledges to conserve water, which ranged from turning off the water while brushing teeth, to taking shorter showers, to only running the washing machine on a full load. Mekayla’s Water Conservation video can be viewed at bit.ly/1IvBZ9y.

All projects are displayed for peers and parents during school open houses, with select projects displayed publicly for community viewing at the Escondido Center for the Arts, the San Elijo Lagoon Nature Center, and other public venues. By inspiring youth to take action and to encourage others to do the same, we are helping create a community that wants and knows how to care for the natural resources on which we all depend. ❖



Mekayla Narino with her water conservation project poster.

THANK YOU

SDGE, Coastal Conservancy, Whale Tail Programs: California Coastal Commission, Union Bank Foundation, Qualcomm Foundation, The Escondido Charitable Foundation and The San Diego Foundation for your ongoing support of our education programs.

Continued from page 2, *Wetlands During Drought* these streams ephemeral. When large portions of these watersheds are developed there is a constant source of flowing water in these systems, which are now considered perennial. This flow of water has allowed riparian wetland habitat to grow vibrantly along urban streams.

In our monitoring of Escondido Creek, biologists typically see a consistent creek flow, even in low rain years. This past year, however, we have observed a drop-off in stream flow since we began recording data in 2002. It seems that public pleas for water conservation and

mandatory regulations are having an effect. This is good news for water conservation, but the riparian wetland habitat will be affected. Trees and other vegetation may show signs of stress, but this habitat, and the wildlife it supports, will find a new balance based on the amount of available water.

Wetlands come in many shapes and sizes. In drought, or not, we are all encouraged to continue water conservation efforts. This will allow wetlands to find a more natural, sustainable balance for all species to enjoy. ❖

San Elijo Lagoon RESTORATION

Reviving Your Wetlands

Coming soon, the conservancy and agency partners will host a public forum which will focus on construction design and timelines for lagoon restoration. Members and the public will be notified by conservancy-generated news and e-blasts. Once the US Army Corps of Engineers and San Diego County complete their final reviews of our environmental document, we will reconnect with you on the restoration of San Elijo Lagoon. Please check online at SanElijo.org/Restoration to read the Final EIR/EIS when uploaded later this summer.

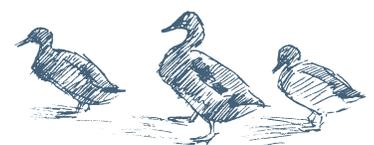
Continued from page 1, *Birds of a Feather*

Returning Presenting Sponsors & Honorary Gala Chairs are community philanthropists Carol Childs and Peter House. Major gala sponsors include Hoehn Motors, ACS Habitat Management, and Ki’s Restaurant, in addition to supporting sponsors and benefactors (see page 7 for a full list).

Birds of a Feather supports the conservancy’s “Our Living Watershed” K–12 curriculum. The program connects, educates, and engages the community to act to ensure the health and wellbeing of their watershed. Through outdoor classroom experiences, students learn about the interactions of land, air, and water—and ways to practice and share new resource conservation behaviors with their home communities.

The celebrated environmental gathering includes philanthropists, elected officials, citizen naturalists, and supporters of kids in nature. Cocktail attire is suggested. Online auction bidding begins August 31 for unusual destinations and adventures, themed special events, handcrafted jewelry, art, and more.

Reservations for tickets, tables, and continuing gala sponsorships may be secured at SanElijo.org/Gala, or by calling (760) 436-3944 x 705. ❖



Docent in the Spotlight—Jim Dietz

With an expansive view of the lagoon out his front door, Jim Dietz has been appreciating San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve for over 20 years, but it wasn't until he went through docent training in 2013 that he began to understand its rhythms and mysteries. "Knowing when and why the pickleweed turns red, where the Argiope spiders like to hang out, or the many uses of the elderberry plant have helped me appreciate the lagoon in an entirely different way," reflects Jim.

Although always comfortable around kids, as an engineer Jim's skills hadn't been put to the test. Shortly after docent graduation, he decided to practice a docent walk on his 9-year-old granddaughter. When she asked politely soon after the hike began 'if they could please

leave', he knew he would have to 'up his game'. "I realized very quickly that providing information and facts was not going to cut it... you have to make sure to connect to the kids, guide them to make their own observations and discoveries, and always be enthusiastic and engaging," said Jim. It didn't take Jim long to figure out the winning formula and he can often be seen in the lagoon surrounded by eager students begging to 'stay longer'. As a fairly recent retiree from Teradata, Jim is looking forward to spending time in Big Bear with his family this summer, hiking in the Andes, and rafting down the Colorado River. We'd like to thank Jim for his kind spirit and patience as a docent, and for stepping up as one of the new docent leaders. ❖



Jim Dietz' upbeat and positive attitude insures his students have an unforgettable nature experience.



Nature Walks for All Seasons

As the evenings are warming up we invite you to join us for our fourth annual summer of evening walks. Bring your family and friends to enjoy a mid-week evening stroll filled with the fragrant smell of sage-scrub and breathtaking views of the lagoon. As the sun sets across the ocean, visitors will discover wildlife emerging from mid-day naps. A family of deer grazing in the reeds, lizards soaking up the last bits of warmth, or shrieking hawks circling above are a few delights you might encounter on our evening strolls. Walks will be held from 5:30–7 pm on the third Wednesday of each summer month: June 17, July 15, and Aug 19, 2015 at the Santa Carina trailhead.

In addition, we are excited to announce two new autumn programs. Join us at the Nature Center on Sunday, October 18th from 3–4:30 pm for a spooktacular walk! Parasites, spiders, and insects, oh my! Celebrate the BOO-tiful autumn weather by getting an up close look at intrepid insects and spectacular spiders! Join us for this 'frighteningly' fun adventure ending with a sweet treat. All ages are welcome.

On November 7th, 8–10:30 am at the Rios Ave. trailhead, get a healthy



*The gemmed orb-weaver (Araneus gemma) is often observed in the reserve in the fall.
Photo: Barbara Wallach*

start to the holiday season by joining us for an informative, fast-paced, 6-mile walk through the reserve. With Thanksgiving around the corner it will be hard not to think about all the wonderful seasonal treats to eat. But what would you eat if you were stranded at San Elijo Lagoon over the holiday weekend? Let's find out together as we explore what's edible in the reserve. We will make a few stops along the way to taste and discuss our various findings.

Each new program is expected to fill quickly and participants must reserve their spots online at SanElijo.org/Walks. The walks are free to conservancy members. For directions, go to SanElijo.org/Trails. Trails are generally easy but we may encounter short stretches of moderate incline or loose sand. ❖

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The Curious Fork in Solana Beach partnered with the conservancy to celebrate Earth Day.

Chefs Daryl Biggs and Sonja Knowles presented NEST, an Earth Day pop-up dinner that offered an organic, locally and sustainably sourced five-course menu themed from local eco-systems. Co-founder Barbara McQuiston and her staff recognized San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy as a local non-profit that connects communities and protects nature. Barbara, her staff and their dogs often hike along the seven miles of trails in the lagoon, enjoying the scents of coastal sages, fresh breezes, and the solace of nature. “Giving back to your community is important,” stated an employee, “so we all decided to give a portion of our Earth Day proceeds to the conservancy to support restoration and community education”.

“Healthy food, exercise, and access to open space are essential to our whole well-being,” McQuiston said. “At The Curious Fork we provide an approachable, engaging space for learning. We are



Curious Fork staff supports SELC with menu themed from local eco-systems.

focused on producing excellent cuisine along with a fun learning experience—from how to cook seasonal ingredients from local farmers markets to really highlighting the importance and joy of the food we put into our bodies every day.

Teaching Philanthropy without Expectation



Third-graders are learning how to give of their time, treasure and talents. North County real estate brokers and philanthropists Steve Knight and Dave Baker created The Philanthropy Club Foundation six years ago. The foundation partners with Del Mar, Encinitas and Solana Beach elementary schools; its primary goal is to reach youth about the meaning and rewards of giving with—and without—expectations.

“We do this to plant seeds at a younger age,” said Dave Baker. “A philanthropist is not just an older adult writing a check. We hope that by planting seeds at this age, they will sprout earlier and bear the fruit of giving earlier, too.”

San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy was awarded funds from third graders at Sycamore Ridge

Elementary School. Conservancy Executive Director/Principal Scientist Doug Gibson attended the award ceremony to thank the students for their support of the lagoon. During the ceremony, students shared that they were first given information about several local nonprofit organizations. They were encouraged to talk about philanthropy with their parents and to visit the organizations’ websites. The entire class voted on how to reward the donated funds that were passed through the children by the Philanthropy Club Foundation. Thank you to the Philanthropy Club Foundation and Sycamore Ridge Elementary School for selecting San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy in their philanthropic efforts.

Ways of Giving



WE WELCOME Carol Childs and Peter House

as the returning Birds of a Feather Presenting Sponsors and Honorary Chairs. Carol and Peter are longtime conservancy supporters. “We love the lagoon,” reflected Carol. “What captures us is not only one plant, animal, or trail, it’s also seeing the lagoon as a whole—at high and low tide, in warm Santa Ana conditions, or even when cloudy and cold.”

Their support of the conservancy stems from their childhoods in nature. At the time he achieved the rank, Peter was the youngest ever Eagle Scout from Brooklyn, New York, where he was raised. In his teens he even considered a career as a forest ranger. Peter continues to be an avid bird watcher and carries Carol’s father’s well-worn Peterson Field Guide on all of his lagoon walks, just as her father Al did.

Carol’s family cherished their summers hiking and camping in the High Sierras. Her mother, Wenetta Childs, with other community leaders in the 1970s, was instrumental in removing old billboards along the lagoon’s view corridors. Carol enjoys walking the lagoon and marvels at the many species of flora and fauna that flourish together along the trails.

Peter retired as a policy analysis director for various federal agencies (including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency). Carol retired from a career in both private legal practice and as a corporate general counsel.

“Many of us find that we need to take vacations in places of complete or relative wilderness to reconnect with nature,” added Carol. “With the lagoon, however, we have a beautiful, refreshing, and accessible wilderness right in our backyards.” Carol and Peter are grateful for their times in nature and for the pioneering citizens who stood up to challenge development of the lagoon decades ago and today. As presenting sponsors, they underscore their commitment—and encourage us all—to ensure the next generation of environmental stewards.

Birds of a Feather

Sponsors

We sincerely thank our generous sponsors for their support of the 2015 Birds of a Feather gala.

Northern Harrier Level



American Kestrel Level



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Elizabeth Keadle

Great Egret Level



Morgan Stanley

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

Thanks for helping to save paper!



Birds of a Feather

Live, Silent and Online Auction!



Go online at SanElijo.org/Gala to preview all gala auction items including:

- Gala Event Live Auction items
- Gala Event Silent Auction items

And new this year,

- Online Auction items
- Bidding online begins August 31 through September 16

Bid on unusual destinations and adventures, themed special events, handcrafted jewelry and art, and more.