

# The Escondido Creek Conservancy

2016 Spring Issue

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The Watershed Voice To Preserve and Restore the Escondido Creek Watershed



Kevin Barnard | President of TECC

*“Never give up; for even rivers someday wash dams away.”*

– Arthur Golden

## Acknowledging Conservation Heroes

You may notice a few changes with this edition of the Watershed Voice. We have begun highlighting an individual or organization that is playing a critical, and often unsung, role in local conservation. The previous issue featured a story about incredible Harmony Grove residents Frank and Pat McCulloch, who have voluntarily been picking up litter along Harmony Grove Road for the past 16 years. In this issue,

we are highlighting our local Game Warden, Mike McCain, who through his knowledge of local wildlife and some good sleuthing, was recently able to catch a poacher in Elfin Forest. If you know an individual or organization TECC should highlight in a future newsletter, please contact [information@escondidocreek.org](mailto:information@escondidocreek.org). In later editions you'll see interactive features and links to pictures and videos, thus providing more information to the reader. TECC's awesome long-time graphics designer, Frantic Graphics, is guiding us into the modern world with these changes; we hope you like them.

## A Generous Gift of \$100,000 to Escondido's Wildlife

Recently another unsung hero came to our attention. Janet Carol Hauser passed away peacefully after a courageous battle with melanoma in November of 2013. From her obituary we learned that Janet was an inspiration for those who knew her. Obtaining a business certificate in 1958, she began working for a company called Hauser which manufactured patio furniture. She and her husband emigrated to San Diego from Canada in 1959 to begin the U.S. operations of the family business which still operates today as Hauser Patio and Rattan. Janet was a passionate lover of animals and nature; some of her fondest memories were her three trips to South Africa where she was able to see animals in the wild.

Janet's love and support of animals and wildlife will carry on as a result of a generous gift she provided to The Escondido Creek Conservancy from her estate. Her \$100,000 gift will help support TECC's operations and help educate and inspire the public about the majesty of local wildlife. We are enormously appreciative of Janet's gift but saddened that we didn't have an opportunity to show her how we could put her gift to use supporting local wildlife.

John Muir said "Any glimpse into the life of an animal quickens our own and makes it so much the larger and better in every way." With her gift to TECC, Janet Hauser will help provide generations to come the possibility of a glimpse of a bobcat, a deer or hawk—from their backyard patio.

*If you would like to remember TECC in your estate, contact us at [information@escondidocreek.org](mailto:information@escondidocreek.org) so we can help you achieve your philanthropic goals.*



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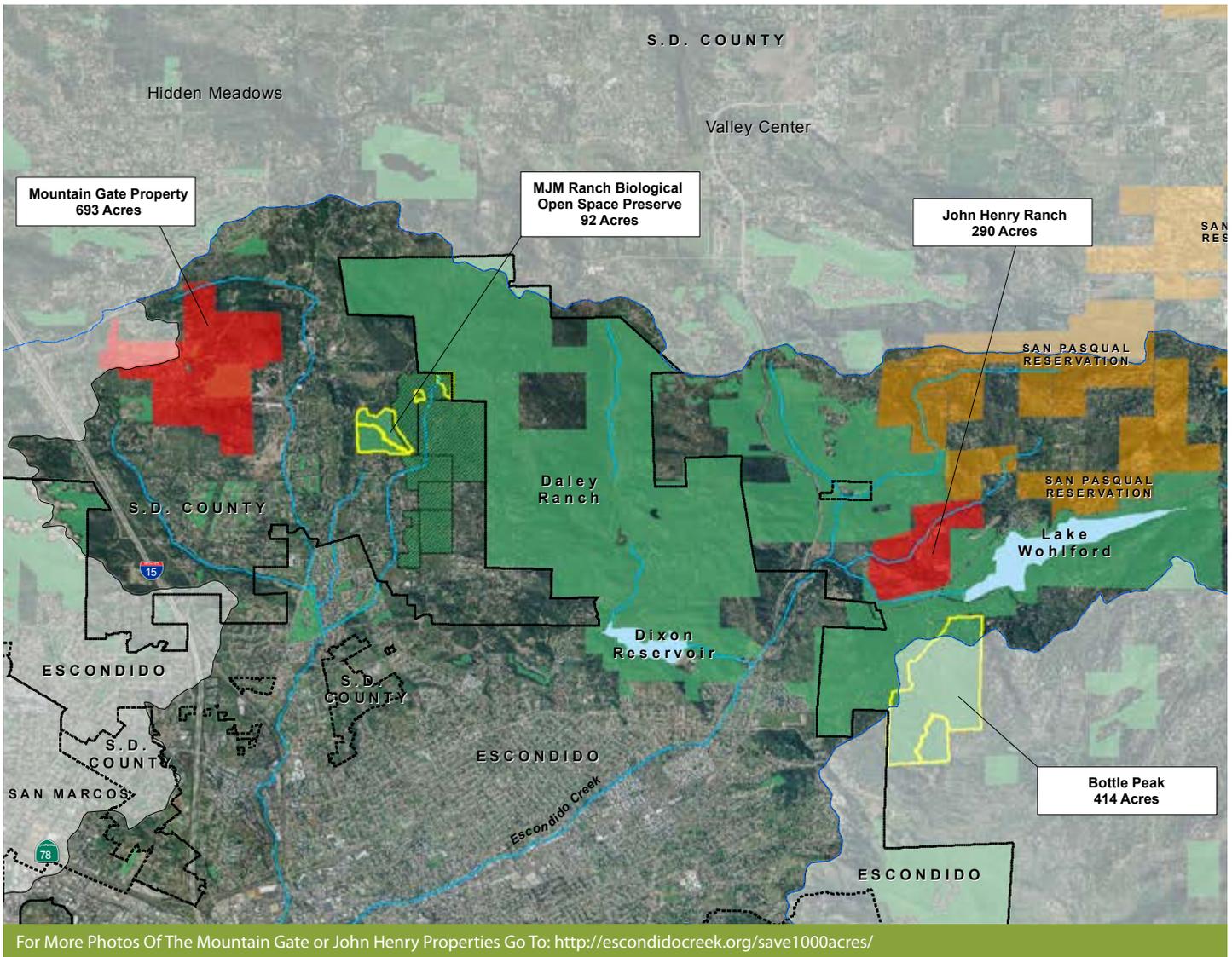
TECC is Turning

25

This Year!



To acknowledge this accomplishment, we are creating a visual record of TECC's work over the past two and a half decades with the help of a super quiet drone, some very good cameras and excellent photographers. We were recently on the Los Cielos Preserve and had help from various "actors" including Nancy's Reed's amazingly well trained horse Jazz. Watch for more information as the year progresses.



# Want to Help TECC Preserve an Additional 1,000 Acres?

by Ann Van Leer, Executive Director

Mark Twain famously said “Buy land, they’re not making it anymore.”

In 2012 we asked TECC supporters to help protect the 502-acre University Heights property in Harmony Grove. As a result of your donations and a sympathetic interim buyer, TECC successfully has been able to secure the property, facilitating a conservation sale of one section to County Parks in 2014 and currently working on a second conservation transaction, which we hope to close in 2016.

Your contributions were essential to preserving University Heights, and we’re grateful for the support! Now we need your help to preserve an additional 1,000 acres.

We are thrilled to announce that we are taking Mark Twain’s words to heart again, as at the end of 2015 TECC was able to put two new properties into escrow: the 694-acre Mountain Gate parcel in the Hidden Meadows area; and the 282-acre John Henry

Ranch near Lake Wohlford. Both prospective preserves in North Escondido are located in the upper watershed, upstream of the flood control channel.

At one time approximately 147 homes were proposed for Mountain Gate, and in recent years there were attempts to develop the John Henry Ranch as well. Instead, with your help, the properties can preserve habitat linkage to the west and east of Daley Ranch, respectively. Additionally, both properties strengthen habitat connections to other TECC-preserved lands; from Mountain Gate, TECC’s MJM Ranch Preserve is visible across North Broadway, and from the John Henry Ranch, the TECC-owned Bottle Peak is visible to the south.

TECC has up to three years to raise the funds to close escrow on these properties, but we must decide by the end of 2016 if there is sufficient community support to proceed or risk losing

our deposits. Your immediate contributions towards these projects will help us fund option payments, appraisals, and other transaction costs. ***If we can raise \$300,000 by the end of 2016, we will feel confident in this support and continue the fundraising effort.***

### **Mountain Gate Property in Hidden Meadows:**

As you exit the freeway off Interstate 15 at Deer Springs and head east, you immediately begin to climb. The privately owned 694-acre Mountain Gate property, located to your right as you head up Mountain Meadow Road, includes a dramatic boulder strewn slope dotted with coastal sage and ceanothus that continues up the grade and over the top of the hill, extending down into the small valley that includes North Broadway. The Mountain Gate property may be the largest single private undeveloped ownership remaining within the Escondido Creek watershed. It supports 11 vegetation communities, including rare Engelmann Oak woodland, as well as abandoned avocado groves, remnants of its agricultural past. Many sensitive animal species are known to use the property including mountain lions. Because of its size, Mountain Gate is important to preserve as a stand-alone property, but it's equally important due to the role it plays connecting large blocks of preserved lands in North County. The price: \$7.8 million.

### **John Henry Ranch near Lake Wohlford:**

Located west of Lake Wohlford and adjacent to Lake Wohlford Road, parcels of the 282-acre private John Henry Ranch have been in the same ownership since 1900. Parents of teenage boys may be familiar with parts of the John Henry Ranch, as since 2011 the property has been partially leased to the owners of "Mr. Paintball," who have operated a paintball park on site. The John Henry Ranch contains two peaks, one at the eastern property line and another at the northern property line, separated by a gently sloping valley. A major tributary to Escondido Creek crosses the valley and cascades over a waterfall near the western property line. Per the region's award-winning Multiple Species Conservation Plan (MSCP), its habitats are considered "high" and "very high" quality, a priority for preservation. It is the last property needed to create a contiguous open space preserve connecting Daley Ranch, Lake Wohlford, and Bottle peak. The John Henry Ranch has been proposed for annexation into the City of Escondido to enhance its potential for development. While some of the habitat has been affected by paintball use, fire, and invasive species, it could be restored to enhance the site for wildlife. The price: \$4.2 million.

***Don't be put off by the asking prices, your donations to support previous projects have given TECC an exceptional track record of using relatively small donations to preserve very expensive properties. With your help, we can do so again!***

***Contact us at 760-471-9354 or [information@escondidocreek.org](mailto:information@escondidocreek.org) to help.***



# Conservation Spotlight

by Ann Van Leer, Executive Director

The words “Game Warden” bring up images of someone in a savanna protecting elephants or lions in Africa from poaching, far away from urbanizing San Diego County. Most TECC supporters know that San Diego County has the richest biodiversity of any county in the continental United States and, sadly, over 200 plant and animal species that are federally or state listed as endangered, threatened or rare; proposed or candidates for listing; or otherwise considered sensitive. But do we have game wardens helping to protect San Diego County’s equivalent of elephants or lions from poaching? Good news is, we do!



Mike McCain | Game Warden

Game Warden Mike McCain grew up in northern San Diego County; as a kid he hiked and biked our local canyons and observed the patterns and behaviors of area wildlife. McCain attended Palomar College and Humboldt State University, graduating with degrees in zoology and geography. McCain, a former wildlife biologist, became a game warden 5 years ago with the Law Enforcement Division of the State of California Department of Fish and Wildlife. McCain shares these responsibilities with twelve other game wardens in the county. While their jurisdiction extends to the entire state including the ocean, they mostly work within individual districts to improve coverage. McCain’s district spans an area of approximately 100 square miles and is based out of Escondido.

Informed by his knowledge of local wildlife, recently McCain was able to catch a poacher in Elfin Forest who had allegedly trespassed on private property and set up an elaborate deer stand in a tree, complete with carpeted floor, custom steps to help him scale the trunk, and holders for his high-end bows. This poacher was baiting wildlife to draw it into two different meadows under the stand where he could easily lean over and kill the animals as they fed. The poacher had set up wildlife cameras so he could monitor where deer and other wildlife were more likely to travel and set his bait accordingly. When caught, the poacher only would admit to killing one coyote, however, carcasses of seven coyotes and one deer were found near the tree stand.

The poacher had ridden a mountain bike to the site, wearing overalls on top of his camouflage, and using a very large backpack for his gear. Once he got near the site, he hid his bike, removed

his overalls, and put on a Ghille suit which is a type of clothing designed to resemble the background environment. The poacher’s suit looked so much like leaves he was almost invisible in the stand. McCain arrested the suspect for violating Fish and Game Code 2000 (take in violation), illegally hunting over bait, and hunter trespass. McCain seized his hunting equipment as evidence and released him with a promise to appear in court where three misdemeanor charges have been filed. While not admitting to killing deer, apples were being used as bait and the poacher had in his possession a bone saw, meat processing scissors, and a deer call. The case is currently working its way through the San Diego County court system.

While some may think wildlife cases are trivial compared to the many other crimes moving through our court system, protecting wildlife from poaching is a very important role if we are to guarantee that San Diego County’s Multiple Species Conservation program is a success and that wildlife will thrive in our region for decades to come. In this case, this poacher was trespassing on private property in order to bait an innocent animal for the purpose of killing it. This is unacceptable in a civil society and we appreciate the critical role that game wardens play to counter these illegal activities.

The Escondido Creek Conservancy counts among its key supporters hunters who responsibly hunt, following the laws that were established to protect people and wildlife. While we would love to see more game wardens in California, we are working to improve the laws that protect wildlife from poaching so that game wardens can spend their time most effectively.

Warden McCain says “If there’s an area with wildlife, regardless of how close it is to urban development, don’t assume it’s safe from poachers and other illegally activity. A few things to keep an eye out for include the use of large packs to conceal gear, tree stands, bait, and trail cameras. If you find something suspicious, it’s very important to report it and avoid alerting the suspect. If they feel they’ve been discovered, they’re likely to leave the area and continue poaching somewhere else. Things like bait, tree stands, trail cameras, etc. can be reported by emailing me at [mccain@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:mccain@wildlife.ca.gov). If the situation requires a quick response, please call the department’s tip line at 1-888-334-2258.”

We extend our thanks to Warden Mike McCain and the other game wardens in California for the important work they do to help insure that all Californians will know a future that includes wildlife.



Photo by Richard Herrmann

# Cultivating Nature Appreciation by Creating Curious Minds

by Simon Breen, Education Manager



For More Photos Go To: <http://escondidocreek.org/curious-minds/>

Every year The Escondido Creek Conservancy (TECC) provides fieldtrips to the Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve for hundreds of students. It's a remarkable thing to see the flood of smiling faces unload from the bus and feel the palpable sense of their excitement as they step into the park.

For many urban students, these fieldtrips mark the first time they've ever set foot in nature. To them, it might feel like they've stepped through a portal and entered into another world. But the truth is, humans aren't separate from nature. The notion that we are is a human construct. We're a part of it—not apart from it. This disconnect can lead some to think that nature "isn't their thing," when in reality it's the very thing that underpins and sustains all life everywhere (including human life)!

As TECC continues to preserve wildlands it's important that we also foster an appreciation for nature among children since they will shape the world according to their values and behaviors, just as every generation does. If we are successful, they will value wild places like the land TECC and all our supporters have worked to protect.

But how does one go about cultivating nature appreciation—especially when, as informal educators, our time with students during fieldtrips is too brief to teach them everything we would like them to know? On top of that, educational standards require adhering to prescribed curricula. One solution that TECC has applied to its education program is to, in effect, teach curiosity. We do this through an approach called inquiry-based teaching. It involves posing questions and investigating solutions, rather than simply being handed the answers.

This method has been used successfully for decades, and is becoming more and more accepted due to its proven ability to empower learners to take responsibility for their own learning, and to generate inquisitive minds that are more engaged when compared to the traditional lecture method. By focusing on creating a sense of wonder about nature within the parameters of any given curriculum, we endeavor to inspire students to ask more questions and seek answers independently—during the fieldtrip and beyond. We might not be able to teach them everything in a single fieldtrip, but we can certainly teach them to see that nature is worth a closer look. Upon closer inspection, we believe they'll see that nature is in fact their thing; it's every living thing's thing.

**Upcoming Events at the Interpretive Center for Your Calendar, please see <http://escondidocreek.org/events/>**



# Become a Supporter!

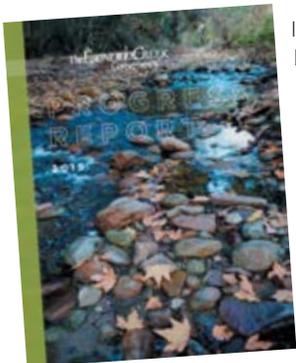
## Join Our Conservation Efforts by Becoming a Supporter or Renewing Your Support

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 Supporter 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 Support Contributed Last Year



In the past 25 years, over 3,000 acres of wild lands have been preserved in the Escondido Creek watershed. TECC has been involved in over 80% of those acquisitions. Additional, over the years, TECC's environmental education program has grown such that now over 500 young people per year have the opportunity to participate in discovery-based programs, making memories that will stay with them forever.

### Find Out More In Our First Ever Progress Report!

<http://escondidocreek.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Progress-Report-Web.pdf>

**Donate Online At: [www.escondidocreek.org](http://www.escondidocreek.org)**  
**or Detach & Mail the Form on the Right to:**  
**TECC | PO Box 460791 | Escondido, CA 92046**

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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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### Monthly Support Options:

I (we) authorize The Escondido Creek Conservancy to initiate debit entries to my (our) Checking Account/Savings Account (select one) indicated below and debit the same to their account.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Routing Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount (Minimum \$10): \_\_\_\_\_

Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

### Annual Support Options:

- Student | \$10  Creek Protector | \$500
- Limited Income | \$25  Creek Advocate | \$1,000
- Individual | \$35  Creek Defender | \$5,000
- Joint/Family | \$50  Creek Guardian | \$10,000
- Creek Benefactor | \$100  Other Amount \_\_\_\_\_

### Please Charge My Credit Card:

One time  Monthly  Visa  MasterCard  Amex

Credit Card #: \_\_\_\_\_

Exp Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Sec. Code on Back of Card: \_\_\_\_\_

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For gifts of stock or land, please contact Ann Van Leer, Executive Director at (760) 471-9354 or [information@escondidocreek.org](mailto:information@escondidocreek.org).

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