

The Island Insider

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A Return To The Channel Islands...

One of the most common questions I receive from our supporters is, “will CIR have any island volunteer projects in the future?” Many of our supporters remember the years we worked on Anacapa and San Nicolas Islands, and some remember when we held monthly trips to Santa Cruz Island, starting 20 years ago. In fact, CIR has worked on all eight of the Channel Islands at one time or another. Newer members may know us more for our work at mainland sites, like the Carpinteria Salt Marsh, the San Marcos Foothills and in the Los Padres National Forest in the Santa Ynez and Sisquoc Rivers. Also, CIR works in many areas across three counties on restoration projects that require the skills of our staff, and are not appropriate for volunteers, including at the Ballona wetlands in Los Angeles, the Angeles National Forest and as far north as Orcutt.

The answer to the question about the islands is a most definite “yes” and we are currently working with various agencies to plan restoration and education projects on the Channel Islands. This involves complicated planning that includes expanding our own capacity to raise grant funding, so that we can not only lead habitat restoration work, but also raise the necessary funding to do that work. Although “Channel Islands” is part of our name, we have from the beginning of our existence sought to work not only on the islands, but also in important natural areas on the adjacent mainland. Even so, we all miss working on the fantastic islands, and we were delighted to lead an educational trip for 100 people to Santa Rosa Island in September. Projects and places come and go, but our heart is always with the Channel Islands, so look for opportunities to join us there coming up in the future.

Ken Owen

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

& the Channel Islands Restoration Team



A white-tailed Kite flies on the West Mesa of the San Marcos Foothills. The Foothills were saved by the community from further development in June 2021.

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CIR Board President Cindy Kimmick stands with Project Managers Doug Morgan and Holly Wright near Cavern Point Vista on the east end of Santa Cruz Island during a recent educational trip.

Work Continues To Save Local Habitat



State Senator Monique Limon and Assemblymember Steve Bennet pose with CIR Executive Director Ken Owen and other members of the CIR board by a symbolic check at the San Marcos Foothills. Both state representatives worked hard to provide the Foothills Forever campaign \$3,000,000 to pay back loans used to save the West Mesa from development.

We have much to celebrate after an extraordinary 2021, a year in which our community banded together to save the West Mesa of the San Marcos Foothills from development. The campaign's success means that Channel Islands Restoration is now responsible for restoring the habitat of rare birds and native plants on the West Mesa. Additionally, the campaign ensures the land is available to the public forever. We take this work seriously, as we know the cultural and historical significance this land holds for our indigenous neighbors and those who recreate in the area.

CIR continues to protect and restore natural habitats across California. We educate the public about these lands and the Channel Islands so that people can enjoy them for generations. We have big plans and ideas for furthering our mission in 2022 and beyond, but these plans and dreams can only come to fruition with your support.

We are thrilled to share our plans with you throughout December, and we invite you to partner with us as our work continues. Keep an eye on our social media accounts and check your inboxes for more information coming soon. Thank you for your past support. With your ongoing support, we're looking forward to building a very robust future. For more information be sure to watch our [end of year kickoff video here](https://bit.ly/cirkickoff) or visit <https://bit.ly/cirkickoff>



Ken Owen
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
& the Channel Islands Restoration Team

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Thank You To Our Amazing Community

Island Fox (\$1000+)

Beryl Feller • Jessica Goldstein • Beryl Feller • Bill Burke • Christine Wong and Prince Rupert • Christopher Reed • Cindy Kimmick • Darlene and Sam Chirman • Dennis Houghton • Diane Quinn • Doug Campbell • Elaine Sweet • Frances Hellman & Warren Breslau • Greg Giloth • Hank and Mari Mitchel • Irene Gilgoff • Jeffrey Light • Jessica Goldstein • Joel Shefflin • John Benjamin • John Woodard • Dave Anderson • Julie Kummel • Karen Telleen-Lawton • Kathi Backus • Linda Ullman • Mark and Kathi Connally • Michael and Diane Wondolowski • Peter Borneman • Phil White • Richard Powell

Island Ironwood (\$500+)

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Coastal Goldenbush (\$100+)

Barbara Barker • Duncan Abbott • Edward Savage • John Broberg • Kathi Backus • Louis Andaloro • Nancy Nazario • Nancy Rothenberg • Richard and Peggy Tarnutzer • Ronald Burke • Susan Bartz • Andrew Kirmse • Anne Bittner • Anthony Knight • Betsy Vanleit • Bob Simon • C. Page Hiller-Adams • Catherine Brennan • Cathy Sternstein • Charles Jones • Charles McLaughlin • Charlotte Mountain • Christina Kerndal • Christopher Williams • Christopher Hamma • Constance Rutherford • Dan Segna • David & Lynn Dewey • David Graber • Doreen Edwards • Doug Wilson • Douglas Wilson • Elise Minichiello • Gloria Hall • Grace Hoffman • Gregory Archbald • Gregory Hytopoulos • Ivana Grahovac • James King • Jamie Lowry • Janet Burki • Janna Gaston • Jeff Phillips • Jennifer Lentz • Jennifer Smith • Jerami Prendiville • Jim Balsitis • Joan Burns • Joel Fithian • Jose Pineda • Judith Oberlander • Kathryn Field • Keri Collins • Kristen Klitgaard • Layne Wheeler • Leah Kuritzky • Leslie Edgerton • Lindsay Martinez • Lorie Bartron • Lorraine Jones • Louise Ratliff • Luke Henningsen • Marianne Henry • Matthew Jewel • Maxine Chadwick • Melissa Riparetti-Stepien • Michael Brundage • Mieke Miller • Myles Blanton • Paul Atkinson • R Craig Percy • Richard Finn • Robert Black • Robert Burtness • Ronald Burke • Ronald Whitney • Russell Goff • Russell Riley • Sally Baker • Sandra Oglesby • Sarah Raskin • Steven Bachman • Sue Mellor • Susan Parker • Theresa Reilly • Thomas Majich • Tracey Willfong • Victoria Shaw • Walter Ailes • Wayne Ferren Jr. • John Johnson



Island Scrub Jay (\$40+)

Nancy Callahan • Christopher Leslie • Greg Sweet • John Kuizenga • Cathy Karol-Crowther • Arthur Hoyle • Molly Troup • Owen Duncan • Sue Masters • Kris and Alex Brodie • Ben Kuo • Carl Pecevich • Eric Werner • Matthew Meyers • Keith Eshelman • Vale Laraia Frasch • Donald Jack • Jamie Thompson • Julie Stark • Lyndal Laughrin • Sabina Thomas • Scott Orlosky • William Dinino • Anthony Gomez • Pamela Petersen • Lisa Acree • Morgan Coffey • Oscar Martinez • Sheri Linden • David Levasheff • Jorgia Bordofsky • Vanessa Deluca • Christopher Tull • Dennis Arguelles • Fiona Reidy • Sally Tannenbaum • Daniel Johnson • Daryn Dodge • Mardi Caruso • Geoffrey Coster • Kevin Mallon • Linda Dye • Linda Stirling • Nancy Tobin • Sheila Stevens • Steve Alnwick • Christine Tran • Patrick Crooks • Jerry Mitcham • Mardi Caruso • Janice Levasheff • Myra Masiel Zamora

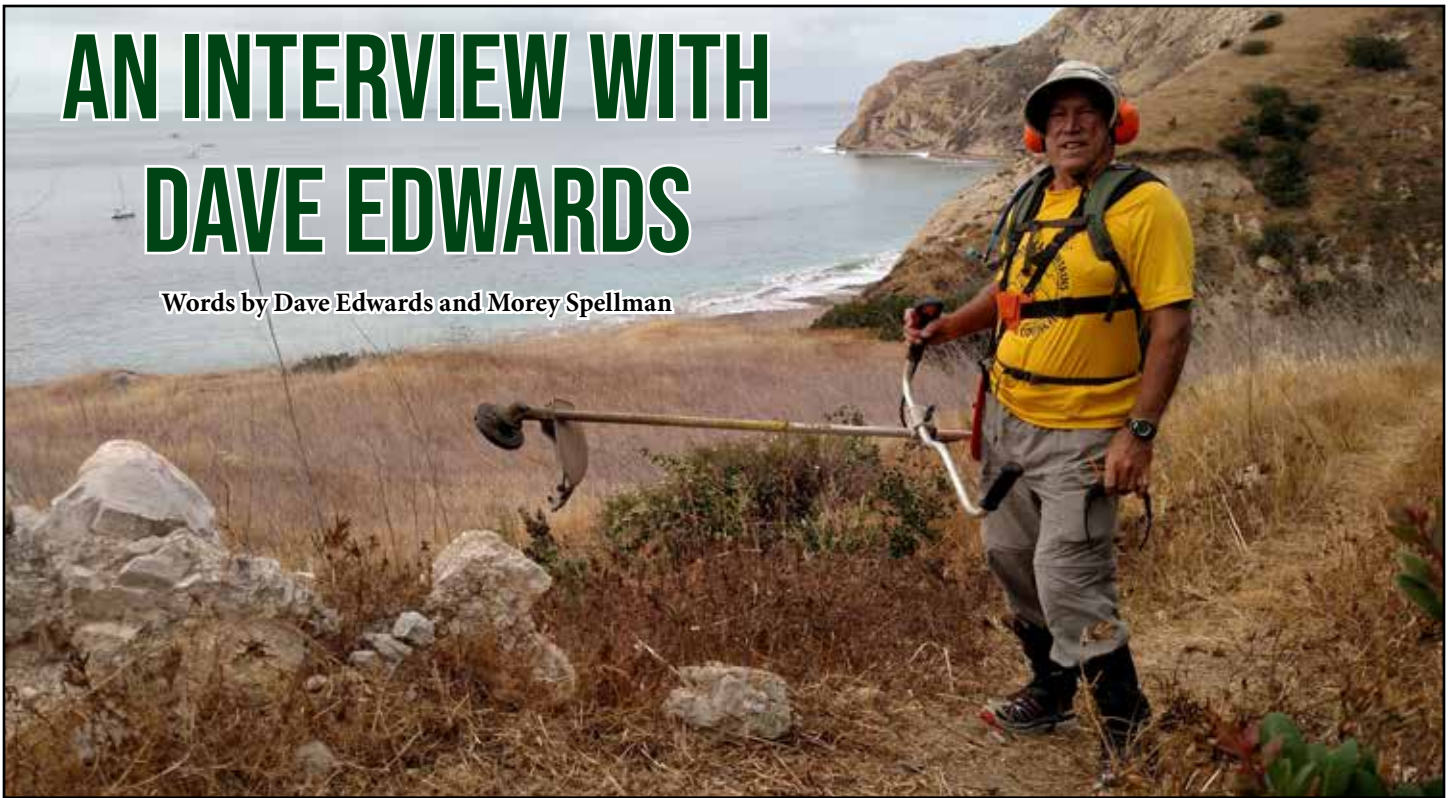


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In addition to supporting habitat restoration, your donation will give you access to tiers of donor benefits, which include invitations to private events, merchandise, virtual talks, and of course our sincere gratitude.

AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVE EDWARDS

Words by Dave Edwards and Morey Spellman



Dave Edwards stands ready to cut invasive weeds on Santa Cruz Island. Dave is a model champion for habitat restoration and trail work.

One gets the sense that Dave Edwards is a man on a conservation mission. Having volunteered with Channel Islands Restoration since 2007 and served as a board member since 2008, Dave has contributed hundreds of hours and led dozens of trips to the islands in the name of habitat restoration, trail maintenance and invasive species control. His work ethic and charming character have contributed to his close involvement with our organization, and he has become a trusted figure in the island and mainland community. Although Dave will be leaving the board this year, his commitment to CIR will not falter and he seems more determined than ever to continue his work. We interviewed Dave to recognize his contributions over the years for the environment and our community.

Dave was born in Missouri, having spent his early years living in the Ozark Mountains and was always exposed to the outdoors. Dave recalls that his family moved to north Texas where he went to high school and college, had a stint in the Marine Corps and retired from the Navy base at Port Hueneme where he provided logistical support for the Navy Seabees.

When his career at Port Hueneme was over, Dave had more time to devote to the outdoors and landed on environmental volunteer work as a focus of his attention. Coincidentally, Dave's first volunteer experience was with Channel Islands Restoration, joining primarily to have "more opportunities to visit the Channel Islands and help restore native plant habitation." Dave first accompanied CIR to Santa Cruz Island in February of 2007 to help eradicate hundreds of invasive eucalyptus trees in The Nature Conservancy's central valley.

Having made numerous trips to Santa Cruz Island since 1987, mostly on the eastern end, he couldn't pass up an opportunity to visit the TNC side of the island which is off-limits to most visitors.

From there, Dave was hooked on restoration. He describes how "rewarding trail work is knowing that our work makes the trails safer and more accessible to hikers, bikers and equestrians. Seeing what the trails look like before and after we clear them gives me a great deal of satisfaction. Invasive plants choke our trails in many areas and their removal allows for more native plants to take their place."

Dave's work quickly made him a sought-after volunteer and "after about 4 or 5 volunteer trips to Santa Cruz Island to eradicate eucalyptus and Vinca major, he was persuaded to join the board." Dave recalls how "this was

sometime during 2008. At that time CIR was sort of in its infancy and joining the board meant that I would be able to go to the islands more frequently. Since I was retired and I loved the outdoors, what a better way to spend my time.”

Dave quickly became a member of the “All Eight Club” someone who had stepped foot on each of the eight Channel Islands. He says his experiences gave him “the opportunity to appreciate all of the islands and their uniqueness. It’s always an adventure for me to set foot on any of the islands. I think most people feel that way.”

However, when it comes to memorable trips, Dave cites the two Navy controlled islands as “probably among the most memorable because of their remote locations and [visiting them is] an adventure that few volunteers ever get to experience. The work on San Clemente Island involved eradicating ice plant and fennel and, although it was very hard work, was fun and enjoyable.”

Dave helped design and build the native plant nursery on San Nicolas Island which was used to grow thousands of native plants from seeds collected from the island. “The Department of the Navy has a responsibility to the environment which they take very seriously, and I was able to help in a very small way in performing restoration work.” Dave also mentioned that being on Santa Cruz Island is always incredible as it “gives one a

feeling of going back in time.”

His responsibilities within Channel Islands Restoration would continue to grow as a trip leader, educational guide, volunteer, and trail expert. His approach to tasks at hand all “require getting a crew together, coordinating the appropriate tools, and being aware of safety protocols. Each task is very different, but always coming in with a positive outcome is the goal.” Dave would become “part of the team that built the native plant shade house nurseries on San Nicolas and Anacapa islands, in Camarillo, and refurbished the existing one at the Greenwell Preserve in Summerland.”

Ultimately, he said the fruits of his labors are always rewarding regardless of the project. Dave mentions how “restoring the TNC’s Diablo Peak trail with a Sierra Club crew provided great views of the island and was a fun experience. I and others also led a Sierra Club crew cutting in the Chapel trail at the Main Ranch of TNC. Working on all these trails is very enjoyable for those who love the outdoors.” He strongly encourages “others who love the great outdoors to spend a little of their time doing volunteer trail work. Without volunteers the trails would soon become overgrown and impassable.”

Dave is also a key part of the Santa Monica Trails Council and explained that “the Santa Monica Mountains encompass five or so state parks from Point Mugu to



Dave Edwards helping to restore TNC’s Diablo Peak trail on Santa Cruz Island in June 2009 with the Sierra Club.

Will Rogers State Historic Park in Santa Monica and relies almost entirely on volunteers to maintain its trails.”

He says although he will no longer be a board member of Channel Islands Restoration his “connection with CIR will not change in any way and that he will “continue

to work with CIR in whatever capacity is appropriate.” Dave is looking forward to “more days outdoors, helping to restore, maintain and perhaps create trails.” In his own words, he hopes “to be able to continue to work outdoors as long as I am capable” and so far, it looks as if his enthusiasm for restoration and conservation hasn’t wavered.



Seen here in 2009. Dave helped construct and build the Camarillo nursery with Channel Islands Restoration.



Dave’s great personality is never far from sight as he looks for local natives on San Clemente Island. Photos provided by Dave Edwards.

The Mystery of The Western Meadowlark



Elihu Gevirtz
Senior Ecologist

A deceased Western Meadow Lark on the San Marcos Foothills in May 2021. In coastal California, the Western Meadow Lark breeding population has declined every year over the past 50 years.

Introduction

A few years ago, while working on a CIR habitat restoration project on San Nicolas Island, I noticed that the songs of Western Meadowlarks that I was hearing were noticeably different than those of their counterparts on the mainland (Gevirtz personal observations 2018, 2019). This led me to wonder whether the different songs are distinct local dialects or indicators of distinct subspecies.

Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*) is one of the most abundant and widely distributed grassland birds, inhabiting open grasslands of the Northern Great Plains to the shore of the Pacific Ocean, and from sea level to mountain meadows (Davis and Lanyon 2008). However, the number of western meadowlarks is declining rapidly. In 1966, there were an estimated 57 million western meadowlarks in North America, but now the population is estimated to be only 30 million birds (Sauer et al. 2017). This represents a nearly 50 percent reduction in the population.

Although the Western Meadowlark was known to explorers Lewis and Clark, John James Audubon observed that Western Meadowlark had been overlooked as a distinct species, separate from Eastern Meadowlark, and gave the bird its Latin name (*Sturnella neglecta*) as it had been “neglected.” His report (Audubon 1844) of a meadowlark west of the Mississippi similar in appearance but differing in voice from Eastern Meadowlark (*S. magna*) triggered a debate over whether these were separate species that lasted for another century (Davis and Lanyon 2008).

Population Numbers and Trends

In coastal California, the breeding population has declined every year over the past 50 years (Sauer et al. 2017). The



Interns gather on Santa Cruz Island in July 2021 to help observe if Western Meadowlark populations on each island have distinct song repertoires that are distinct from those of their mainland counterparts and from repertoires of populations on other islands.

same is true in Santa Barbara County, the meadowlark population has also declined dramatically. On the south coast of Santa Barbara County, meadowlarks no longer breed here, but they still occupy grasslands in fall and winter on the San Marcos Foothills and a few other locations. On the Gaviota Coast, west of Goleta, meadowlarks are still present but are very uncommon and irregular breeders (Lehman 2020). They breed on San Miguel, Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz, Anacapa and Santa Barbara Islands (Collins and Jones 2015) and probably breed on San Nicolas and Catalina Islands.

We do not know whether Western Meadowlarks travel across the ocean between the mainland and the Channel Islands; nor do we know whether they travel from island to island (Paul Collins, pers. communication 2020). It may be that each island supports a population that has its own repertoire of songs. It may also be that each island population supports a distinct population of this species and that distinct song repertoires are indicators of distinct subspecies.

Western Meadowlark Singing

Western Meadowlark males sing on breeding grounds from their time of arrival in spring through the summer (Lanyon 1957). They have a complex melodious primary song that consists of 2 phrases: an initial series of 1–6 rather pure whistles, and a terminal phrase of 1–5 gurgling, steep slope elements. Males typically sing from perches, frequently along the perimeter of their territories, though they may also sing from the ground or from perches within their territories (Davis and Lanyon 2008).

Study Objectives and Questions

Funded in part by the UCSB Associated Students Coastal Fund and in part by CIR, I am conducting a study of Western Meadowlark songs on the Channel Islands and on the mainland of southern California. The hypothesis is that Western Meadowlark populations on each island have song repertoires that are distinct from those of their

mainland counterparts and from repertoires of populations on other islands.

I suspect that distinct song repertoires may suggest that each island supports its own distinct population of Western Meadowlark, and they don't travel from island to island or from island to mainland. I suspect that the island populations are isolated from each other and from the mainland population and that there may be one or more subspecies that have not been recognized.

Field Methods and Analysis

In summer 2021, I was assisted by three UCSB student interns and one UCLA intern who were a big help to me as it's often good to have more than one observer since different people observe different things. Recordings of songs were made using a microphone and sound recorder.

We recorded songs on the Gaviota coast, on the edges of the Santa Maria Valley, on the Sierra Madre potrereros, and on the Chimineas Ranch near the Carrizo Plain, and on Santa Rosa Island. Although we traveled to Santa Cruz Island in July, we did not find any singing. Next year, if I can find funding, I will record at additional island and mainland locations. Soon, I will begin analysis of the songs using software called Raven.

We did not collect enough recordings to make any conclusions, so additional recordings are necessary. Eventually, I hope to have enough songs to produce a paper that will document the results and present additional questions.

Funding Needed for Future Work

Funding is needed to support additional research.

If you can support this project, please contact me at eliu@cirweb.org.



A live Meadowlark sings. Western Meadowlark males sing on breeding grounds. Photos by Elihu Gevirtz and Creative Commons License.

REIN Teen Tours Trip & Future Educational Trips

Cindy Kimmick
Board President

While in the midst of the Foothills Forever campaign last spring, CIR was approached by Rein Teen Tours about providing service opportunities for high school students over four weeks beginning in late June. We had worked with students from Rein Teen before on island trips, so we were happy to expand our relationship with them.

Preliminary discussions were prolonged, as we had to warn Rein Teen that many of our project locations were not allowing volunteers due to COVID-19, despite hoping to open to volunteer work “soon.”

Setting up a schedule was challenging, with UCSB and Channel Islands National Park (with two and three prospective service sites) and the Santa Barbara Zoo warning us that they did not know exactly when they would be able to utilize volunteers. Once Rein Teen agreed that the island trips did not have to include service work, I was able to move forward and start scheduling.

Designing a service program before volunteer service work was approved meant I had to come up with a

schedule with various fallback plans to allow us service options if some of the sites were not available due to COVID. The jigsaw was further complicated due to a lack of flexibility and Rein Teen’s need to schedule buses and other activities for their students.

In what is probably the most logistically challenging education program CIR has organized to date, Rein Teen students worked from the newly saved San Marcos Foothills in Santa Barbara to Ventura, and of course, Santa Cruz Island. Projects ranged from island seed collection to invasive plant removal, to beach cleanups, to helping with solarization of invasive plants. Both the first and second group of students each visited seven different sites over two weeks, for a combined total of 11 different sites, including Scorpion Anchorage and Prisoner’s Harbor.

Although we were not able to perform service work at Prisoner’s Harbor, we surveyed the extensive trail work done by the Santa Monica Mountains Trail Council (SMMTC) on the Pelican Bay trail to see how the numerous wooden steps and other improvements were holding up. We were especially fortunate to have Dave Edwards along. Dave, who was then a CIR board



Students from REIN Teen Tours remove ice plant as part of their service opportunity at the UCSB North Campus Open Space.

member (and has just retired this month), described what the trail was like before and the logistics of back country trail work.

Whether you are familiar with the Pelican Bay trail or not, I encourage you to visit Prisoner's Harbor and check out the trail, preferably in the spring so you can experience the uniqueness of each watershed the trail crosses. Luckily, we were able to obtain approval to do service work at Scorpion Anchorage during Rein Teen's second session. The students collected island morning glory and buckwheat seeds while learning about the fragility of island bio-geography and endemic species and encountering island foxes and Island scrub-jays close up.

The students also enjoyed the days they were able to walk from their hotel to the UCSB North Campus Open Space project and didn't have to ride the bus to the service site. UCSB also provided the most amusing moment. At the safety orientation for removing sand bags from a completed solarization project, one of the students suddenly jumped back, then began poking around the sand bags where he had been working. I asked him what he'd seen. He replied "a spider." I asked what color it was. "Black, with a round body." I said it sounded like a black widow. The student jumped

back even further. "You have black widows here?" Yes, I said, and asked him if he had listened to the safety briefing (which, ten minutes previously, had covered what to do if you see a black widow or snake, as well as the standard tool safety). The student admitted he had not really listened, likening it to the safety presentation on an airplane, saying "You don't really need to listen because the plane isn't going to crash." Sadly, planes do crash, and the things we cover in our safety orientation are much more likely to happen than the plane crashing. Recounting this incident the following week to the new group of students resulted in a lot more attention being paid to the rest of the briefing.

CIR was also fortunate in being able to incorporate some staff training for those who work predominantly on the mainland by taking advantage of extra boat tickets to Scorpion, so we were able to prepare for returning to service work on the island.

We look forward to working with Rein Teen next year, now that we're more familiar with the program and schedule requirements. You can read about the Rein Teen 2022 summer service program "Protect the Environment" here: <https://www.reintents.com/summer-community-service/project-california/service-opportunities/#environment>



Ken Owen leads a discussion about geology on Gibraltar Road.



*Doug Morgan guides students on a walk of the San Marcos Foothills.
Photos by Cindy Kimmick and Morey Spellman*

The Foothills Wheel of Species

Laura Dell'anno
Community Member

This February, police arrested eight protesters who were peacefully standing and singing to prevent the development of the West Mesa. The people who showed up for days of sit-in and protest brought the threat to my attention. They felt a strong connection to the land, and it gave them the courage to block bulldozers. I had been walking the Foothills often for the sense of spaciousness they always give me.

The next time I visited, I saw coyotes, barn owls, a mountain king snake, and - what? Fifteen foot story-poles standing in the grassland, to show where the luxury houses would be built. Eight houses on 101 acres may sound small, but I knew from working in architecture, it would not just be



A closeup of the Foothills Forever wheel, displaying the multitude of species living at the Foothills.

houses. There would be grading, roads, drainage, utility trenches, power lines, defensible space, and fences along with them - lines of control and convenience cutting the landscape, breaking the network of plants and animals living there now. I felt angry and wanted to join the

effort to protect the land. Later I learned that it is as simple as handing out flyers and talking to people. Those face to face exchanges are one of the best ways to make a message felt. But, unacquainted with activism and outreach work, I went ahead and made things complicated.



Laura and friends take the wheel to downtown Santa Barbara to help in the fundraiser for the Foothills.

The San Marcos Foothills preserve has it's own website maintained by Channel Island Restoration. On it you can find a list of all the plant and animal life seen by human eyes at the preserve: slithering, scurrying, quietly sending down roots, prowling, soaring over, and generally getting their living off of the land. There are no doubt many that didn't make it on the list.

The number of species surprised me. To my eye, the land looked like glorious - but uniform - fields of grasses and the occasional oak tree. I thought, people should see the quantity and diversity of life. If they saw all the forms of life that will be lost, they might be surprised into action too. So I tried to design the

most eye-catching poster possible - big enough to fill a person's entire vision, showing every species that lives at the Foothills.

The names fit well in five concentric rings - Two hundred seventy seven plants and one hundred twenty eight birds on the two outer rings, and a total of fifty three mammals, reptiles and pollinating insects populated the three inner rings. Once everything fit in the shape of a wheel, the idea of spinning it came to mind.

The base of a belt sander, a donated bike wheel from Bici Centro, and pipe fittings assembled to make a sturdy base and stem. A shellacked MDF disc and pegs fixed around the circumference completed the wheel. The poster now had a high contrast optical illusion in the center that, when spun, spiraled inward or outward. A three foot diameter hypnotic sunflower, with every species on a petal, had solidified from spare parts, time pressure and inspiration.

Eager to get the wheel in front of the public before the fundraising deadline, I joined Margie Bushman, Wes Roe & Matt Makana who had been getting the word out at local farmers markets. The wheel also traveled to Hendry's Beach, the Harbor, and events at local breweries.

Out on the street, the wheel took on a life of its own. The usual interaction went more or less like this - You are walking along and see this big, curious, click-clacking wheel. You get closer and learn that the multitude of colors represent all of the species living at the Foothills. You're invited to give it a hearty spin. A flapper arrow bounces along the pegs, slowing the wheel, eventually settling on one of the hundreds of sections. You follow the arrow up through the rings and discover the five species the forces of Fate and Probability have matched you up with that day. For example, you may spin and discover -

Purple Needlegrass, Cedar Waxwing, Mountain Lion, California Whiptail, and Mourning Cloak Butterfly. or, California Blackberry, Caspian Tern, Pocket Gopher, Fence Lizard and Buckeye Butterfly or perhaps, Mountain Mahogany, Cooper's Hawk, Big Brown Bat, Alligator Lizard and Anise Swallowtail Butterfly.

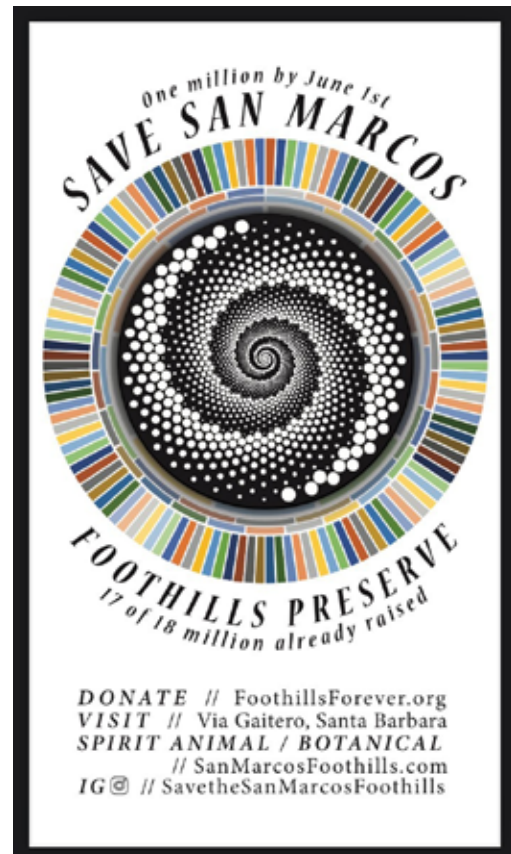
You take the name of the plant or animal you feel the most affinity with written on a card, to look up later on the website, or look for on the land. People who had never heard of the Foothills before suddenly wanted to help, because they felt associated, curious and protective of a particular bird, or a

plant. Kids' faces lit up when we handed them a card and announced, "You are now the caretaker of the Kestrel - or Toyon, Gray Fox, Golden Yarrow. They wanted to go to the Foothills and look for their match.

Everyone wanted to know how the rings of species related to each other. Did the arrangement of the insects have anything to do with the reptiles? I had to tell them it was all I could do to get them on the poster in time. But the artwork sparked a lot of questions.

The value and beauty of an intact ecology I think, can be felt. How could someone with no relation to the Foothills sense a little bit of that? Being matched with one part of the whole, by way of unlikely chance, made the abstract real, and made a great introduction. Now they had a something to look for, and a story to tell.

What started as a way to focus attention on the Foothills, ended up linking hundreds of people to animal and plant species, and making a web of personal connections to the land. I am elated and grateful knowing that this recent story started with a few people's strong connection to the Foothills, and due to so many people's action, ended with success!



Photos by Blake Herpst, Wheel Design and Card By Laura Dellanno

CIR'S FIRST ANNUAL AUTUMN EQUINOX CRUISE

An Educational Expedition To Santa Rosa Island

Morey Spellman
Marketing Manager

On September 23rd, 2021, Channel Islands Restoration made a triumphant return to Santa Rosa Island alongside nearly one hundred guests! The trip, an educational expedition for supporters of our environmental nonprofit, was a major milestone that marked the renewal of in-person education and expanded opportunities for Channel Islands Restoration community members to participate once again in events with like-minded friends and supporters.

Held in celebration of the September 22nd equinox, the Autumn Equinox Cruise was our first education only island trip, with seven distinct island adventures to choose from, each led by a different scientific expert or experienced field guide. Trip leaders incorporated a range of knowledge into their programs, from descriptions of island ecology and geology to teaching about the anthropology and history of Santa Rosa Island and the Channel Islands.



A guest walks across Water Canyon during our recent visit to Santa Rosa Island.

At 84 square miles, Santa Rosa Island is the second largest Channel Island. It is remote, wild, and windswept, located 40 nautical miles from Ventura Harbor, the point of departure for our Autumn Equinox Cruise. In terms of topography, sandy white beaches and crumbling cliffs slowly transition into Soledad Peak, the island's highest point at 1,589 feet. Although the island is home to only three native mammal

inhabitants (the island fox, the island spotted skunk, and the island deer mouse) it hosts over five hundred plant species and hundreds of bird species.

The original inhabitants of Santa Rosa Island were the Island Chumash, who may have lived on the island as far back as 13,000 years ago and whose present-day descendants remain integral to many of the historical and cultural

aspects of the island to this day. Since the native Chumash first called the island home, Santa Rosa Island has seen various groups play a part in shaping the land for better or for worse. In 1986, the National Park Service took Santa Rosa Island under its wing to ensure its increased federal protection and conservation.

With the help of Island Packers, we

traveled across the Santa Barbara Channel to this incredible destination. Guests were treated to views of the southern side of Santa Cruz Island before embarking from the boat onto Santa Rosa Island and splitting into their respective programs. Steve Junak, a respected researcher, author, and expert on the flora of the islands of California, led guests on a tour of Cherry Canyon for a unique curated botanical experience.

Dave Edwards, the Trail Crew Coordinator for the Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council, and recently retired CIR board member, led a walk to the incredible Torrey Pines Grove. Santa Rosa Island is one of only two places that Torrey Pines exist in the world. This extremely rare species of pine tree stands 26-56 ft tall, alone on an isolated patch of coast. Exposure to the elements have twisted these trees into beautiful shapes that sparked the imagination of our guests and provided incredible photographic opportunities.

Other island programs for the day included a tour with anthropologist Jennifer Perry. Jennifer, an Associate Professor of Anthropology at Cal State Channel Islands, oversees CSUCI's Santa Rosa Island Research Station. Dr. Perry's program discussed the human history of Santa Rosa Island from earliest settlement to recent ranching. Focusing on the Bechers Bay area, Dr. Perry explained the significance of Santa Rosa Island over time.

Geologist Sabina Thomas a professor in the Earth and Planetary Science department at Santa Barbara City College, shared her insight with guests about the geologic history and seismic activities that went into shaping Santa Rosa Island and the Channel Islands of California.

On the trip back from Santa Rosa Island, there was one more surprise for our lucky visitors -- a visit to Painted Cave. Painted Cave is a sea cave on the north side of Santa Cruz Island and is the twelfth largest sea cave in the world and second largest in the United States, with an entrance over 130 feet high! As the sun set at our backs we watched in awe as our boat inched into the opening, our guests got a close up look at sea birds clinging to the cliffs and admire the shimmering multicolored rocks of Painted Cave.

Our adventure wound to a close as our vessel backed out of Painted Cave and headed for home, accompanied by groups of short-beaked common dolphins and plunge diving brown pelicans, providing a wonderful reminder of the extraordinary biodiversity and stunning vistas of the Channel Islands. We are excited to have shared a small portion of this special place with our guests. We plan to make the Autumn Equinox cruise an annual excursion and look forward to next year's trip to experience the uniqueness of this special archipelago.



Guests eat lunch at Water Canyon beach, carrying their day packs and enjoying the beautiful views.

Photos by Morey Spellman

Santa Clara River Arundo Removal Returns

Holly Wright
Project Manager

Channel Islands Restoration has been involved in Arundo removal in The Santa Clara River since 2015.

The Santa Clara River is one of the most dynamic river systems in Southern California. Its 1660 square mile watershed, includes parts of four Transverse Ranges: the Western Santa Ynez, Sierra Pelonas, North Santa Susana and Eastern San Gabriel mountains. Its main channel of the Santa Clara River begins in Acton in the San Gabriel mountains, then flows over 80 miles to the estuary at McGrath State Beach in Oxnard.

Two of its tributaries, the Sespe River and Piru Creek, are designated (in full or partially) as wild and scenic rivers and it is home to endangered species such as the Southwestern Pond Turtle and Least Bell's Vireo among others. Although it is one of the least altered rivers in Southern California, levees exist where the river flows through areas of significant urban development. Its groundwater is heavily relied upon as a natural resource for drinking water. Like all of California's waterways its stream flow is severely in drought and jeopardy.

“Despite its local and regional ecological importance, the lower Santa Clara River is threatened by invasive

non-native vegetation, intense levee building, poor water quality, conversion from agriculture to urban land uses and increasing development in the floodplain. In 2005, American Rivers designated the Santa Clara River as one of the most threatened rivers in the nation” (The Nature Conservancy [TNC]).

One of the greatest threats to the river in both its stream flow, ecology and as a natural resource, is the invasive grass *Arundo donax* that is found from the headwaters to the ocean. *Arundo* is classed as one of the highest threats to California's riparian ecology from a non-native invasive species. At all life stages, *Arundo* is highly flammable and becomes a fire danger in riparian habitats unaccustomed to sustaining fire. It uses far more water than native vegetation and transpires three times the amount that native vegetation does and with a faster transpiration time.

Also known as giant reed, *Arundo* provides limited shade along bank edges compared to native trees such willow or cottonwood which results in warmer stream temperatures. This damages to the natural cooling aspect of riparian corridors which contribute to healthy climate conditions. The dense monoculture it creates also denatures habitat for native flora and fauna as well as damming and channelizing the dynamic alluvial washes and main stem



The Channel Islands Restoration Santa Clara River Arundo removal team!

of the river.

Channel Islands Restoration is working on *Arundo* Removal in 205 acres of the river and floodplain in Santa Paula for The Nature Conservancy. It is hard work in challenging conditions.

The riparian corridor is in peril but still has abundant vegetation, which includes dense poison oak. The *Arundo*, on average 20 ft tall and interwoven, has taken the overall vegetation density to a much higher and unnatural level.

Paths have first to be made to even move around much of the work area. This is the fourth major *Arundo* project that CIR has worked on since 2010 and

our experience with *Arundo* enables us to work very efficiently.

The work is given a worthy but serious complication by the bird nesting season from March to September when buffers are in place to protect nests or mating activity. CIR crews have an opportunity to grow many skills on this project ranging from the use of chainsaws to deep understanding of riparian ecological wildlife and hydrology systems which is needed to perform *Arundo* removal.

Progress is being made with *Arundo* removal along the river but there is much more to do. CIR is one of the experts in this field as well and enjoys taking on this important task!



Staying hydrated is one of the most vital parts of the job. Fresh Farmers Market watermelons for a quick snack, brought by Cade!



*The team uses chainsaws to free native trees and vegetation from *Arundo* monocultures.*

Photos by Holly Wright



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