

# UC Santa Barbara

## Newsletters

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NCOS News - March 2021

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## UC **SANTA BARBARA** North Campus Open Space Restoration Project

**NCOS NEWS**

*March 2021*



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### **UPDATES**

#### ***LAST CALL: T-Shirt Art Competition***

There is still time to send us your NCOS inspired artwork for the Grand Opening t-shirt competition - we're extending the deadline to March 31st! We have received a few great submissions so far, and would love to see more. Photographs are also accepted. Please send your submissions and any questions to [ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu](mailto:ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu).

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#### ***Blooming Wildflowers and Vegetation Maintenance on the Mesa***

Earlier this winter, seeds and seedlings of various annual wildflower species were [spread and planted in plots on the Mesa](#). We have been irrigating the plots to help sustain the seedlings during this dry winter so that they may drop seeds that will sprout more wildflowers next winter and spring. Recently, California buttercups have been blooming well in some of the plots.



**Flowering California Buttercup (*Ranunculus Californicus*) and Blue-eyed Grass (*Sisyrinchium bellum*) on the Mesa.**

Another way we are helping the wildflowers thrive, and making room for other plants on the slopes of the Mesa is by removing some of the dead stalks of native annual saltmarsh aster (*Symphyotrichum subulatum*) that grew profusely last year. CCBER restoration staff have been bundling up the stalks for other uses such as erosion control.





Top image: CCBER staff remove dead stalks from last year's growth of native annual saltmarsh aster (*Symphyotrichum subulatum*), which are then bundled up for other uses on site (bottom image).

### ***Latest NCOS Trail User Observational Study***

Since the Wells-Elings Marsh trail at NCOS officially opened to the public at the end of 2018, we have conducted observational studies of trail use two to three times per year in an effort to document and understand trends in

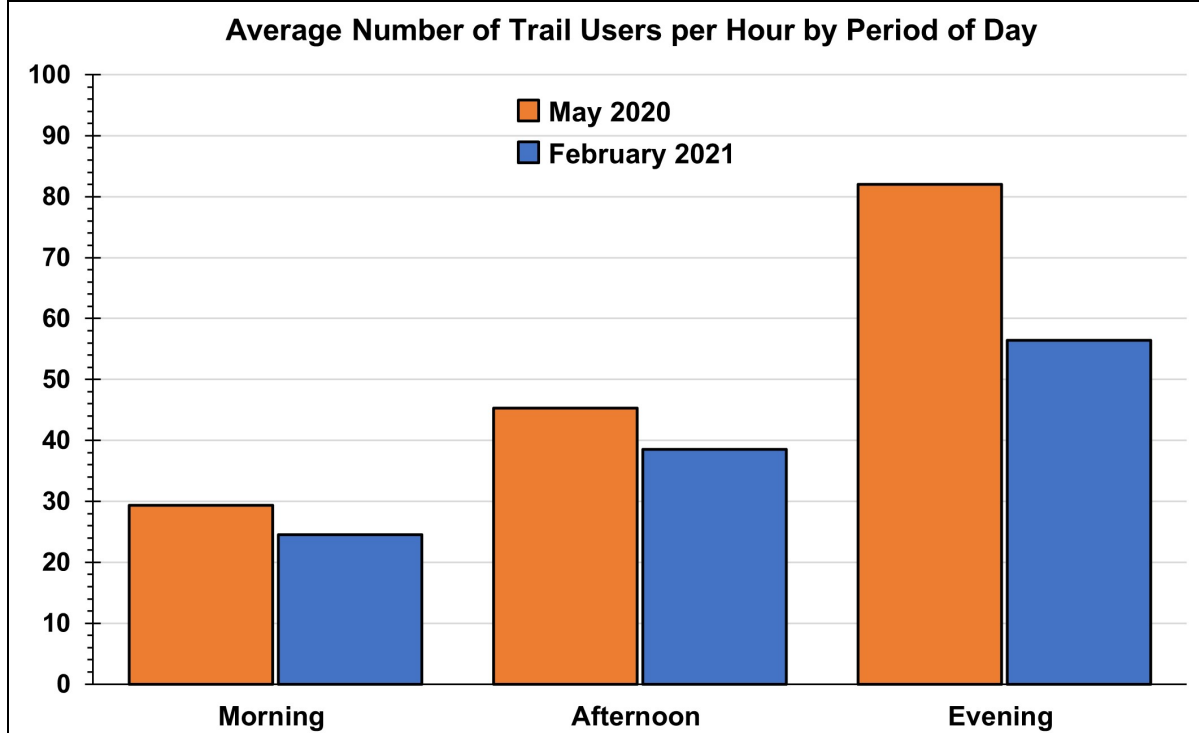


activities, and to see where improvements in outreach and education may be needed, such as new signage.

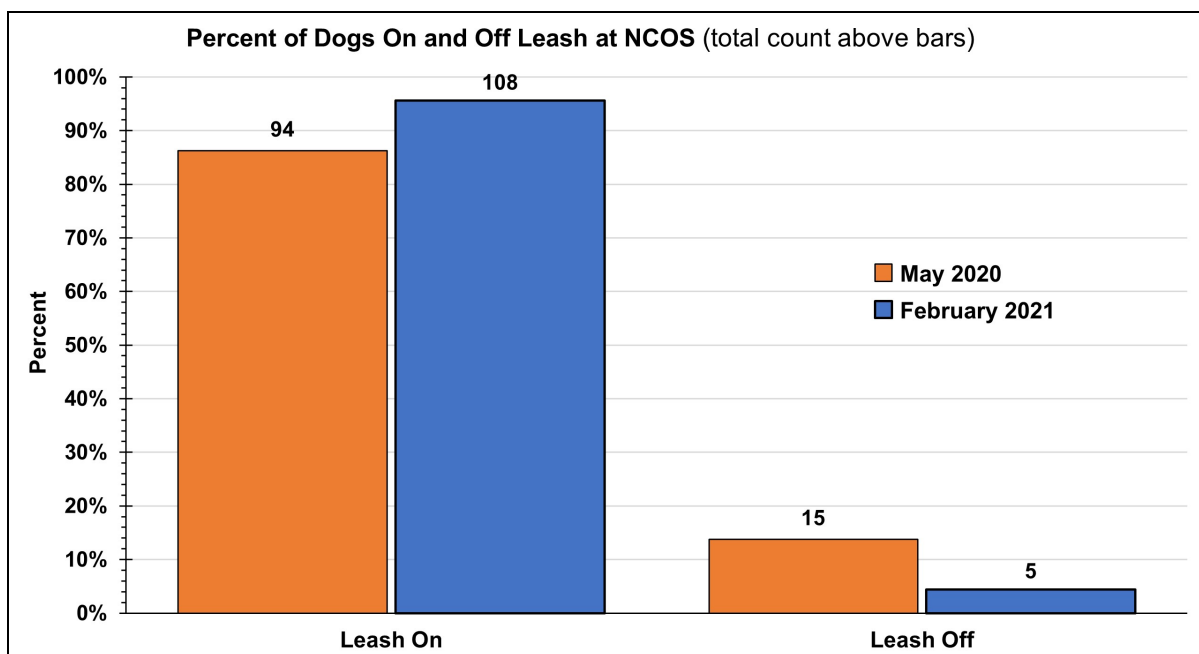


Last month we carried out the second observational study conducted during this time of COVID-19 pandemic safety measures. Data collection was conducted by a UCSB student for 1.5 hours at a time, distributed evenly across three daytime periods (morning, early afternoon, and early evening) at three of the main trail access points (Whittier Drive, Phelps Creek, Venoco Road).

Compared with data collected during the previous survey in May 2020, there were less people on the trail per hour at any time of day, and especially in the early evening (see first chart below). This could be an influence of the shorter days and cooler weather in the winter compared with spring. On a positive note, the number of dogs off leash was much less than that observed in May last year (see second chart below). Help us get that number down to zero!



Bar chart of the average number of people observed per hour on the NCOS Marsh trail in May 2020 and February 2021.



Bar chart of the percent of dogs being walked on and off leash on the NCOS Marsh trail (total count of dogs observed are above bars) during observational studies in May 2020 and February 2021.

### Devereux Slough Hydrology Update

In [last month's newsletter](#), we described how the heavy rain on January 28 led to Devereux Slough breaching the berm at the beach and emptying into the sea. The breach carved out a channel in the beach more than 300 feet wide and down to nearly sea level. This allowed tidal flow to enter in and out of the slough, and reach all the way into the upper arms in NCOS. The tidal fluctuation lasted for about two weeks after the breach (left half of chart below), and during a period of muted tides (middle part of chart below), the beach berm began to build up again so that during the subsequent period of high tides, seawater entered the slough but could not flow back out (see

the right half of the chart below).

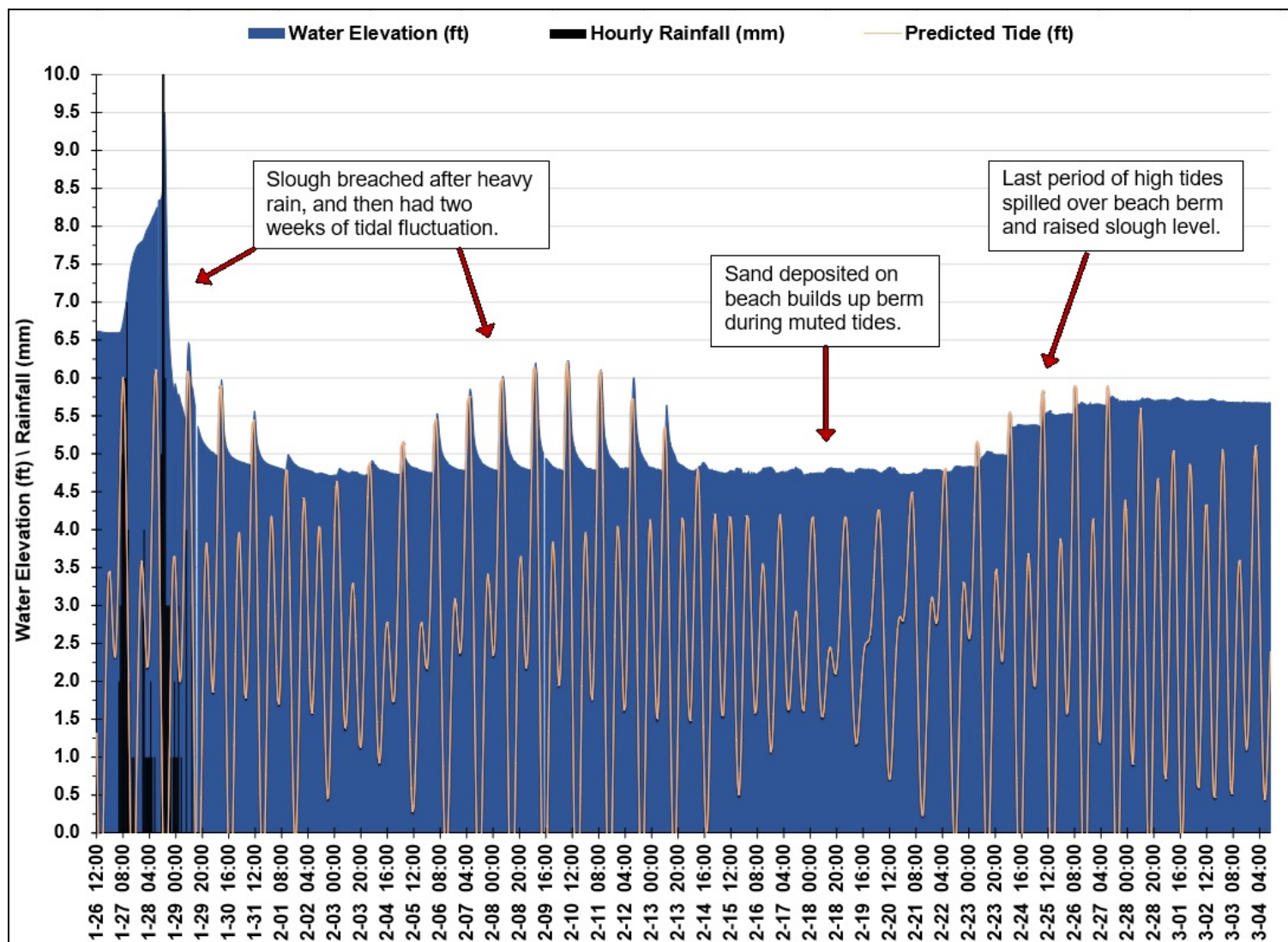
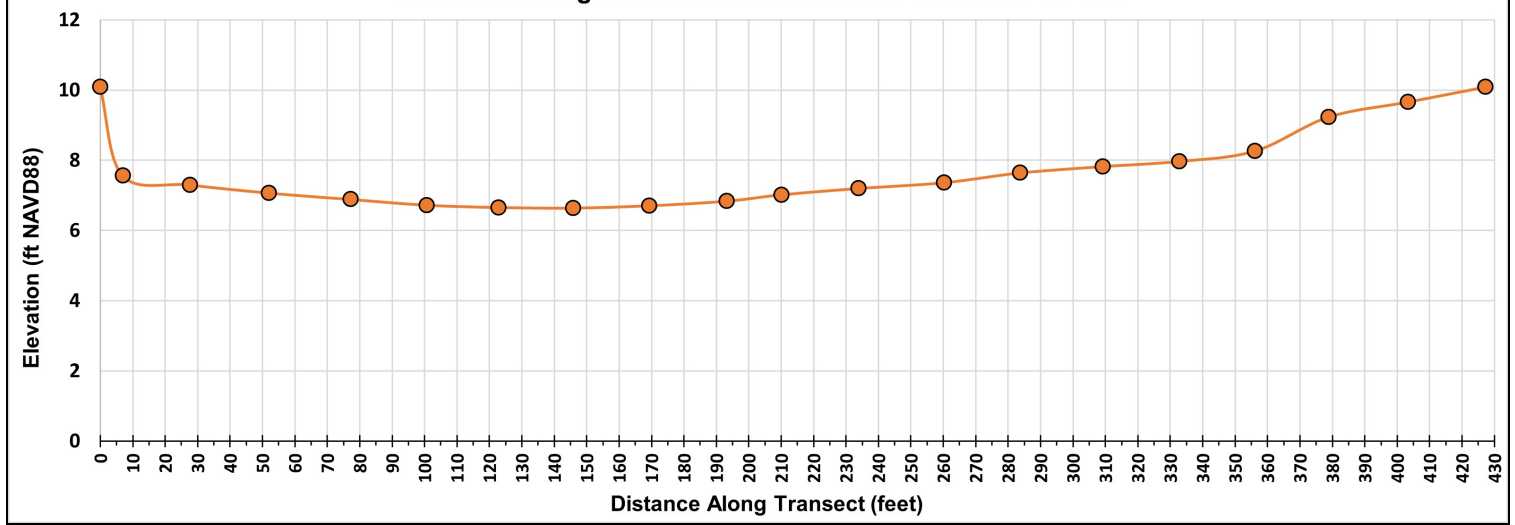


Chart showing the influence of rainfall and tides on changes in the water elevation in Devereux Slough,  
January 26 to March 4, 2021.

An elevation profile survey of the breach zone at the beach on February 25 indicated that sand had begun building up on the beach berm so that the lowest point was above 6 feet (see chart below).

Devereux Slough Beach Berm Elevation Profile: 02-25-2021



Elevation profile chart of the breach zone in the beach berm at the mouth of Devereux Slough, on February 25, 2021. The left side of chart is the west end of the breach zone, as viewed from the beach side looking north.

### ***Construction Projects Beginning Soon: Parking Lot, Outdoor Classroom, and more***

Starting in April, several small construction projects will be getting underway at the northeast corner of NCOS near Whittier Drive. With our successful [grant application](#) to the Wildlife Conservation Board, complemented by generous donor funds, construction will soon begin on a new parking lot, an outdoor classroom and modifications to our ROOST building to make it more versatile and capable of accommodating our monitoring, research, and teaching activities.





Map showing areas of NCOS that will be affected by construction over the next few months.

## **FEATURE STORY**

### **[Introducing: The North Campus Open Space Nature Guide Program](#)**



**Could this be you, guiding a future tour of North Campus Open Space as a Nature Guide? Read more below!**

Education and outreach are two key elements of CCBER's mission, and we are continuously looking for new ways to expand these efforts and involve the local community at UCSB's open spaces. With the community's growing interest and use of NCOS, and to help extend our education efforts related to this restoration project, we are excited to announce the launch of the NCOS Nature Guide program this April!

[This feature story is continued on page 13.](#)

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### **COMMUNITY FORUM & PHOTOS**

We are interested in any observations of wildlife activity on NCOS, as well as plants and landscapes. Please send your observations, with or without photos, to [ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu](mailto:ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu). Thank you!

### ***Signs of Seasons in Transition***

This month we are sharing wildlife photos that show signs of spring are beginning to appear (such as male hummingbirds showing off their breeding colors), but winter hasn't left just yet as overwintering visitors like the Burrowing Owl and Wilson's Snipe are still hanging around.





Left: Allen's Hummingbird (by Karen Lunsford). Right: Anna's Hummingbird (by Jeremiah Bender).



A Wilson's Snipe probes for food in a wetland at NCOS. Photo by Jeremiah Bender.





**A typical winter afternoon on the NCOS Mesa, with Killdeer foraging in the foreground, and a Burrowing Owl and Ground Squirrel keeping watch from the front porch of their burrows. Photo by Jeremiah Bender.**

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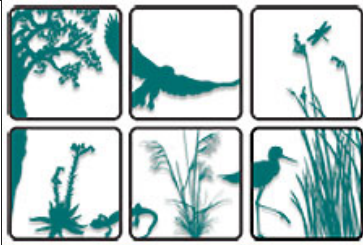
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## INTRODUCING: THE NORTH CAMPUS OPEN SPACE NATURE GUIDE PROGRAM



**Could this be you, guiding a future tour of North Campus Open Space as a Nature Guide? Read more below!**

Education and outreach are two key elements of CCBER's mission, and we are continuously looking for new ways to expand these efforts and involve the local community at UCSB's open spaces. With the community's growing interest and use of NCOS, and to help extend our education efforts related to this restoration project, we are excited to announce the launch of the NCOS Nature Guide program this April!

Building on responses from more than 20 community members to a survey about the idea that we sent out in the December and January newsletters, CCBER has developed a pilot program to train interested and committed volunteers to become certified NCOS Nature Guides. Led by CCBER's education and outreach staff (Andy Lanes), the training will focus on ten topics, such as the flora, fauna, hydrology, and restoration practices of NCOS. Participants in the program will have access to resources online for remote learning assignments and we anticipate having bi-weekly check-ins for discussion and assessments until in-person tours and trainings can begin. The goal is that, by this summer, certified nature guides will be able to lead scheduled weekend tours for the public (pending restrictions), interpret site history, and point out interesting plants, birds, insects, and other features along the 3 miles of accessible trails at NCOS.

If you are interested in becoming a certified NCOS Nature Guide, and did not respond to our survey this winter, please send an email to [ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu](mailto:ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu). We are planning to schedule an orientation to the NCOS Nature Guide Program via zoom on Thursday, April 1, where we will discuss the goals, expectations, and how we will balance outreach with the current and changing constraints. All respondents to the survey, and anyone who contacts us expressing interest before April 1, will be invited to the orientation session. Also, keep an eye on the newsletter for future guided tours of NCOS, which will be open and free to anyone.



**Date:**

Tuesday, March 9, 2021 - 13:30

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