

The Escondido Creek Conservancy



The Watershed Voice

Protecting The Escondido Creek Watershed Since 1991

President's Message



Kevin Barnard | President of TECC

Every morning, for the past 17 years, I've awakened to the sound of clicking paws on the floor and tails wagging in anticipation. Quivering with enthusiasm to bound into the chaparral and make sure the night shift coyotes have retreated to their dens, my dogs, both present and past generations, have played a large part in awakening me to the wonders of our rich and eclectic neighborhood.

So my dogs began to clue me in that there really is something different to see, hear, smell, and feel every day, in the open spaces of our watershed. So rain, shine, valley fog, and even a thick coat of frost, does not keep us from

our required "walk". A mile round trip to the mailbox to retrieve the morning paper for me, about three miles for my canine escorts, as they roust a covey of quail, collect any number of ticks, and recoil from the occasional rattlesnake.

We've come to have a love affair with our arroyos and ridgelines, bobcats, and coyotes, roadrunners, and redtails. We have been so touched by our unique environment that we have dedicated ourselves to this little non-profit, [The Escondido Creek Conservancy \(TECC\)](#), that some visionary Elfin Forest residents started over 20 years ago. Among those original few, our former President, Steve Barker, is still working to save as much of this magical wonderland as possible. That's what you would call being patient and committed to a long term view.

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Upcoming Events at the Interpretive Center for Your Calendar!

March 28 | 5:30 pm - 7 pm

Wren Box Building Workshop | Cost of Box \$15.00 RSVP

April 7, May 5, and June 2, 2013 | 8:30 am 2-3 Hours

Walk with a Tracker

April 14, 21, 28, 2013 | 10:00 am 1 Hour

May 12, 19, 26, 2013 | 10:00 am 1 Hour

Free Interpretive Nature Walk

Thursday, April 18, 2013 | 5:30 pm - 7 pm

Amphibians and Reptiles of San Diego

Lecture by Jeff Lemm

April 20, May 25 and June 22, 2013 | 10:00 am - Noon

Children's Program: The Amazing Animal Kingdom -
Up Close! With Bill the Bug Guy

The Interpretive Center is located at:

8833 Harmony Grove Road • Escondido, CA 92029



We have made great progress in saving thousands of acres of critical habitat; no one can ignore the upheaval in Harmony Grove that is the opening act of [Harmony Grove Village](#). What is occurring there now looks and sounds more like a strip mining operation rather than the preparation for 750 houses. It has certainly gained the attention of several TECC members and local residents.

While this project was approved many years ago, and with reluctant community support, or maybe a more appropriate description would be community resignation, it came with clear promises and designs intended to contain the huge increase in density to this project alone and not have it spread on to nearby large vacant parcels. But money and politics can sabotage the best laid plans of mice and men. Within the last few weeks a development group has announced plans to build 336 houses north of the Village, and the 111 acre parcel south of the creek has been granted a density increase from what would have yielded possibly 20 houses to 170 houses. If this all comes to pass it will result in over 1,100 additional houses in Harmony Grove, a 1,000% increase in what exists today.

The pressure on the surrounding preserved open space could be overwhelming. Over use, edge effects, and increased wildfires caused by human activity or intentional acts, could render the habitat we have worked so hard to save non-functional.

In spite of all the fossil fueled execution of these plans, on goes the cycle of life in the chaparral, like it has for thousands and thousands, even millions, of years. Even those who have not tuned into the seasons of the chaparral suspect there is something different this year. The sage green sea is dusted with a white frock, maybe in honor of our record cold temperatures this winter. It's the white blooming Ceanothus which has exploded like a Russian meteor. While no windows were injured in the production of this dramatic bloom, I have never seen anything like it. Tonight, in the pale lunar glow of a half moon, I could still make out the ghostly stands of creamy blossoms, like cumulonimbus clouds, floating through the sage forest. It is a spectacular and powerful display that has burst onto the scene in spite of our collective anxiety over the possibility that this valley may one day look and sound like Simi Valley.

I know that any biologist could explain in scientific terms, why this year the Ceanothus has given us such a dazzling performance. Just the right rainfall, perfect temperatures, and maybe the correct amount of sunlight. But intuition suggests that this may be a conscious act, our Mother planet also opening her eyes to the diesel belching machines lacerating the valley floor, indiscriminately rearranging Her rich earth that she has laid down over thousands of years. She may be watching with millions of tiny eyes. It could be a reaction to the wound, a desperate attempt to ensure her survival in the face of such destruction by producing an overwhelming seed crop. Or maybe it is a display of grace and gratitude performed for those who have become aware of her presence. An invitation to look away from what troubles us and heal our eyes with the beauty we cherish and strive to protect.

Land Acquisition Update

Last newsletter we brought to your attention two significant pending land deals we were working on - University Heights and Cielo Del Norte. Here's an update on the status of these two critical tracts of habitat today.

University Heights, also known as Sleeping Lady Mountain, with 502 acres of native chaparral and coastal sage scrub, is located above the Questhaven Retreat between the communities of Elfin Forest and San Elijo Hills. As you remember, TECC had secured an option to purchase the property from ING bank with a deadline of the end of 2012 to secure financing, or the bank would put the property for sale on the open market.

In the dramatic tick down to our year-end deadline, the community came alive with many small and not-so-small heartfelt donations, but by mid-December, we were still millions short of our goal.

Seeing how important this was to the surrounding community, a funding source came forward and at the very last minute in an agreement with TECC, bought the property and gave TECC an option for another year. TECC will use this reprieve to work on putting together a public funding partnership to finally and permanently preserve this critical piece of open space. We are not done, but we are breathing easier.

Thank you for all your donations. Your generosity made the difference by convincing funders that the community was committed to saving the property from development. Your continued donations will be critical in helping TECC finance our option with the new owner and pay for maintenance and continued due diligence costs.

Cielo Del Norte is a 400-acre property south of Escondido Creek in the Elfin Forest area. The property owner put together a development plan for the property in the 90's and received County approval to build clustered units in what would have been the first and largest planned development in Elfin Forest. The approved plan required significant infrastructure investment including new roads, fire mitigation, construction of sewer treatment facilities, and off site habitat mitigation.

The property is also some of the best quality coastal sage scrub habitat left in Southern California and home to several pairs of endangered California gnatcatcher. It's biological value and its location, contiguous to several hundred acres of already preserved land, made it an ideal candidate for preservation as open space.

Consequently, when the real estate market softened, The Conservation Fund (TCF) successfully entered into an option agreement with the owners in order to try to find conservation buyers for the property.

In the last weeks of 2012, TCF in partnership with TECC announced the completion of an \$11.5 million deal for approximately half the development, 240 acres. Funding came from the US Fish And Wildlife Service and the California State Wildlife Conservation Board. As it's contribution, TECC agreed to take ownership of the parcel and accepted management responsibilities under agreement with the federal and state agencies. The Conservation Fund continues to work with the developer to purchase the second half of the property before the end of 2013.

So in the final week of December, TECC added another 240 acres to our growing inventory of lands managed. Looking forward we are going to need both your continued contributions and your strong backs for more volunteer stewardship days in 2013!

The ESCONDIDO CREEK Conservancy

2012 Donors

We are grateful for the support of the new and returning members of the Conservancy.

This list includes all new members, membership renewals, donations and sponsorships received last year.

If you feel that your name has been inadvertently omitted, please contact Ann Hough at information@escondidocreek.org or phone (760) 471-9354.

The Watershed Voice

Protecting The Escondido Creek Watershed Since 1991

Guardians of the Creek (\$10,000 plus)

Steve and Nona Barker
The San Diego Foundation -
Anonymous - General Support
The San Diego Foundation -
Anonymous - Interpretive Center
The San Diego Foundation -
Anonymous - Steelhead
The San Diego Foundation Myron Eichen
Memorial Fund
The San Diego Foundation - TCJ Fund
The San Diego Foundation -
The McLaughlin Endowment Fund
The San Diego Foundation -
The Escondido Charitable Foundation
Grants Program

Defenders of the Creek (\$5,000 to \$9,999)

Kenneth and Bonita Baumgartner
San Diego Gas & Electric
The Charles H. Stout Foundation
The San Diego Foundation -
Erik Baumgartner Memorial Fund

Advocates of the Creek (\$1000 to \$4,999)

Elizabeth Keithley and John Olsen
Christward Ministry Inc
Code Cobblers
Eagle Creek
Elfin Forest Community Foundation
James Ellerbrock
Susan Hayes
Dennis Kibler
Tom and Cheryl Munnecke
Richard P Murphy
Olivenhain Municipal Water District
Palomar Audubon Society
R & F Products
Delcena Scott
Leonard Wittwer and Martha Blane
Blackhawk Helicopters Inc
Habitat West
Patricia Jones

Protectors of the Creek (\$500 to \$999)

David and Edith Felker
First California Bank
Frantic Graphics
Dale Hamelehle and Suzanne Tolman
Brian and Nancy Littlefield
Gregory McBain
Natural Solutions Wildlife Enterprise

Nancy Reed
San Diego Mountain
Biking Association
JP Theberge
Denis and Kimmerly Trafecanty
Frank and Gail Twohy
Gerald Varty

Benefactors of the Creek (\$100 to \$499)

Brent Alspach
David and Amita Bardwick
Kevin Barnard
Janathan Allen and Richard Barron
Patricia Benson
Paul Bergford
Lucy Berk
Bill Schnetz Landscaping
Deborah Blades
Leah Bookhamer
Loretta and Deborah Brown
Cathy Carey
Joan Chitrea
Eleanor Poppy Dennis and
Cambria De Marco
Roxanne Demik
Douglas and Elizabeth Dill
Jon Dummer and Debra O'Neil
Escondido History Center
Carolee Ferguson
Laura Hunter and Ron Forster
Elinor Foulke
Roy and Mary Garrett
Michael Gilligan
Thomas and Donn Golich
Grangettos
Craig and Cathrine Greene
Stacy Halboth
Bruce and Linda Hamilton
Jerry Harmon
Carla Hayes
Rich and Kelly Hill
Margaret Hoppenrath
Kim Hunter
David and Joy Jackson
Larry and Michele Jansen
Chris and Linda Khoury
Phyllis Laderman
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Travis Lindsay
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Howard Magoon
Margaret McCown Liles
Robert and Janet McGurk
Raymond and Cheryl Meek
Ricky Schlesinger and Judy Nakatomi
Betsy O'Dell
Hajime and Janice Ohno
Deanna Pierson

William and Margaret Robison
San Dieguito Equine Group
George Sardina
Stuart Shaffer
Mark Sherman
Pamela Stahl
Elaine Dodge and Martin Staubus
David and Denise Stillinger
Tom and Joanne Sullivan
Bill Tippetts
Michael Vallee
Mark Vogt
Stacie Smoot and Kirby Wolfe
Women's Club Of Escondido
Aristides and Sandra Yayanos
Rebecca Arnold
DLM Engineering
Helen Shafer Garcia
Tanya Golz Ingorvate
Danny and Nancy Goodrich
Kai Johnson
Lucille Khoury
Mary Krebill
Kim MacConnel
Virginia McManus
Laura Mitchell
Patrick and Amy Molenaar
Gloria Murphy
Sam and Kathy Pickard
Michael and Nancy Sampson
Newton and Jerre Stafford
Scott Sutherland
Eloise Swenerton
Jeff and Carolyn Swenerton
Timothy and Gudrun Ulman

Friends of the Creek (Up to \$99)

Eric Anderson
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Jayne Ellen Bernasconi
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John and Lee Haass
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Bill and Pat Hotz
Alden and Ann Hough
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James and Anne Hubbell
Heidi Huffman
Mark and Davi Huffman
Reverend Blake and Danielle Saac
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Albert and Alta Kisselburgh
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Tom Leech
William and Susann Leininger
Gary and Anna Lillian
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Richard and Elizabeth Mercurio
Matt Merritt
Ronald Miller
Bob and Cindy Moore
William and Marilyn Morgan
Mark Muir
Mary Murphy
Douglas and Susan Nail
Melinda Nevins Benson
Gerald and Cynthia Nosewicz
Joan Perron
Ed Philbrick
Jeffrey Ploski
Jack Pomeroy
Marty Reed
Laurence Reiser
Peter and Winona Rowat
Daniel Silver
Helen Simmons
Stephen and Judith Slane
Dr. and Mrs Minoo Sohaey
Jason Spurgeon
Cynthia Steiger
Phillip Stone
Phyllis Strickland
Ann Swink
The East End Club
Teresa Thomas
Kimberly-Anne Thorner
Vincent and Anne Torti
Rick, Valerie and Ricky Trujillo
Dave and Dawn Voss
Richard and Patricia Wagner
Peggy Watson
Don Wilber
Karin H. Wilson
Leo and Wilma Wittwer
John Richard Yoder

Amazing Things Are Happening At The Interpretive Center

by Jeff Swenerton | Vice President of TECC



With the recent rains, the [Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve](#) is well worth a visit. The Ceanothus is in full bloom covering slopes with their white, blue, and purple blossoms. The views from the top of The Way Up Trail are amazing. Weekdays are best, or come early on the weekends for a great hike.

In the Center running through April we are featuring the incredible winners of our annual photo contest. All photos were taken in the Reserve.

For those of us that are coordinating the activities at the Center, we are so appreciative of our dedicated docents. Many of them attended training sessions organized by Supervising Ranger Jeff Anderson during February in preparation for our program for 3rd graders from Escondido schools in March. This is the result of a partnership with the San Diego Zoo, the San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy, and the San Diego Children's Discovery Museum in Escondido. The intensive watershed education program (funded by a grant from SDG&E) includes a school-wide assembly and an in-class program provided by an enthusiastic Zoo staff and a field trip to the Reserve for hands-on sessions with our talented docents and rangers. In 4th and 5th grade these same students attend sessions at the San Elijo Lagoon. By the end of the program we have many more stewards of our watershed.

A number of the programs at the Center draw upon the individual talents and expertise of our dedicated docents:

- Our "Bill the Bug Guy" series with docent Bill Burkhart continues to draw a great number of kids of all ages. Bill gives his "Amazing World of Insects" presentation once per month at the Interpretive Center.
- Docent Donna Walker shares a wide range of knowledge on Native American heritage and native plants. Her walks along the creek under the oak canopy on Sunday mornings bring to life how the Luiseno and Kumeyaay Indians drew upon the resources of Escondido Creek watershed to live. From the many pockets of her vest come amazing things to see.
- Ever wondered what those tracks were? Join docent Mike Gibbs on a tracking hike and learn about the small bits of evidence left by the many animals that reside in the Reserve.

No hike you will ever take will be the same after being on one of Donna's or Mike's hikes. Consult the calendar of events in this newsletter or our website for times and dates for these hikes.

Our docents are helping us develop programs and materials. You are welcomed to our Center by a large column, which was the creation of renowned artist James Hubbell. In the middle of the column is a large bronze casting of the Kumeyaay creation story. Docent Donna Walker has recently developed materials so that we can share this story with you. Her work includes some of her wonderful illustrations. We hope to have these materials will be ready for everyone soon. Her illustrations will also be on some of the materials we are developing for our school groups. Thank you Donna!

This past year the [Elfin Forest Interpretive Center](#) Honoring Susan J. Varty provided programs for over 1,200 students from elementary to high school. Through the Conservancy's unique partnership with the Olivenhain Municipal Water District we are able to provide vital support for these programs. Since opening, TECC has raised over \$50,000 in grant funding and \$100,000 from private donors like you to fund programs at the Center. Most recently we received a \$5,000 grant from SDG&E and \$10,000 grant from the Charles H. Stout Foundation to enhance the Center's programs.

The Center is open most Wednesdays – Sundays from 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM. Come and enjoy!



TECC Welcomes Richard Murphy

The Escondido Creek Conservancy welcomes new Board member, Richard Murphy. Richard grew up in San Diego North County and enjoyed exploring the abundant open space on foot, bike, and horseback growing up. The experience taught him much about the natural world and helped him develop a love of the outdoors. He thinks it is important that kids today and in the future have the same opportunities to enjoy the natural open spaces, rather than just seeing them on TV. Richard hopes to use his engineering and business background to support TECC's efforts to preserve some of our remaining open space.



Red Dragonfly by Connie Hatfield
Winning Photo from our 2012 Photo Competition

A Q & A Interview with Jeff Swenerton Vice President of TECC

by Ron Forster
Chair of Communications



Jeff Swenerton is the Vice President of [The Escondido Creek Conservancy](#) (TECC). As a long-time resident of Elfin Forest, he has a true passion for preserving and sharing the natural wonders of the valley. Jeff hopes to help the Conservancy in advancing its mission of preserving and protecting the Escondido Creek, and in particular to help with the challenges of raising funding and providing environmental education programs for adults and children at the Elfin Forest Interpretive Center. Prior to serving on the Board, Jeff was a teacher and principal in the Del Mar Union School District and has been an active part of the Elfin Forest community.

Q. When did you join TECC, and what attracted you to it?

A. Carolyn and I have been residents of Elfin Forest since 1978. There are not many places like Elfin Forest with its hills and steep canyons. The creek flowing year-round with overhead oak canopies and hilltops with views of the ocean make it one of the most beautiful places in Southern California. As a family with our two daughters, we spend many hours exploring the area. When I retired in 2004, the preservation of this wonderful place became a priority and I was honored to join the TECC Board that year.

Q. What are the highlights for you of being a part of TECC?

A. Clearly the remarkable work by the TECC Land Acquisition Committee to preserve an area in Elfin Forest and Harmony Grove that is larger than Balboa Park in our community is a monumental achievement.

My focus as a Board member has been in the development of the Interpretive Center. Much appreciation needs to be given to the generous donors, large and small, that gave so generously, with over \$565,000 raised in just two years to build the Center. With TECC's unique partnership with the Olivenhain Municipal Water District and more recently additional partnerships with San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy and the San Diego Zoo, we have developed programs that brought over 1200 students to the Center and Reserve to experience hands-on engaging activities presented by our dedicated docents. Many of these students are from central Escondido and have limited outdoor experiences. They are a wonderful group of very inquisitive and interested students.

Q. What is the significance of the Elfin Forest Interpretive Center?

A. TECC has been instrumental in providing the essential funding to enable the programs to grow. What has been done at the Center is due to an amazing group of people. Special recognition needs to go to Advisory Committee members Tim Costanzo, Lali Mitchell, and Supervising Ranger Jeff Anderson, that coordinate the programs at the Center. Enough can't be said about the skill and dedication of our docents, TECC volunteers, and ranger staff. With their support we are now open four days a week.

What also makes the Center a special place is that it is the design of James and Drew Hubbell. From the moment you walk into the Center you realize that you are in a very unique place. From the handmade tile floor to the painting on the ceiling, it is a true work of art honoring the environment of the Reserve. One of the nicest places to be is

in one of our rocking chairs on the front porch listening to the creek.

Q. What can a family expect if they drop by the Interpretive Center?

A. We believe that the Center should be a very exciting place for everyone. Our most popular spot is our Science Lab with its very powerful microscope. The whole world of "small things" opens up to our visitors of all ages from a mayfly emerging into an adult to observing cells of plants. Throughout the center there are lots of things to feel, touch, and explore. But it really is all about what is outside in the Reserve that we want to emphasize. Through the Center and our programs we want to build a group of "stewards of the creek" to honor and take care of what we have.

Q. What special events or exhibits are planned for this year at the Interpretive Center?

A. Through the docent program we have attracted a wonderful group of very talented people that share their skills with our visitors. Through the [TECC](#) website you can learn about "Walks and Talks" on a great variety of subjects.

From talking to our visitors we are aware that many are repeat visitors, with some coming weekly. It is therefore essential that we change our programs often. As a result we change our major displays three times a year. One of the exhibits always features the work of local artists displaying their work honoring our environment.

Q. Why should local residents and nature lovers join The Escondido Creek Conservancy?

A. It is essential that TECC have a broad base of support. What TECC has accomplished is because of the generosity and support of our donors. Without TECC the Elfin Forest/Harmony Grove area would be fully developed. Houses would be covering our hills. The community would be very different. This week a person came into the Center and after talking with a docent said she was interested in joining because of all the great work that is being done in our community. A check for \$1,000 arrived at the office. A donation of this size does not happen very often at the Center; most donations are much smaller. However, they all add up. Donors like you empower us to continue our work. If you are not a member please consider joining.



Become a Member!

Join Our Conservation Efforts 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 Contributed Last Year

- We continued our advocacy for the growing regional open space park now totaling over 2,000 contiguous acres in the Elfin Forest/Harmony Grove area alone. We hosted 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 provided 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

- | | |
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YES! I want to support TECC's mission of watershed protection. Here's my gift!

Thank you for your gift. Donations are tax deductible to the extent provided by law. TECC's tax identification is 33-0497525.

Please Make Checks Payable To: The Escondido Creek Conservancy

Mail This Form To: TECC PO Box 460791, Escondido, CA 92046

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City: _____ State _____ Zip: _____

Phone: () _____

Email: _____

Monthly Membership Options:

I (we) 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 their account.

Date: _____

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For gifts of stock or land, please contact Ann Hough, Managing Director at (760) 471-9354 or information@escondidocreek.org.

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