

Fall
2016

LAGOON TIDINGS



Inside:

Slot Canyon Secrets

Partners in Action

Fall Events, and More!



San Elijo Lagoon CONSERVANCY
Connecting communities. Protecting nature.

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President's Message

By Doug Gillingham, Board President

com·mu·ni·ty (kə-ˈmyū-nə-tē) /noun

1. A group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common
2. A feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals
3. [Ecology] A group of interdependent organisms of

different species growing or living together in a specified habitat

"Community", with its wonderful range of meanings, derives from the Latin *communis*: "common, public, shared by all or many," and originates with the Proto-Indo-European roots co: "together" + moin/mei: "change, exchange".

I like the PIE roots because of how they remind us that communities are dynamic, alive, changing and evolving over time. The word in its plural form is there on our logo in the tagline: "Connecting Communities, Protecting Nature." The tagline provides a condensed version of the conservancy's mission statement, conveying in four simple words the essence of our work. But while the "Protecting Nature" part is clearly central to our being, I find it is the "Connecting Communities" part that increasingly guides our work and plans for the future. Not only do we seek to connect diverse plant and animal communities together into a healthy functioning coastal wetland ecosystem, but through our school education, public activity, land preservation, and trail improvement projects, we also seek to connect human communities to nature, and to each other. That's your local community-spirited land trust at work. And as always, none of our work would be possible without your support. Thank you for your investment in the San Elijo Lagoon community.

—Cheers, Doug

Spotlight on Bobcats

The pawprints of a bobcat look like your cat's prints—except twice the size. Usually, tracks are all we see of this elusive and mostly nocturnal mammal. Our wildlife cameras have captured bobcat sightings. Wild animals are our neighbors. And this neighbor keeps to itself. It's unusual that a hiker will see a bobcat because they are generally loners, except in motherhood.

"What is most important about bobcat habitat, here and elsewhere, is that they have unbroken territory to roam throughout the Escondido Creek watershed," said Rusty Rodes, Supervising Ranger at San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve, and our reserve co-managing partner. "They've also been spotted near Escondido Creek, the Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve, and in less urban areas east of I-5."

They have a distinctive white underbelly and tufted ears. Its black-tipped tail, for which it is named, appears cut or "bobbed." Most bobcats are patterned with brown or brownish-red spotting. Females can have one to several young kittens that stay with the mother until they disperse. As carnivores, they have a variable diet, which includes rabbits, mice, lizards, and other smaller animals. Because bobcats are vulnerable to broken habitats, places like San Elijo Lagoon provide native habitat for all creatures furry, feathered or scaled, in nearly 1,000-acres protected both for nature and our community.



Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*)



Like any good parasite, California dodder (*Cuscuta californica*) rarely kills its host.

A Walk Back In Time

By Denise Stillinger, Associate Faculty, MiraCosta College
Conservancy President's Council & Legacy Circle member

With the opening of Annie's Canyon Trail, we're now exposed to its unique geography. Public fascination has emerged with questions about the formation and history of this coastal slot canyon. Like the worn, weathered face of a longtime friend, these sandstone cliffs have watched over San Elijo Lagoon for a very, very long time, about 45 million years (give or take a few million).

Our prehistoric coastline was very different 45–50 million years ago; with offshore, sandy barrier islands and shallow lagoons laden with oysters and other invertebrates. These biologically rich lagoons left behind the Del Mar Formation, which makes up not only the reefs along coastal North County, but also the geologic layer under the Torrey Sandstone. Sea level rise in the Eocene caused the barrier islands to migrate inland along with and on top of the lagoon deposit. This formed two distinct sedimentary layers: the Del Mar Formation below and the Torrey Sandstone above. During the following ice age, as sea level retreated, the sandstone cliffs became exposed to the elements. It wasn't until about a million years ago that a red layer rich in iron oxide was deposited on top of the Torrey Sandstone.

Over time water has relentlessly eroded away at the sandstone. Its unique consistency of sand grains cemented together by calcite from the ocean causes "wind caves" to form in certain places. You can see the smooth indentations in an otherwise vertical cliff face. These fascinating sculpted areas of prehistoric white sandstone, streaked with iron oxide, make Annie's Canyon Trail a captivating walk back in time.



Spaghetti-Looking Good Parasite

Its bright orange color makes this parasitic plant easy to spot. Also called Witch's hair or Devil's hair, dodder species are leafless orange parasites. Fortunately, the three species of dodder in the reserve are native. They have evolved with and adapted to their host species.

California dodder is a parasitic, herbaceous annual plant that resembles fine strands of orange-brown spaghetti. It lacks a root with which to take up water and nutrients from the soil, and chlorophyll with which to turn light and carbon dioxide into carbohydrates. The mature dodder plant obtains all of its food and water from the "host" plant. In the reserve, parasitism by California dodder is largely restricted to three species: California buckwheat, deer weed, and black sage. In summer, large patches of California dodder may be seen covering these host species, while other native dodder species are found in the salt marsh and brackish marsh parasitizing different species.

This article is adapted from our **Guide to the Plants of San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve**, online at .



EVENTS

On the Horizon



Botany Sketching Workshop

October 9 Members \$5 | Public \$10

Spend the afternoon observing the finer details of plants in the lagoon. Artist Irina Gronborg will point out what to focus on when sketching, and will demonstrate the basics of drawing with examples from her sketchbooks. Irina will have a variety of plant subjects appropriate for beginners.

Salt Marsh Yoga

September 24

Members \$20 | Public \$35

Exhale stress. Inhale sage-scented air as you find balance in your mind and on your mat at San Elijo Lagoon. Join our 90-minute Vinyasa flow yoga experience trailside with James Petracca. Includes sage relaxation eye pillow.



Trails & Ales

November 5

SOLD OUT

Trails & Ales is a series of hiking tours combined with craft brew experiences, presented by San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy, San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy, The Escondido Creek Conservancy, and Volcan Mountain Foundation. The Lost Abbey is sponsoring the San Elijo Lagoon hike. This season's Trails & Ales sold out. The next series will soon be announced.



The Lost Abbey

Lagoon Geology Tour

November 13

Members Free | Public \$5

Earthquakes, faults, land uplift, and sea level changes have worked together over millennia to create San Diego's coastal lagoons. Join MiraCosta College geology professor, Keith Meldahl, for a geologic walking tour to explore the past, present, and future ground-shaping stories of San Elijo Lagoon.



Not-So-Scary Estuary

October 23

Free

Meet creepy, crawly, and hooting animals this Halloween at San Elijo Lagoon. Costumes are encouraged! Kids can go trick-or-treating along the "Haunted Hike" nature trail, where clues help families look and listen for wildlife. You'll learn about nocturnal creatures in live animal presentations. Co-presented by the Conservancy & County Parks and Recreation.

Register SanElijo.org/Events



Keep Touring

Guided Tours Every Saturday Morning



DISCOVERY TOURS *Free* Birdwatching for Beginners

September 18

Join a tour to inspire your interest in avian species for a lifetime of delight observing birds. Bring along binoculars (some available) and your favorite field guide (not required) and we'll include tips on how to get the most out of birdwatching. Led by naturalist Emmy Garnica.

What Makes a Bird a Bird—Feathers!

October 16

Let's take a close look. Every bird species has unique designs. Learn the various ways that birds use, clean, lose, and regrow their feathers. Are all birds born with feathers? Why are feathers like zippers? Bring binoculars (some available). Led by naturalist Barbara Wallach.

Restoring Nature Tour

November 27

Ever wonder about the plant protective cones and pin flags you see in restoration sites? Which native plants are in the ground, and what's next? We'll tour some of the conservancy's habitat restoration sites. It's all about exploring nature's interrelationships, and how native plants are needed. Led by naturalist Mike Blanco.

Winter Solstice Reflections

December 18

In these shortest days, we'll look for birds before sunset that may be fishing, flying, resting, even eating. Some live here, others are visiting during winter migration. Look for sightings of waterfowl, shorebirds, and a diversity of species. Led by naturalists Linda Jones and Nancy Everett.

Volunteer

Roll Up The Sleeves

Sep 17 | Oct 15 | Nov 19 | Dec 17

Skip the gym on 3rd Saturdays and plan for a workout in nature.

In September, help remove plastics and debris that fouls our coasts and waterways in the California Coastal Cleanup. In later events we'll focus on restoring alkali marsh in the Ford Wildlife Habitat Preserve, and coastal sage scrub at Annie's Canyon Trail and along Santa Carina trail.



Family Fun Days *Free*

Oct 2 | Nov 6 | Dec 4

Kids can uncover cool mysteries while exploring their natural world. We'll wrap our eyes and minds around **Our Changing Climate** in October. **Is A Bug an Insect?** Find out in November. And **Good Night Tortoise, Good Night Snake** bids our reptiles a sound brumation (like hibernation) in December. Each adventure-filled event features crafts, hands-on exhibits, and TRACK Trails touring guides. Co-presented by the Conservancy & County Parks and Recreation.



Future Biologists Get Started Here

Three years ago, two San Pasqual High School students volunteered for our seasonal Family Discovery Days. It was then that Lizeth Martinez and Angelique Martinez (unrelated) realized a passion for giving back to younger children.

"I look forward to volunteering at these family events and encourage other students to join the mentorship program," said Lizeth, who loves watching how excited kids get about nature. "I want to have the same impact on their lives as the naturalists at the conservancy have had on mine." This cross-age peer mentorship program provides growth and learning opportunities for both mentors and mentees, resulting in a double impact.

At first, Angelique Martinez was shy. Over time, she has presented new ideas for children's activities. "This mentorship program has helped me build personal skills and confidence since I first volunteered three years ago," said Angelique. She and Lizeth spent two weeks over summer assisting Lagoon Discovery Camps. They plan to continue volunteering with the conservancy until they graduate. They have exceptional leadership skills and are looking forward to applying for the Sage Environmental Leadership Program next year, which will further their academic careers as they both plan to study biology in college.

Career Building from the *Ground Up*

Some of our interns grew up here. They all love the outdoors. So it's no surprise several are environmental studies majors in college. They're here to help make a difference for our natural world.

"I like that we are able to actually see the difference our work makes on the lagoon and how we contribute to local wildlife while doing so," said intern Chase Clark. Our 2016 Sage Environmental interns are *jumping at the opportunity* to learn from conservancy experts in our award-winning and recognized conservation programs. These future leaders are trained in best practices on how to restore nature and how to inspire our next generations through conservation education.

Mentoring is a priority. We have supported many interns who went on to achieve advanced degrees in the fields of life sciences and environmental education. Through support from the Anthony Cerami & Ann Dunne Foundation for World Health we celebrate our largest number of interns to-date.

We thank our interns Andrea, Henry, Erin, Chase, Alex, Gianni, and Weston. Learn more about them, ways to apply, and to support this program, online at SanElijo.org/SageInternship.



Join our *Board Leadership* team.

SanElijo.org/Board

Partners

ENERGY for Conservation



SDG&E passes on “energy” to inspire our next generation. “SDG&E is firmly committed to improving quality of life in the communities that we serve by collaborating with organizations that address needs in environmental stewardship,” said Morgan Justice-Black, Community Relations Manager. “We are pleased to partner with the conservancy to further our shared goals of fostering environmental leaders among underserved youth through our Environmental Champions giving initiative.”

Are You ‘GOIN’?

Ever since a life-changing experience with Outward Bound early in her career, Debi Iannizzotto has embraced outdoor discovery. She is a conservancy partner teacher at Central Elementary in Escondido. Debi works to provide her students with lasting memories in nature in the form of family campouts, after-school programs, and weekend explorations.

“I strongly believe that nature makes us happy, and if everyone spent more time in nature, we would all be happier,” shared Debi. “I love watching how excited and enthusiastic the students are once they get outside. Their curiosity blossoms and their relationships with the environment begin to change.” She added that it takes just one positive experience and the students are hooked, “begging to know when the next outing will be.” Debi’s new initiative: Get out in Nature (‘GOIN’), is supported by the conservancy. ‘GOIN’ presents opportunities for Escondido partner schoolchildren and families to visit the reserve, to keep exploring together, and to take action to protect diverse habitats here, and everywhere.



Thanks SDG&E! Some school children tell us that until now, they’ve never been to the beach.

In Their Own Words | Board Members On the Trail

Matt Adams



Matt feels lucky to live near the lagoon. His pal, Maui, gives it two paws up. “Maui is overjoyed when we hit the Rios Avenue trail for a leisurely walk down to the lagoon viewpoints,” shared Matt. “We frequent the nature center loop and Rios trails more often for fresh sea air and a sunset.”

Fun Fact: Rangers at the nature center provide water and treats for our furry explorers.

Susie Hedrick



Her fascination with birds sparked here 20 years ago. “A childhood friend asked me to look through her scope at a Great Egret in breeding plumage,” said Susie. “The clarity and color of the bird’s face through the scope were amazing.” Susie likes to share her enthusiasm by inviting trailgoers to check out a bird through her scope.

Fun Fact: Approximately 40% of North American bird species have been observed at San Elijo Lagoon.

Nicolle Selby-Thomas



Nicolle’s checklist: leash, water, bags—let’s go! “At least weekly, my consistent running buddy, KJ, and I go for a quick jaunt in the lagoon,” mentioned Nicolle. “Our favorite starting point is Rios where we love checking out the view from Annie’s Canyon Trail and also seeing our year-round residents of the lagoon, the Snowy Egrets.”

Fun Fact: Scientific evidence suggests that running and being in nature can make you happy.



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#LoveYourLagoon Kids' Art

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