

UC Santa Barbara

Newsletters

Title

NCOS News - November 2018

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/99j4c24z>

Authors

Clark, Ryan
Stratton, Lisa

Publication Date

2018-11-01

UC SANTA BARBARA

North Campus Open Space Restoration Project

NCOS NEWS

November 2018



Hello there! A Burrowing Owl recently sighted on NCOS. Photo by Jeremiah Bender.

UPDATES & EVENTS

Open House / Trail Opening Recap

We had a wonderful time and, it seemed, so did the many community members who attended the Marsh Trail opening celebration and NCOS Open House & Birding Festival on October 13th. Many thanks to our partners and co-sponsors who contributed significantly to the success of this event: Santa Barbara Audubon Society, Associated Students Coastal Fund, and Coal Oil Point Nature Reserve.







Top to bottom: attendees socializing, dissecting owl pellets, and bird watching at the Trail Opening and Birding Event.

Bike Train to School Video

The first Bike Train on the Marsh Trail, en route to Isla Vista School, occurred on International Bike to School Day on October 10th. Check out the video below about Bike Trains (featuring NCOS) by the Santa Barbara Bicycle Coalition:



Burrowing Owl - A New Rare Visitor

We are very excited to share news of a rare visitor recently sighted at NCOS - a Burrowing Owl! This is a [**Bird Species of Special Concern in California**](#). Their historic breeding range includes the central and south coasts where they have declined and mostly disappeared due to habitat loss. The owl spotted on NCOS is likely migrating to wintering grounds - perhaps it will stay here for the winter! We really need your help to make NCOS a comfortable place for rare and sensitive wildlife like this Burrowing owl: please

stay on the trail and keep dogs on leashes at all times.



More Trees = More Habitat and Biodiversity

Thanks to the hard working Your Children's Trees volunteers, several oak, sycamore, and willow saplings have recently been planted along the banks of Phelps Creek, as well as the first oaks planted on the northern slopes of the Mesa. You can help plant more trees on NCOS with [Your Children's Trees](#) on Saturday November 10th and 17th. Please see the Volunteer Section of this newsletter for more information.



Your Children's Trees volunteers and staff planting willows, sycamores, and oaks at Phelps Creek (top image), and the NCOS Mesa (bottom image).

FEATURE STORY

First Year Milestones & What's Next for NCOS



Young community members help with planting along the Wells-Elings Marsh trail at NCOS.

The NCOS restoration project has passed the first year milestone, and the Marsh trail now open to the community. What's next in the story of NCOS? [Here we share with you](#) a brief summary of the achievements over the past year, and the goals and opportunities of the project moving forward. This feature story is continued on page 11.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES



Second Saturdays at NCOS

TWO SATURDAYS!
November 10th and 17th

Come by one of the next two, or both Saturdays and help us plant one or one hundred plants! Meet at 6975 Whittier Drive at 9:00 am. Bring water, sunscreen, and wear a hat, clothes and shoes suitable for garden work. Please RSVP to ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu

Saturday Tree Plantings

November 10th and 17th

You can help Your Children's Trees plant oaks and other saplings at NCOS! Please contact [Your Children's Trees](#) for more information and to RSVP.



Thursdays - CCBER Greenhouse Associates

Come help transplant seedlings of native plants with the CCBER team from 9:00 - 12:00. To join, please send an email to ncos@ccberr.ucsb.edu.



Group Volunteer Opportunities

We gladly welcome local business, non-profit, school and other community groups to come out to NCOS to help with planting and other activities. For more information, please send an email to ncos@ccberr.ucsb.edu.



COMMUNITY FORUM & PHOTOS

Q&A - Trail Condition

Some community members have noted that portions of the Marsh trail are currently not so comfortable to use. We recognize this limitation of the class II road base the trail is composed of, however, we selected this substrate because, over time, it will become a much smoother surface that is also durable enough to withstand use by bicycles and maintenance and construction vehicles in wet and dry weather on these very slippery and sticky clay soils. While the smoother surface known as decomposed granite, or DG (such as at West Campus Bluffs) could be ideal at some point, it can become very rutted and soupy in the wet season, especially with the amount of use we are anticipating. Our recommendations are to walk and bike more slowly and patiently, and perhaps tighten up bike chains. As time goes by we will continue to

evaluate how the trail substrate is working, try to compact it when possible, and we hope to raise funds to eventually convert it to a smoother, possibly DG surface, if it seems necessary.

Photos - Sora

Like the Burrowing Owl, the Sora is another secretive and elusive species that is rarely seen. We are aware of at least one, maybe two Sora that have been hanging around some of the freshwater marsh habitats at NCOS. A community member and a CCBER staff member have recently been able to capture photos of a Sora from a distance.





Photos of a Sora at NCOS, captured by Karen Lunsford (top image), and Jeremiah Bender (bottom image).

Have a plant, wildlife, or other photo of the NCOS project site you'd like to share? We welcome submissions of photos of the project site and/or the adjacent Ellwood-Devereux area to share with NCOS News readers. Please email a photo you would like to share along with a brief description to ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu.

Received this email from a friend? [Click here](#) to subscribe to our mailing list.



For more information on the
North Campus Open Space Restoration Project, [Click here](#), or email ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu



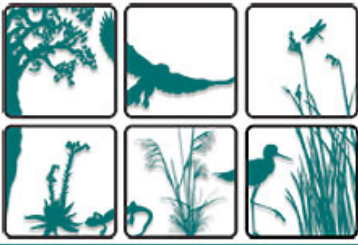
Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#)

This email was sent to <<Email Address>>

[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)

Cheadle Center for Biodiversity and Ecological Restoration (CCBER) · Bldg 578 Harder South · UCSB, MC 9615 · Santa Barbara, CA 93106 · USA



[Home](#)[News](#) ▾[About](#) ▾[UCSB Natural History Collections](#) ▾[Ecological Restoration](#) ▾[Data & Research](#) ▾[Education](#) ▾[Home](#) » [Blogs](#) » [Ryan Clark's blog](#)

FIRST YEAR MILESTONES & WHAT'S NEXT FOR NCOS



Young community members help with planting along the Wells-Elings Marsh trail at NCOS.

The NCOS restoration project has passed the first year milestone, and the Marsh trail is now open to the community. What's next in the story of NCOS? Here we share with you a brief summary of the project's achievements over the past year, and the goals and opportunities moving forward.

Planting

200,000 plants have been planted over more than 40 acres. Completion of the primary work on the Marsh trail and bridges in mid-summer provided the opportunity to plant the zones that were used by the contractor for storage and access. The focus for the next 6 months will be along the north facing slopes of the Mesa and along the trail edges.

We have designed a mosaic of grasslands, coastal shrublands and woodlands along the north-facing slopes of the Mesa that is based on the grade of the slopes, the soil moisture levels, and a desire to support a diverse array of wildlife and plant biodiversity while retaining views from the Mesa trail to the wetland below and the mountains in the distance. This fall and winter, you can help plant oaks in the woodland zones on Saturday mornings - contact [Your Children's Trees](#) for more information and to RSVP. So far, more than 150 trees have been planted in the riparian zones along the banks of the Whittier channel and pond, and Phelps Creek. We anticipate planting another 70 trees plus complementary berry-producing shrubs such as Toyon, Elderberry, Coffeeberry and Lemonadeberry.



Your Children's Trees volunteers and staff planting oak saplings at NCOS.

We will be establishing salt grass along the Marsh trail edge to reduce weed invasion, stabilize the trail shoulders and provide space along the trail edge as needed. Many young volunteers helped start that process during the October 13th Open House / Trail Opening celebration. There will be more opportunities for you and your friends and neighbors to help with this planting, including the next two Saturday mornings in November (10th and 17th). If you're interested in these events, or volunteering at any other time, please send an email to ncos@cber.ucsb.edu

Grassland Seeding

In October 2017, four acres on the east facing mesa slope were drill-seeded with locally sourced and bulked purple needle grass seed. Those plants grew slowly but steadily, and many produced seeds this past year. We were astounded how well the 3 pounds-per-acre of seed established in the low nutrient conditions of the soil. This October, an additional 9 acres were drill-seeded at a rate of 6 pounds-per-acre. Controlling invasive plants in this newly established grassland will be a priority this Spring, which will eventually help us to establish annual and perennial wildflowers such as lupine, poppies, popcorn flower, redmaids, snakeroot, buttercup, mirabilis, bloomeria, brodeia, and more. We will be experimenting with weed control strategies and with establishing biotic soil crusts composed of lichens, mosses and cyanobacteria to help stabilize soils and reduce invasion by annual European grasses such as ripgut brome. Controlling invasive annual grasses and other weedy species helps us create openings between the clumps of native perennial bunch grasses (e.g. *Stipa pulchra*), which then creates room for wildflowers, ground nesting bees, foraging by insect and rodent-eating birds, and more.



Drill-seeding of *Stipa pulchra* grass seed across the top of the NCOS Mesa.

To support all of this planting, irrigation pipes are being moved around the site and re-deployed multiple times as planted areas become established and can survive without the supplemental watering. The current work is focused on setting up

irrigation for the 9 acres of newly drill-seeded perennial grassland on the top of the mesa, and the plantings along the north facing slopes.

Monitoring

Throughout this past August and September, more than 60 vegetation monitoring transects were completed in more than 8 plant communities and habitats: vernal pools, seasonal fresh and brackish marshes, grassland, scrubland mosaic uplands, riparian woodlands, salt marsh and transitional, and sand flats. These permanent transects will be monitored over the next 5 years to document progress and to identify areas with any challenges in establishing native species. A monitoring report for the first year is being finalized and will be posted on the CCBER website next month.



CCBER staff quantifying vegetation coverage on monitoring transects in the Scrubland Mosaic (left) and Transitional Saltmarsh (right).

Wildlife monitoring has included monthly bird surveys as well as sampling for fish once a year, and strategic deployment of wildlife cameras to document wildlife use of habitat features such as the horizontal logs, vertical snags, and hibernacula where a burrowing owl was recently sighted. CCBER is also working with UCSB professors to document the return of small mammals to the site, which are important components of the food web that translate seed and insects into larger morsels for raptors, bobcats and coyotes. An ongoing collaboration with the Santa Barbara Audubon Society and Coal Oil Point Reserve (COPR) involves the sampling, identification and quantification of aquatic invertebrates in the different wetland types on NCOS and COPR, in order to help understand the aquatic food web. Other monitoring will include you and other trail users in order to gain an understanding of the amount and type of usage by the community and how this might impact the ecological and restoration goals of the site (e.g. are users staying on the trail, keeping dogs on leashes, and picking up after themselves). CCBER hopes to conduct interviews and surveys of users and neighbors to gauge the community's awareness about the goals of the project, and to understand what questions, concerns or areas of confusion might remain.

In the abiotic realm, CCBER is monitoring hydrology and water quality parameters such as temperature, salinity and dissolved oxygen, nutrients and suspended sediment. This monitoring will tell the story of how the restored wetland system is functioning.

Research

There are several key research projects going on. One is focused on documenting and understanding how the grasslands and saltmarsh work to sequester carbon in the soil. Another is an evaluation of a matrix of soil amendments and how they affect soil salinity, plant growth and long term patterns of carbon movement through the soil. Experiments related to weed control strategies, biotic crust establishment and more will be started this winter.

Signage, Education, Outreach, Construction and more



Informational signage currently posted at some of the trail entrances around NCOS.

Initial signage has been installed at the main trailheads, and along the fence to help inform visitors of the goals of the project regarding access and use. These signs include maps and basic rules and regulations. CCBER is currently reviewing and editing interpretive signage for the visitor plaza that will be built near the parking lot off of Whittier Drive. Topics for these signs include land-use history, hydrology, plant and wildlife communities, as well as Native American use of plants and wetlands, pollinator gardens and wetland functions. These signs will hopefully be installed this Spring. An equipment and maintenance vehicle storage building is currently under construction adjacent to the Whittier parking area, and we hope to raise funds to install a gate that will allow for daytime use of the parking lot as well as to improve the parking lot surface.

There are still opportunities to name overlooks and bridges through supporting the NCOS endowment fund, as well as for smaller contributions to a documentary film, shelves and work benches for the "Gator Barn", research equipment, student research funding and more! Please contact us at ncos@cber.ucsb.edu for more information on how you can help. To make a direct contribution [click here](#), and you can choose to specify whether your contribution is in support of the endowment or for any other component of the of the project.

Date:

Tuesday, November 6, 2018 - 09:45

[Contact Us](#)

Cheadle Center for Biodiversity and Ecological Restoration • [Earth Research Institute](#)

Copyright © 2007-11 The Regents of the University of California, All Rights Reserved.

UC Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara CA 93106 • [Terms of Use](#)

[UCSB website](#)

