

Winter  
2016-17

# LAGOON TIDINGS

*Inside:*  
Sprouting Community  
#LoveYourLagoon  
Events & Tours



San Elijo Lagoon CONSERVANCY  
Connecting communities. Protecting nature.

#### Cover Image

New native plant garden at Escondido elementary school (SELC photo)

#### Summer 2016 Cover Image

Annie's Canyon Trail Grand Opening, by Bill Wechter

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## President's Message

*By Doug Gillingham, Board President*

**in·vest·ment (in'ves(t)mənt) / noun**

1. [Material/Financial] the action or process of investing money for profit or material result.
2. [Devotional] an act of devoting time, effort, or energy to a particular undertaking with the expectation of a worthwhile result.

Investment derives from the Latin in, into or upon, and vestire, to clothe, and in its original 16<sup>th</sup>-century usage meant "to clothe with the insignia of a rank," and "endow with authority." Our current usage of the word has evolved, but I like the noble flavor the original definition lends to the current. 'Tis the season for noble investment.

As the Conservancy reflects on the completion of its 29<sup>th</sup> year of operations, we are proud of the investments we, and you, our supporters, have made during 2016. We opened Annie's Canyon Trail (the lagoon's first "E Ticket" attraction!), preserved new open-space additions to the reserve, restored habitat, educated school kids, engaged the community with the lagoon, and more.

I am especially proud of the investment by the board and staff in the completion of a new strategic plan for the Conservancy: Strategic Plan 2020. To develop the plan we surveyed our membership, the community, and ourselves, and conducted several planning workshops to explore and refine our direction for the next five years and beyond. You can review the results at [SanElijo.org/StrategicPlan](http://SanElijo.org/StrategicPlan).

The new strategic plan represents a developmental milestone for the Conservancy as we prepare for our 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year. The plan establishes direction, sets measurable objectives and timelines, and challenges the whole of the organization, staff and board, to continue to up our game as protectors of nature, builders of community, and fiduciaries to those who invest in our mission.

Thank you for your investment in the San Elijo Lagoon community. Best of the season to you and yours.  
—Cheers, Doug



## Director's Message

*by Doug Gibson, Executive Director | Principal Scientist*

This year I celebrated 20 years with the Conservancy. I am grateful for the relationships I have formed with all of you. Your passion, commitment and support to our mission and vision prevails.

As we head into our 30th year, we begin the planning of exciting endeavors. We will add agriculture in our community services. The Conservancy secured 16 acres at the western "Strawberry Fields" off Manchester Avenue for future agricultural and open space lands. Lagoon Restoration will soon be under way, with new trail connections and a railroad undercrossing. We'll also begin the restoration of Harbaugh Seaside Trails next year. These initiatives will coincide with community open houses. Let's build the future together.

I am humbled by the support you have given me (us) these last 29 years. See you on the trails!  
—With gratitude, Doug Gibson



## Berry-Licious Winter Beauty

The summer clusters of small white flowers are attractive on toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*). But it is best known for bright red berries, which are conspicuous from November through winter. The berries are prized by wildlife and often disappear rapidly. Toyon is also called Christmas berry and California holly. It's popularly believed that the large stands of toyon in Hollywood gave that town its name.

Toyon is a large, native evergreen shrub or small tree found throughout California below 4,000 feet, but only slightly beyond the state boundary. It is a frequent component of chaparral, often in canyons and north facing slopes. It is also found in coastal sage scrub. Here in the reserve, toyon is widely distributed in both sage scrub and chaparral. After a fire, toyon resprouts vigorously from the root crown; survival of seeds, however, is poor.

Native Americans usually roasted or boiled the berries to remove the bitter taste, and sometimes they were dried for future cooking. Early settlers cooked berries into pies and custards and fermented them into a cider.

*This article is adapted from the Guide to Plants of the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve, online at [SanElijo.org/PlantGuide](http://SanElijo.org/PlantGuide).*

In the 1920s, extensive harvest of toyon for holiday decor threatened the plant populations and inspired a law prohibiting collection from public lands.

## Sprouting A School Garden



Little hands planted little plants. On a sunny fall morning, 24 fifth-graders at Central Elementary teamed up with the conservancy to install a native plant garden at their school in Escondido. Everyone was ready to dig in, but working the parched and root-bound soil was not easy.

Side-by-side, boys and girls shoveled dirt. Sweating was fun! We planted 21 species of native plants—57 different plants—that included: Douglas iris, deer grass, ceanothus, wild strawberry, manzanita and yarrow. In two hours we created a 675-square foot garden.

"I feel like a planting champion!" a student shared, "and can't wait to show my friends the garden. I hope it attracts lots of butterflies!" Another student mentioned that she couldn't wait to share with her grandmother that she had planted a wild strawberry plant, just like the one growing in their backyard.

Their teacher, Debi Iannizzotto, will use the garden as a science center to explore subjects in water conservation and drought, and native plants and pollinators. Tara Fuad, Conservancy Education Director reflected, "It's all about partnerships and bringing more than just a field trip opportunity. By having this native garden on site, students can practice conservation actions at school, every day." We thank the Escondido Charitable Foundation for supporting this garden initiative. (See cover photo).



## Did You Know?

The fragrant blossoms of ceanothus attract a variety of important pollinators. Shrubs buzz and hum with insects.

# EVENTS

## On the Horizon



### Winter Birding Series

Jan 7 | Feb 18 | Mar 18  
Members \$5 (\$12 series)  
Public \$10 (\$24 series)

Join us at the beach and on the trails during winter bird migration. In January's **Beach Birds Tour** we'll look for Sanderlings, Semipalmated Plovers, and Western Sandpipers at Cardiff State Beach. The **Low Tide Visitors Tour** in February explores shorebirds in the mudflats—Willet, Whimbrel, and Marbled Godwit. Use your ears in the March **Birding by Sound Tour** to ID familiar calls not always visually recognized.

### Nature Photo Workshop

January 15      Members \$5 | Public \$10  
Seeking higher quality outdoor photography skills? Photojournalist Jac Flanders guides the return of our popular workshop and tour. Learn tips on how to capture the best moments in nature with wildlife and people in focus. Registration includes a complimentary entry to our #LoveYourLagoon Photo Contest.



### The Some Day Birds Book Launch

January 29      Free  
Adventures by the Book and author Sally J. Pla host a book launch reception and birding tour at the nature center. *The Some Day Birds* is Pla's debut novel. She described it as her "own neurodiverse heart-gift to kids who are different ... It's about self-acceptance, about learning how to feel more at ease in the world."

### Love Your Lagoon Fun Run

February 12      Members \$5 | Public \$10  
Join Conservancy Executive Director Doug Gibson for a fun run through the lagoon. He's our expert trail runner and will show you his favorite routes. You can choose your distance with 3-mile and 5-mile options. Sweeten your inspiration with Valentine's Day treats post-run.



### Wildflowers Workshop

March 4–May 20      Members \$60 | Public \$90  
Want to know more about local flora? Plant lovers can learn how to identify wildflower family relationships and discover the natural quirks of these sometimes cryptic plants. Meets 2 Saturdays monthly with classroom and guided tours, led by Elizabeth Venrick, PhD, conservancy board member and author of the online *Guide to Plants of San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve*.

Register [SanElijo.org/Events](https://SanElijo.org/Events)



# Keep Touring

Guided Tours  
First & Last Saturdays



## Family Discovery Days *Free*

### Wings Over Wetlands

January 22

It's all about the birds—our residents and migratory visitors. Children can enjoy bird-themed crafts, nature hikes, bird watching, and live animal interactions.



### Lagoon In Bloom



March 26

Join the spring festival about nature's renewal through hikes and arts and crafts, with a spotlight on baby lagoon animals, insects and wildflowers.

### Beautiful Butterflies Tour

April 9 Members \$5 | Public \$10

Fly freely, monarch butterflies! Guest experts from The Butterfly Farms present a show and tell about important butterflies, with a special release of their emerged monarchs. We'll tour the trails for sightings of fluttering, fanciful pollinators of San Elijo Lagoon.



### Earth Day Detectives

Earth Day, April 22 Members \$5 | Public \$10

Investigate the many mysteries of the lagoon in a nature-themed scavenger hunt. Using our senses, we'll search for jumping fish, smell fragrant plants, listen for buzzing bees, touch soft leaves of sagebrush, and taste pickleweed. Earth Day Detectives can learn ways to protect our natural places, every day of the year.

## Volunteer

### Roll Up The Sleeves

Jan 21 | Feb 18 | Mar 18 | Apr 22

The Santa Carina restoration area was a lima bean farm in the early 20th-century. As we restore this area, come out and help install native plants that have grown in our nursery. Join us on Earth Day, April 22, in the annual Creek to Bay Cleanup with I Love a Clean San Diego at Annie's Canyon Trail. Volunteers can help remove graffiti, debris and invasive plants. Register: [SanElijo.org/LagoonPlatoon](http://SanElijo.org/LagoonPlatoon)



### Have Time Wednesday Mornings?

Lagoon Platoon stewards work behind the scenes to prepare and restore native habitat sites—volunteers always welcome.

### Family Fun Days *Free*

Jan 1 | Feb 5 | Mar 5 | Apr 5

Winter Family Fun Days explores the fascinating world of birds—from their long journeys—to the ways they move and adapt with the air, lands and waters they live in, or visit for winter. In spring, we'll celebrate nature's renewal. Programs include interactive tours and arts/crafts.

**YOU**  
make a difference

# Partners



Our *Living Watershed* serves students in grades 3–5 in four Escondido schools with demonstrated need. Our goals are: to instill a lifelong conservation ethic among grade school youth; to develop education skills among volunteer naturalists and partner teachers; and to protect the Escondido Creek watershed.

## Giving to Future Leaders UnionBank

Environmental literacy means having the knowledge and confidence that is necessary for decision-making and stewardship. That's important to Union Bank Foundation, a dedicated supporter of Our Living Watershed. Students explore the lagoon and its watershed in consecutive visits, building upon each experience year-to-year. Corporate members, like Union Bank, help these kids shine with inspiration for embracing fresh air, clean water, and open spaces.

## Nationally Recognized Success

We thank U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for their support in school programs—we are one of only 30 awarded national grants. “EPA is very excited to present a two-year \$90,000 Environmental Education Grant,” said Adrienne Priselac, manager, USEPA Pacific Southwest Regional Office. “Through classroom lessons, naturalist-led field trips, writing and art activities, and professional development for teachers, the project will help foster a lifelong conservation ethic among grade school children. We hope that these hands-on learning opportunities and extra classroom resources will inspire our youth to value and protect local wetland and coastal resources for generations to come.”

We value our partners: Central and Felicita Elementary Schools in Escondido, California Coastal Commission, California State Coastal Conservancy, San Diego Gas & Electric, and The Escondido Charitable Foundation, an affiliate of The San Diego Foundation for their grant letters of support. Together, we are all about changing lives, one footstep at a time here at San Elijo Lagoon.



Your Year-End *Gift* Builds the Future: [SanElijo.org/Giving](https://SanElijo.org/Giving)

# Photo Contest

#loveyourlagoon

How do you love your lagoon? Share all the ways you celebrate your local wetland. Photo contest is open to all ages and levels (smartphone selfies included) and begins January 1.

Here's how to enter: [SanElijo.org/PhotoContest](http://SanElijo.org/PhotoContest)

## In Their Own Words | Backyard Supporters



The Rios trailhead is an example of community-supported brilliance. **Seaweeders of Solana Beach Garden Club** volunteers planted 56 native plants with the conservancy's habitat team. Club members Karin Esser and Irina Gronborg (they initiated the project) have walked these trails since the 1970s. Karin reflected, "Today, the trails are better designed and the native plants are even more bountiful than when we first discovered this peaceful place. We were delighted that both the conservancy and the City of Solana Beach, too, were interested in this project, and that the city took the initiative to design and build the stone sitting area."

### Solana Beach Garden Club



The **Coastal Community Foundation's Solana Beach Fund** supports the improvement of lands at Rios Trail, Harbaugh Seaside Trails, and in the east basin. "The founding members of the Solana Beach Fund value connecting residents to community needs through intergenerational involvement, community building, and encouraging service," said Laura Fleming, representing the club's stated support. "The conservancy's Citizens Restoring Coastal Habitat program does all of these things while beautifying our town and building a stronger connection between our citizens and the natural world."

### Coastal Community Foundation



Our native plant nursery is thriving, thanks to **Rancho Santa Fe Garden Club**. "The Club started 90 years ago because a small group of families in the area wanted to further the advancement of gardening and landscaping the Ranch, which was then three years old," said Erin Browne, Executive Director. "We honor the original mission of the organization today by connecting our community to the opportunities to advance the charitable horticulture and conservation projects in the Ranch and surrounding communities."

### Rancho Santa Fe Garden Club



Rich Risner of **Grounded** is donating his time and expertise as a landscape architect to the conservancy. Rich helps design trails, public gathering spaces and other outdoor areas. "As a landscape architect I balance environmental protection with public access and aesthetics," he said. "I support the conservancy because I believe it is important to preserve and protect spaces like San Elijo Lagoon."

### Grounded Modern Landscape Architecture



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