Sketches

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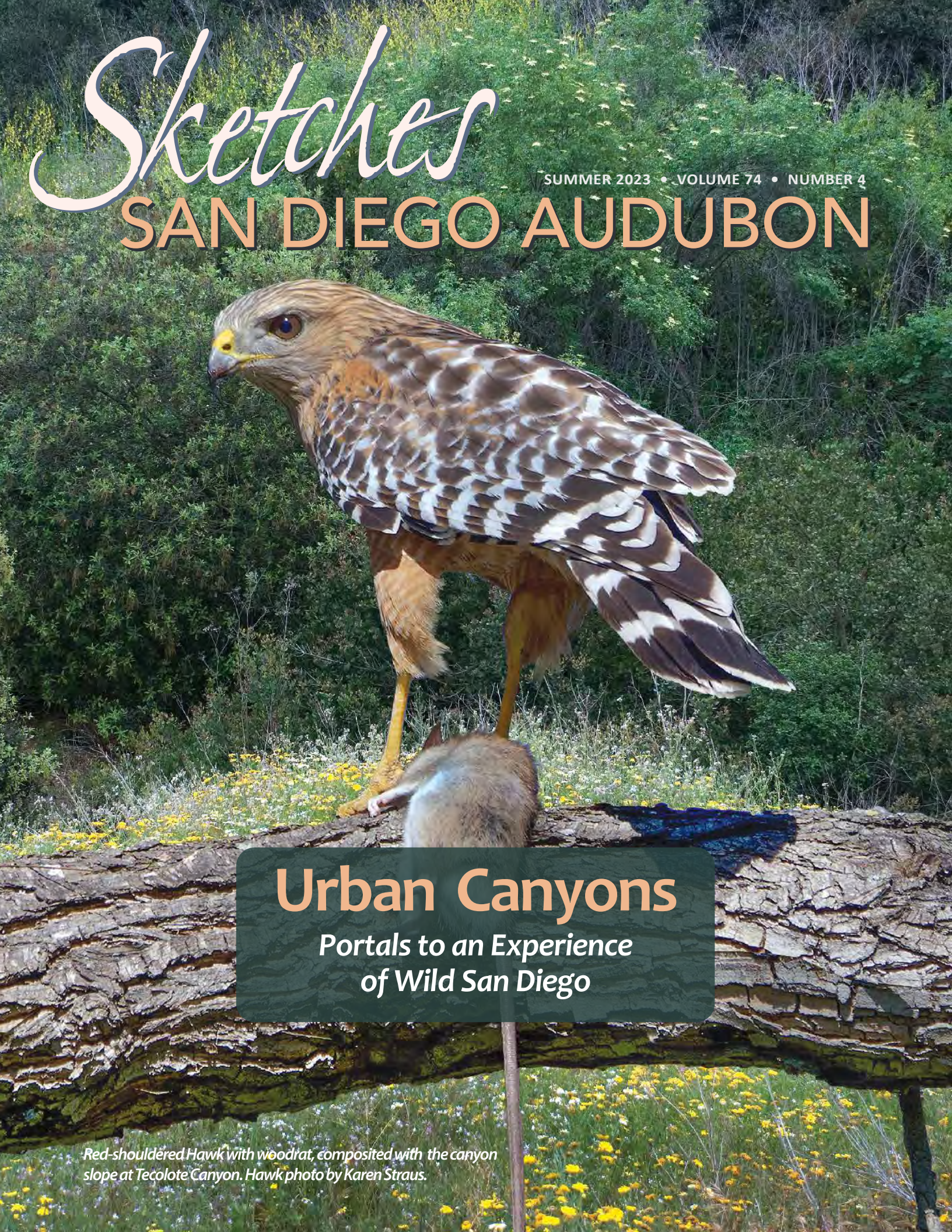
SAN DIEGO AUDUBON



Urban Canyons

Portals to an Experience of Wild San Diego

Red-shouldered Hawk with woodrat, composited with the canyon slope at Tecolote Canyon. Hawk photo by Karen Straus.

URBAN CANYONS
Bring Nature Close to Home

by LaTresa Pearson, Sketches *Editor*

I pull into the parking lot of Canyonside Community Park in Rancho Peñasquitos and drive past the athletic fields to the last parking area before the gated entrance to the historic Ranch House. I like to use the small trailhead located here to enter Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve because it lends itself to wandering. While many visitors follow the wide dirt path until they reach the waterfall, I like the smaller trails that wend their way through the trees, along the creek, or loop around the open area near the Ranch House. Each offers its own set of adventures, and I never know what I might encounter. It's one of the things I love about exploring this place and the many other urban canyons and open space preserves in San Diego.

Acorn Woodpecker by LaTresa Pearson.

Today, I have no destination in mind, no specific plant or bird I want to see. I simply allow the sights and sounds of the trail to lead me. I get only about 20 feet when a California Scrub-jay perched on a bare branch of Coyote Brush catches my eye. I point my camera, and it looks directly at me. I press the shutter and think it's about to fly away when, instead, it surprises me and boldly flies to the ground several feet closer. It studies me for a moment, then quickly nabs an insect from the ground and flies back to the Coyote Brush, where it gulps down its meal in a single swallow.

A little farther down the trail, I spot a path that leads to a group of Western Sycamore trees with long branches that reach in multiple directions low to the ground instead of into the sky. The low, gray mottled branches invite me into the secluded space and offer a quiet place to sit for a moment of reflection. I close my eyes, focusing on the sounds around me. A Spotted Towhee sings nearby, then switches from singing to calling in its characteristic catlike mew. In the distance, the raucous calls of Acorn Woodpeckers fill the air. They always sound like they're having a good time, and I can't help feeling a little envious. I strain my ears and can just make out the hammering of another woodpecker deeper in the preserve. This one is no slacker, I think. It's busy adding holes to the granary where it stashes acorns gathered from the many Coast Live Oaks located in the preserve.

The short "kik" call of a Cooper's Hawk brings my attention back to the nearby trees. I open my eyes and search the high branches as I wait for the "cak, cak, cak" that often follows. The hawk is right on cue, but I'm still unable to spot it from where I sit. Dried leaves on the ground nearby scatter, and a chubby Western Fence Lizard darts toward me, abruptly stops, and begins pumping his body up and down, showing off his blue belly. After a few moments, he scurries off. I notice sunlight streaming through the trees and catch a glimpse of something white floating in the air. Then another and another. As one floats by, I peer more closely and see a delicate silky parachute carrying a single seed. The breeze carries dozens of these tiny packages through the air. A nearby willow-like shrub called Mule Fat, loaded with clusters of creamy seed heads, appears to be the source of this barrage.

I walk back to the trail and begin following it toward the creek when a California Sister Butterfly bounces across the sky in front of me and lands on the leaf of a California Scrub Oak. The butterfly's brown, orange, and white wings stand out against the shiny new, green leaves, and I stop to take a few photos and marvel at this delicate creature. The sweet song of a House Wren, joined by the gentle burbling sounds of water flowing over rocks, draw me onward. As I approach the creek, my eyes sweep across the branches of a large sycamore tree in search of the wren just in time to see the small brown bird take off from one of the branches and fly toward an opening in the trunk of another nearby sycamore. A few twigs protruding from the opening hint at the presence of a nest. The wren darts back out and lands on a branch of Mule Fat several feet in front of me and begins singing. I back away to find a more discreet vantage point and shoot a few photos before heading back to my car.

Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve is just a 10-minute drive from my house, but every time I step foot on a trail here, I feel transported. The chatter in my brain quiets. Stress melts away. And even when I come here alone, I never feel alone. Each plant or fellow creature I encounter feels like a kindred spirit. It is truly special that a city the size of San Diego has open-space canyons and preserves like this interspersed in neighborhoods throughout our urban environment. From Crest Canyon and Gonzales Canyon in the north to Otay Valley Regional Park in the south, San Diego is filled with protected natural spaces to explore and learn about the native plants, birds, and other wildlife that rely on these habitats for survival. "You just don't find urban canyons like this almost anywhere else," says Jim Varnell, who has led interpretive hikes as a Canyoneer with the San Diego Natural History Museum for more than a decade. "I always think of them as the hidden gems of San Diego. They're just tucked in amongst the businesses and the houses, and yet, you can walk a hundred yards down the trail, and you might be in the middle of nowhere, except for maybe some traffic noise," he tells me as we stroll along a trail in Tecolote Canyon.

California Sister by LaTresa Pearson.

These spaces might look much different today, however, if not for the

diligent efforts of scores of local residents who have stood up over the years to protect San Diego's urban canyons. Without their advocacy, many of our canyons could have suffered the fate of countless other urban canyons in California—their creek beds paved over for easy access to sewer lines and storm drain systems, or even worse, entire canyons filled in with dirt and covered with tract houses. An early advocate for San Diego's urban canyons and native plant habitats was Helen Vallejo Chamlee, a botanist and native plant specialist who worked at the San Diego Natural History Museum. Chamlee advocated for the preservation of Florida Canyon, one of Balboa Park's few remaining natural areas, and her efforts culminated in the establishment of the canyon as a native plant preserve in 1973. Chamlee also created the Florida Canyoneers program, training volunteers to lead guided hikes along the new trail system, educating

The Canyoneers exploring Florida Canyon, by Cypress Hansen.

participants about the plants, animals, geology, history, and Native American uses of the canyon. Those hikes grew into the museum's popular Canyoneers program, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary of leading guided hikes throughout San Diego County.

Although Florida Canyon was set aside as a preserve, other urban canyons throughout the city still remained at risk of development. In 1998, the City wanted to build permanent roads in the bottoms of several canyons for sewer line maintenance, but a coalition of neighborhood "Friends" groups put a stop to those plans, setting the course for the protection of San Diego's urban canyons. Concurrent to this movement, the City of San Diego adopted the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP), which transferred the permitting process for developing land that could impact endangered species and their habitats from state and federal agencies to the City. To allow development to go forward under the MSCP, the City is required to set aside land that provides important habitat and corridors for the 85 species targeted for protection under the MSCP. These lands are called Multi-Habitat Protection Areas (MHPA), and the City has designated most of our urban canyons and open space parks as MHPAs to satisfy MSCP requirements. That's a lot of alphabet soup, but what's important is that these lands are now supposed to be conserved forever to protect the region's biodiversity.

Chaparral Mallow, by LaTresa Pearson

Although the MSCP has been instrumental in preventing the development of our canyon and open space lands, many of the people I spoke with say the program lacks the necessary funding to maintain and manage them in a way that truly protects the region's globally important biodiversity. "It's a big problem", says Deborah Knight, Executive Director of Friends of Rose Canyon. "[The land] is managed by the Open Space Division under City Parks, and they have a severe lack of rangers and an ever-expanding pool of responsibilities."

Clayton Tschudy, Executive Director of San Diego Canyonlands, a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting, protecting, and restoring San Diego County's canyon and creek habitats, illustrates the magnitude of the Open Space Division's job. "The Open Space Division, which is the land manager for all of the Open Space Areas in San Diego, administers over 20,000 acres of Open Space dispersed throughout the city, and they have fewer than 100 employees," he says. He compares

Lewis's Woodpecker, by LaTresa Pearson

this to New York's Central Park, which employs 300 people to oversee 843 acres. "That's a bit apples and oranges, but it gives you some context for the way we value open space." The Tri-Canyon Parks, comprising Rose Canyon, Tecolote Canyon, and Marian Bear Park, for example, contains 1,500 acres, and that entire area plus the 52-acre Mission Valley Preserve is overseen by three rangers. "And they have a very small budget," says Knight. "The result is there are ever-more impacts on these areas that are supposed to be protected, and they continue to degrade."

One of the impacts degrading canyon habitats is erosion, which creates safety hazards for people using the canyons for recreation and threatens sewer infrastructure. While canyons naturally serve

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as drainages for rainwater and snow melt, human modifications to upstream hydrology, including dams and other hardened infrastructure, have changed the way water flows through these areas. "The City built the system to essentially take all the water from the streets, parking lots, everything, and it gets channeled through underground pipe systems and shot straight into the canyons," says Knight. The pipes are often located at the canyon rim, so strong storms send water rushing down the canyons with tremendous force, eroding canyon walls and incising stream channels. As this year's rainy season illustrates, climate change is increasing the strength, number, and duration of the atmospheric rivers that are responsible for the majority of our region's rainfall. "Much is made of the threat of droughts driven by climate change, but we tend not to think of these storms as a problem," says Tschudy. "We tend to think of them as solving droughts, but really big storms also cause rapid change in wetland systems. Sea-level rise is threatening our coastal wetlands, but intense storms are threatening our wetlands upstream."

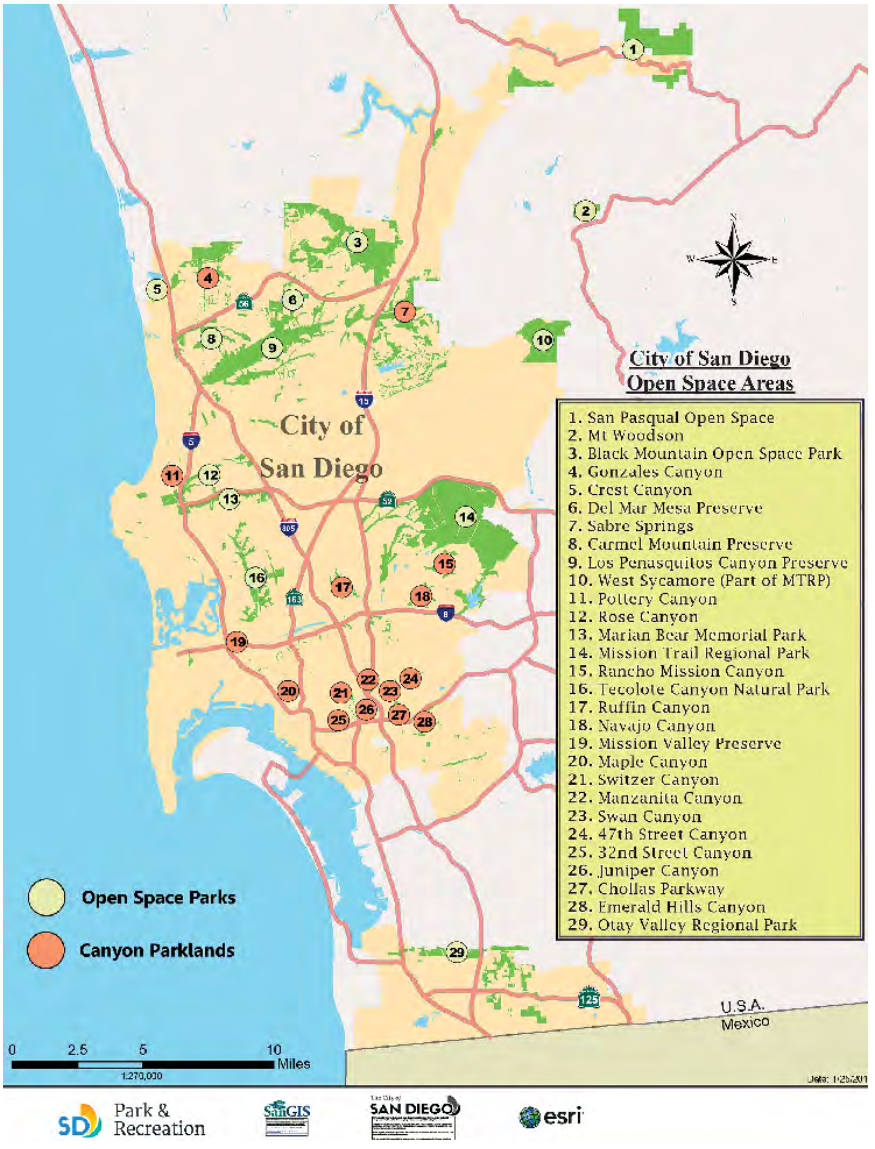
This year's abundant rainfall also shines a light on another major impact to our urban canyons—invasive plants. Every canyon I visited while preparing this article was overrun with invasive plants. Landscape escapees, such as Arundo (Giant Reed), Pampas Grass, and Mexican Fan Palms are prominent in the canyons. Some invasive plants, such as Crown Daisy, mustards, wild radish, and nasturtium, may look pretty in full bloom, but it's easy to see how completely they take over a space, crowding out the native plants that provide important habitat for native wildlife. Add invasive grasses to the mix, and you have a recipe for disaster. These plants aren't adapted to our pattern of short rainy seasons, followed by long hot, dry periods, so they quickly dry out and turn into fuel for wildfires, dramatically increasing the risk and intensity of these events, which, like intense storms, are already increasing due to climate change.

San Diego's urban canyons are also impacted by our recreational use. Anyone who has gone hiking in any of our open space areas since the Covid-19 pandemic knows there has been a dramatic increase in people on the trails. And it's not just hiking. Mountain biking, especially with the availability of e-bikes, has increased dramatically, too. Even the best-intentioned visitors to our open spaces cause impacts to these habitats and the wildlife that depend on them. Unfortunately, however, those impacts increase substantially when people go off official trails or cut new trails that can cause lasting damage to sensitive species. "The open space that we have in the region will become increasingly important for general outdoor access, and that means more and more people using canyons for recreation and more and more impacts from that recreation on those natural resources that are supposed to be protected in a balanced way," says Tschudy.

In addition, the City is in the middle of a master planning process that could impact canyons and open spaces even more. "Part of what the City is doing right now is looking at reducing vehicle miles traveled by utilizing open space canyons as mobility corridors between transit depots," says Tschudy. "It would imply the need for much more extensively constructed trails that could be touching and impacting critical habitat for threatened species like the California Gnatcatcher." While reducing vehicle miles is important to meeting the City's Climate Action Plan goals, Tschudy wants to ensure that the City includes natural-resource management early in the planning process, rather than as an afterthought. "The main issue for me right now is that all of these big master plans have important goals, but the opportunities and challenges embedded within the natural resources of our MSCP lands have not really been looked at in the context of broader sustainability planning," he says. "The community really needs to lean into these issues and make sure it's done right because, historically, environmental planning is the last thing, and that's really the opposite of how it should go."

Tschudy wants to emphasize the opportunities embedded in our urban canyons. "We need to see open space as providing opportunities instead of a set of impossible challenges," he says. "Instead of seeing open space as a money pit, we need to see it as an opportunity for creating a whole sector of locally sourced green jobs that can be supported with state and federal monies, as well as local monies. An opportunity for daywork for the unsheltered and for people trying to reenter the workforce. And an opportunity for nearby nature access for underserved communities that don't have the resources to travel to distant National Parks and other outdoor recreational areas."

San Diego Canyonlands is piloting programs along these lines. The organization has created a training program geared toward people who have fallen out of the workforce, and they are putting together a daywork program geared toward those who may not yet be ready to hold down a regular job. They've also created an internship program for students at Hoover High School in City Heights. "We're trying to activate natural resource development as a set of job opportunities across a spectrum of people's needs," Tschudy says. Although the training program has presented challenges, they graduated their first



small cohort in June. "We struggled for a while, but we found some very granular strategies that eventually started becoming successful," he says. "In the future, we'll be able to scale that up."

Recruiting for the organization's new internship program was far easier, Tschudy says. They had 47 students apply for 12 positions. The interns worked with field teams in their neighborhood canyons, learning about pollinator habitat, local natural history, and the history of indigenous land use. "They're getting kind of a deep dive and also a broad exposure to the issues with the hope of creating pathways for kids who might not look at environmental careers seriously because they don't see other people around them in those careers," he says. Their culminating project was creating a Monarch Butterfly waystation. After one year, many of the students know all of the prominent native plant species in their local canyons, many of the local birds, and can speak articulately to what a pollinator habitat is, Tschudy says. "They get it so fast, and they've become advocates. It really just goes to show what investing in kids can do for the future. For me, it's inspiring and really elevates the importance of that program."

To get a firsthand look at San Diego Canyonlands' projects in City Heights, I head to Azalea Community Park for a guided hike of the City Heights Canyons Loop Trail. Opened to the public in 2017, the five-mile trail system winds through densely populated residential neighborhoods and connects four canyons—Manzanita, Swan, Olivia, and Hollywood—providing the highly diverse community here with a larger open-space experience that is designed to be safe and accessible. I'm one of more than a dozen people who have shown up for the guided hike, which is led by Jennifer Ochoa, Outreach Coordinator for San Diego Canyonlands, on the fourth Saturday of each month. As we meander through the canyons, Ochoa points out a variety of thriving native plants, including Holly Leaf Cherry, Yerba Santa, Chaparral Mallow, Purple Nightshade, Wooly Blue Curls, and more. She highlights habitat restoration sites, discussing how staff and volunteers remove invasive plants by hand and reintroduce native plants.

When we arrive at the Monarch Butterfly waystation created by the interns, dozens of plants surrounded with protective blue cones dot the newly cleared area. In addition to Narrowleaf Milkweed, which serves as a host plant for Monarch Butterflies, the students planted a variety of other nectar-producing plants to attract and feed butterflies and other pollinators. "It was a community effort to get this program rolling, and it's been really successful," Ochoa tells us. "We're really proud of it, and they're also really proud of the work that they've done." Her voice fills with emotion as she continues, "They bring out their families and friends. They live in this neighborhood. For them, it's really important to take care of the open spaces where they live, to take ownership of them. I'm going to start crying. It's a beautiful thing."

Tschudy believes the work they're doing in City Heights and other canyons throughout the county is the future of environmental justice. "We often think of environmental justice as redressing historic wrongs," he says. "Cleaning up a Superfund site, reducing pollution, improving quality of life by getting rid of problems, but canyons offer the other side of that coin by providing an additional benefit—nearby nature access and all of the ecosystem services that come with that. You're not just redressing a wrong, you're building a new right."

Pine Hills Seed Library by Anthony Isham

Making a Difference Through the Native Seed Library Program

by Anthony Isham

Two years ago, when I began working with the San Diego Audubon Society, one of my tasks was helping with the newly created Native Seed Library program. At the time, there were only a few native seed libraries in the county. Since then, we have helped establish 33 new seed libraries and are in the process of adding 16 more. These libraries benefit their surrounding ecosystems by encouraging community members to propagate native plants that provide food and habitats for native wildlife, especially birds and other pollinators!

The growth of the native seed library network has been an ebb-and-flow process. Some weeks, there were no requests for starter kits. Other times, there were multiple requests in a single day. Witnessing the number of people interested in sharing native plants in their communities brings me great hope for the future. San Diego residents truly care about conservation and about preserving our profoundly biodiverse county. Native seed libraries can now be found at public libraries, schools, colleges, businesses, and in residential neighborhoods throughout the city. Each is unique and special.

Some of these libraries are situated close to urban canyons and open spaces. A couple of great examples are the Juniper Canyon and Manzanita Canyon seed libraries. Increasing the number of native plants around our urban canyons and open spaces can help expand and connect ecosystems fragmented by urbanization. But urban neighborhoods aren't the only ones benefitting from our native seed libraries. There are also libraries farther from the city, including one at the Barona Cultural Center and Museum in Lakeside, as well as one in the Pine Hills neighborhood of Julian. Even more rural areas like these are overrun with invasive plants, and they benefit when residents add natives.

As someone who helped get this program up and running, I'm excited that we just received a grant from the Wildlife Conservation Board, in partnership with the San Diego Resource Conservation District, to fund our program for three more years. We are planning to continue establishing libraries around the county and hope to reach more than 100. There will be more seeds and fun information to share with San Diegans. We hope to see even more on tribal lands and in rural communities to share the love of native plants even farther from the city. I can't wait to see the new works of art added to the ever-growing map of native seed libraries!

Urban Canyons

Portals to an Experience of Wild San Diego

The City of San Diego and its surrounding communities are threaded with canyons that weave through the developed mesas and wider valleys. Like marbling in a good steak, these urban canyons change the character of the landscape, providing coastal sage and riparian habitat for a significant diversity of birds and other native animal and plant species. A good number of these habitat corridors are preserved as open spaces, and they provide breathing room for our regional wildlife to retain a foothold in an environment they might otherwise be absent from.

Most of the bird species shown here have a presence in residential areas and parks designed for human use, but these canyons help sustain the complex ecosystems that stabilize that presence. Canyon habitat also provides opportunity for species to move freely between wild and suburbanized areas, potentially expanding their local ranges, especially when offered native plant gardens.

Even a bird as familiar as the Mourning Dove can seem somehow more fascinating in a wild setting, a confirmation of how nature functions at a much deeper level than many are aware of. The next time you head down an urban canyon trail, try to let the tempo and stress of daily life slip away, and experience, for an hour or so, a sense of wildness. Let yourself be surprised by what nature offers you.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Uncredited photos by DS.

(Column 1) Mourning Dove, Black-headed Grosbeak, Nuttall's Woodpecker

(Column 2) Western Bluebird, Song Sparrow, Cassin's Kingbird, and House Wren

PHOTO: KAREN STRAUS


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PHOTO: ED HENRY


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(Far left) an immature **Cooper's Hawk** is alert to passing hikers and dog-walkers.

(Left) The chubby, long-tailed **California Towhee** is usually seen at or near ground level searching for seeds.

(Inset) The coppery irridesence of the **Allen's Hummingbird** is surpassed only by the Rufous Hummingbird, a very closely related species.

(Above) **California Scrub-jays** are bright, bold, and shamelessly opportunistic.

Teaching Moments

Discovering the Wild Animals in Your Neighborhood

by Hayley Heiner, Education Manager

Hayley Heiner points out instructive signs of nature to a field trip group. Photo by Nigella Hillgarth

With so many of San Diego's urban canyons to choose from, these areas have quickly become some of our favorite places to connect students to nature within their own communities. Many of these canyons can be found just a five- to ten-minute walk from their schoolyards. As we make our way through their neighborhoods toward the trailheads, we often hear students exclaim, "Oh, my house is right down there" or "My grandparents live just over there." While seasoned explorers might be turned off by the sound of cars or glimpses of buildings when hiking the canyons, our students, many of whom are new to exploring nature, find comfort in these familiar sights and sounds. They enjoy starting the hike on busier, well-trafficked trails, seeing plants and animals they recognize. By the time we make our way deeper into the canyons, they begin to calm down and feel closer to nature, as the noise and urbanization slip away.

A Desert Cottontail huddles near a prickly pear while nearby egrets and avocets stride through the Famosa Slough. By DS.

Over the past few years, we've been working with students in Chula Vista, offering our afterschool Outdoor Explore hiking program, which features four weeks of hikes into Otay Valley Regional Park. When we first began the program, hardly any of our students were familiar with the park. After returning year after year, however, we've found students are not only more comfortable during their hikes with us, but many return to the park with their friends and family to experience the trails and the diversity they offer throughout the year. San Diego's big parks and beaches get so much recognition, but our urban canyons are often the quickest and easiest way for most of the city's residents to gain access to natural spaces and all of the benefits they provide.

Conservation Director Andrew Meyer shoulders part of the day's gatherings. Photo by Karina Ornelas.

Join Us for Latino Conservation Week
Acompáñanos Para la Semana de la Conservación Latina

by Karina Ornelas, Conservation Outreach Coordinator

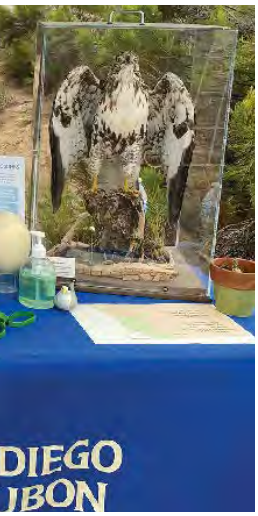
San Diego Audubon invites you to celebrate Latino Conservation Week (LCW) July 15–23. Launched by the Hispanic Access Foundation in 2014, Latino Conservation Week provides opportunities for members of the Latino community to participate in conservation activities, enjoy the outdoors, and have fun. This weeklong celebration features events around the country, and we are hosting two events in San Diego with the support of the Hispanic Access Foundation. As a conservationist and a member of the Latino community, I'm proud to be part of events that enable our community to enjoy the outdoors and to feel that we belong.

On July 16, join us for Descubramos Silverwood (Let's Discover Silverwood) at our Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary in Lakeside, and on July 19, we will host our fourth year of LCW events at Otay Valley Regional Park, Descubramos OVRP (Let's Discover OVRP). Both events will be bilingual, and participants can pick up a free copy of our San Diego County Spanish/English pocket bird guide, featuring more than 200 local birds. (The guide, which we translated with the support of the Hispanic Access Foundation and the Friends of San Diego National Wildlife Refuge, is also available for sale on our website.) The number of participants at each event is limited and spaces fill up quickly. For details and registration information, see the events calendar on our website.

We are moving closer to the day when San Diego Audubon is truly bilingual. The Spanish version of this article is shown to right.

San Diego Audubon te invita a celebrar la semana de la conservación latina (LCW) julio 15–23. Creado por Hispanic Access Foundation en 2014, en lo cual proporciona oportunidades para la comunidad latina en la que participan en actividades de conservación, y en lo cual pueden disfrutar del aire libre y divertirse. Esta celebración se lleva a cabo alrededor del país y nosotros estamos organizando dos eventos en San Diego, con el apoyo de Hispanic Access Foundation. Como conservacionista y miembro de la comunidad Latina, me enorgullece en ser parte de estos eventos que permiten que nuestra comunidad pueda disfrutar del aire libre y sentir que pertenecemos aquí.

El día julio 16, acompáñanos al evento de Descubramos Silverwood en nuestro santuario de la vida silvestre de Silverwood en Lakeside. Y el día julio 19, celebraremos nuestro cuarto año de eventos de LCW en el parque regional de Otay Valley, Descubramos OVRP. Los dos eventos serán bilingües y los participantes podrán obtener una copia gratis de la guía de aves de bolsillo del condado de San Diego en español o inglés, el cual cuenta con más de 200 aves locales. (La guía fue traducida con la ayuda de Hispanic Access Foundation y Friends of San Diego National Wildlife Refuges, también está disponible a la venta en nuestra página de internet.) El número de participantes de cada evento es limitado y los espacios se llenan rápido. Para más detalles e información de registración, mira nuestro calendario de eventos en nuestra página de internet.



(Above) A San Diego Canyonlands trail sign has been translated to Spanish. Image courtesy San Diego Canyonlands.
(Left) a San Diego Audubon display table with Spanish language materials, and a group of Latino volunteers in an Otay Valley Regional Park clean-up project. Photos by Karina Ornelas.

Silverwood Scene *Our Native Plants Thrive, with a Little Help from Our Friends*

by Phillip Lambert, Silverwood Resident Manager

Nuttall's Treadplant. Photo by Ron Vanderhoff.

It was an incredible spring at Silverwood this year. With more than 27 inches of rainfall, many tributaries that had not seen flowing water for many years were all flowing this season. Countless annual native wildflowers displayed a spectrum of colors, including magenta-colored Fremont Monkeyflowers, Palomar Monkeyflowers, and Elegant Clarkias; blue Chias, Nuttall's Snapdragons, Parry's Phacelias, and Parry's Larkspur; and orange California Poppies. Most spectacular were the purple Chinese Houses mixed with the yellow Seep Monkeyflowers along the stream banks in the observation area.

Many of Silverwood's habitats have been restored to their native state, a rarity among habitats in San Diego and much of California, which have been heavily invaded by nonnative species, particularly annual grasses, such as bromes and wild oats; and herbs, such as mustards and star thistle. While hiking in most wildland open spaces, it's common to find only a smattering of native annual plant species, or perhaps rare pockets where natives truly dominate. Leave Silverwood and drive down Wildcat Canyon Road, for example, and you'll be hard-pressed to see a single native annual flowering species within the dense population of invasive grasses, Black Mustard, and thistles. Silverwood flourishes with a diverse population of native annual species because we have spent years, with the help of many dedicated volunteers, hand pulling invasive grasses and other nonnative weeds. Without any effort to reintroduce native annual species, they are repopulating and thriving because they don't have to compete with invasive species.

Each year, for the last 17 years, we have recorded new annual species of plants. This year, we collected 11 new annual flowering plant species for the San Diego Natural History Museum's Botany department, which have never been recorded for our designated N14 square. Included in this season's collection are the Nuttall's Threadplant *(Nemacladus ramosissimus)*, in the Bellflower family; Palomar Monkeyflower *(Erythranthe diffusa)*, with an environmental listing of 4.3 S3.3 G4Q, and Downy Monkeyflower *(Mimeetanthe pilosa)*, both in the Lopseed Family; and two species of Clarkia, in the Evening Primrose Family, White Clarkia *(Clarkia epilobioides)* and Delicate Clarkia *(Clarkia delicate)*, with an environmental rating of 1B.2 S2.2 G2. Thank you to all of our dedicated volunteers for helping Silverwood's colorful native annuals thrive.

Chinese Houses and other native plants along the Silverwood stream banks. Photo by Phil Lambert.

California Wild Rose by DS.

Silverwood will be closed during August and September 2023

We will be closed to visitors following July 30, 2023, and will reopen in October. Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary in Lakeside is free and open to the public on Sundays from 9 A.M. to 4 P.M. ***Registration required.*** To sign up for a visit RSVP at **www.sandiegoaudubon.org/what-we-do/silverwood.**

Silverwood is also open on Wednesdays, 8 A.M. to 12 P.M. *for SDAS Friends members only*. Please call a week in advance of the day of your visit at **(619) 443-2998**. See our web page for all updates.

Pete Nelson *Leaving a Lasting Legacy at Silverwood*

by Phillip Lambert, Silverwood Resident Manager

We at the Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary and SDAS are deeply saddened by the recent loss of longtime Silverwood Committee member and dedicated volunteer, Peter Nelson, who passed away in May. Pete and his wife, Sally, began volunteering at Silverwood as Sunday hosts during the late 1990s, but it was after the 2003 Cedar Fire that Pete began building a lasting legacy here at the sanctuary. He documented the aftermath of the fire, photographing the devastation at Silverwood, as well as its rebuilding and recovery.

A retired high school art teacher, Pete used his unique talent in wood working to contribute to Silverwood's reconstruction. He designed and helped construct the Frank Gander Nature Education Center, constructed the information kiosk in the observation area, and designed and constructed the Harry Woodward Observation Deck. Pete joined the Silverwood Committee in early 2004 and served until his retirement from the committee for health reasons in 2022.

On a personal note, Pete played an important part in my life over the years. He and Sally supported my daughter Rayne and I when she developed Type 1 diabetes and even helped take her to and from school. Their life experiences provided emotional support on countless occasions. They have been far more than neighbors to us both, they have been true friends.

In lieu of flowers, Pete's family requests that donations be made directly to Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary.

Pete Nelson (above) and the Silverwood Observation Deck he designed and built.

Anstine Ambles *Closed for the Summer, but the Work Goes On*

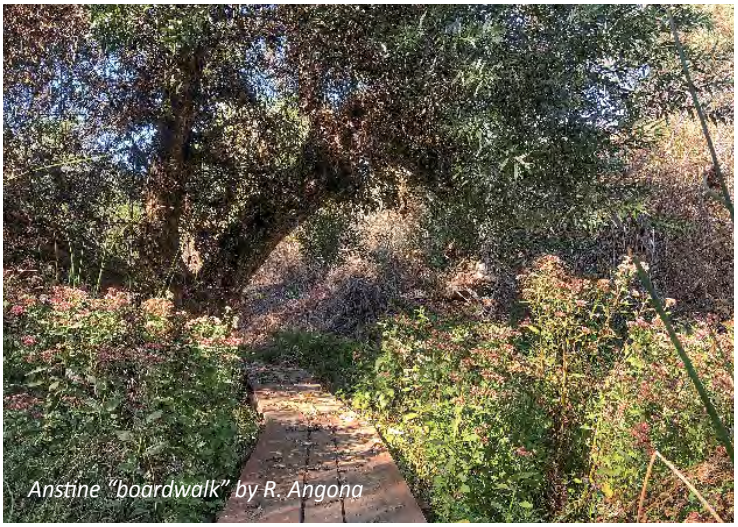
by M.J. Aguirre, CA Climate Action Corps Fellow

Being a California Climate Action Corps Fellow with SDAS has been an eye-opening and magical experience. Throughout this fellowship, I have been fortunate to work with our education programs and to see the beautiful transformation of habitats through the seasons at our Anstine-Audubon Preserve. During the summer months of July to September, the preserve is closed due to extreme heat, transforming this special place into a peaceful, undisturbed utopia. Bullock's and Hooded Orioles take refuge in the cottonwood trees within the mixed riparian habitat, and Black-headed Grosbeaks travel to the oak woodlands. The mixed riparian habitat includes two creeks and a 1.5-acre manmade, freshwater pond, providing wildlife a valuable source of water during the hot summers. You can see one of the preserve's two creeks as you walk across the wooden bridge running through the tall tule. The second creek runs through the riparian area and into the iconic pond—a site known for its enchanting interactions and observations between primary producers and consumers.

While the preserve is closed for the summer, wildlife has a chance to recharge without the intrusion of guests walking the trails or students eagerly chasing them. During these quiet months, early mornings bustle with birds and other wildlife racing to satisfy their appetites before temperatures rise. The afternoons bring stillness to the preserve, as most of our wildlife seek cool spots to settle down and escape the heat. This is an ideal time for our reptiles to bask in the sun, knowing their predators are lazily sleeping. Dusk once again brings the chirping of hungry birds, followed by the scurrying of squirrels and rabbits. Like clockwork, Red-tailed Hawks circle overhead, and Red-winged Blackbirds call across the pond. As nightfall approaches, the daytime chatter gives way to coyote howls and the hoots of Great Horned Owls.

While the preserve is closed to visitors, the staff and volunteers continue to work at Anstine to provide an enchanting, undisturbed sanctuary for our native flora and fauna. This is a time when we can complete large-scale work without affecting our visitation hours. We improve infrastructure, remove dead trees, forge new trails, and prep restoration sites for the planting season. The work being done today ensures positive visits in the fall.

Anstine will be closed to the public from July – September 2023.



Anstine "boardwalk" by R. Angona

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