

Watershed

The Escondido Creek Conservancy



SPRING 2020



Life After
Quarantine



“The secret of change is to focus all of your energy,
not on fighting the old, but on building the new.”

-Dan Millman

Wild, Open Spaces Have NEVER Looked So Good.

by Richard Murphy | Board President

When stay-at-home orders were first announced, local trails were the busiest they had ever been. With bars, restaurants, and shopping malls closed, many of us were looking for an escape from the confinement of our homes—an escape from stress and worry.

Unfortunately, the influx of guests caused park closures in many areas, especially those with narrow trails that made social distancing impossible.

As walking around our neighborhoods became the only option, we started imagining the possibilities for a brighter future: one where nature is no longer taken for granted—where our daily routines and infrastructure incorporate the innate human need for parks, viable habitat, and time spent outdoors.

We are dreaming big.

California is ready for a shift, which is why we are committed to protecting more contiguous open spaces for wild-life as part of our Missing Lynx campaign, and continuing to push for vibrant urban communities alongside viable ecosystems through our Grape Day Park Project. We're also excited to announce the launch of CalSOL (California Statewide Outdoor Learning)—our statewide initiative to fund outdoor education **for all students** in California public schools!

Will you join us?

Nature: Where Art Meets Science

by Nathan Serrato | Marketing and Volunteer Manager

The ceanothus were putting on a show of vibrant purple hues, creativity was flowing from school children, and no one was worried about standing fewer than 6ft apart. March 5th was one of our last fieldtrips—and it was one for the books. Students from Sycamore Ridge Elementary, Del Mar had been learning how human activity is hindering wildlife conservation—but learning wasn't enough. Each of the students worked on projects that related directly to the challenges faced at our newest preserve, the George Sardina, MD Preserve, near Lake Wohlford. Students researched impacts of human recreation, increased fire frequency, decreased biodiversity, and how the thousands of plastic micropellets (a relic of how the site was used in the past) could harm wildlife. They then created solutions and recommendations for our land managers to help restore and protect our native plants and wildlife... and they didn't stop there.

After weeks of planning with their art teacher, the students came up with designs to paint ten picnic tables at the Preserve's staging area. The students took turns mixing colors, sketching the design, and bringing it to life with color. The designs all reflected the biodiversity seen at the Preserve. In between sessions, they also explored the area with our volunteer trail guides, Al Bates and Benny Hadley, and saw the beautiful subjects of their research up close.

Thank you to I Love A Clean San Diego and SDG&E for funding this project and to all the teachers, parents, and volunteers who made this possible.



5th grade student painting a Coast Horned Lizard

CalSOL

CALIFORNIA STATEWIDE OUTDOOR LEARNING



Students enjoying their fieldtrip at Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve

Outdoor Education for All Public Schools

by Simon Breen | Education Director

Students who participate in outdoor education perform better in school and on standardized tests in math, English, science, and social studies. Some states have begun recognizing this: in 2016 Oregon passed Measure 99 to fund outdoor programs through their state lottery; similarly, Hawaii is advancing legislation for a No Child Left Inside grant program. Sadly, California has no statewide system to provide outdoor education—but we're working to change that!

A private family foundation, and additional private donors, have provided The Escondido Creek Conservancy (Conservancy) with funding to organize a campaign for statewide outdoor education so that all California school children can experience outdoor learning at every grade level, and that such opportunities are an integral part of California public education. The Conservancy is launching the first year of an ongoing campaign to develop and implement a strategy for providing standards-aligned outdoor education programs throughout California.

This is an equity issue. Since a significant amount of school funding in California comes from property taxes, those in the poorest areas receive less. As a result, schools in park-poor, disadvantaged areas often lack discretionary funds for transportation to a park, even though these communities are often the ones with the greatest need for access to nature. But dedicated outdoor education funding at the state level would mean all public-school children receive the positive benefits of learning in nature.

The first year of this campaign will focus on identifying and organizing stakeholders around a central funding strategy and building an advocacy coalition that will

be deployed in Sacramento and across the state. The Conservancy is also currently working with the California Legislature to secure more immediate-term funding, which would provide the opportunity to implement pilot programs around the state to set the stage for statewide funding.

Our funder has requested that we provide a partial match of \$30,000. New donors are already stepping up to assist. Please help us make outdoor learning for all California public schools a reality by donating to support this cause.

For more information please visit californiasol.org.



Our education team, Simon and Jennifer, advocating for outdoor education in Sacramento.



Rob Machado

Australian-born American professional surfer and environmental activist

“My Foundation endorses the CalSOL campaign because California’s oceans are never going to be clean unless our children get outdoors and experience first-hand why the environment matters.”



Greg Koch

-Co-Founder of Stone World Bistro & Gardens

“The goals that CalSOL aspires to are ones that I personally believe in. I am well aware that countless studies have shown that meaningful connection to nature in youth increases our connection to all things, creating better ability to interact and learn going forward.”



Richard Louv

-American nonfiction author and journalist.

“In my book, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder*, I wrote: ‘An environment-based education movement—at all levels of education—will help students realize that school isn’t supposed to be a polite form of incarceration, but a portal to the wider world.’ The California Statewide Outdoor Learning (CalSOL) movement can open this portal, not just for the well-being of our children’s health and minds, but for the health of our planet. California has the opportunity to be bold and lead the world.”

Escape The Classroom

by Jennifer Imm | Education Coordinator

Now, more than ever, we can all appreciate the importance of an escape. We frequently encounter students who struggle to learn in a traditional classroom setting, but thrive in the unique setting of an outdoor classroom. And when students participate in our Habitats program, they don’t just escape the classroom once—they do it multiple times!

Our students participate in an “escape room” style lesson, where we guide them through solving riddles to unlock treasure chests and discover native plants and animals. Then, students get to see these plants and animals first-hand when they explore four native habitats at the Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve. There, students get to use their innate curiosity to guide the discussion. And we never know when a lizard or a hummingbird might interrupt us to provide an unexpected learning opportunity! After their trip, students participate in a litter clean-up in their community—helping to make Escondido cleaner and local habitats healthier. These escapes are just what students need to refresh their minds and grow their passion for nature!

We are looking forward to a time when we can all escape into nature together, again!

“...refresh their minds and grow their passion for nature.”



Students enjoying their fieldtrip at Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve

Restoration Horizons

by Juan Troncoso | Conservation Land Associate

One of the greatest threats to California's unique native landscapes is infestation from non-native invasive plants, often referred to as weeds. These weeds, such as highly flammable non-native grasses, put our neighborhoods and wild areas at risk of devastation due to catastrophic wildfires.

We were thrilled to hear the Conservancy won a grant from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for \$552,097 to reduce weeds and prevent fires in the heart of the Escondido Creek watershed! The project area spans an approximately 8-mile stretch of Escondido Creek—from Harmony Grove to Olivenhain—and aims to treat at least 70 acres of public and private lands.

In addition to these restoration efforts, we'll also be working on our two most recent land acquisitions—Mountain Meadow Preserve and George Sardina, MD Preserve. 225-acres of Mountain Meadow are a former avocado grove, filled with dead avocado trees and invasive, non-native grasses. Here, the removal of non-native grass and thatch is essential to the successful restoration of native habitats. Meanwhile, the Sardina Preserve contains approximately 50-acres of land that is either denuded or covered by a thick forest of blue gum eucalyptus—an invasive species. Both restorations will require substantial planning, a big seed collection effort, and our dedicated team!



Land crews working on taking out invasive arundo.



Nancy describes the beak adaptations of hummingbirds

Farewell Nancy...

by Nathan Serrato | Marketing & Volunteer Manager

"Although I have worked as a volunteer for other organizations in the San Diego area, this has been by far my favorite," said Nancy Samp, an Interpretive Center Docent for the Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve. Since the spring of 2012, she has dedicated eight years of service to helping improve the Center and our outdoor education programs. As a Master Gardener with the California Native Plant Society, she also led the creation of the Center's native pollinator garden. Her knack for photography has helped us to promote volunteer opportunities, and it earned her the winning prize in the annual Elfin Forest photo contest.

What drew her to volunteer with us was the "authenticity of the landscape... and the peacefulness and serenity it provides." As a volunteer, Nancy has enjoyed getting to know other docents, attending various volunteer fieldtrips, and going to the seasonal Docent BBQ's. She has also enjoyed working under the direction of the knowledgeable and friendly rangers and environmental educators. But without family nearby, she is especially grateful to have met her "adopted granddaughter," Christina—a former Conservancy volunteer.

As Nancy plans to move to Idaho this fall, we will surely miss her dedication and strong desire to see the Interpretive Center flourish. We can't thank her enough!

Learn more at: escondidocreek.org/volunteer



Animal Feature:

Barn Owl

by Benny Hadley | Conservation Intern

1. Barn owls do not hoot like other owls—they screech.
2. Barn owls have super sensitive hearing—they can hear better than most people!
3. Barn owl's feathers help them fly silently through the sky.
4. Barn owls are carnivorous birds—their diet mostly consists of small mammals like mice, gophers, and rats.
5. Barn owls don't always live in barns! They can live anywhere that is warm, dry, and hidden out of sight—like hollowed out trees, attics, rock crevices, and specially-designed nesting boxes.
6. Barn owls don't build nests with sticks and twigs like other birds. Instead, they often use their regurgitated pellets as a nest for their eggs.

Critter Crossing

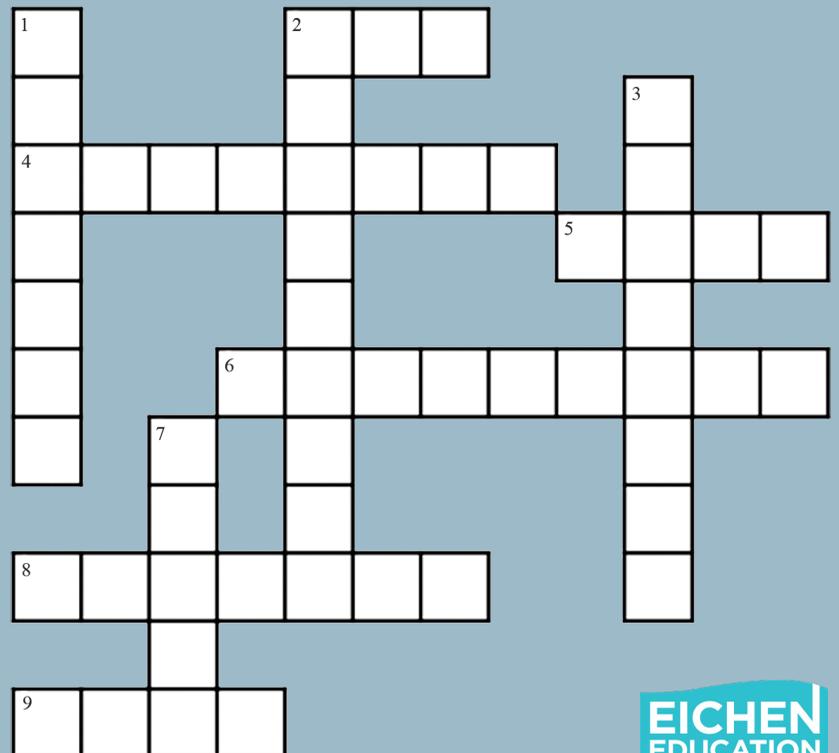
Use the clues below to help fill in the blanks in the crossword puzzle.

Down

1. Smallest falcon in North America
2. Great “web” designer (two words)
3. Lizard; sometimes also called a racerunner
7. _____ hummingbirds consume more insects than any other North American hummingbird.

Across

2. “Horned” flyer
4. This bird appears to have “funerals” when other members of its species die (two words)
5. Opossums can kill and eat 5000 of these in one season
6. Many native chaparral plants depend on the _____ ant to disperse their seeds
8. _____ butterflies eat only milkweed as caterpillars
9. Tarantula hawk, for example



Check your answers by visiting escondidocreek.org/eichenedfund
To support the Conservancy's outdoor education programs, please consider donating to the Eichen Education Fund.

**The Escondido Creek Conservancy
Staff & Board of Directors**

Ann Van Leer | Executive Director
 Rita Petrekova | Director of Finance & Operations
 Simon Breen | Education Director
 Hannah Walchak | Conservation Land Manager
 Nathan Serrato | Marketing & Volunteer Manager
 Meghan Williams | Development Associate
 Jennifer Imm | Education Manager
 Juan Troncoso | Conservation Land Associate
 Shirley Innecken | Restoration Specialist
 Donna Leon | Administrative Assistant
 Elyse Goin | Education Facilitator
 Stacey Vielma | Education Facilitator
 Steffani Jijon | Education Facilitator

Richard Murphy | President
 Leonard Wittwer | Vice President
 Vicky Taylor, CPA | Treasurer
 Betsy Keithley Ph.D | Secretary
 Steve Barker | Director
 Jon Dummer | Director
 Ron Forster | Director
 Jeff Swenerton | Director
 Brent Alspach | Director
 Kevin Barnard | Director
 Tim Costanzo | Director

Escondido
Creek
 Conservancy
 P.O. Box 460791 Escondido, CA 92046

Your fixed income stream. Your land legacy.

You want to give... and want to make sure you're financially stable throughout your retirement years. Many people accomplish this through Charitable Gift Annuities. Your sizeable investment can provide you a fixed income for life and tax benefits while supporting the legacy of conservation in the Escondido Creek watershed.

GIFT ANNUITY RATES:

SINGLE LIFE		TWO LIVES	
Age	Rate	Ages	Rate
65-66	4.7%	73 & 73	4.8%
70	5.1%	75 & 79	5.3%
75	5.8%	79 & 84	5.9%
80	6.9%	83 & 88	6.9%
85	8.0%	85 & 93	7.8%
90+	9.0%	90 & 91+	8.8%

Rates reflected are from the American Council on Gift Annuities. Only a few selected ages are represented above. Please consult your tax professional (CPA) to explore these options.

Others join our Land Legacy Society through gifts of land, stocks, or by including us in their estate.

For more information or personalized gift rates please contact us at: information@escondidocreek.org (760) 471-9354



Miriam Jupp

Why do you give?

Meet Miriam "Mimi" Jupp, one of the newest members of our Legacy Society. From early childhood to today Mimi feels "fortunate to have the delight and beauty of nature surround her." When asked what legacy she hopes to leave, her response was, "A love and application of nature in its intact and multi-faceted forms," which is why she chose to incorporate the Conservancy into her planned giving. Mimi gives with the "optimistic hope that a natural environment can be a gift to be enjoyed for all time."

escondidocreek.org/donate

To help save resources, please pass this publication on to a nature-loving friend or recycle after use.

