

UC Santa Barbara

Newsletters

Title

NCOS News - July 2020

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0t4348m6>

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Publication Date

2020-07-01

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UC SANTA BARBARA North Campus Open Space Restoration Project

NCOS NEWS

July 2020



A Western Snowy Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*) chick successfully hatched at NCOS on June 24th. Here's a selection of photos of the chick and adult taken by Mark Bright.

UPDATES

Town Hall Webinar on Public Access & Use at NCOS + New Video

Please join us on Thursday, August 13th, 5:00-6:30 pm for an NCOS Town Hall webinar about the trails, visitor plaza, overlooks, and other public access and engagement features of project. [Click here](#) to register for the webinar and submit a question or comment so we can integrate your interests into the presentation and do our best to address everyone's points. Read more about the webinar and the existing, in construction, and planned amenities in the Feature Story link below.

We are also pleased to share a new short film by Michael Love called [NCOS IMPACT](#) that highlights some of the educational, research, wildlife, health and spiritual benefits of the project that many users have experienced.



Ocean Meadows Residential Project Available for Comment

When the Ocean Meadows golf course was donated to UCSB, there were two portions retained for housing in line with the Ellwood-Devereux Joint Proposal for the larger coastal open space. Developers for that property have been diligent about working with UCSB on a number of design elements that could have impacted NCOS, such as plantings, drainage and public access. Conceptual plans for 32 units along the eastern edge of NCOS and 6 affordable units adjacent to Whittier Drive are proposed. The conceptual plans are shown below. The public comment period for the project is open

for 45 days and it is within the Santa Barbara County jurisdiction. More details are [available here](#).



Response and Clarification on Aerial Photo in June Newsletter

In [last month's newsletter](#), we featured an aerial image of NCOS and Coal Oil Point Reserve taken by Bill Dewey with a small modification that we hinted at. Some readers responded and noticed that the old Venoco oil tanks were missing in the image, when in reality, the tanks have not been removed, not yet. Plans are in development to safely remove the tanks and restore the area, which could offer quite a nice viewpoint in the future.

FEATURE STORY

[NCOS Town Hall on Public Access & Use](#)



Map of existing, in construction, and planned public access and engagement amenities at North Campus Open Space.

Amenities that support public access and engagement at NCOS are a vital component of the project. We want to hear from you about your thoughts and ideas on these features and the long term management priorities for NCOS. [Read more](#) and learn how to register for an upcoming NCOS Town Hall webinar.

This feature story is continued on page 10.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES



"Second Saturdays" at NCOS

Second Saturdays at NCOS will resume as soon as it is safe to do so.

Thursdays - CCBER Greenhouse Associates

Thursday mornings at the CCBER greenhouse & nursery will resume as soon as it is safe to do so.



COMMUNITY FORUM & PHOTOS

We are interested in any observations of wildlife activity on NCOS. Please send your observations, with or without photos, to ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu. Thanks!



A White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*) landing ashore next to a Snowy Egret. Photo by David Levasheff.



A Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*). Photo by Jeremiah Bender.



A male Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*) perched atop a wild rye stalk. Photo by Karen Lunsford.



A recently fledged Lesser Goldfinch (*Spinus psaltria*) receives food from a parent. Photo by Glenn Kincaid.

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

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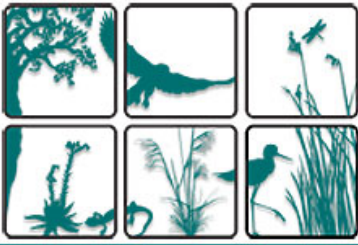
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NCOS TOWN HALL ON PUBLIC ACCESS & USE

With the primary plant communities and Marsh Trail established at the the North Campus Open Space (NCOS) restoration project, we at CCBER have turned our focus to addressing the more challenging areas of the site, particularly those with weedy seed banks. We are also now keenly focused on the enhancement of features that support public access and engagement at NCOS, which are a vital component of the project. And we want to hear from you: neighbors, users and supporters of all types, about your thoughts and ideas on these features (existing, planned, and in construction) and the long term management priorities for NCOS. Please join us on Thursday, August 13th at 5:00-6:30 pm for an NCOS Town Hall webinar about these features and other aspects of the project.



The public access components of NCOS are designed to support a wide range of constituents: community members (including UCSB students, neighbors, commuters and other people passing through and exercising), birders and artists focusing on the natural features of the site in a calm and quiet setting, and K-12 and university students participating in field trips, conducting research, participating in restoration, and conducting environmental education programs for people of all ages.

The primary public access amenity of NCOS is the Wells-Elings Marsh Trail, which has been open since October 2018 and is now visited by more than 160 users per hour. Several other public amenity features are currently under construction/restoration or are anticipated to be funded through grants. Along the Marsh trail, many recent visitors have noticed the three decomposed granite (DG) overlooks where benches will soon be installed (see the labeled red spots along the Marsh Trail in the map below). The benches will be constructed with wood from a salvaged redwood tree set on metal bases. We will also be installing way-finding signs with the names of trailheads and overlooks to help give a sense of place and facilitate meeting and location identification.



Map of existing, in construction, and planned public access and engagement amenities at North Campus Open Space.

We have recently applied for a grant to fund an improved parking lot at the Whittier Drive entrance to NCOS (area outlined in light blue in the map above). The proposed project would provide 28 parking spots, a widened entryway, walking and biking paths, and ADA parking stalls. We expect to hear if we will be awarded the grant this coming fall. This project would support and enhance access to the greatest concentration of interpretive features at NCOS, including the Carlton-Duncan Visitor Plaza currently under construction. The Visitor Plaza will include interpretive signs, shaded seating, a pollinator garden, and access to a short “Discovery Trail” focused on Native American use of plants and other natural materials for living. The construction of the Visitor Plaza also includes an elegantly designed and enclosed, ADA-accessible restroom facility. We would like the restroom to be available to the public, but we first need to determine if it can be managed in a way that avoids inappropriate use of the facility.



The recently completed base construction of the Carlton-Duncan Visitor Plaza, bicycle parking and restroom enclosure at NCOS.

The grant for the parking lot would also support installation of a low post-and-cable border along the Whittier Drive sidewalk, and several overlooks with benches for resting and observing nature. We are pursuing funds to complete the restoration of the grasslands and wetlands adjacent to Whittier Drive (orange thatched area in the map above), so visitors will be able to watch the transformation over time. We hope this will reduce unwanted use of this area for things like mattress disposal, transient encampments, and other disruptions of the site’s ecology. Through our monitoring and birder’s observations we are seeing raptors settling into the area and using these grasslands to hunt and consume prey, and small passerines and other birds are using the riparian corridor that runs through the area. We anticipate that wildlife viewing and a peaceful respite will be provided by these proposed overlooks. We look forward to your thoughts and ideas regarding this area.



LEFT: The Discovery Trail; and RIGHT: the foundation of one of the three overlooks along the Marsh Trail at NCOS.

With regard to education and research amenities, we are excited to announce that we have just learned of a donation that will support the construction of an Active Learning area adjacent to the Visitor Plaza where school groups can conduct activities off the trail and also divide into smaller learning circles for focused activities. We aim to support that learning with access to an adjacent indoor Science Center at the ROOST, where microscopes and other equipment could be accessed by school groups and student researchers.



Burrowing Owl

As we have reported previously, we are working on completing the restoration of the NCOS Mesa, including the coastal sage scrub and oak chaparral on the slopes, the grassland and wildflower fields, and the vernal pools. We hope to have enough plant growth in place to open the Mesa Trail and overlooks to the public in the Spring of 2021. As restoration has progressed, the site has begun to support several unique and sensitive species such as the Burrowing owl. With this in mind, we are carefully considering how to open the Mesa trail to the public in a way that will minimize disturbance and support the ecological values of the site. For example, if dogs are not kept on a leash, we may have to consider excluding dog walking on the trail. If users do not stay on the trails, then we may need to install barriers along the trail edges. We prefer not to take these steps, yet we have a funding and regulatory mandate as well as a deep desire to support nature with this project, and we intend to honor that goal. We would be grateful for your thoughts on how we can best convey these values and goals to site visitors.

Supporting these varied types of public use of NCOS while retaining its ecological values and functions means that principles of use need to be clearly defined and honored. The three key principles we have implemented for NCOS include: the requirement that all dogs are kept on a leash; that trail users do not leave behind trash or dog feces (bagged or unbagged); and to limit public access and use to delineated trails in order to reduce fragmentation that degrades the quality and connectivity of the habitat for wildlife and plants. Off trail access can be granted to guided tours and field trips, researchers, and student workers for learning-focused experiences conducted in a way that protects wildlife and reduces degradation of the habitat for all to enjoy.

Please join us at the [NCOS Town Hall webinar](#) at 5:00pm on August 13th to discuss all of these projects and your thoughts and ideas on how we can manage them in a way that supports a well-balanced combination of public use and preservation of nature.

Date:

Thursday, July 9, 2020 - 11:30

[Contact Us](#)

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