



# Lagoon Tidings

## Draft I-5 Widening Project Environmental Reports for Review

The draft EIR/EIS (environmental impact report/statement) for the proposed I-5 Widening Project has been released for public review. Your Conservancy staff and Board of Directors are thoroughly reviewing this important document to determine potential impacts to San Elijo Lagoon. We will submit formal comments by the October 7, 2010 deadline.

Visit: [keepsandiegomoving.com/I-5-Corridor/I-5-intro.aspx](http://keepsandiegomoving.com/I-5-Corridor/I-5-intro.aspx)



## 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 in September  
10 am–Noon, at the Nature Center  
(no meetings in August, October,  
or November)  
Contact [docents@sanelijo.org](mailto:docents@sanelijo.org)

### Guided Nature Walks

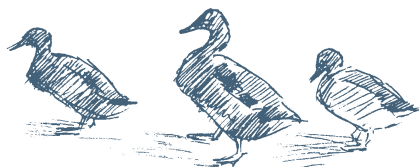
Thursday, September 23rd, 3 pm,  
'Sunset Serenade' hike to celebrate  
1st Day of Autumn (see details inside)

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

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



## Acting Regionally and Beyond Helps Us Locally

By Doug Gibson, Executive Director/Principal Scientist

San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy's (SELCS) work is most noticeable within the reserve boundaries and the Escondido Creek watershed. What may be somewhat less noticeable is the important role we play in framing the larger picture by our involvement with relevant stakeholder groups and boards that are focused locally, regionally, and statewide. Participation in these collaborative efforts requires time and money, but we believe that the reward to the organization is greater than the cost. Our involvement ensures that our issues and considerations have a voice and get the attention they deserve. It has also led to SELCS's access to and receipt of larger grant funding, as well as the implementation of various regulations that have positively impacted the reserve, watershed, and hydrologic unit. See *Acting Regionally* on page 3



Avery Van Houten

Photo: Michele Van Houten

Tom Yamashita (left) and James Murnane

Photo: Geoffrey Smith

Ben Stillinger

Photo: Geoffrey Smith

## Local Youth Stewards with Global Perspectives

By Geoffrey D. Smith, Communications Director

Plants and animals are not the only things that grow in the lagoon, as four young people recently revealed. These 'Youth Stewards', ages 13–20, have grown in their understanding of both themselves and the world around them by volunteering for the Conservancy. "If we only worked on big problems, then the local problems would get bigger." **Avery Van Houten**, a 13-year old student at The Rhoades School in Olivenhain, didn't let her young age or lack of resources stand in the way of taking on the global environmental challenges of today. "I grew up around the lagoon, and went there all the time with my family," she said. See *Youth Stewards* on page 4

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**Editor:** Geoffrey Smith

# President's Message

*By Denise Stillinger, President*

Those of you who read the fine print may have noticed a slight change in the list of directors in this issue of *Lagoon Tidings*. After several years of service, Craig Olson and Mike Luther have stepped off the board. They will, however, remain active in the organization, serving on the science and finance committees respectively. Please join me in thanking them for their significant contributions to the Conservancy. As we bid farewell to Mike and Craig we welcome Conservancy member and docent Scott Griffiths to the board. Scott brings a strong background in business and finance to the organization. To learn more about all of our directors, please visit our website. Though the composition of our board is somewhat fluid, our purpose remains firm: to direct and support our executive director in accomplishing the goals of the organization. Encouraging staff involvement in regional and statewide programs such as invasive species control and wetlands protection and enhancement are just a few examples of our efforts. Read on to see how your contributions allow the Conservancy to pursue the various projects and issues that are vital to the health of the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve. As always, your continued support and confidence are much appreciated. ❖



Denise Stillinger Photo: Sally Foster

## Wardens in the Reserve



Over the summer months you may have noticed the presence of armed Fish & Game wardens in the reserve. This is due to funding from the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), which has been working with land managers to better control issues that are occurring on our ecological reserves. In San Elijo Lagoon they will be focusing on three issues: after hour activities, illegal encampments by La Bajada bridge and dogs off leash. The wardens have been instructed to issue citations for failure to comply with the reserve rules and regulations. ❖

FEATURED PHOTO



*'Tis the season!*

*Shot of a Western diamondback rattlesnake taken late morning on March 15 in the far eastern area of the reserve, along the trail under the high-power lines.*

*Photo: Ron Ham, Encinitas*

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)

For submission specifications visit: [sanelijo.org](http://sanelijo.org)



Acting Regionally continued from Page 1

The most prominent group that SELC has been involved with is the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project, a collaboration of 19 agencies and the 5 coastal counties of Southern California. Each county has a task force and SELC has led the charge for San Diego for over 10 years. Through these associations, we have been able to secure essential grants to finance the inlet endowment, purchase 35 acres of new land for the reserve, fund our invasive plant control program, and fund several studies that are being used in the current restoration project. On top of this, we helped pull significant funding into San Diego County and the greater region for wetland restoration and acquisition. Without this collaboration, this important work could not and would not have been accomplished.

Currently, because of our large invasive plant species control program, SELC has been involved with a statewide effort with the California Invasive Plant Council, or 'Cal-IPC' ([cal-ipc.org](http://cal-ipc.org)). Our Executive Director sits on the board of this organization and helps guide its work throughout the entire state. The benefits have been the continuation of the invasive species assessment book, short-term funding to local weed management areas, and most importantly the formation of the multi-state agency council, the Invasive Species Council of California ([iscc.ca.gov](http://iscc.ca.gov)), headed by the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the California Resources Agency. For the first time, we have a collaborative group looking at the ecological damage caused by invasive plants and working together to find solutions to this continuing issue for the region and the state.

Our Education Director is also involved with a regional effort to bring environmental education to the forefront. SDCaN, the San Diego Children and Nature Collaborative ([sdchildrenandnature.org](http://sdchildrenandnature.org)), inspires communities to nurture, empower, and engage youth in cultivating their relationship with nature. SDCaN freely shares

## WHO'S NEW?

### Joel Kramer

The Conservancy welcomed new staff member Joel Kramer in June, serving as Habitat Management Program Technician. Joel attended Skyline Elementary School in Solana Beach and Torrey Pines High School, where he wrote for the newspaper on such topics as the Miramar Landfill, migrant worker conditions and water use. He graduated this June from the University of Washington with a degree in Aquatic and Fishery Sciences. Here at SELC, Joel works on the invasive species removal program and monitors stream health and water quality in the lagoon and its tributaries. When out of the stream, Joel spends his time with his family drumming Latin jazz, surfing and learning indigenous languages. Welcome Joel!



Photo: Geoffrey Smith

ideas and work products. The end result will be that our environmental education programs will all benefit from those great ideas.

San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy has benefited greatly over the years due to our involvement with these and other organizations. The direct and most dramatic results can be seen in the reserve and the watershed, and in our environmental education program's reach that extends to classes at the reserve, collaboration with local schools, and on into our community at large. ♦

## Become a trained naturalist at San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve!

Join a cadre of 50 dedicated volunteers who educate school and scout groups and the community at large. Share the incredible diversity found within the reserve, and the importance of protecting this important ecosystem.

**Fall 2010 training starts October 5th**

**REGISTER NOW!**

### Training dates (seven Tuesdays):

October 5, 12, 19, 26, and November 2, 9, and 16  
9:15 am to 12:15 pm

### Location:

San Elijo Lagoon Nature Center  
2710 Manchester Ave  
Cardiff-by-the-Sea

### Fee (to cover cost of materials):

SELC members: \$75.00  
Non-members: \$110.00  
(includes membership)

### For more information:

Visit [sanelijo.org/education](http://sanelijo.org/education)  
Contact Tara Fuad at [tara@sanelijo.org](mailto:tara@sanelijo.org)



Western Snowy Plover  
*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*

"Sometimes I worked with the National Charity League (NCL) on projects with my mom. When deciding on a science fair project, I wanted to do something with the outdoors. I love learning about animals so I contacted Doug Gibson at San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy." After accepting Doug's invitation to join him at a Qualcomm 'Global Volunteer Day' restoration event in the wetlands, Avery conceived of a science fair project which she entitled, 'Preserving Coastal Marsh Habitat for the Belding's Savannah Sparrow.' The goal of her project was to test which watering schedule would best promote the growth of salt grass and shore grass. Another goal was to document the Belding's Savannah Sparrow's presence and to record other bird species observed at the lagoon. Through her dedicated efforts, and persevering in spite of unusually high flood waters that year, Avery earned a remarkable 3rd place in her division at the State Science Fair! Avery learned that public volunteers are needed to make a difference in the survival of bird species.

With school weeks consisting of a full course load at San Marcos High School, and four hours of gymnastics practice every day, 17-year old graduating senior and honor student **Tom Yamashita** turned his attention to the lagoon and other open spaces on weekends. "My dad took my sister and me out hiking a lot, so I wanted to do something to help those areas. I really care about the environment." Tom checked around for local park areas, and discovered San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy. "I really liked the lagoon area," he said. "The restoration projects I did included removing invasive trees, building a trail around the new nature center, and putting up informational signs." Tom sees the value in giving back locally. "If you can help preserve the local community, it can encourage others to help in more remote areas. It helps people see what the environment is supposed to be like." Seeing the bigger picture, Tom has been accepted to the University of California at Berkeley this fall, where he will major in conservation resource studies. Look for Tom to be working for the National Park Service in a few short years.

San Marcos High School graduating senior **James Murnane** has been a familiar face at the monthly restoration events over the past twelve months, having joined in most of them with his buddy, Tom Yamashita. When asked why he makes the trek from San Marcos to the lagoon each month, he replied, "I wanted to do something local and help the environment. I learned in environmental science class about global warming and non-native species, and I found out that San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy does lots of interesting projects—not just trash pickup." What has James learned through this work? "All of the problems I knew about seemed so big, but I learned that if I start locally and get involved, together we can stop pollution and help the environment." James will no doubt apply his local training in a global setting, as he begins a course of study in international relations and communications at University of California, Davis. The varsity basketball team member and honor student added, "I'm interested in globalization."

**Ben Stilling** has been a familiar face around Cardiff for many years. Having grown up around the lagoon, Ben became aware of what an awesome place it is. While attending San Dieguito Academy, he chose to volunteer for the Conservancy, helping to remove sandstone



graffiti on the south bluffs. Now age twenty and attending MiraCosta College, Ben took his volunteering to a higher level serving as a water quality intern working under staff Scientist Barry Lindgren. During the summer of 2008, and again for nearly a year in 2009, he could be seen each week at six locations around the lagoon with a sophisticated electronic probe which he lowered to various depths in the water to gather information about salinity, temperature and dissolved oxygen. Back in the office, the recorded data was transferred to a written log, and then incorporated into a sophisticated database for analysis. His stewardship work has given Ben a broader world view. "Even if just one person helps out with stewardship, it's the right thing and it makes a difference. Natural sanctuaries are not going to be there forever unless we do something because they are being encroached upon. I've learned that not everybody cares about preserving natural habitat, which I thought would be something obvious." And after college? Ben is considering the firefighting profession. He finds that, as with his lagoon stewardship, firefighters are helpful to the community and protect it. "Protecting things is in my personality."

Tom, James and Ben have clearly grown as individuals in their years of association with the lagoon, and they've taken big steps in choosing their life direction in part from the lessons they've learned here. Back at The Rhoades School, Avery Van Houton is contemplating next year's science fair project. She is reading a report entitled '7 Surveys of Territorial Belding's Savannah Sparrow in California, 1973–2006', and thinks it would be useful to see how the birds use the plants that she propagated. Avery's college and career plans are developing, too. "I don't really know what I want to do yet, because I'm taking life one step at a time." Something tells me that Avery will make a good career decision—when the time comes. ❖

## SUNSET SERENADE

### La Orilla Walk

Celebrate the first day of autumn with a hike in the lagoon from Rancho Santa Fe to the coast followed by sunset refreshments.

**When:** Thursday, September 23rd beginning at 3 pm

**Where:** Park at Rios Avenue trailhead; transportation will be provided to La Orilla trailhead where walk will begin

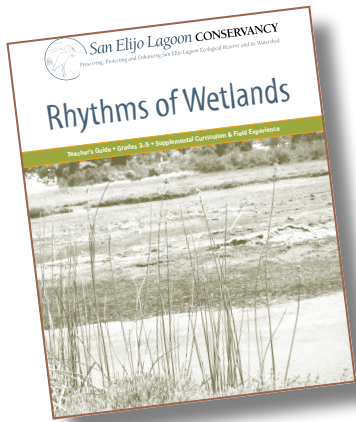
The walk is expected to end at approximately 6:30 pm, with refreshments and socializing until 7:30 pm at a nearby home. Reservations are required and a \$10 donation will guarantee your spot. Walk is limited to 14 participants.

**RSVP:** [Tara@sanelijo.org](mailto:Tara@sanelijo.org)



# Education Update

By Tara Fuad, Education Director



As I take a deep breath and reflect on all that we have been able to accomplish in the past few months, I am most impressed by the dedication of our strong docent corps and their commitment to the education program. In the last six months alone, we have been able to offer nearly 2000 kids and adults docent-led walks, serving our immediate community, as well as surrounding communities such as Vista and Escondido. Thanks

in large part to our docents, the education program is growing and continues to gain momentum.

Part of strengthening the education program is developing educational materials for students and teachers. We recently completed “Rhythms of Wetlands,” the second in a series of five Teacher’s Guides. This document covers life science standards for grades 3–5, providing a general overview of wetlands, the animals that live there, and how they are affected by tides and the mixing of fresh and salt water. Subsequent guides will build on this one, providing curriculum specifically for grades 3, 4, and 5, and addressing plant and animal adaptations, food webs, and watersheds and water resources, respectively.

Vocabulary words such as ‘watershed’, ‘erosion’, ‘endangered species’, ‘adaptations’, and ‘food webs’ are introduced in these grades, and what better venue than the lagoon to facilitate the students’ understanding of these words and concepts?

As part of a pilot program funded by Qualcomm to draw from students throughout the watershed and to bring students back to the lagoon for multiple visits, 250 third graders from Lincoln and Central elementary schools (Title I schools located in the Escondido Union School District) visited the reserve in the spring of 2010. These same students will be returning as 4th graders in the fall of 2010, and are expected to return for a third visit as 5th graders in the 2011/2012 school year. One of the goals for our education program is to provide opportunities and incentives for students to participate in our field trips for three consecutive years. This program offers a unique benefit because it provides continuity and reinforcement for the students to build on their understanding of the lessons from the previous year.

Finally, to further prepare the students before they visit the lagoon, with funding from Sempra Energy Foundation, we have completed a 13-minute School Programs video that will provide the students with a brief overview of what to expect on a field trip. By offering these visuals to the students prior to their visit to the lagoon, we expect the students will arrive ready to learn and with questions to ask. The Teacher’s Guides and video are posted on our website at [sanelijo.org/education](http://sanelijo.org/education).

*Note: There will be no Docent meetings in the months of August, October, and November. The September meeting will be held as scheduled.*

## Docent of the Quarter: Ed Slater

By Tara Fuad, Education Director

Growing up in rural British Columbia with nature beckoning at his doorstep, Ed spent much of his childhood exploring the pristine wilderness that surrounded him. His love of nature and his keen understanding of our planet’s finite resources led him to a lifelong career in the environment. Lured by job opportunities, Ed left his beloved Canada—ultimately landing in San Diego in the 1970s when he worked at Scripps Institute of Oceanography. As Chief Marine Technician during the International Decade of Oceanography, Ed traveled the world from Antarctica to the Arctic and everywhere in between, always appreciating the beauty of our planet and the diversity that it presented. Following his stint with Scripps, Ed worked for several county agencies, including the County Air Pollution Control District and the San Diego Department of Environmental Health.

Soon after graduating from docent training in 2009, Ed was the first in his class to lead a walk and encouraged others to do the same. Ed is admired by his fellow docents for his pleasant demeanor and his relaxed yet instructive approach to teaching, whether the audience is 9 years of age or 95. “I really enjoy being able to play my part in helping us live a sustainable existence—we all need to do our part to help protect our planet, and I feel it’s important to share that with others,” said Ed. But Ed’s skills and contributions don’t stop at leading walks. In preparing for Lagoon Day, Ed shared his carpentry skills

and constructed the “Perfect Beak” educational exhibit, which was a big hit. Most recently, Ed spent two days installing shelves in the education shed, significantly improving its usability.

In addition to volunteering with the Conservancy, Ed volunteers at the Associate Glider Clubs of Southern California and with the San Diego Citizens Advisory Board for Torrey Pines City Park. “I received my gliding license in my 20s,” noted Ed, “and have enjoyed soaring the same thermal winds as the hawks that I observed and admired as a child ever since.”

Ed resides with his wife, Trudy, in Cardiff. Next time you are at the Cardiff Town Center, look for Ed and congratulate him; he is often spotted hanging out with Albert, his Great Dane sidekick. They both enjoy coffee and treats from Starbucks. ♦



Ed Slater Photo: Tara Fuad



# RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

By Elaine Dodge, Development Director

## Conservancy Honors Major Donors

The board of directors honored the Conservancy's major donors at a private "after hours" reception on the viewing deck of the San Elijo Lagoon Nature Center. Guests were treated to live music performed by jazz ensemble Endangered Speciez Project, appetizers donated by Ki's Restaurant & Catering, beer donated by Stone Brewing Co., homemade lemonade flavored with rosemary made by Conservancy board member Linda Jones and champagne donated by Rita Myers.

Special recognition was given to this year's matching gift challenge donors Ilse Epprecht and Rita and Brys Myers. In her remarks, board president Denise Stillinger pointed out that "we're within striking distance of meeting our \$1 million dollar goal for our operating endowment fund." County Supervisor Pam Slater-Price graciously praised the work of the Conservancy and spoke about the importance of all the lagoons in San Diego's North County—calling them "a string of pearls." All the honorees, including Supervising County Ranger Susan Welker, were given original artwork donated by Joan Grine, Heather Kinch, Jennifer Nelson and Janine Free.

The event was a lovely affair due in large part to board members Paul Worthington, Elizabeth Venrick and Linda Jones who worked tirelessly to create an exquisite venue complete with linen table cloths, terrarium floral arrangements and handmade centerpieces—made all the more exceptional with breath-taking sunset views of San Elijo Lagoon, including a fly-by from a couple of tern-like birds called Skimmers.

## Newsletter Sponsor

This issue of the newsletter is sponsored by Paul Worthington. Paul has been a professional realtor for 30 years and is currently working for Sea Coast Exclusive Properties in Encinitas. This year we were lucky to recruit Paul to not only sit on our board of directors but also serve as the board's treasurer.

Paul was born in Rancho Santa Fe and has lived in North County all his life. He enjoys running in the reserve and can be regularly seen at our monthly 3rd Saturday restoration events.

In addition to board service and restoration volunteering, Paul is actively signing up new members to the Conservancy. "I've set a goal for myself to join one new member each week," said Paul. "So far, five of my friends have become supporters."

It's easy to help the Conservancy's membership drive. Simply fill out the membership recruitment form in this newsletter and mail it back to the Conservancy. Or visit [sanelijo.org/membership.html](http://sanelijo.org/membership.html).

We're grateful for Paul's leadership and support in helping us preserve, protect, and enhance San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve.



Brys and Rita Myers

Photo: Janine Free



Elaine Dodge and Ilse Epprecht

Photo: Janine Free



Denise Stillinger thanks major donors.

Photo: Janine Free



California Least Tern  
*Sternula antillarum brownii*

# Ways of Giving...



San Elijo Lagoon CONSERVANCY

In Recognition of Your Support

San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy's Board of Directors

## Private Major Donor Reception

### Honoring

Ilse Epprecht

Rita & Brys Myers

County Supervisor Pam Slater-Price

Supervising County Ranger Susan Welker

### Featuring Musical Guests

Endangered Speciez Project

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Art & Sandy Yayanos\*  
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John & Valerie Zagara

\*Legacy Donors

## Grants Received

Metropolitan Water District of  
Southern California: Lagoon Day

Dudek: Lagoon Day

Hattie Ettinger Conservation  
Fund at The San Diego  
Foundation: Educational and  
trailer signage

The Engel Fund at The San Diego  
Foundation: Website upgrade

The Grauer School: Lagoon Day  
shuttle service (in-kind)

County of San Diego  
Neighborhood Reinvestment  
Program on a recommendation  
from Supervisor Pam Slater-Price:  
Educational software

Rev. Devore C. Smith and Ruth W.  
Smith Trust: 'Lagoon Team' trailer  
(in-kind)



Torrey pine  
*Pinus torreyana*



# San Elijo Lagoon CONSERVANCY

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

P. O. Box 230634 | Encinitas, California 92023-0634

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