

The Escondido Creek Conservancy



The Watershed Voice

Protecting The Escondido Creek Watershed Since 1991

President's Message



Steve Barker | President of TECC

A Whole Lot Of Changes Going On!

- This will be my last newsletter as TECC Board President.
- I'm moving after living in Elfin Forest for almost 30 years.
- The iconic dairies and egg ranches of Harmony Grove have been bulldozed to make way for 750 homes!

Got Your Attention? Here's The Skinny!

I'm not leaving the Board but I have termed out as President, and I'll be passing the lead next month to Kevin Barnard, who has agreed to serve as our next President. Kevin is not a new face to our members, as he has served on the Board in many capacities for several years and even did a stint as our Managing Director. He has a great passion for [TECC's](#) mission and creatively gets things done. He is going to be a great leader of TECC's next chapter.

I am moving from the house where Nona and I raised our kids and have lived for almost 30 years in Elfin Forest to a smaller home also in Elfin Forest where we hope to spend the next 30 years.

So this all means I've been cleaning, purging, and moving years of TECC files. Wading through 22 years of TECC annual plans and meeting minutes has been quite a labor, but it has also made me really proud of what we all, including you our members and donors, have achieved. With your help TECC has been actively involved in the preservation of a park area in Elfin Forest/Harmony Grove larger than Balboa Park!

We are far from done. We need your help to acquire the piece of land known as University Heights. This 502 acre property is an incredible recreation and conservation opportunity for the region. We are in discussions with several conservation investors as well as interested public entities, but they want to see a commitment of interest from our members and the community.

Your contributions do matter, large and small! Write us a check today and indicate that you want to designate the gift to preserve University Heights. Please do it today. We have only **until the end of the year** to secure this property and then it goes back on the market and one only has to look down the hill to Harmony Grove to understand the urgency to save this pristine landscape.

Because, yes it's true, the beautiful rural valley of Harmony Grove is being bulldozed to make way for Harmony Grove Village, another planned community of 750 suburban homes. **Help [TECC](#) save the last tracts for open space in the watershed for future generations.**

2012 Fall Issue



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Upcoming Events at the Interpretive Center for Your Calendar!

November 1st - December 31st, 2012
Exhibit: The Birds of Elfin Forest

Sunday, December 2nd, 2012 | 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.
Workshop: Build Your Own Owl Box

The Interpretive Center is located at:
[8833 Harmony Grove Road](#)
[Escondido, California 92029](#)

Birds Have Invaded the Interpretive Center

by Jeff Swenerton, Chair of the Education Committee
Communications Committee



What are the names of our local birds? How do I build an owl box? These and other questions are answered in our new exhibit on birds.

Local bird photographer and expert, Bert Kersey, has filled a large section of our walls with his photographs of the most common birds that we observe in our area. It is a great way to learn the names of the birds.

There has been a great deal of interest in owl boxes. In September Bert Kersey, Interpretive Center docent and bird authority Doug Nail, and TECC Board member Ron Forster conducted a very well attended owl box workshop. A number of people have requested a second workshop. It is scheduled for Sunday, December 2 at the Interpretive Center. Information is included in this newsletter.

The second section of the exhibit displays both a barn owl and a screech owl boxes and a number of amazing photographs of owls. Thanks to local residents JP Theberge and John Olsen for their photos. A number of mounted birds in cases surround the room that are on loan from Palomar Audubon Society.

Our bird exhibit is great for kids along with always popular Children's Science Lab and table of things to touch and feel. A recent young visitor commented, "This is really cool."

Thanks to the many talents of our docents and a partnership with San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy and the San Diego Zoo, we will be seeing over 800 students this year in our school programs that begins in January.

On our website you can explore our latest exhibit with our Gigapan high resolution picture of the interior of the Interpretive Center that allows you to see it in amazing detail. Go to <http://escondidocreek.org/interpretive-center/> and check it out <http://gigapan.com/gigapans/116149>.

The Interpretive Center is the result of a unique partnership of TECC and the Olivenhain Municipal Water District, as well as the on-going support of our talented docents, Ranger staff, and TECC volunteers. We are open most Thursdays – Sundays 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM. You can always call 760-632-4212 to confirm .

The Interpretive Center Program Receives Three Large Donations

by Jeff Swenerton, Chair of the Education Committee
Communications Committee



The Interpretive Center recently was awarded a \$20,000 anonymous grant and a \$10,000 grant from the Charles H. Stout Foundation to support the educational program at the Center. In addition, [TECC](#) in partnership with the San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy and the San Diego Zoo received grant funding from San Diego Gas and Electric for our third grade student program.

We also appreciate the donation of displayed insects from docent Marvin Valverde and Escondido resident Delcena Scott. TECC Board Member Ron Forster also donated a collection of over 30 well preserved animal skulls. These collections will be a valuable resource for our program.

TECC Receives a Special Recognition Award from Citizens Coordinate for Century 3 (C-3)



[TECC](#) was pleased to receive an award from C-3 to recognize their remarkable work in protecting and enhancing the habitat, open spaces, and water quality in the Escondido Creek watershed. The presentation was made at the Mission Trails Nature Center on November 1st. Steve Barker, President, Jeff Swenerton, Vice-President and Tim Costanzo, Board Member, received the award on behalf of TECC. Citizens Coordinate for Century 3 (C3) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization of informed citizens who are interested in planning issues, preservation, and the revitalization of downtown San Diego.

A Q & A Interview with Doug Nail, a TECC Docent

by Ron Forster
Chair of Communications



Q. Why did you join The Escondido Creek Conservancy?

A. When I became president of Palomar Audubon Society (PAS) in 2010, I knew we were donating money to several conservation organizations, of which The Escondido Creek (TECC) was one. PAS decided we needed to better understand where our money was going and at what level we should continue to support these group's activities. We met with the folks from each organization. We then made some specific decisions on which ones to support and at what level. TECC was one group we felt was getting a lot accomplished, and we felt helping TECC more and getting involved with them more might be a good way to increase our contact with TECC. Since then, I have given several presentations on birds, a strong focus of Palomar Audubon's Charter. I soon decided to begin volunteering with TECC as a docent at the Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve Interpretive Center. I have just tried to lend my life experiences to the Interpretive Center where ever possible.

Q. How long have you lived in the area, and what changes have you noticed over the years?

A. I have lived in Fallbrook for the last twelve years with my wife of 50 years. It is a wonderful place to live. Mickey and I enjoy bird watching and Southern California is a great place to see them. I say we live between two freeways – the 5 and the 15. In the years we have been in Southern California the traffic has escalated, and the open land is receding. I'm actually heartened to see what others have been doing to change the game instead of letting development drive the train. TECC, along with others, has done a wonderful job of not just "talking the talk" but really "walking the walk." They are acquiring land to make sure our watersheds are preserved, which is a key strategy in having a healthy place to live.

Q. When did you first get interested in nature, and what was it that sparked your interest?

A. My parents were instrumental in my liking nature at an early stage. They were always

supportive of me having animals. Having animals and keeping things in my room like snakes, frogs, skunks, birds, etc. One day I was subbing on a paper route, and a lady asked me if I wanted to come over and help her "band" birds. I knew nothing about banding birds, but I said yes. She hooked me on birding, and to this day I am indebted to her for taking the time to help me enjoy birding. She bought me my first bird book, and I still have it! I also had access to a cemetery near our home, it was a great place to bird. I also had access to Lake Merritt in Oakland. I spent a lot of time at Lake Merritt learning from the ranger there, and he helped me learn things I would never have had the opportunity to learn at such an early age.

Q. Why do you think it is important for children to experience and learn about our local natural areas?

A. I learned a long time ago if people don't know about something they tend to value it less than things they know more about. The more you know the more comfortable and actionable you can become. Young children are sponges, and they will soak up anything and everything. What they soak up is directly related to the exposures they are given by their parents and their schools. Interfacing with young children in a positive way is a tremendously important. Connecting them to their local natural areas will make them responsible when making decisions in the future. I kind of look at it as an investment in the future, whether I am here or not.

Q. You volunteer at the Interpretive Center - what role do you see the Center playing in the community? What do you enjoy most in your volunteer work?

A. I think TECC's role in my mind is clear: to educate people (parents and children) about the importance of the natural world around them and how important it is to protect it and enhance it. If we can just make them aware that this natural world is important and perishable and they can help preserve it with their and others help. I enjoy the interaction with visitors and helping them understand more about the natural world around then and I think our Interpretive Center is a great place to do what I like.

Q. Why should people consider joining The Escondido Creek Conservancy?

A. Our natural world is constantly under pressure and will continue to be as populations continue to expand. Joining The Escondido Creek Conservancy gives one a chance to directly help the watershed where they actually reside. One that will directly effect them regardless of the direction it heads in...here they can help it move in a positive direction! They can bring their children or grandchildren, become a docent, make a donation, or just have fun.



Late Breaking News...

by Steve Barker | President of TECC

In late breaking news TECC has just completed a deal in partnership with The Conservation Fund, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Wildlife Conservation Board to take ownership of an incredible 240 acre tract of land, upland from Escondido Creek, along Harmony Grove Road and Via Ambiente.

This property was destined for development with an approved County map so this is a tremendous win for the community and for our resident wildlife. Unfortunately, to save this land TECC had to commit to cover ongoing management costs.

So, have a great Holiday and take an opportunity to hike with your family and friends along Escondido Creek. Please consider [TECC](#) in your Holiday giving., we need your help to keep up our important work.

Monthly Giving: Sustaining Contributor Program

by Ann Hough | Managing Director



We are gaining fundraising momentum for our protection of natural open space in the Escondido Creek watershed. Please join our Sustaining Contributor Program, and make monthly donations to support our mission. The benefit to you as a donor is that it is easier to make a small donation regularly and incorporate it into a monthly budget than it is to send a large donation once or twice each year. The benefit to the Conservancy is that our support continues without the cost of renewal mailings, reminders, and staff hours, so more time and energy can be put into protecting land.

This is a convenient, secure and less wasteful way for donors to support TECC. The amount you specify (minimum \$10) is transferred each month - there is no need for writing checks or to receive extra mailings. We know and you know your donation will be there to support our mission. If you decide it is not working for you, it is just as easy to stop the process.

To make a monthly donation through an automatic withdrawal from your personal account to our account, please complete the attached monthly donation form, and return it to the TECC office in the envelope provided. Monthly giving from your debit or credit card can be arranged by visiting our website www.escondidocreek.org and selecting the 'donate now' button.

We thank you for your support which is critical to our success. Our commitment to protect the land, water, and life of the area where we live, work, and play could not continue without the generous support of people like you, who care about the natural world. With your monthly donation, you will receive the satisfaction of knowing you are helping to preserve the Escondido Creek and watershed for future generations.

Authorization Agreement for Direct Payments (ACH Debits) to The Escondido Creek Conservancy (TECC)

I (we) hereby authorize The Escondido Creek Conservancy to initiate debit entries to my (our) Checking Account Savings Account (select one) indicated below and to debit the same to such account. I (we) acknowledge that the origination of ACH transactions to my (our) account must comply with the provision of U.S. Law.

Bank Name: _____

Branch: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Routing Number: _____

Account No: _____

Checking Account Savings Account

Dollar Amount: \$ _____

Starting Transaction Date: _____

This authorization is to remain in full force and effect until TECC has received written notification from me (or either of us) of cancellation in such time and in such manner as to afford TECC and my bank a reasonable opportunity to act on it.

Name (s): _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Support for University Heights Acquisition

[TECC](#) gratefully acknowledges a grant of \$40K from the San Diego Foundation McLaughlin Endowment Fund in support of the acquisition of the 502 acre property known as University Heights. We also appreciate the donations which have been coming in from members and the community, including a check for \$500 from the San Diego Mountain Bike Association. There is still a long way to go to secure this land by the end of the year and prevent this spectacular area from being developed. Please forward your check payable to TECC and designated to 'University Heights' to P.O.Box 460791, Escondido, CA 92029 or donate at the TECC website www.escondidocreek.org. Make your holiday giving count this year by helping to preserve this valuable local resource for wildlife, nature, and the generations to come.



Matt Merritt, Board Member of the San Diego Mountain Biking Association presents a check for \$500 to Steve Barker, TECC President.

Creating a New Gathering Place Along the Creek

by Katie Ragazzi

Chair of the Reveal Escondido Creek Committee



Recently, the Escondido Charitable Foundation announced the Reveal Escondido Creek proposal for the Plaza del Arroyo project will receive full funding at the October 24th Awards Ceremony. Reveal Escondido Creek (REC) is a coalition of volunteers and organizations which include The Escondido Creek Conservancy that are working to realize a new vision of the seven mile channelized Escondido Creek Trail that runs through central Escondido.

The Plaza del Arroyo (Spanish for “creek plaza”) project will unify the community of Escondido in new ways that build on old traditions. The waterway that was a natural place to gather in ancient times during the homestead era will again bring people together in the 21st Century through arts, culture, and recreation. The two part project will create a new plaza where Beech Street abuts the pathway that runs along the south side of Escondido Creek, just behind the Fresh and Easy grocery store at the corner of Ash/Highway 78 and East Valley Parkway in Escondido. The project will also include quarterly events called “Creek Days,” which will engage residents and visitors throughout the year with programs on scientific and cultural topics related to the watershed.

Both for residents that have a very negative view of the Creek Path and for visitors who know nothing about it, the Plaza del Arroyo project will create new opportunities for people to have pleasant experiences using the creek trail, whether that means using the Plaza and path on their own time or attending a Creek Days program. This project will put more people on the path, which will decrease the opportunities for the undesirable activities that have dominated it in recent decades.

The Plaza del Arroyo project is a key step forward in the long-term process of transforming what many people still call the “flood control channel” into a vibrant linear park. Through a public/private partnership model, the Plaza will create the second of many “catalytic nodes” along the Escondido Creek Trail, the first one

occurring at the Juniper Village senior residential complex near downtown. This grant represents great progress towards REC’s goal of realizing the vision articulated in 2009 by graduate students of landscape architecture from California Polytechnic University Pomona and unanimously embraced by the Escondido City Council in design guidelines finalized this year.

This program has deep roots. Even before formally coming together as REC, community members planted the seed of the vision with Council Member Olga Diaz, who became the public champion for the cause. Now, City staff and other council members embrace the vision and the plan that some people considered impossible. The City of Escondido has recognized REC as the community group to work with on the Reveal Escondido Creek project.

Plaza del Arroyo will serve as a gateway to the Creek Trail and a cultural magnet that connects residents and visitors with myriad amenities across the city – Daley Ranch and Mayflower Dog Park on the east, the commercial cluster at Ash, downtown Escondido and the Sprinter in the center of the city, and on the western edge, Harmony Grove, Stone Brewery, the Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve and trail connections to San Marcos and the coast.

The Plaza del Arroyo project is sustainable because the upfront costs of building the plaza will be paid for right away, and maintenance of the plaza will be shared between the City, volunteers, and company partners. REC will partner with these groups to promote awareness of, and participation, in Creek Days during the grant year and beyond. Just as it is sustainable, the project is replicable because it plays a key role in the incremental strategy of creating “catalytic nodes” along the urban portion of the creek. The city’s Master Plan for the creek and REC’s strategic planning have already identified several other locations along the path to develop next. As with this project, we are prioritizing those places that offer synergy between businesses, new funding sources, or active support from community groups.

Reveal Escondido Creek includes individuals and members from organizations, including The Escondido Creek Conservancy (TECC), Escondido History Center, Old Escondido Historic District, Commercial Latino Association, Friends of Daley Ranch, San Diego Bicycle Coalition, Downtown Business Association, and the City of Escondido. The Escondido Creek Conservancy (TECC) is the fiscal agent for Reveal Escondido Creek. For more information, visit Reveal Escondido Creek on Facebook and at www.revealthecreek.com



Become a Member!

Join Our Conservation Efforts by Becoming a Member or Renewing Your Membership

The Escondido Creek Conservancy (TECC) is a non-profit public benefit corporation dedicated to the preservation, enhancement, and protection of the natural open space within the Escondido Creek watershed. We support educational programs and compatible outdoor recreation within the watershed.

Not a Member of The Escondido Creek Conservancy?

Join today and add your voice to the hundreds of local people who already look to the Conservancy to protect and preserve the natural open space within the Escondido Creek watershed!

Here's How Your Membership Contributes

- We continue our advocacy for the growing regional open space park now totaling over 2000 contiguous acres in the Elfin Forest/Harmony Grove area alone. We host numerous watershed tours for Federal, State, and County Land Agencies, showcasing available tracts of land for possible future purchase as open space native habitat.
- We provide continued stewardship of over 600 acres of valuable coastal sage scrub and chaparral habitat in the Escondido Creek watershed. This includes controlling exotic plants, installing fences to protect sensitive areas from off road vehicle traffic, and planting many native oaks, toyon, and sumac to further restoration efforts on the preserved lands.
- At the Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve Interpretive Center we hosted 6,500 visitors, sponsored educational programs for 150 children and presented three art exhibits.

Donate Online At: www.escondidocreek.org or Detach & Mail the Form on the Right to: TECC

PO Box 460791, Escondido, CA 92046

The Escondido Creek Conservancy Board of Directors

Steve Barker President	Tim Costanzo Director
Jeff Swenerton Vice President	Jerry Harmon Director
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YES!

I want to support TECC's mission of watershed protection.
Here's my gift! **Please Make Checks Payable To:**
The Escondido Creek Conservancy
Mail This Form To: TECC PO Box 460791, Escondido, CA 92046

Annual Membership Levels:

- Student – \$10
- Limited Income – \$25
- Individual – \$35
- Joint/Family – \$50
- Benefactors of the Creek – \$100
- Protectors of the Creek – \$500
- Advocates of the Creek – \$1,000
- Defenders of the Creek – \$5,000
- Guardians of the Creek – \$10,000

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 Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____
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- Please designate my gift to the capital campaign for land acquisition.
- Securities are also acceptable. Please contact TECC. at (760) 471-9354
- All gifts are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

P.O. Box 460791 • Escondido, CA 92046

