



THE ISLAND INSIDER

VOLUME 18, ISSUE #1: MARCH 2020

A PUBLICATION OF CHANNEL ISLANDS RESTORATION



Channel Islands Restoration

928 Carpinteria St. Ste. #3 Santa Barbara, CA 93103

(805) 448-5726 contact@cirweb.org

cirweb.org



THE ISLAND INSIDER MARCH 2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 01 | Our Team
- 02 | Invest in the Future of Habitat Restoration!
- 03 | Three Billion Birds Lost and How You Can Help
- 05 | Ice Plant Removal at the Carpinteria Salt Marsh
- 07 | Battling Invasives at the San Marcos Foothills Preserve
- 08 | Studying the Sierra Madre Potrerros

How COVID-19 Affects Channel Islands Restoration

This pandemic is incredibly difficult on our country and community. Beyond the clear and present personal health hazards, it has far reaching consequences hurting the livelihoods from restaurant owners to dog walkers. It also has a huge impact on small nonprofits like us at Channel Islands Restoration. We know that many of our supporters are retired and feel particularly vulnerable at this time. We share that feeling of uncertainty, and we wish the best for all our supporters during this crisis.

Our small office staff has been able to work remotely, and we are using this time productively. We are applying for government assistance and working to defer payments on our obligations during the crisis. We are also looking to the future by applying for grants for several important projects on public land that would start later in the year. These grants include removing invasive trees and other weeds in critical habitat in the Los Padres National Forest and germinating native trees to be planted in the Angeles National Forest. We're excited about the future of CIR, but first we need to get through this difficult time.

As many of you know, winter and spring are our busiest seasons. As the rains come and prompt explosions of invasive weed growth, we are normally able to come together as a community to fight back and protect our native habitat. From a business standpoint, this also creates much of our income as we provide these services to clients like the Navy, the Nature Conservancy, the National Park Service, and others, and it also provides work for our field crew. Now, in the interest of public health and in accordance with the 'Stay at Home' order, we have canceled field work. This comes as a massive blow to our bottom line. Our work and main source of income is on hold for the time being, but CIR is still obligated to pay thousands of dollars a month on such things as workers compensation and liability insurance, both of which we are legally required to maintain, even if we are not working.

We have been raising funds for CIR for nearly 20 years, and this is by far the hardest time we have had to ask for assistance. We know that first and foremost, our supporters are trying to stay healthy and financially secure during this crisis. If there is any leeway in your personal situation that would allow you to contribute to CIR, then your help has NEVER been so vital. This is the moment that will determine if we survive and eventually thrive as we work on many critical projects that save and protect our natural world. If you can, please consider investing in the future of habitat restoration with a donation to Channel Islands Restoration. Your donation is fully tax-deductible and is crucial to getting us through this hard time so that we can hit the ground running as soon as we can.

Thank you for your support, and stay safe and healthy,

Ken A. Owen

Ken Owen & the Channel Islands Restoration team

The Island Insider

Vol. 18, Issue #1: March 2020

Contributors: Tanner Yould, Elihu Gevirtz, Doug Morgan, Ken Owen

Editors: Tanner Yould, Elihu Gevirtz, Ken Owen, Greg Giloth

Design: Tanner Yould

Published by Channel Islands Restoration

Articles may be reprinted with permission. Submissions are welcome. We reserve the right to edit content.

Past newsletters can be found at cirweb.org/newsletters

Cover photo:

Looking Southeast over the Sierra Madre Ridge

Bill Dewey



STAFF

Ken Owen

Executive Director

Elihu Gevirtz

Senior Ecologist

Kevin Thompson

Operations Manager

Doug Morgan

Project Manager

Kelle Green

Nursery Manager

Sarah Spellenberg

Nursery Technician

Tanner Yould

*Volunteer & Outreach
Coordinator*

Lizzy Sorce

Special Projects Administrator

Wenjing Chen

Accountant

Koby Bench

Rolando Castro

Richard Cravey

Mayra Diaz

Nicholas Duenas

Hunter Giron

Gordon Jenkins

Rachel Linden

Elaine Madsen

Brad Meiners

Erin Merrill

Robert Raffetto

Garrick Thomsen

Carolyn Welch

Holly Wright

Field Technicians

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Cindy Kimmick

President

Greg Giloth

Vice President

Duke McPherson

Treasurer

Susan Bartz

Secretary

Dr. Tanya Atwater

Keri Dearborn

Dave Edwards

Wayne Ferren Jr.

Dennis Houghton

Geoffrey Jewel

Ken Owen

Dr. Charles Rennie III

Mike Watling

Phil White

MEMBERS

Island Fox (\$1000+)

Anonymous • Steven Adrian • Dave Anderson • Tanya Atwater • Kathi Backus • Peter Borneman • Bill Burke • Doug Campbell • Darlene and Sam Chirman • Mark and Kathi Connally • Dave Edwards • Beryl Feller • Greg Giloth • Frances & Warren Hellman & Breslau • Dennis Houghton • Cindy Kimmick • Julie Kummel • Jeffrey Light, Christine Wong and Prince Rupert • Myra Masiel Zamora • Duke McPherson • Hank and Mari Mitchel • Richard Powell • Diane Quinn • Joel Shefflin • Elaine Sweet • Phil White • John Benjamin Woodard

Island Ironwood (\$500+)

Anonymous • Louis Andaloro • Marilyn & Steve Bachman • Anne Bittner • Chuck Buchanan • Mary Bucholtz • Timothy and Louise Casey • David, Jessica, and Ben Goldstein • Robert Else • Tisha Ford • Mack Fuhrer • John Gherini • Tanis Hammond • Jon Huber • Connie J. and Tom Jenkins • Gudrun Kleist • Joan Kreiss • Donald Mills • Taylor Person • Richard Pisor • Barak Raviv • Chris Reed • Peter and Nini Seaman

Coastal Goldenbush (\$100+)

Anonymous • Walter Ailes • Greg Archbald • Gregory and Anita Arnold • Lorraine Barba • Susan Bartz • Terri Bentzinger • Randy Berg • Robin Birney • Robert Black • Myles G Blanton • Katherine Bradford • Gary and Margaret Bradley • Ron Burke • Bob Burtness • Melissa Adyia Calasanz • Russell Charvonnia • Rhonda Cole-Alvarado • Megan Cunnison • Nollie Lei Dawson • Kari Deignan • Anne Dewey • David & Lynn Dewey • William Dewey • William Dinino • Ellen Dorwin • Douglas Duncan • David Dunlop • Ron Ehmsen • Phillip Fanchon • Wayne Ferren • Wayne R. Ferren Jr. • Kathryn Fink • Judith Finn • Joel Fithian • Jay Fitzgerald • Arthur Gaspar • Russell Goff • John Gorham • Gloria Hall-Murray • Letitia Harper • Marianne Henry • Kelly Hill • Page Hiller-Adams • Grace Hoffman • Kirk Hoffman • Mark Holmgren • Haley Hopkins • Harvard and Helen Horiuchi • Karl and Nancy Hutterer • Don Jack • Vijaya Jammalamadaka • MacKenzie Jeanette • Geoffrey Jewel • Lexie, Hannah, Kaleigh, Emma • Stewart Johnston • Steve Junak • Christina Kerndal • Cecilia Kimberlin • Diane Kirchner • Andrew Kirmse • Carolyn Koegler • Leah Kuritzky • Dan Lang • Janice Lang • Mike Leary • Gilbert and Joan Lentz • Rodney Lewis • Dennis & Jeannette Longwill • Karen Lyons • Mark MacWhirter • Patrick Marr • Siri and Robert Marshall • Caroline McDonough • Brian McMurray • Sue Mellor • Virna Merino • Elise Minichiello • Dawn Mitcham • Nancy Nazario • Richard Stephen and Carol Newman • Ronald Nichols • Katie Oprandy • Marilyn & Randall Owen • Hilly Paige, Jr. • Craig Palonen • Susan Parker • Erik Pfeifer • Jean Pichler • Jerami Prendiville • Debbie Prosser • Michelle Rainville • Stephanie Ranes • Sarah Raskin • Christopher Reed • Ruth Ann Rentfrow • Gail Reynolds • JoAmy Rice • Constance Rutherford • Jeff Saley • Ed Judy Savage • Terry Schuller • Dan L. Segna • Dale & Steve Silbaugh • Vanessa Songer • Ann Steinmetz • Linda Stirling • Kenneth Tatro • Alice Van de Water • Alessandra Ward • Mike Watling • Stephan Weeks • Eric Werner • Tracey Willfong Singh • Doug Wilson & Jamie Uychara • Deb Zumerling • Margery Zweizig

Silver Lotus (\$75+)

Donald Davidson • David Hill • Raeanna Jewel • Tom Kelly • Robert Lera • Tom Majich • Amy Marchiando • Tammy Minion • Jerry Mitcham • Jeanne Mohle • Dennis Moran • Sandy Richeson • Alan Turnbull • Frank Wheeler • James Young

Island Scrub Jay (\$40+)

Andrea Adams-Morden • Steve Alnwick • Craig Baker • Caitlyn Barrera • Steven Barrett • Donald Beaver • Linda Bernson • Kathleen Boehm • John Campbell • Carol Celic • Richard Cirincione • Geoff Coster • Rachel Covell • Patrick and Megan Crooks • Maria Da Re • Lydia Deems • Daryn Dodge • Thomas (Tuck) Donnelly • Thomas Fusek • Inman Gallogly • David Gartrell • Nina Giannotti • Roy Gingrich • Ann Glass • Jay Greenlinger • Christopher Hamma • Jim Horstman • Read Howarth • Eric Hvolboll • Gretchen Ingmanson • Marie Jessup • Daniel Johnson • John Johnson • Marcia Keen • Thomas Kelly • Aaron Kreisberg • John Kross • Benjamin Kuo • Kriss Larson • Audrey Laubender • Kathleen Lavidge • Bruce McDonald • Antoinette McQueen • Ryan Paige • DeRae Preston • Leslie Pribram • Brenda Rees • Pandora Sneathkamp • Deborah Snyder • Sheila Stevens • Timothy Stirton • Derek Strong • Greg Sweel • Sally Tannenbaum • Richard Tarnutzer • Sabina Thomas, PhD • Nancy and Richard Tobin • Shirin Tolle • Christopher Tull • Claudia Tyler • Angela Valente • Sunny Watt • Diana Weir • Ron Whitney

INVEST IN THE FUTURE OF HABITAT RESTORATION!

As a reader of our newsletter and someone who deeply cares about our mission: thank you so much for your past support! It's because of you that we can continue to expand our scope of work. **We're reaching out now because we need your support today.**

In order to continue removing hundreds of acres of Arundo in the Santa Clara River, eradicating Tamarisk in the Los Padres National Forest, restoring grasslands on the San Marcos Foothills Preserve, and many other projects, CIR has purchased two four-wheel drive utility trucks, three UTVs, and two trailers so that we can restore habitats for years to come. However, as a small non-profit organization, sometimes we must finance our equipment.

Last year, as we were gearing up for several large projects, generous CIR supporters contributed to our down payments for the two utility trucks, but we still owe nearly \$69,000 before we are debt-free. These vehicles have revolutionized the way we work. **Please help us retire the debt on these two trucks.**



2017 Chevrolet Silverado 3500, 4WD Crew Cab, Diesel
Original price: \$70,704 | Balance owed: \$38,600



2018 Chevrolet Silverado 3500, 4WD Crew Cab
Original price: \$66,642 | Balance owed: \$30,320

“These new 4-wheel drive work trucks are a game changer for CIR! They allow us to take on restoration projects we have only dreamed of in the past. Gone are the days when we weren't even sure if our work truck will get us to the job site...and many times it didn't. We now have a level of reliability, safety, versatility, and confidence in our equipment that we never had before. The storage boxes in the bed of the truck allow us to keep an amazing amount of equipment, supplies and safety gear available at all times. We have doubled our weight carrying and towing capacity. This allows us to haul nearly 2,000 gallons of irrigation water to our planting sites. The seating for 6 staff and volunteers allows us to bring a large crew to job sites.”

-Kevin Thompson

Please consider giving a tax-deductible donation to our *Retire the Debt* campaign and upgrade or renew your membership! It will go a long way toward ensuring the future of habitat restoration on the Central Coast.

Thank you so much!

Ken A. Owen
Ken Owen

Elihu Gevirtz
Elihu Gevirtz

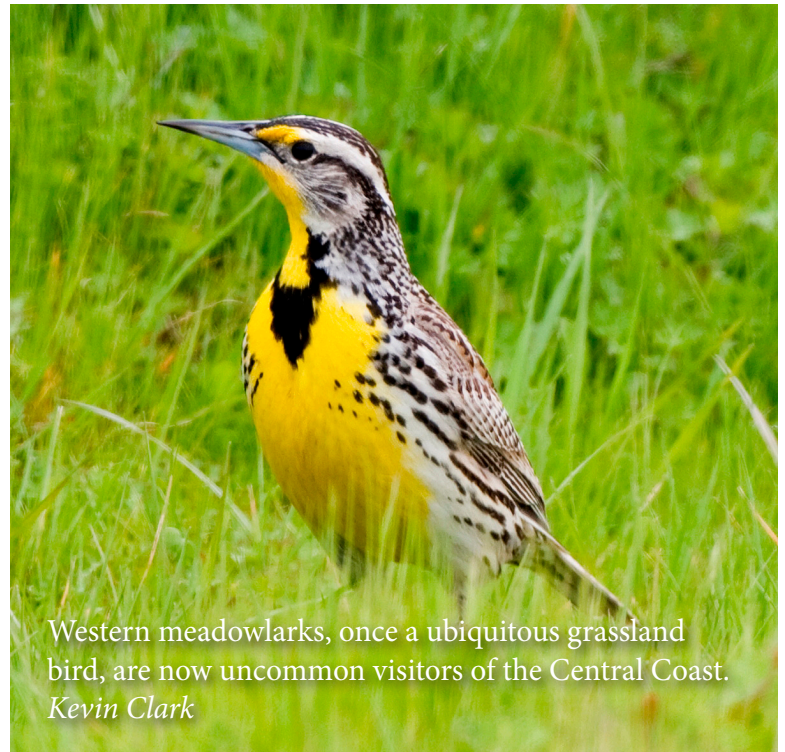
Tanner Yould
Tanner Yould
for the CIR Team

THREE BILLION BIRDS LOST AND HOW YOU CAN HELP

As you may have heard, a recent study found that nearly one in three birds have been lost since 1970. Grassland birds have been hit the hardest. Their populations have declined an average of 53% since 1970.

Here in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties, our native grassland birds rely on patches of bare ground between the grasses and occasional shrubs. Burrowing owls search for squirrel burrows in the ground to den in. Raptors such as white-tailed kites and red-tailed hawks depend on open spaces in the grass to spot prey. But invasive plants almost completely cover patches of bare ground, and even when they die off and dry out in the summer, the gray desiccated husks still cover the ground in a dense layer of thatch.

The sad news was hard to miss; nearly 1,700 news outlets reported on it. The nation was shocked and saddened, and the most common response was: “How can I help?” Despite the bleakness of these findings, there is reason for hope. The sheer magnitude of the media coverage and people’s immediate reaction of wanting to fix this, shows that people care and are ready for positive action. As a result of the demand, the website 3billionbirds.org was created to make the findings available and list ways for people to help. One of those ways? Plant native plants.



Western meadowlarks, once a ubiquitous grassland bird, are now uncommon visitors of the Central Coast.
Kevin Clark

Here on the Central Coast, we’re working hard to ensure that birds can always call this home. Our work at the San Marcos Foothills Preserve is specifically designed to improve bird habitat. The Preserve contains over 50 acres of open grassland habitat, and such an expanse is found almost nowhere else in the Santa Barbara - Goleta area. While the Preserve is home to one of the best and most extensive native grasslands in the region, much of the grassland habitat on the Preserve is covered by invasive annuals like ripgut brome,



Though scenic, tall, densely-packed invasive grasses cover the Sierra Madre Potrerillos. Our native grasslands would have many more bunchgrasses, wildflowers, and open ground.



After a day of grazing, the sheep leave their pasture munched and trampled, exposing bare ground and providing room for our natives to grow.



A CIR field technician surveys for grassland birds.

black mustard, and other species from Europe and the Mediterranean region. These don't provide the habitat structure that many grassland-dependent birds need.

Channel Islands Restoration is working to restore grassland habitat throughout the region. This is our second year of bringing sheep to the San Marcos Foothills. We bring the sheep in and they graze intensively for short periods of time. The sheep trample the thatch and eat everything they can reach – invasives and natives alike. Luckily, many of our native grasses are perennial – meaning they survive year after year – and can regrow from their deep roots. We are hoping that, over the course of 5 to 10 years, the acres of native grassland and the numbers of individual native grasses and their

associated wildflowers will increase. This takes time, patience, hard work, and more money.

We are also working on 1,500 acres of open grassland at the northern edge of the Los Padres National Forest, along the ridge of the Sierra Madre Mountains. In 2019, we conducted a comprehensive biological survey of the “Sierra Madre Potrerros” to understand its need and potential for habitat restoration. In these areas, an average of 72% of the species are native to the area. We are currently fund raising to support restoration of native grassland in the potrerros. Again, this will take time, patience, hard work, and money, but we think that we can make a difference for birds.

Your support of Channel Islands Restoration makes this work possible. There are still many things you can do to help as an individual, but know that your support, whether as a volunteer or donor, means you are making a difference.

To read more about our sheep grazing project at the San Marcos Foothills, head to: <https://cirweb.org/smf-grazing>.

To read more about our Biological Inventory of the Sierra Madre Potrerros, head to: <https://irweb.org/smp-study>.



Ice Plant Removal at the Carpinteria Salt Marsh

Doug Morgan

If you haven't been to the Carpinteria Salt Marsh, you are missing out!

The Carpinteria Salt Marsh is an incredibly diverse and fragile area easily visible from the 101, but difficult to access given its protected status. I look forward to any opportunity to work there, and evidentially so do many of our volunteers. I see the same people returning to do hard, dirty work for free. (You all know who you are, thank you!) The improvements we have made along the salt marsh in the last couple months simply would not have been possible without the involvement of our dedicated volunteers. I have to admit when I saw the budget for the project and finally grasped the full scope of work, I had doubts that maybe in this instance, success might be... elusive. But more on that in a bit, first some background.

Southern California tidal salt marshes are nearly extinct. Only about 3-10% of the historic salt marshes remain. The rest have been dredged for harbors or filled in for developments. Think of where airports are located in So Cal. Santa Barbara, Point Mugu, LAX, are all sitting on huge areas that once were tidal salt marshes. And the Carpinteria salt marsh makes up a large percentage of what little remains.

It might be a symptom of such a limited amount of habitat remaining, so many species competing for an area, but the Carpinteria salt marsh is teeming with life and diversity - above and below the water and everywhere underfoot. There have been over

200 species of birds sighted there, including my favorite local, "Ollie" the Osprey. We have also seen sharks and seals a number of times. It is a critical spawning ground for many fish, including some of the more delicious kind.

The endangered salt marsh bird's-beak, (*Chloropyron maritimum* ssp. *maritimum*) is found there and only 6 other estuaries in the rest of the world, restricted in its range between Morro Bay and northern Baja California, Mexico. However, at this time, salt marsh bird's-beak in Carpinteria Salt Marsh is extremely threatened by an invasive plant, European Sea Lavender, (*Limonium duriusculum*) that grows particularly well in the tiny niche remaining that the Birds Beak occupies. (We've also done a significant amount of work to remove this invasive.) The quadruple threat of reduced habitat, competition with invasive plants, sea-level rise and lack of funding to intervene may mean that bird's-beak disappears forever during our lifetime. Because of the incredible interconnectedness of this delicate ecosystem, that seemingly minor event could set into motion a cascade of events with unimaginable consequences.

With all this in mind, I walked the nearly half-mile of ice plant covered road shoulder next to the marsh. This is where that aforementioned doubt crept in. We needed to remove the entire span of it by hand, and then haul it to a dumpster that couldn't be parked close to the work site. Then when all that was done, we had to plant 500 native plants in the



Ice plant had to be carted away to nearby dumpsters.



Ultimately, we filled about eight dumpsters with ice plant.
Celeste Giuffre

bare ground and set up drip irrigation. And all of this would have to be done on the sparse budget afforded to habitat restoration projects. Things weren't looking good.

And then the volunteers arrived. The first workday was raining at starting time. Still about 15 people came out and eventually so did the sun. We had a glorious and productive day clearing about 300 feet of the project's half mile. Each successive workday was more efficient and 5 workdays later we had removed around 50 tons of ice plant (100,000 pounds) from over 2,200 feet of road shoulder and were ready to plant the natives we had been raising in our Camarillo nursery (with the help of yet more volunteers!).

Planting day came and so did the volunteers! About 25 people joined me and our Nursery Manager Kelle Green, and of course our UCSB Interns Viviana and Sophia (funded by the University's Associated

Students Coastal Fund). It's a good thing we had so many staff on site because this group of volunteers came to make a difference! We had about 500 plants to install and irrigate, and three days budgeted to do it. This crew of "fire-eaters" had most of the holes dug before first break. By the end of the day we had all the plants in the ground and the irrigation system almost halfway complete.

This project is only possible because of the contributions of the neighbors on Sand Point Road and the Gas Company who contributed funding, and volunteers who did the dirty work. The Carpinteria Salt Marsh needs all the help it can get. I no longer have doubts about the success of this project. With community and volunteer support like we have had on this project, I'm confident the salt marsh will outlast me, and with a little assistance, so will salt marsh bird's-beak.

With the ice plant cleared, we could finally move in and plant native plants.





Battling Weeds in the Wake of the Cave Fire

Doug Morgan

Driven by 50 MPH winds the Cave Fire flashed down one of the few tracts of unburned front country Chaparral remaining, on the night of Monday November 25th, 2019. By morning it had burned into the SMFP and incredibly been stopped there in a heroic effort by firefighters.

The Cave Fire burned one of our mature restoration areas. As expected, the majority of the native plants are slowly regrowing from the burned-out stumps and roots. They have evolved in these conditions and historically have had no reason to hurry and grow upwards, choosing instead to maintain a strong and reliable root system. However, today they risk being smothered by invasive plants that spring up at the first chance. Usually, the invasives are mostly suppressed by healthy native habitat, but when a fire comes through, the invasives can spring up and take all the available light and nutrients. So just weeks after the Cave Fire, invasive plants were threatening to choke out the natives that were leisurely coming back to life.

It was time to step in and defend our native plants. A call for volunteers was sent out and our community stepped up to help. And this help could have come no later - the invasive growth was getting so thick and tall we needed expert guidance. Our Executive Director Ken Owen went out and identified and flagged native plants, some not even an inch tall hidden amongst the thriving invasive weeds.

Taking this step allowed the volunteer crews to proceed rapidly and with a more heavy-handed approach to eliminating the invasive plants. With hoes and hands, we created buffer halos around the identified native plants. Soon everyone was adept at identifying even



We cleared space for plants like this giant wild rye to grow

more native plants hidden in the weeds and everyone was impressed at how well they handled fire.

At the end of a hot workday in a fire blackened area we all looked like chimney sweeps from a Dickens story. Our soot smudged faces smiling as we proudly wore our blackened clothes home knowing we made a difference and gave nature a boost. As of this writing the work crews made enough headway that we can address other more time sensitive projects, but the work in SMFP is far from over and will require all the support we can gather from our friends.

Speaking of which, “how close to the sheep will we be working?” Was by far the most common question I was asked the morning of each volunteer day. I felt bad having to answer that they had already gone home.

I was usually then asked, “How many sheep were here?” “I don’t know for sure, every time I tried to count them, I fell asleep.”

Editor’s note: Booooooo

Studying the Sierra Madre Potreros

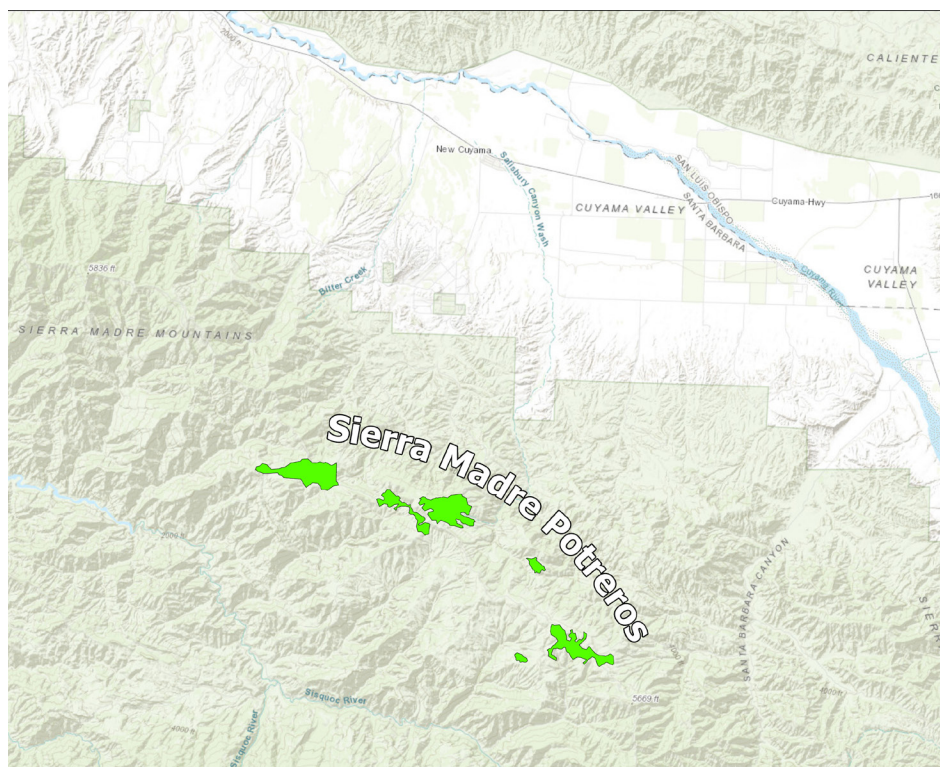
Elihu Gevirtz



Channel Islands Restoration biologists recently completed a comprehensive biological study of the Sierra Madre Potreros. The potreros are expansive grasslands occupying about 1,500 acres that are located in the Los Padres National Forest on the edge of San Rafael Wilderness between the Sisquoc River and the Cuyama River. The study was funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, working in close cooperation with the Los Padres National Forest through the Southern California Forests and Watersheds – Wildfires Restoration Grant Program.

We found high plant species diversity including 171 species of plants, including seven species of native grasses, and three species of rare plants: *Amsinckia douglasiana*, *Caulanthus lemmonii*, and *Layia heterotricha*. About 78 percent of the plants on the potreros are native and 21 percent are non-native. The most problematic of the non-native plants is medusa head (*Elymus caput-medusae*). This non-native species invades grasslands and other communities and takes over, eliminating habitat for native plants and animals, eliminating forage for cattle and other livestock, and increasing fire hazards. In California, medusa head now occupies more than one million acres, and continues to expand its range by about 12 percent every year. We are currently seeking funding to support habitat restoration efforts on the potreros. Can you help?

We observed at least 43 species of invertebrates, 9 reptile species, 2 amphibian species, 51 bird species and at least 8 mammal species. Contrary to the plant diversity, the animal diversity is relatively low as compared to other habitats in our region, and the population size of several species is low. Western meadowlark, for example, is present, but in relatively small numbers. We are asking ourselves, “What can we do to increase the numbers of meadowlarks and other species such as burrowing owl?” To answer this question, we are seeking funding to write and implement a restoration plan. Can you or someone you know make a financial contribution to this effort?





Channel Islands Restoration

928 Carpinteria St #3

Santa Barbara, CA 93103

cirweb.org | contact@cirweb.org | (805) 448-5726



Carpinteria Salt Marsh Ice Plant Removal, Post Rain
Celeste Giuffre