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Dear ,

Our Conservancy and River Park owe a debt of gratitude to our volunteers.



This month, volunteer work parties scrubbed graffiti at Clevenger Canyon and planted native plants at Riverpath Del Mar. Other volunteers led hikes or advanced our message of habitat conservation.

A social media share. A donation. Collecting a stray piece of trash on the trail. A smile for our hardworking staff.

We appreciate your time and good energy. We can thank the restorative power of nature -- which we protect so dearly -- for bringing out the kindness and spirit of volunteerism in all of us.

RIVER VALLEY NEWS

C2C Challenge: Accepted and completed!



November was a big month for the [Coast to Crest Challenge](#).

Finishers of the hiking series (above, clockwise from left) included: Anne Yilmaz; Charlie Kahle, Bobbie Wright, Dedette Edwards; Thomas and Stacey Laemmel; Stephen Mazurek; Jeff Jerterberg and his buddy Barth; DaveDohren; Donna Nasielski.



And these finishers, (left, clockwise from left): Elissa Pettengill; Elena and Katya Pyuvi and friends; Olga Ruiz and friends, and Gina Kackman.

BIRD OF THE MONTH California Scrub-Jay By Ranger Dave Hekel

California Scrub-Jays populate the scrub, oak woodlands, and suburban yards of the Pacific Seaboard from extreme southern British Columbia, Canada, through Baja California, Mexico. They are very common in the San Dieguito River Park. Look for



California Scrub-Jays in oak scrub and oak woodland areas. In general, this species has a blue head, wings, and tail, a gray-brown back, grayish underparts, and white eyebrows. The throat is whitish with a blue necklace. The call -- or "screech" -- is harsh and scratchy.

The scrub-jay eats mostly insects and fruit during spring and summer, switching to nuts and seeds and especially acorns during fall and winter. To get at the meat of an acorn, California Scrub-Jays hold the nut between their feet and hammer at it with their stout bills. The hooked bill gives extra power to its grip as the bird hammers acorns open. Once the shell is split, the scrub-jay steadies the nut with its lower mandible and pecks at it with the hooked upper mandible to open the shell wider and pluck out the meat.

Like many members of the crow and jay family, California Scrub-Jays have a

mischievous streak. They've been caught stealing acorns from Acorn Woodpecker caches, and some even steal acorns they've watched other jays hide. When these birds hide their own acorns, they check their surroundings for other jays that may be watching. The brain-to-body mass ratio of adult scrub-jays rivals that of chimpanzees and is dwarfed only by that of humans. Scrub jays are also the only non-primate or non-dolphin shown to plan ahead for the future. Studies have shown that they can remember the locations of more than 200 food caches, as well as the food item in each cache and its rate of decay. California Scrub-Jays are known to summon their fellows to screech over the body of a dead jay. The birds' cacophonous "funerals" can last for up to half an hour.

COMMUNITY PROGRAM SURVEY Talk to us!



We are determined to improve what we do. Please share your thoughts about our programs by completing our Community Program Survey.

The survey is completely anonymous and takes less than five minutes to complete. Thanks so much for participating.

[Open the Community Program Survey.](#)

Inlet dredging completed



Annual excavation of the San Dieguito River inlet ended earlier this month.

Lagoon basins are getting good tidal flushing as the mighty San Dieguito flows unvexed to the sea.

As an added benefit, workers spread the excavated sand onto the beach south of the river channel.

Southern California Edison, which funded the San Dieguito Wetlands Restoration Project more than a decade ago, is responsible for maintaining the inlet.

Exploring Bernardo Bay

It was great to make the nature connection at Bernardo Bay with fifth-grade students from High Tech Elementary North County.



Working together at All Alliance Meeting



During an All Alliance Meeting hosted by the Climate Science Alliance, we presented on joint projects such as the Hiking Expedition and A Pollinator's Paradise.

Hands-on lessons for home-schooled kids

Staffers at Sikes Adobe hosted 25 homeschooled students and their parents and siblings.

The educational visit included butter churning, gardening and a short hike on the Coast to Crest Trail to learn about native plants and the Battle of Mule Hill.



Learning local lore -- and English



On Wednesdays, instructor Anita Tallman of Poway Adult School likes to take her English as a Second Language students on field trips to local points of interest.

It's a good way for them to learn about the area, she says, and to listen to the speech of other native English speakers, such as Steve and Anita -- two of our docents at Sikes Adobe.

Staff spotlight: Andy Lam

Introducing Andy Lam, a UC San Diego senior and our newest intern.

Andy is researching how our youth education programs influence the public's perception of the environment.

"I believe we need to address our environmental issues by reaching our future generations early in life," Andy says. We agree.



Welcome aboard, Andy!

Bronze Awards for conservation



These young conservationists from Girl Scout Troop 2104 in Del Sur are earning Bronze Awards by helping to preserve animal habitats.

Ava, Jasmine, Bella, Rachel and Ainsley worked with Ranger Hilary to plant native plants, which support birds, insects and other wildlife.

Great job, girls!

Suzanne Lichter: Volunteer of the Year



Here's Suzanne Lichter, who received honors as our Volunteer of the Year during the annual North County Philanthropy Council Awards luncheon at the Omni La Costa Resort.

Sue serves as our ambassador with partner organizations to address fire safety in the Santa Fe Valley.

She was instrumental in building capacity for the Rancho Santa Fe Fire Safe Council.

Congrats, Sue!

Yes on safeguarding our countryside



The Conservancy's Board of Directors is endorsing [Safeguard Our San Diego Countryside \(SOS\)](#), a ballot initiative to give residents an important voice in how and where housing is built.

SOS requires voter approval for any County of San Diego General Plan amendment that would bring significant housing increases to rural and semi-rural areas.

The measure has qualified for the March 3, 2020, ballot.



This clutch of hearty hikers completed 7.26 miles of trekking at Lake Hodges as part of the Coast to Crest Trail Challenge Guided Hike Series.

UPSTREAM

Dec. 1: Holiday fun at Sikes Adobe

Families can create Victorian ornaments and table centerpieces -- like the ones settlers from old town Bernardo used to make -- during a Festive Farmhouse Holiday Celebration 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Dec. 1 at the Sikes Adobe Historic Farmstead. We'll decorate cookies, sip hot drinks, play holiday music and tour the farmstead. Donations

of \$3 per person are requested. Please contact Leana Bulay with questions: Leana@sdrp.org .



Dec. 14: All about owls

We're all about owls from 10 to 11 a.m. Dec. 14 at La Colonia Community Center, 715 Valley Ave., Solana Beach.

San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy and Living Coast Discovery Center are hosting Hooterific, a family-friendly presentation about owls' unique adaptations for survival. Registration is required and is limited to 50 people.

[Register for Hooterific!](#)

Please contact Ana Lutz-Johnson with questions: ana@sdrvc.org or 858-755-6956.



DOWNSTREAM



Nov. 17: Pollinator garden planting

Our Pollinator Garden Planting Event drew nearly two dozen volunteers to River Path Del Mar.

Members of Boy Scout Troop 271 dug into the project, which included the planting of 150 native, pollinator-friendly plants such as sages, monkey flowers and bee plants.

We thank our volunteers, and so do the butterflies, honeybees and hummingbirds!

BACKWARD GLANCE



That was some heavy rain in late November. But it didn't match rains of the early 1980s that swelled the river and lagoon basins and left much of the Del Mar Fairgrounds underwater.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

DECEMBER

<p>Sundays, 12/8, 12/15, 12/22, 12/29 Sikes Adobe Historic Farmstead Open for Public Tours</p>	<p>Thursday, 12/26 Boxing Day Hike to the Summit</p>	<p>Friday, 12/13 Shooting Star Geminids Party</p>	<p>Saturdays, 12/7 Nature Touch Table</p>
<p>Sundays, 12/8, 12/15, 12/22, 12/29 North San Diego Certified Farmers Market</p>			<p>Saturday, 12/14 Hooterific! Grand Opening Santa Ysabel Nature Center</p>
<p>Sunday, 12/8 Del Dios Trail Half Marathon and 10K Bike Warehouse Demo Volunteer Trail Maintenance</p>			<p>Saturday 12/21 Oceanside-Vista-Carlsbad Christmas Bird Count Volunteer Habitat Restoration Nature Touch Table</p>
<p>Sunday, 12/15 Grasslands Trek</p>			<p>Saturday, 12/28 Escondido Christmas Bird Count</p>

[Open Full River Park Calendar](#)



Please help boost our visibility and outstanding reputation by sharing a brief story about an experience you've had with us. [Write a review for GreatNonprofits.](#)

Thank you!



Get in touch with the Conservancy: sdrvc@sdrvc.org | sdrvc.org



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