

The Island Insider

VOLUME 21, ISSUE #2: NOVEMBER 2023



Published by Channel Islands Restoration



Channel Islands Restoration - PO Box 40228 Santa Barbara, CA 93140
(805)-448-2791 - contact@cirweb.org - www.cirweb.org

The Island Insider

Channel Islands Restoration - Vol. 21, Issue #2: November 2023

Contributors: Ken Owen, Morey Spellman, Scott Orlosky, Carol Gravelle, Lauren Harris, Dawn Erickson, Cindy Kimmick, Holly Wright, Lizzy Sorce, Caleb Stumberg, Julia McHugh, Jamie Uyehara, Gerry Ching.



CIR STAFF

Ken Owen
Executive Director

Natasha Booth
Projects Admin & Technician

Pablo Chalott
Restoration Foreman

Wenjing Chen
Accountant

Lauren Harris
Staff Ecologist

Wyatt McLean
Restoration Foreman

Erin Merrill
Field & GIS Technician

Doug Morgan
Operations Manager

Lizzy Sorce
Director of Administration

Morey Spellman
Marketing Manager

Holly Wright
Field Projects Administrator

CIR FIELD TECHS

Nicolas Arriaga
Monique Cagan
Schuyler Capita
Steven Cardoza
Casey Cleland
Zachary Eichert
Riley Evans
Ryan Fass
Olina Graham
Jackson Hahn-Smith
Zay Loeb
Aidan McCarter
Brad Meiners
Jeremiah Morgan
Nel Nolan
Morgan Plummer
Gabriel Ramirez
Leilanie Rubinstein
Carl Rump
Jaycee Sacdalan
Owen Shapleigh
Sofia Solberg
Trinity Tompkins
Jordan Tulak
Rhu Wright Steedman

CIR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Connie Jenkins
President

Phil White
Vice President

Angelica Daus
Treasurer

Scott Orlosky
Secretary

Carol Gravelle
Cindy Kimmick
Art Levitt
Jeffrey Light
Ken Owen
Alikoi Parra
Aireona Bonnie Raschke
Alana Rader

As we continue to grow, so does our team! Pablo and Wyatt, previous Field Technicians, have been promoted to Restoration Foremen, and Natasha has been brought onto CIR's admin team to assist with projects from the field and office!

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

IN THIS ISSUE...

- 02 | Our Staff
- 03 | Thank You to Our Supporters
- 04 | Reaching New Heights with New Board Members
- 06 | Become A Recurring Member This Year
- 07 | Santa Cruz Island Restoration Talks Underway
- 08 | CIR's Costa Rica Earth Watch Trip
- 10 | Visiting the Torrey Pines on Stunning Santa Rosa Island
- 12 | Sheep Help Save Lives!
- 13 | Elings Park Transformation Project
- 16 | The Annual CIR Membership Picnic
- 18 | Trail Restoration with Gerry Ching
- 20 | Contact Information



Outgoing Channel Islands Restoration President Cindy Kimmick is honored during the CIR membership picnic at Rincon Bluffs Park.

Thank You to Our Channel Islands Restoration Supporters!

The Island Fox Club

Peter Adams • David Anderson • Henning Ansorg • Kathi Backus • Diane Bearer • Ashlyn Bell • Sonja Bennett • Alex Brodie • Carrie Brown • Bill Burke • Tim & Louise Casey • Russ Charvonja • Darlene Chirman • Mark Connally • William Connally • David Edwards • Dan Emmett • Beryl Feller • Tisha Ford • Jon and Heather Eberly • Greg Giloth • Jessica Goldstein • John Gould • Carol Gravelle • Dennis Houghton • Sally Ingmanson • Lynne Israel • Vijaya Jammalamadaka • Cindy Kimmick • Joan Kreiss • Julie Kummel • Arthur Levitt • Jeffrey Light and Christine Wong • Renee Longan • Siri and Robert Marshall • Sharon Metsch • Donald Mills • Hank Mitchel • Joseph Morlan • Richard Mott • Christopher Reed • Jasper Rhodes • Julie Ringle • Peter Seaman • Joel Shefflin • Bob Simon • Ann Steinmetz • David & Karen Telleen-Lawton • Carrie Towbes • Eric Werner • Phil White • Diane Wondolowski • John Woodard • Kim Yarger

Island Ironwood Members

Joel Fithian • James Johnson • William Fletcher • Rachel Dreher • Leslie Edgerton • Mary Bucholtz • Jeff Sosnow • Patrick Marr • Maia Palmer • Julia Zaratzian • Nancy Thatcher • Elaine Sweet • Richard Pisor • Ben Kuo • Willfong Singh • Terry Schuller • Jessica, David, Ben, and Dan Goldstein • Gail Faulkner • Mark Holmgren • Mark Holmgren • Mark Rhomberg • David Chang • Mack Fuhrer • Barbara Gural • Mike Taylor • Diane Kirchner • Jon Huber • Peter Schuyler & Lisa Stratton • Charles Buchanan

Coastal Goldenbush Members

Abigail Fuller • Tanis Hammond • Douglas Wilson • Yvonne Tsai • Angi Daus • Jean Bramer • Roger Nisbet • Gloria Linder • Karen Lyons • Leah Kuritzky • Rob Robertson • Vicki Holloway • Arthur Gaspar • Sandra Howard • John Reed • Scott Orlosky • Christina Kerndal • Gary Bradley • Kevin Bourke • Linda Bernson • Richard Powell • Ronald Abeles • Christina Kerndal Hansen • Kelly Hill • Niki Rogers • Christina Gonzalez • Reid Bengard • Sherri Sisson • David Simpson • Timothy Owens • Ashley Rogers • Tracey Willfong • MaryLou Furrer • Liam Strong • Howard McCauley • Isabelle Doerschlag • Jillian Ferguson • Audrey Laubender • Gabrielle Coulousi • Riley Evans • Benjamin Lopez • John Sisson • Ava Castanha • David Hill • Nancy Hill • Catherine Gillespie • Jan Chytilo • Mark MacWhirter • Holly Huff • Lesley Gonzalez • Gail Reynolds • Michelle Rainville • Mary Byrd • Carolyn Chaney • Kate Symonds • Sophia Hohlbauch • Carolyn Hiller-Adams • Kathryn Fink • Sandi Ward • Jo Amy Rice • Jennifer Matthews • Rein Teen Tours • Mike Leary • Mike & Mary Lynn Mallen • Eileen Read • Drew Shula • Clara Lee • Ronald Nichols • Andrew Mueller • Sheila Lodge • Gregory Hytopoulos • Ronald Whitney • William Wellman • Ron Burke • Martin Flam • Craig Hillock • Victoria Shaw • Walter Ailes • Lynn Iavayen • Letitia Harper • Jean Phillips • Jim King • Greg Archbald • Katharina Ivey • Julie Reed • Duncan Abbott • Owen Sanders • Cortney Flores • Brian Lopez • Sally Herman • Angela de Mott • Donniss Galvan • Laura Hess • Spencer Westbrook • Bonnie Passy • Debra Fedaleo • Craig Lewis • Thomas Kelly • Kimberly Moses • Jane Montague • Susan Parker • Barbara Wheeler • Paul Atkinson • Mark Benson • Janet Burki • Sidney Symington • Ruth Ann Rentfrow • Cheryl Briggs • Anne Bittner • Jennifer Kilby • Nina Souders • Cathy Sternstein • Catherine Wagner • Margaret Silverstein • Phyllis Noble • Sarah Raskin • Karen Wade • Cecilia Harris • Michele Van Wyk • Alisa Klein • Karen Dinino • Robert Else • Kaylen Meeker • Robinanne Stancavage • Joan Kent • Sandra Squires • Darin Kuida • Keri Collins • Mary Michel • Marianne Wampler • Alan Turnbull • Marcia Barnett • Dan Segna • Judith Dugan • Constance rutherford • Gloria Hall-Murray • Wesley Roe • Lindsay Coony • Sabina Thomas • John Kross • Catherine Brennan • Louise Ratliff • Pauline Nelson • Kathryn Field • Bruce McDonald • Lindsay Darjany • Theresa Reilly • Anne Ashmore • James Blake • Linda Stirling • Leland Montgomery • Heidi Wieland • Karin van Hoek-Niles • Karen Dron • Rosalie Benitez • Noel Van Slyke • Namino Glantz • Glenn Davis • Pam McLean • Renee Meuret • Lucinda Mclean • Katherine Meter • Marjorie Popper • Dawn Dean • Georganne Alex • Mark Schaedler • Joe Selzler • Faye Scheff • Doreen Edwards • Marjorie Palonen • Lisa Foote • Zachary Eichert • Nancy Nazario • Dennis Holst • James Kennett • Pamela Elliott • Michael Brown • Jennifer Cork • Beth Ruben • Sarah Johnson • Kathryn Wasden • Deborah Reisinger • Forrest Smith • Jeffrey Reisinger • Jack Farris • Pat Spence • Alan Prichard • Gail Morales • Tom Vinetz • Carol Kurtz • Rick Fields • Jason Saltoun-Ebin • Julie Stark • Matt Buckmaster • John Johnson • Lee Scheuermann • Kathleen Linowski • Bryan Mumford • Peter Ivory • Julie Hayes-Nadler • Donna Grubisic • Janne Kukka • John and Ros Gorham • Patricia Lambert • James Young • Page Hiller-Adams • Estelle Ichino • Kathi Smith • Bradley Balukjian • Margaret Callahan • Katya Armistead • Stewart Reid • Sterling Keeley • Rhonda Alvarado • Wayne Ferren • Murry Franklin • Russell Goff • Sylvelin Edgerton • Peggy Shirar • Barbara Edelblute • Russell Riley • Carolyn Koegler • William Talanian • Lauren Steely • Nancy Weiss • Charles Mclaughlin • Mary Rose • John Evarts • Marjorie Poppers • Jeff Phillips • Harold Neufeldt • Elenita Mathew • Susan Horne • Teri Dorin-Guillies • Burt Romotsky • Stephanie Welch • Robert Goettler • John Kuizenga • Lawrence Flynn • Robert Petty • Joanie Burns • Anita Bauer Arnold • Don Brusselars • Charlotte Mountain • Jim Shoemaker • And many more from our community of supporters, view your membership at https://cirweb.networkforgood.com/donors/sign_in

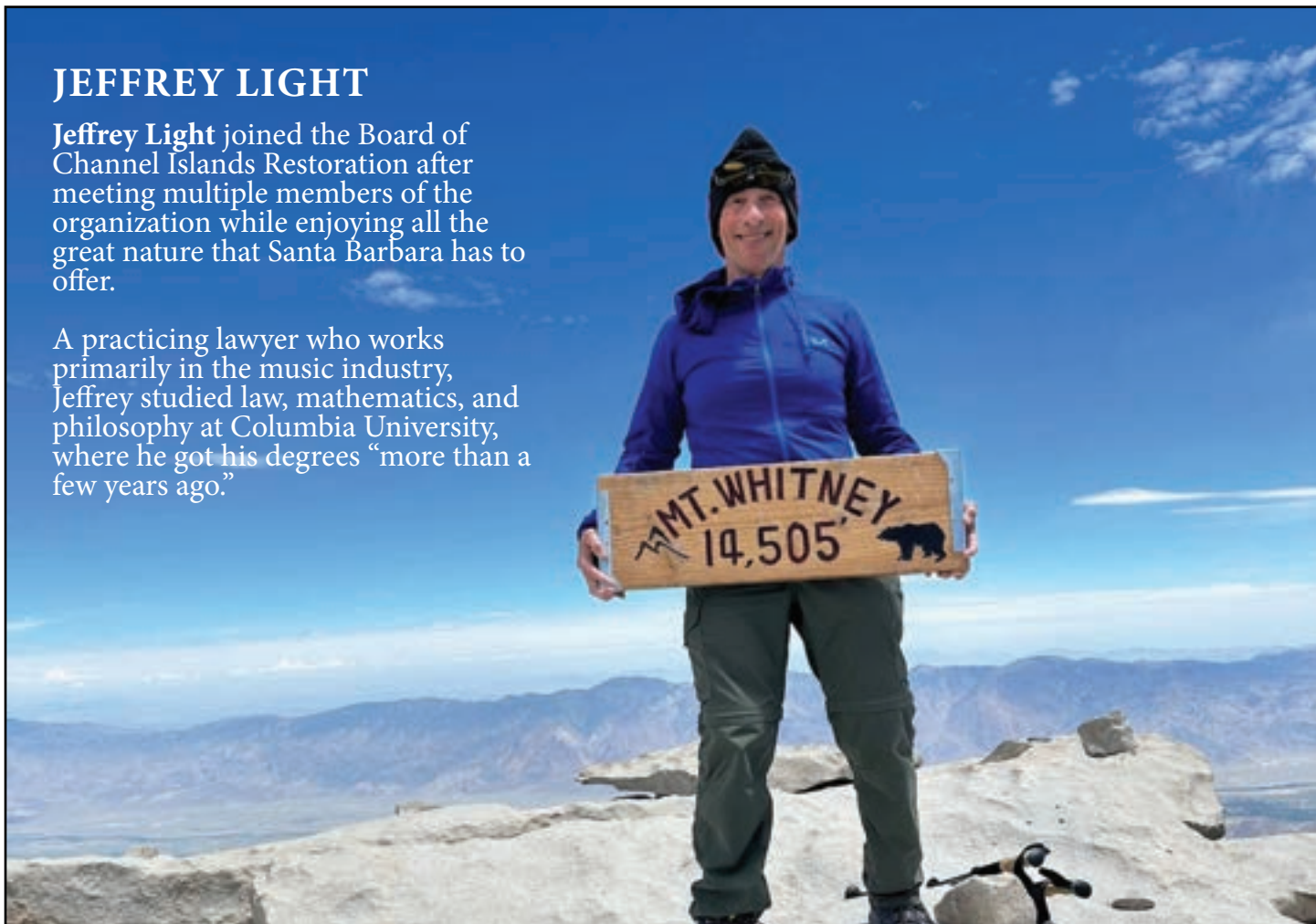
Want to become a member or increase your membership level today? Make a gift at www.cirweb.org/donate
In addition to supporting habitat restoration, your donation will give you access to tiers of benefits, which include invitations to private events, merchandise, virtual talks, and of course our sincere gratitude.

Reaching New Heights with New Board Members

JEFFREY LIGHT

Jeffrey Light joined the Board of Channel Islands Restoration after meeting multiple members of the organization while enjoying all the great nature that Santa Barbara has to offer.

A practicing lawyer who works primarily in the music industry, Jeffrey studied law, mathematics, and philosophy at Columbia University, where he got his degrees “more than a few years ago.”



ALIKOI PARRA

Alikoi Parra is a full-time college student and works as a cultural consultant/monitor. Alikoi is also heavily involved in her Chumash culture. She started working with CIR in 2021 during the Foothills Forever campaign, and enjoyed being able to learn more about the plants her ancestors used that sustained them for thousands of years. The Foothills Forever campaign gave her the opportunity to protect her ancestors' land. Alikoi's current project with CIR is the Chumash Ethnobotanical Garden located on the San Marcos Foothills Preserve.

Alikoi became interested in ethnobotany as a child due to her Grandma Parra being a Chumash medicine woman in Colonia (Oxnard). Alikoi grew up eating roots straight from the ground and drinking her grandmother's herbal teas. Being a traditional singer and dancer, Alikoi firmly believes in restoring, revitalizing, and sustaining her culture which is why she helps run the Chumash Cultural Circle: hi stokoy hil xus (Bear Circle) with the Ygnacio Family in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties which focuses on bringing back traditions that were once banned on her own homelands.



ART LEVITT

Art Levitt, a former media and entertainment executive, recently moved to Santa Barbara to pursue his passion for the environment. After receiving a certificate of environmental studies from UCLA Extension, Art has dedicated his time to working with causes that protect and restore critical habitats. An avid underwater photographer, Art has had the privilege of exploring and photographing the underwater world of the Channel Islands for over 20 years.

“Being involved with Channel Islands Restoration allows me to support a uniquely talented team with a history of success restoring important habitats in places that I love.” Art has been involved in the philanthropy and conservation world, serving as Chief of Staff of the Dalio Foundation. His responsibilities included managing initiatives in Marine Conservation and Global Oceanographic work.

Art’s career in the entertainment industry included positions as CEO of Hard Rock Café International, founding CEO of the movie ticketing company Fandango, and former president of Disney Regional Entertainment. He currently serves on the boards of the Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach and Reef Check Foundation. Art completed the Program for Management Development (P.M.D.) at Harvard University and graduated from Southampton College with a B.A. in Biology, focusing on Marine Science. Art has served on the Walden Woods & Elton John AIDS Foundations boards and resides in Santa Barbara.



AIREONA BONNIE RASCHKE

Aireona Bonnie Raschke, Ph.D. is an interdisciplinary conservation biologist who primarily works in collaborative conservation as both a collaborative leader and facilitator, and a researcher. Aireona is currently the Associate Director of Practice for the Center for Collaborative Conservation out of Colorado State University, and there she specializes in standing up capacity for collaborative efforts across Colorado and the United States as well as directing the Western Collaborative Conservation Network.

Aireona has been in love with the Channel Islands since she first visited Anacapa with her father as a child in the 90s. She has continued to travel to visit them regularly since this first visit to the rocky cliffs of Anacapa. Since then, Aireona has enjoyed no shortage of magic on the islands, including a trip with CIR to San Nicolas in 2018 and her most recent trip to San Miguel in 2022. Aireona is beyond excited to support CIR's amazing work in one of her favorite places in all the world as a member of the board.



Become A Sustaining Member This Year

Join us in preserving the natural beauty of the Channel Islands and mainland. Consider a monthly recurring membership. Not only will you be actively contributing to our restoration efforts, but you also have the option to receive a new San Marcos Foothills Preserve shirt as a token of our appreciation.

**Scan The
QR Code to
Contribute
Today!**



Or send a check with the included remittance envelope to Channel Islands Restoration at
PO Box 40228 Santa Barbara, CA 93140

Receive our newly designed San Marcos Foothills apparel!

Thanks to volunteer Dawn Erickson and Board Member Carol Gravelle, we are thrilled to provide newly designed merchandise and stickers for sustaining CIR members.

Enjoy a complimentary grazing sticker included in this newsletter. Sustaining members of \$10 a month or higher have the option to receive a new CIR t-shirt with the accompanying design.



Santa Cruz Island Restoration Talks Underway: A Letter From Ken Owen, CIR Executive Director

The staff and volunteers at CIR are experiencing an unusually busy summer and fall working on 15 mainland projects. I often get asked with “Channel Islands” in our name why do we do so much work on the mainland, and when are we going to offer volunteer trips on the islands again?

To be sure, CIR has worked with thousands of kids and adults on the Channel Islands over the last 21 years, and the islands are never far from our minds. The more than 60 mainland locations where CIR has worked also contain precious habitat for native animals that have benefited from our work. Even so, CIR is always pursuing opportunities to keep the islands in our name and at the forefront of what we do. With a proposed philanthropy agreement in the works with Channel Islands National Park, CIR hopes to soon raise funds and enlist volunteers to help with restoration projects on East Santa Cruz Island. Starting this spring, CIR plans to collect seed for the Cavern Point restoration project, and we will need plenty of volunteer help. Most of us can hop on a boat and visit the islands any time, but CIR has always offered the opportunity to visit while helping with work that heals past damage done by over-grazing and invasive species. Volunteers can be a part of the solution while seeing aspects of the islands not often seen by other visitors.

Carrying out restoration on the islands can be more complicated and expensive than work on the mainland. To make such work possible, CIR will raise funding for the boat trip, the cost of staff to organize and complete the work, plus supplies and other necessities. Volunteers will be asked to help with the cost of the boat, and CIR will seek contributions from donors to build a restoration fund for Eastern Santa Cruz. With the help of volunteers and donors, CIR hopes to both return to Santa Cruz Island and work on a highly deserving restoration project on that island. This is an opportunity for all our supporters to kick off this important work, and we look forward to seeing volunteers on the islands again!

Sincerely,
Ken Owen

Executive Director
Channel Islands Restoration





CIR'S COSTA RICA EARTHWATCH TRIP

Above: The group trekking out to plant in the Monteverde Cloud Forest Preserve of Coast Rica. Below: A Rattlesnake plant.

Cindy Kimmick
Board Member

In July, CIR sent volunteers to Costa Rica to assist with a pollinator conservation study near the Monteverde Cloud Forest Preserve which protects an area that is 90% virgin cloud forest. In this forest there are over 2,500 plant species, 400 bird species, 100 mammal species, and 120 different types of reptiles and amphibians.

We assisted Dr. Valerie Peters (Eastern Kentucky University) who is studying pollinator communities and how they utilize plant networks at different elevations. The long-term study will hopefully assist in mitigating the effects of climate change by showing which plants will benefit pollinator communities the most at different altitudes providing guidance to local communities in planting “agroforests”. Agroforests encourage local farmers to plant non-crop plants in and around pastures or cultivated crops.

Our service trip was working at higher elevation sites, and we stayed at the lodge next to the entrance



to the Preserve which is on the continental divide, and thanks to our guide pointing out the best viewing spots for resplendent quetzals our first day there. We were able to spot quetzals regularly.

The bird watching was amazing with highlights being a family of Crested Guans, Azure Headed Jays, and nine species of hummingbirds. The hummingbirds hung out at the feeders near the café, and included

species such as the Violet Saberwing, Coppery-headed Emerald, and Purple Throated Mountain Gem. The Saberwing is huge compared to our local species found in Southern California. Also deserving mention are two species of nightingale thrushes which were not remarkable in looks, but whenever we heard their song, we stopped to look for them running through the underbrush. We also identified five species of bat by sound ID with a Wildlife Acoustics

bat detector we had brought along. Other notable sightings were a coral snake, a side-striped palm pit viper which is a small, bright green venomous snake, a python millipede, three teenage coatimundi, and a highland tinamou. The highland tinamou was seen during our guided night hike in the Preserve which was rare to see. Each day we visited different locations in the San Luis Valley ranging from family farms to resorts. In the morning, we collected bees, noted the plants they were on, and recorded the number of flowers of each plant species being studied on each site.

Flower counts were easier than catching the bees, though a bit tedious, as a big hydrangea cluster can have over 300 flowers – we counted enough to get an average, then estimated.

Part of the fun was rediscovering childhood skills such as using a butterfly net, and enjoying the tropical ecosystem. One day (while waving my extended-to-the-max net to collect bees on banana flowers), I had the good luck to observe a family of four white throated capuchin monkeys. They are very people-shy as they raid fruit trees, and are not welcomed by farmers.

We also experienced community conservation in action by visiting farms and a nursery that are implementing agroforestry and growing pollinator-friendly plants. We spent one day planting Peacock Flower (*Caesalpinia pulcherrima*) and Purple Porterweed (*Stachytarpheta frantzii*). In the afternoons, we double checked our collected specimens to make sure they were correctly labelled, filled in any missing information, and since we were on the last trip of the season, helped prep the specimens for transport.

As with other Earthwatch trips, one of the most enjoyable things is working with other like-minded individuals. Besides our CIR volunteers, our group consisted of Dr. Peters, her grad students, and

several local drivers and guides, some of whom helped with collecting. According to Dr. Valerie Peters, in our week at Monteverde we collected the greatest variety of bee species of any other week of the study this year. I attribute this to the CIR volunteers all being very detail oriented and experienced, although none of us had worked with bees previously. Jamie Uyehara works for the USDA Forest Service and came on the trip to learn more about pollinator species. She started out as a bird behavioral ecologist, then moved on to monitoring threatened and endangered amphibians and steelhead.

Working to manage watersheds for the ecosystem and conserving biodiversity, is a responsibility Jamie

takes very seriously. She supports CIR because she says, "Public agencies can't do it alone and that is why partners such as CIR are so important moving forward. Eco-volunteerism is extremely vital to many projects, and I hope to do another Earthwatch trip for CIR volunteers next year. Be on the lookout for an email survey soon if you are interested."

These are the research/monitoring projects that you'll be able to vote on: Brazil – reforestation & wildlife, Baja – whale/whale shark, Andorran Pyrenees – wildlife and plant, Costa Rica – pollinator/agroforestry, and possibly Mongolia – wildlife/community conservation (this one's less related to CIR and the Channel Islands, but I've had some requests).



Above: A resplendent quetzal. Bird watching was amazing in Costa Rica.
Below: A side striped palm pit viper. Images by Cindy Kimmick and Jamie Uyehara.



Visiting the Torrey Pines Grove

Scott Orlosky
Board Member

The day started out cool and gray at the Ventura Harbor. Fifty or so guests boarded the “Islander” sight-seeing boat operated by Island Packers. Today’s destination: Santa Rosa Island, the second largest of the Channel Islands, to spend the day wandering the trails, taking in the history, biology, ecology and yes, the beauty of the island.

The particular adventure that I had planned was to be part of a small group to visit the rare Torrey Pine forest on the northeastern end of the island. Known for their stark beauty as well as their rarity, the Santa Rosa

stand of trees is one of only two in the world – the other being in northern San Diego County. These trees have been declared rare and critically endangered by the California Native Plant Society and the International Union for Conservation of Nature. But first we had 25 miles of ocean to cross.

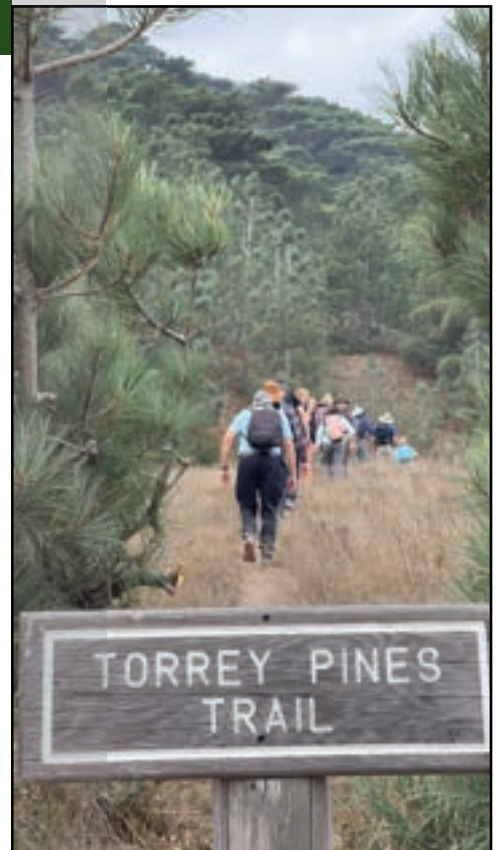
As if to set our weather expectations early, we had a gentle crossing with the skies slowly turning from foggy gray to a summery blue. Our companions on the crossing included a few humpback whales, scores of common dolphins surfing the boat wake, and perhaps a dozen or so different seabird species feeding at the surface.

We paused for 20 minutes or so to enjoy the whales and marine life, then headed off to our destination, arriving around 11:00am. We caught a glimpse of the Torrey Pines as we approached the island and were amazed to see the extent to which they covered this part of the island and how healthy this stand of trees seemed to be.

Now that we had spotted these wonderfully beautiful and rare pines, we were anxious to hit the trail. The round-trip to the pines and back was about seven miles, so we knew we would have to set a strong pace to get there and have enough time to enjoy the grove.

We disembarked, had a safety talk by the resident ranger, broke into our various hiking groups: Archeology, biology, ecology, (pine-ology?). We were equipped with two walkie talkies, a leader and a “sweep” to make sure no one got lost on the trail, then we were off.

After about an hour of hiking, we could see that we were just below the edge of the forest that we were all anxious to see. A small wooden sign marked the turn off and up we climbed, gaining about 300 feet on a winding trail that took us up to the ridge line and into the heart of the Torrey Pine forest.





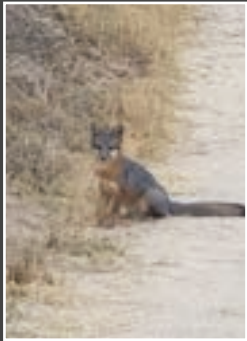
On Stunning Santa Rosa Island

People have lived on this island for the past 13,000 years and despite all of the human-like “harms” that people naturally inflict on the land, the more recent past 50 years or so has been a time of restoration. The largest predators on the island are ravens, skunks, and foxes. Some 100 or so bird species are active, some amphibians and snakes, a myriad of plants both native and non-native, and of course a wide variety of sea life.

We were lucky enough to spot an adorable island fox early in the hike. Looks notwithstanding, we were warned that they can be very stealthy and will readily plunder your trail snacks if given half a chance.

We paused for pictures then reacquired the trail and headed up towards the pines. Although classically wind-blown pines clinging to life on the edge of a cliff comes to mind, these trees were inland enough from the prevailing winds that they grew tall, 50 feet or more with wide canopies. The trunks were close together with their canopies intertwined, creating a quiet, sheltering atmosphere. We were nestled in the presence of what could possibly be the remains of a Pleistocene era forest.

Photos by Lauren Harris and Caleb Stumberg



The Channel Island Fox

The Santa Rosa Island Fox (*Urocyon littoralis santarosae*) plays a crucial role in the ecosystem of Santa Rosa Island. This island fox subspecies helps control populations of small mammals and insects, which in turn has positive effects on the island's plant communities.

We had made it there and earned our lunchtime break amongst these long-needled conifers.

Carefully examining the forest floor litter, we observed the prickly cones, seeds, and their 12-inch-long pine needles in clusters of five around the tips of the branches. From our high perch we enjoyed the aquamarine coves and ocean views below us.

We knew that lunchtime would be short, but we found we could loop back through the forest as we descended to get one last “taste” of this rare and ancient community of trees.

But now it was time to make our way back to the boat, each visitor at their own pace and their own takeaway from our Torrey experience. The weather had been perfect, and our luck held out all the way back to the dock in Ventura. With even more whale and dolphin activity, we realized it was dinnertime, and sushi was on the menu.

The dolphins created huge whirlpools to effectively cage in great schools of small fish while whales shared in the resulting feeding frenzy. We sailed around amongst this spectacular feeding frenzy for maybe 45 minutes or more.

At times the activity was so chaotic that it was hard to figure out where to look; half a dozen or more whales spouting from blow holes and diving, dolphins leaping excitedly in the air, and diving birds scooping up their share of the spoils.

It was an incredible sight. Eventually our own mealtime was calling and we left the frenzied activity behind.

As we approached the dock, each of us felt a sweet satisfaction that included picture-postcard weather, all the marine life activity, a satisfying hike, and time spent in the shade of a very special pine forest. That day could be summed up in one word: Perfect.

Sheep Help Save Lives!

Channel Islands Restoration (CIR) is conducting carefully prescribed sheep grazing to restore the native grassland at the San Marcos Foothills Preserve.

Native grasslands used to inhabit millions of acres of California, providing nesting opportunities for birds such as the Grasshopper sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*) and the Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*).

Now, very little is left. One place that native grassland remains is on the San Marcos Foothills Preserve, where it is dominated by Purple needlegrass (*Stipa pulchra*) the tall bunch grasses you see on the mesa. However, it is threatened by invasive grasses from Europe such as Ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*).

Although uncontrolled grazing has caused damage in many regions, carefully designed and timed grazing programs support the growth of native plants and reduce the number of non-native grasses.

Grazing also has an important effect on fire safety. In November 2018, the Cave Fire was extinguished at the San Marcos Foothills Preserve. County Fire Chief Rob Hazard credits CIR's grazing program with saving the neighborhoods around the San Marcos Foothills Preserve:

“By all accounts most firefighters were convinced the Cave Fire would burn into the developed neighborhoods in the North La Cumbre area and had the potential to result in significant structure loss. This did not happen, no structures were lost, and the primary reason was the buffer provided by the grazed areas in the Preserve.”

- Santa Barbara County Fire Chief, Rob Hazard

Below: Sheep graze at the San Marcos Foothills Preserve during the fall grazing cycle, which lasts until early November. Photos by Morey Spellman

CIR recognizes and wishes to remind us all that the beautiful land we all enjoy in this region is the unceded territory of the indigenous Chumash people. We respect their wisdom and commitment to the land and seek their advice and participation in our work. CIR is committed to fostering diversity and inclusion in the environmental movement, pursuing equitable outcomes in our work, and fostering a just and healthy environment for all.

Where Can I Learn More?

If you have any questions or comments about this program, please contact Ken Owen, at 805-448-5726 or Jack Anderson from Cuyama Lamb, at 510-734-8334. Funding for this program is provided by The Santa Barbara Fire Safe Council and donations from neighbors and other supporters. More community support is vitally needed for this program.





The staff of the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden (SBBG) and Channel Islands Restoration gather for a group photo at Elings Park in Santa Barbara, California.

ELINGS PARK TRANSFORMATION PROJECT: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR RESTORATION, RESEARCH, AND COMMUNITY

Lauren Harris
Staff Ecologist

A new joint effort from the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden (SBBG) and Channel Islands Restoration (CIR) is aimed towards restoring native habitat at Elings Park in Santa Barbara, California. Elings Park is a 230-acre publicly accessible landscape with numerous trails

and recreational spaces, and spectacular ocean views.

The project is meant to improve climate resilience, enhance biological diversity, and promote community engagement and well-being. SBBG Director of Conservation & Research, Dr. Denise Knapp, has developed

a plan to restore the space. First, the one-acre site is delineated and non-native species are manually removed. To further reduce the presence of non-native plants, the plots are laid with either black plastic for solarization or cardboard and mulch for sheet mulching to control weeds. After a period of a couple months, the tarps are removed, and planting will commence. Plants have been purchased from various native plant suppliers and will be installed in the field over the course of a couple months. Preparation and installation of gopher cages as well as irrigation, cardboard collection, and community volunteers are important for project success. Community engagement is a critical part of this project. Not

only will our team rely on their handiwork to accomplish much of the project's physical tasks, but the feedback provided by the public is integral to environmental planning. Four community forums were held in late summer and early fall to hear from members of the public on Elings Park Transformation Project. Topics ranged from environmental concerns to design ideas. Community members were also invited to participate in "BioBlitz" events in the spring to help catalog the biodiversity of the park. The BioBlitzes, community forums, and environmental educational experiences facilitated by this project increase our community's positive impact on and knowledge of the environment of the region

we call home. On September 16th, SBBG hosted the first of many volunteer workdays and nature walks for the Transformation Project at Elings Park.

At 9 am, a group gathered in the center of the park for a guided pollinator walk led by SBBG Terrestrial Invertebrate Conservation Ecologist, Dr. Sarah Cusser and Conservation Technician, Kylie Etter. The two gave an insightful talk to the group about the importance of pollinators and their impact on plants, biodiversity, and people. As the group moved from the main parking lot to the mesa above, the two conservationists pointed out various floral resources and explained their relationship to specific types of pollinators. For example, bumblebees (*Bombus spp.*) pollinate the flowers they visit through a method called buzz pollination or sonication. With this technique, bumblebees move their flight muscles rapidly and cause pollen to be released from

the anthers of the flower. For many plant species, this is a necessary process as their anthers are poricidal and fused to have only a single hole through which pollen must be manually released. A good example of one of these plants is our native Greenspot nightshade (*Solanum douglasii*), and its commercially grown relative, the tomato (*Solanum lycopersicum*), native to South America. However, due to the commercial and cosmopolitan distribution of the tomato, it is also grown in places where its native pollinators do not exist. In these cases, gardeners might resort to a tuning fork or electric toothbrush to replicate the plant-pollinator interaction. This is a good example of the impact of biodiversity losses on the rest of the ecosystem; the evolutionary relationships between pollinators and plants are often fragile and impacts on one will have effects on the other.

Dr. Knapp and the SBBG team are researching these plant-pollinator relationships to improve

conservation and restoration efforts. At Elings Park, Dr. Knapp explores these main questions: (1) Which plants support which organisms? (2) How does the abundance and diversity of pollinators compare before and after restoration? (3) How do different restoration techniques impact restoration success? (4) How do the pollinator-plant relationships of locally native plants compare to those relationships with non-locally native plants? This analysis will help conservationists and restorationists make more informed decisions when it comes to selecting plant palettes, choosing between sheet mulching and plastic solarization, or even whether assisted migration is a good choice for their site and region. We have a lot to learn about the way the world is held together, and projects like the Elings Park Transformation Project not only illuminate those ecological relationships but also strengthen our community relationships for the betterment of both people and place.

Restoration work at Elings Park. Images by Julia McHugh



**THANK YOU
TO ALL OF OUR
GENEROUS
CONTRIBUTING
PICNIC VENDORS!**

We wish to extend our thanks to all the local vendors who contributed to making our raffle and silent auction a success:

Santa Barbara Adventure Company, REI, Mountain Air Sports, Shoreline Beach Cafe, Third Window Brewing and the Beach House in Santa Barbara, Real Cheap Sports, Patagonia, Harbor Cove Cafe and Margarita Villa in Ventura, The Dutchess of Ojai, Sea Fresh at Oxnard Harbor, the Aquarium of the Pacific and most especially Island Packers who helped us in this and so many other ways. Please show your appreciation by giving them your business and tell 'em CIR sent you!

The Annual CIR Membership Picnic



CIR members enjoy the view at Rincon Bluffs Park during the summer membership picnic.

Carol Gravelle
Board Member

The annual CIR Membership Picnic returned to Rincon Beach Park in Carpinteria this year. On September 10, over 50 members enjoyed a sunny afternoon with welcoming ocean breezes and the companionship of fellow supporters and friends.

The event, free to members, included appetizers and lunch including a variety of prepared sandwiches, vegetables, fruit, beverages, and home-baked cookies. Attendees enjoyed spending time with old and newer friends, some not seen since last year's event, and meeting new like-minded

supporters. Guests were treated to a raffle with items generously donated by local establishments and supporters, and attendees participated in an exciting Silent Auction, bidding on items hinted at but not seen. All items included were valued at or over a declared amount, and the mystery of the exact contents added an extra layer of excitement to the auction.

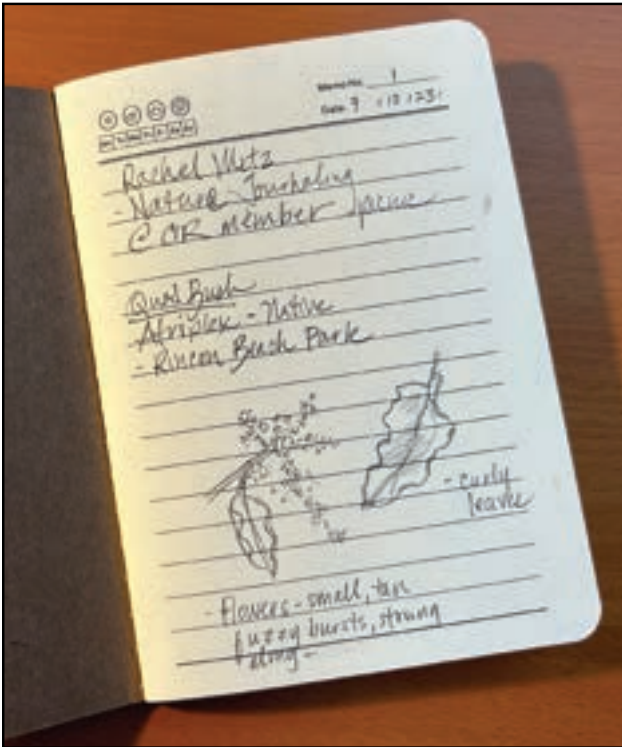
CIR Executive Director, Ken Owen, welcomed the gathered members, shared his thoughts about the past year, and expressed thanks for members' ongoing support. Board president, Connie Jenkins, also expressed thanks and recognized outgoing

Board President, Cindy Kimmick, for her many years of service and leadership on the board. Doug Morgan, CIR Operations Manager, presented a short recap of this year's field operations and also thanked members for their participation in volunteer field work and for their financial support of CIR's mission.

Rachel Metz, an Environmental Philosopher and School & Community Programs Specialist at the Sea Center in Santa Barbara, offered a workshop in nature journaling to interested participants.

Nature journaling is the practice of drawing or writing in response to

A Return to Rincon Bluffs Park in Carpinteria



Rachel Metz offered nature journaling at the picnic.
Photos by Carol Gravelle and Morey Spellman



Connie Jenkins (CIR President) and Ken Owen (CIR Executive Director) announce the raffle and auction winners at the picnic.

nature. In a notebook, participants can collect and organize observations, questions, descriptions and make connections through drawings and words.

workshop were already longtime journalers, but to others it was a delightful new experience which they intend to carry forward.

One does not need to be an artist or naturalist to start a nature journal, and skills will develop over time. The process invites the participant to slow down and give careful observation to particular components of the natural world, inspiring curiosity and knowledge-seeking.

Workshop attendees were invited to closely observe quail bush (*Atriplex Lentiformis*) specimens and sketch their observations, adding descriptive notes.



Some participants in the

Guests mingle at the picnic during a beautiful sunny day on the Central Coast of California.

Trail Restoration with Gerry Ching

Morey Spellman
Marketing Manager

We have embarked on a remarkable trail restoration journey over the past year to enhance the trails at the West Mesa of the San Marcos Foothills Preserve in Santa Barbara.

After joining forces with a community coalition and saving the West Mesa in 2021 from impending development, Channel Islands Restoration stepped up to steward the 101-acre property.

As winter turned to spring in 2023, we were fortunate to gain extraordinary help from Gerry Ching, who single handily founded and has run our boots-on-the-ground 'Trail Team G' operations as Volunteer Trail Manager ever since.

Trail Team G consists of regularly rotating volunteers who share our commitment to enhancing the outdoor experience for everyone in Santa Barbara County.

The primary goal of our trail maintenance program has been to transform these trails into accessible and sustainable paths for hikers, naturalists, birders, educators, and outdoor enthusiasts, while alleviating off-trail pressure and use. That means stable footing, clearly marked trails, and an overall improved hiking experience for the public while protecting the integrity of off-trail areas and wildlife.

Restoration started in November of last year which provided the ideal conditions for trail maintenance.

Taking advantage of the soft ground and cooler temperatures, Trail Team G made the most of their efforts by surveying trails, clearing grass, and creating waterbars.

Each month, Gerry and the staff at CIR organize trail days to help maintain the Foothills, while keeping activities light and fun for volunteers. Our community members only work during the cool morning hours to minimize efforts during the middle of the day, when the sun is at its zenith.

Gerry reflects that, "The team has accomplished a lot this year and volunteers have been critical for helping the cross-connect trails, which were once overgrown with grass. These trails serve as a vital link between the west side trail and



After helping to save the West Mesa in 2021, Channel Islands Restoration stepped up to steward the 101-acre property.

the east side main trail. They offer a quick route across the West Mesa for everyone who utilizes the Preserve."

Recently, the San Marcos Foothills West Mesa came under new management thanks to incredible support from the County of Santa Barbara.

CIR has worked closely with the County during the transition period, and our team continues to conduct ongoing research as well as restoration to help protect the native plants and animals on the entire San Marcos Foothills Preserve. This creates a safe space for continued public enjoyment and recreation. We have also worked closely with indigenous Chumash people to seek their advice and encourage participation in our ongoing projects.

You can join Gerry and Trail Team



Gerry and the staff at CIR organize trail days that keep activities light for volunteers.

Each month for volunteer trail work. CIR would like to thank all our Trail Team G volunteers for their dedication to the trails we cherish.

For those who want to pick up a shovel and join the fun, we are

searching for passionate naturalists, hiking enthusiasts, and members of the community who share our enthusiasm for trail maintenance to help enhance the outdoors for everyone who visits the San Marcos Foothills Preserve.



You can join Gerry and Trail Team G each month for their ongoing trail work at the San Marcos Foothills West Mesa Preserve.

Channel Islands Restoration
PO Box 40228
Santa Barbara, CA 93140

The Island Insider

*Print Issue Opt Out: Please notify our staff at
volunteer@cirweb.org if you no longer wish to receive
future printed editions of The Island Insider.*

www.cirweb.org | contact@cirweb.org | (805) 448-2791

