



**San Elijo Lagoon CONSERVANCY**  
Preserving, protecting and enhancing the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve and its watershed

Spring 2010

# Lagoon Tidings



Visitors enjoy Lagoon Day 2009

## Calendar of Events

### Bird Counts

Second Monday each month,  
7:30 am–Noon, at Rios Ave trailhead  
Contact [birds@SanElijo.org](mailto:birds@SanElijo.org)

### Docent Meetings

Second Tuesday each month,  
10 am–Noon, at the Nature Center  
Contact [docents@SanElijo.org](mailto:docents@SanElijo.org)

### Free Guided Nature Walks

Second Saturday each month  
9 am–11 am, at Rios Ave trailhead

Every Saturday

10 am–11 am, at the Nature Center

### Volunteer Work Parties

**No Work Party in May due to Lagoon Day**

Third Saturday each month

9 am–11 am

Contact Geoffrey Smith (760) 436-3944  
or [workparties@SanElijo.org](mailto:workparties@SanElijo.org) for location  
and signups

## Theme for Lagoon Day 2010 on May 15...

# Youth and You at the Lagoon

*By Geoffrey D. Smith, Communications Director*

On Saturday May 15, from 10 am to 3 pm, the community will celebrate its connection with San Elijo Lagoon at a fun-filled day of learning, sharing, experiencing and enjoying this unique and treasured resource. Lagoon Day 2010 will take place at the beautiful LEED Platinum-Certified Nature Center at 2710 Manchester Ave in Cardiff-by-the-Sea. Free parking will be provided at MiraCosta College, San Elijo Campus, at 3333 Manchester Avenue, ½ mile east of Interstate 5, with free shuttle service to the Nature Center.

The entire community is welcome to this free event where they will be treated to fun family activities, wild animal viewing, crafts, scenic walks and informative talks, as well as access to the engaging interpretive displays within the Nature Center. Conservancy docents and scientific staff, County ranger staff, and volunteer experts in the fields of natural history, archaeology, wetland ecology and habitat stewardship will all be available to answer questions and show inquisitive visitors how they can become involved in volunteer activities themselves. Local food vendors will be on hand to offer a selection of food and drinks. *See Lagoon Day on page 4*

## Teens Becoming Future Conservationists

*By Debby Strauss, Program Assistant*

Thirty juniors and seniors from two local high schools, The Grauer School in Encinitas and the San Diego Met High School in San Diego, have been enthusiastic participants this year in a pilot program that engages teens in learning about and protecting the environment. Based on the premise that we must understand and experience nature first hand in order to care for and protect it in the future, the students have been learning environmental concepts, observing those concepts in the field and putting them to work at hands-on restoration projects in the Reserve.

*See Teens on page 4*



### San Elijo Lagoon Day 2010 **FREE**

Fun for the entire family on Saturday,  
May 15, 10 am–3 pm, at the  
Nature Center.



**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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**Editor:** Debby Strauss

# President's Message

*By Denise Stillinger, President*

In our continued efforts to promote an overall healthier and more sustainable community, the Conservancy is looking forward to welcoming the public to its 9th annual Lagoon Day on Saturday, May 15. Connecting the community to the San Elijo Lagoon and its watershed is an important part of our overall mission. Lagoon Day is a free and family-friendly way to do just that. Each year we reach out to the public to increase direct awareness of this natural resource in the hopes of inspiring respect for the land as well as instilling emotional and spiritual connection to this important open space. Lagoon Day is also our opportunity for us to thank our membership without which we would not be able to do all the other vital work described in this newsletter. So mark your calendars and invite your neighbors, together we can strengthen and sustain the community's connection to our natural environment. ❖

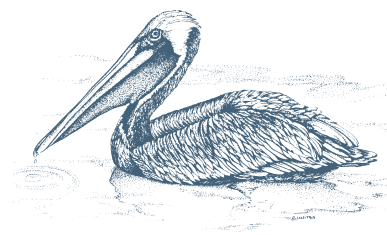


Denise Stillinger Photo: Sally Foster

## e-communications



Find us at [www.facebook.com/sanelijo](http://www.facebook.com/sanelijo).  
 This 'viral networking' technology is revolutionizing the way we communicate!



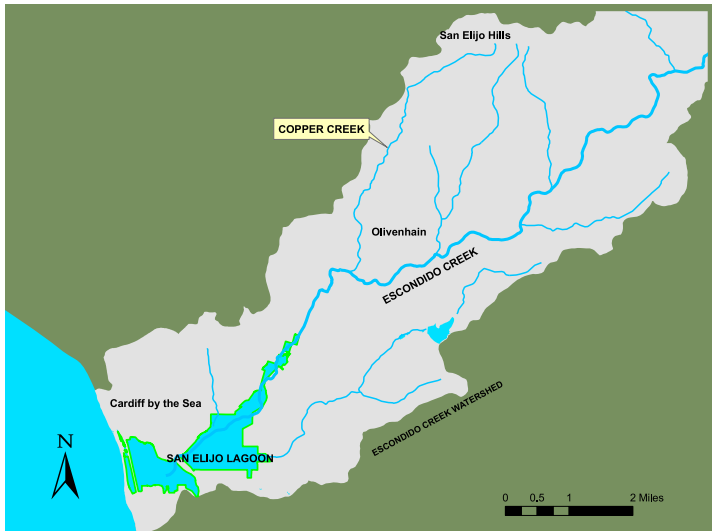
## FEATURED PHOTO



Honey Mushrooms (*Armillaria melia*)

Photo: Elizabeth Venrick

Submit your own photo! Send as an attachment with a description and your name in the subject line to [photos@SanElijo.org](mailto:photos@SanElijo.org)



*The Escondido Creek Watershed*

## Do You Know Where Copper Creek Is?

*By Amy Trujillo, Biologist*

San Elijo Lagoon is at the end of the Escondido Creek watershed, but did you know that Escondido Creek is not the only creek in the watershed? There are over sixteen smaller creeks that feed into Escondido Creek and eventually into San Elijo Lagoon. Copper Creek is one of these smaller creeks. It begins within the San Elijo Hills development in San Marcos, winds down through natural chaparral habitat and through a series of man-made ponds that were excavated as part of mining efforts in the 1800s. The creek continues through some larger rural residential properties in Olivenhain, many with horse ranches, ultimately draining into Escondido Creek at the County of San Diego's Val Sereno Wetlands Preserve, formerly known as "Lake Val Sereno". From Val Sereno, water flows less than a mile before reaching the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve.

The Copper Creek sub-watershed covers approximately 2,800 acres of land within the Escondido Creek watershed. Within the sub-watershed there are two distinct communities, San Elijo Hills and Olivenhain, each with its own opportunities to share in responsible stewardship of the creek. Residents at San Elijo Hills undoubtedly enjoy the beautiful hiking trails in their community, including the trail along Copper Creek. If you live in this community, you can help the creek by cleaning up after your pets to reduce bacteria levels in the creek, reducing the spread of invasive non-native plants by avoiding their use in your landscaping, and by checking your sprinklers and reporting over-watering of common areas to property managers to reduce urban run-off into the creek.

Residents in Olivenhain can do the same with regard to pet waste, invasive plants, and over-watering. In addition, residents who keep horses on their properties can also make sure they are doing what they can to reduce bacteria levels by checking their manure management practices. *See Copper Creek on page 5*

## Back in Business!

**An important water quality program for the Escondido Creek watershed has been re-instated by the State of California.**

*By Barry Lindgren, Staff Scientist*

Since 2004, San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy has managed a network of water quality monitoring stations on five creeks in the Carlsbad Hydrologic Unit (CHU), providing automated stream flow and precipitation information. This system was originally established by the Carlsbad Watershed Network (CWN), of which the Conservancy is a founding member. Two of these stations are on Escondido Creek—one at the Camino Del Norte bridge in Rancho Santa Fe and the other in the East Basin of the Lagoon at the southern end of the freshwater dike. The California Coastal Conservancy has supported this unique facility since the middle of 2007.



*Stream Flow Gauge  
Photo: Barry Lindgren*

Water chemistry, biological monitoring and hydrologic monitoring are all key components of any program that addresses critical watershed-related issues of public health, like flood control and water quality and habitat protection and water conservation. The benefits of this information are particularly important in an arid region like southern California, where the *variability* of runoff tends to be much greater. In this setting, the rapid pace of development and urbanization makes it far more difficult to predict the effects of poor water quality on our natural communities without the validation provided by actual measurements.

At the end of 2008, funding for this program was suspended due to the state budget crisis. While the Conservancy continued to perform critical maintenance functions on equipment and retrieval of digital data, water quality sampling in CHU creeks and the laboratory analysis of samples could not continue until funding was restored. At the beginning of 2010, we were notified that funding has been restored.

The stream flow data continue to support two regional monitoring programs, restoration activities in San Elijo Lagoon and watershed stakeholders planning for new water conservation programs. While the technical details of how all this information is gathered and analyzed might be distracting, the simple objective is the protection of our fragile receiving waters, whether it be the Lagoon or the Pacific Ocean, and the people and wildlife that depend upon them for their survival and quality of life.

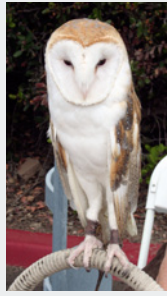
Resource managers need reliable information to make prudent decisions and reinstatement of Coastal Conservancy funding allows the Conservancy to continue assisting its neighbors by providing data that would otherwise be unavailable. ♦

Lagoon Day continued from Page 1

The Lagoon Day 2010 theme is **'Youth and You at the Lagoon'**. For over twenty years, San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy has connected people with the land through extensive volunteer stewardship and educational programs. On May 15, high school students from The Grauer School in Encinitas and the San Diego Met High School in San Diego will demonstrate what they have learned this academic year through their classroom- and

Scenes from Lagoon Day 2009

File Photos



field-based work as 'Teen Stewards'. These talented young people have developed personal connections with the Lagoon through education and stewardship over the past year. We hope YOU will, too! ❖



Students from the San Diego Met High School at San Elijo Lagoon. Bottom row L-R; Bernabe Cesena, Desta Hagos, Libni Hernandez, Gaby Castillo, Torin Duvall. Standing L-R; Marco Castaneyra, Ofelia Ramirez, Brianna Contreras, Ericka Gonzalez, Mario Mitchell, Rose Phabmysay and Juan Villagomez. Photo: Jill Badger



The Grauer School students prepare to test water quality with Doug Gibson. Right Hand Row, counterclockwise: Doug Gibson, Brendan Wallace (teacher) Levi Li, Jerry Wu, Kirk Staver, Jack Schreiber, Miles Smith. Photo: Dana Abplanalp

**Teens continued from Page 1** With funding from the Wetland Recovery Project Community Wetlands Restoration Grant Program, we focused on three critical environmental themes: native/invasive species, pollution/water quality and endangered species/sensitive habitats. The students visited the Lagoon on three occasions, in the fall, winter and spring and spent half a day in the field each time.

To prepare the students, Conservancy staff developed and distributed educational materials to the students prior to each field trip, explaining what they would be doing, why it was important, and how it fit into the overall management plan and health of the Reserve. Once in the field, the students had an opportunity to work side-by-side with Conservancy staff scientists on an array of projects. "I've enjoyed the experience that the San Elijo Lagoon has offered me in the past few months. Whether it be collecting water samples or planting new trees, it has been a wonderful privilege to work with people who care so much about our lagoon environment," said Olivia Burdge of The Grauer School.

The students have gained more than scientific knowledge about the Lagoon. "In the midst of discovering the beauty of plants, the San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy taught me the importance of nature and working to conserve it for the rest of my life," said Audrey Grauer of The Grauer

School. According to Gaby Castillo of the San Diego Met High School, "Experiencing the natural beauty of San Diego has been my favorite part of the project. I plan to major in nursing at Mills College next year, and have a passion for the environment. What I've learned at San Elijo Lagoon can be applied to similar environments in Northern California, so I'm excited that I'll be able to use that knowledge next year when I'm up north."

The Conservancy looks forward to continuing this innovative program in partnership with these schools. "San Diego Met senior students have learned about an environment completely different from where they have lived their whole lives. The hands-on work replanting native species, testing water and using binoculars to identify endangered species has been exciting for our students. They have looked forward to every visit, and come back to school enthusiastically sharing what they've learned about the San Diego coastal wetlands. We hope to continue this project with our seniors for many years to come," said Jill Badger, Intern Coordinator for the Met High School.

As part of this project, the students are required to present their conservation experiences to the community at Lagoon Day. Please join us for Lagoon Day on May 15 at the San Elijo Lagoon Nature Center and show your support for these future conservationists. ❖

# Docents of the Quarter

By Tara Fuad, Education Director

Meet Docents of the Quarter Suzanne McAllister and Erica Peterson, residents of Rancho Santa Fe and graduates of the class of 2008. After years of raising their kids and all the time and energy that goes into that, Suzanne and Erica have recently found themselves with a little extra time as their kids leave the home and start their own life journeys. As passionate native plant gardeners and neighbors of the Lagoon, becoming involved with the Conservancy seemed like a natural fit.



Suzanne McAllister

A prankster by nature with a great sense of humor, it seemed only fitting that I called Suzanne on April 1st, which I learned was her favorite day of the year. She recalled the many pranks she had played on her two daughters when they were young, and lamented the lack of April Fools victims in her home these days. A native of Connecticut, she remembers vividly being a nature lover as a young child, with lazy summers of collecting polliwogs from a nearby pond, and helping her parents in the garden. "I still love the outdoors, and am a compulsive gardener," noted Suzanne. "My motto is edible or native, and I've been having a lot of fun with that," she added. A meticulous planner, whether it's for a trip to Europe or preparing for a docent walk, Suzanne seems to have an insatiable interest and curiosity for just about everything, which serves her well as she learns about the Lagoon, and its diversity of life forms. "I really enjoy volunteering at a place that is so flexible...this allows me to pursue my many other interests, yet it is something I care deeply about and feel like I am making a difference," concluded Suzanne. In addition to leading walks, Suzanne spent six months as an "office helper" in 2009, assisting with educational outreach materials and research projects.

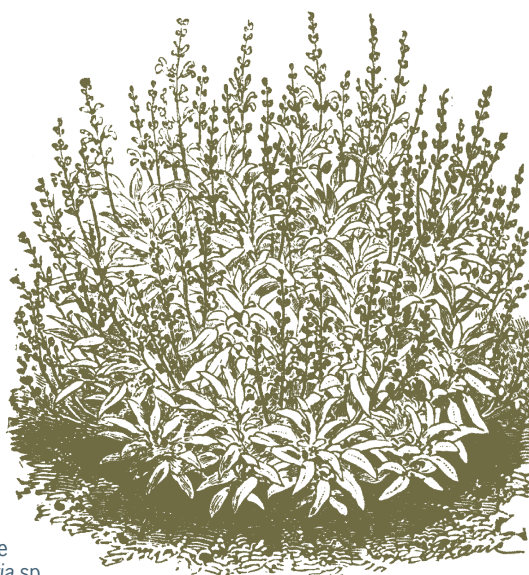
While taking conversational Spanish at MiraCosta College, Erica noticed a flyer on the bulletin board announcing the Conservancy's upcoming docent training. Having recently received her Elementary Education Certification, it seemed like an interesting way to put her newly minted teaching skills to work. "I joined the docent program to lead the kids on walks, but I didn't realize I would also become part of a wonderfully interesting community of people



Erica Peterson

whom I really enjoy spending time with," noted Erica. "I also look forward to the monthly speakers...there is always something new to learn, and the speakers are all so knowledgeable," added Erica. A mother of three, with one child at Berkeley, another working on Wall Street, and her youngest getting ready to graduate from Canyon Crest Academy next year, Erica is moving into a new phase of her life. In addition to volunteering at the Conservancy, Erica has also been substitute teaching. But she acknowledges that at times it can be tough to be "the substitute" teacher, and welcomes a morning at the Lagoon, where the kids are eager to be in a new environment and ready to learn something new. In the fall of 2009, Erica put her undergraduate degree in English to work, and helped edit parts of the 2009 Docent Manual.

Thank you Suzanne and Erica for your tremendous contributions as docents, as well as for all your "behind the scenes" help! ❖



Sage  
*Salvia* sp.

## Lagoon Day 2010



Saturday, May 15  
10 am–3 pm

Hikes, games,  
family fun and  
learning!

**See You  
There!**

*Copper Creek continued from Page 3* "Equestrian-Related Water Quality Best Management Practices" can be downloaded from our website at [SanElijo.org/Resources/Equestrian\\_BMPs\\_Final.pdf](http://SanElijo.org/Resources/Equestrian_BMPs_Final.pdf).

For more information on what residents can do to protect our watershed, please visit our watershed booth at Lagoon Day. ❖

# RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

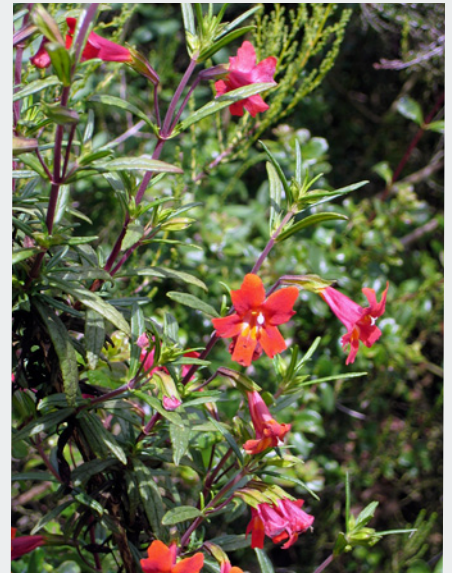
By Elaine Dodge, Development Director

## Spring Membership Renewal Has “Sprung”

Many of you recently received your spring membership renewal letter in the mail. Your membership support not only sustains this precious land, but contributes to your health and sense of wellbeing. Studies show that people are happier, healthier, and live longer—just being able to look at natural outdoor spaces.

Without membership support, the Reserve wouldn't receive the environmental stewardship we are able to provide. Regular financial donations from our 2,000+ members not only benefit the inhabitants of the Reserve but enable us to improve your quality of life.

Supporting the Lagoon is even easier when you join our flock of monthly givers! Sign up today at [SanElijo.org/monthlygiving](http://SanElijo.org/monthlygiving). Please don't wait to renew your commitment for 2010. Your annual membership renewal will make a lasting impact on land conservation and human health.



Monkey flower  
*Mimulus puniceus*

## 2010 Endowment Campaign & Matching Gift Challenge

The San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy President's Council has entered the final phase of its endowment campaign. With a stated goal of \$1,000,000, members of the President's Council have raised and donated upwards of \$875,000.

According to Council Chair Neil Hokanson, “we may meet our goal before the end of 2010. There's no doubt that our success this year will be attributed to the matching gift challenges made by Brys and Rita Myers and Ilse Epprecht. Together they have offered endowment donors a \$30,000 matching gift.”

The President's Council provides support to the San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy by strengthening the Conservancy's financial resources, which are needed to maintain the continuing existence of the Conservancy and the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve for the benefit of future generations. The Council meets three times per year at the homes of its members. Refreshments are served along with a presentation, often by a local scientist or professor on a topic pertinent to wetlands ecology. Council members are also treated annually to two private tours of the Lagoon, one featuring spring native wildflowers and the other on winter migrating birds.

If you are interested in joining or learning more about our President's Council, contact Elaine Dodge at 760-436-3944 x 708 or [elaine@SanElijo.org](mailto:elaine@SanElijo.org).

View it online



Annual Report available. You can get your personal copy at [SanElijo.org/publications](http://SanElijo.org/publications)

# Ways of Giving...

By Elaine Dodge, Development Director

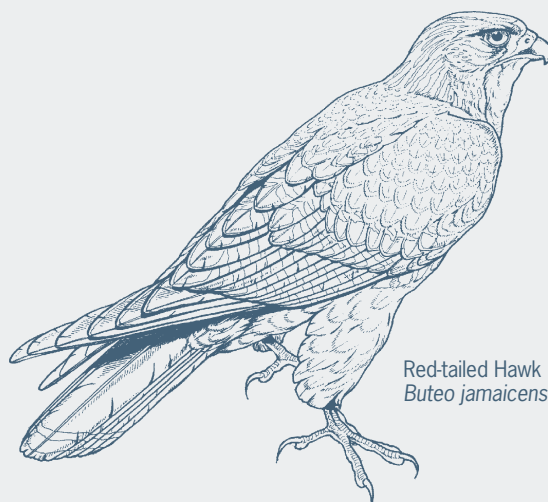
## Las Olas Sponsors Newsletter and Supports Membership Drive

“Las Olas Mexican Restaurant and the San Elijo Lagoon go way back”, says Dave Murphy co-owner. The restaurant has been serving this community great Mexican food for almost 30 years. For almost as many years, Dave Murphey and Las Olas co-owner Peter Johnson have been supporters of the San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy. Peter currently sits on the Conservancy's board of directors.

Las Olas Mexican Restaurant literally sits on the banks of the San Elijo Lagoon. Located on a small spit of land between the railroad tracks and Highway 101, restaurant patrons have an exceptional view of the Pacific Ocean and the Lagoon's coastal sand dunes.

Over the years, Peter and Dave have donated thousands of dollars in support for the Conservancy's environmental education, habitat management and water quality monitoring programs. For a limited time, they are offering gift coupons redeemable at Las Olas to help us with our membership drive. “We understand that the health of our community is directly related to the health of the Lagoon,” Peter explains. “Our philanthropic motto is to think globally and act locally by donating to the San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy. We support the Conservancy by way of showing our ongoing commitment to this fine community.”

In addition to the many ways they regularly donate, Peter and Dave have chosen to sponsor this issue of our newsletter. We hope that you'll support them by dining at Las Olas.

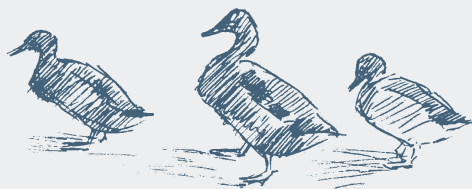


Red-tailed Hawk  
*Buteo jamaicensis*

### You Can Help the Conservancy Recruit New Members

This year we're focusing our efforts on recruiting new members. We have literally thousands of visitors to the Reserve, many of whom take our guided second Saturday walks, volunteer at our third Saturday restoration efforts, attend our lecture series, or enjoy a view of the Reserve from their backyard or drive to work. Yet, only a fraction are Conservancy members. Maybe you know someone like that?

If so, you can help us with our Membership Drive – and receive a gift coupon from Las Olas Mexican Restaurant. We're encouraging all our members to invite a friend to join the Conservancy. We've made it easy by creating a membership recruitment form in the newsletter and on our website at [SanElijo.org/membership](http://SanElijo.org/membership).





# San Elijo Lagoon CONSERVANCY

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# Las Olas

## Mexican Restaurants

Authentic Mexican Food  
~ Served By The Beach ~



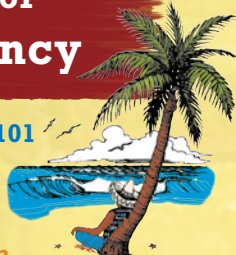
**Perched on the edge of the lagoon,  
Las Olas is proud to support its neighbor  
The San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy**



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**For all your catering needs, please visit us at [www.LasOlasCatering.com](http://www.LasOlasCatering.com)**



For information on sponsoring upcoming issues, please contact Geoffrey Smith at (760) 436-3944 or [geoffrey@SanElijo.org](mailto:geoffrey@SanElijo.org).