

UC Santa Barbara

Newsletters

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NCOS News - August 2020

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UC SANTA BARBARA North Campus Open Space Restoration Project

NCOS NEWS

August 2020



Two of six benches recently installed at overlooks along the Marsh Trail at NCOS.

UPDATES

REMINDER: NCOS Town Hall Webinar - August 13th, 5:00-6:30 pm

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.

Trail Overlook Benches & Signs

We are excited to announce that just this week, benches were installed at the overlooks! Trailhead marker signs have also been installed that identify the names for the entry points to help with wayfinding and to honor the significant contribution that Betty Wells-Elings has made to the long term management of NCOS. Thank you Betty! These unique Corten Steel signs contain a cutout of the NCOS mascot, the long-billed curlew, while the bench supports have cutouts of a sandpiper, both designed by Kelly Campbell. The signs, overlooks and most aspects of the Visitor Plaza and Discovery Trail were designed by [True Nature](#).



Planting Underway at Visitor Plaza and Discovery Trail

This month we're beginning to install plants and irrigation lines around the recently completed Visitor Plaza and Discovery Trail. During this process, we welcome and encourage visitors to use the new trail and plaza benches while respecting the delicate plantings and irrigation by staying on the trail.



Aerial image of the recently completed Visitor Plaza and Discovery Trail at NCOS.

Students Return to NCOS

A small number of UCSB students have been approved to return to work at the project site part-time. This is great news as we really missed the enthusiastic contribution of our usual cohort of students over the last few months. Despite having a much reduced crew on site during the Spring and first half of Summer, we still removed an estimated 18,000 gallons (600 thirty gallon trash cans) of weeds!



CCBER staff and student workers collect weeds for removal in 30 gallon cans.

FEATURE STORY

Restoration Progress on the EEM Zone of NCOS



Newly planted native coastal sage scrub species flowering in an area of the EEM project that was previously a densely covered patch of Fennel, Harding grass and Ripgut brome.

As the NCOS project got underway, we were concerned about the 25 acres of invasive weeds between NCOS and South Parcel that could easily colonize the newly restored site. Fortunately, with a grant funded by the Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program (EEM), our efforts to control the inhospitable weeds in what we call the EEM zone of NCOS have created openings for natural and planted restoration. Read more in [this report](#) by Beau Tindall, CCBER's project leader at EEM and South Parcel. [This feature story is continued on page 11.](#)

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!

Virginia Rail Sighting

The Virginia Rail (*Rallus limicola*) is a secretive, elusive wetland bird that is rarely seen, which is why we are delighted to share some photos of one recently seen by the Phelps Creek bridge - thanks Pamela!



A Trio of Blues

As the restored native vegetation continues to develop along the Marsh Trail, more and more butterflies are showing up to take advantage of the newly available resources. In fact, local butterfly expert, Nick Lethaby, recently counted 28 Western Pygmy Blue butterflies during a walk along the trail, which is many more than he has typically seen in the Goleta area. Two other "blues" that can be seen on site include the Acmon and Marine Blue.



Two views of a Western Pygmy Blue butterfly on one of its favorite plants at NCOS, *Suaeda taxifolia*. Left photo is by Karen Lunsford. Right photo is by Jeremiah Bender.



Two other "blues" butterflies feeding on nectar from Seacliff buckwheat flowers at NCOS. The butterfly on the left is an Acmon blue, and the one on the right is a Marine blue. Photo by Jeremiah Bender.



A close-up image of the Acmon blue butterfly. Photo by Jeremiah Bender.

Bobcat



Last month, one of our wildlife cameras briefly captured a bobcat walking by. They're definitely out there!

More Birds



An Anna's Hummingbird rests on the tip of a wild rye stalk. Photo by Karen Lunsford.



A juvenile Wilson's Phalarope. Photo by Jeremiah Bender.

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**For more information on the
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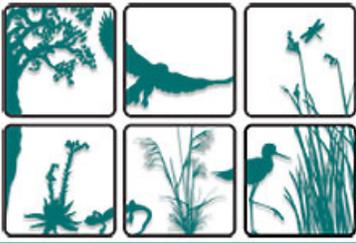
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RESTORATION PROGRESS ON THE EEM ZONE OF NCOS

In the 25 acres located between the North Campus Open Space (NCOS) Restoration Project and the South Parcel vernal pools is a unique zone that evolved in the aftermath of the bulldozing of the area in 1965 to scrape fill soil into the former upper arms of Devereux Slough for the creation of the Ocean Meadows golf course. That bulldozing left a series of berms and swales designed to keep runoff and sediment out of the golf course but ended up dumping extensive sediment into the lower portion of Devereux Slough. Some of the grading work exposed a region of sandy soils with a perched water table that became colonized by willows and cottonwood trees, and by the invasive Pampas grass (*Cortaderia jubata*). Other regions of the area with clay soils became dominated by Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), Mustard (*Brassica nigra*) and Harding grass (*Phalaris aquatica*), all of which established dense, low diversity weed patches. As the NCOS project got underway, we were concerned that these 25 acres of invasive weeds could easily colonize the newly restored site. To help control these weeds, we were fortunate to secure a grant funded by California Transportation Commission and managed by the California Natural Resources Agency called an [Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program](#) grant (EEM). Hence, we informally call this region the EEM portion of the greater North Campus Open Space. Now in its third year of implementation, the efforts to control the inhospitable weeds have created openings for natural and planted restoration, which are highlighted here in a report by Beau Tindall, CCBER's project leader at the EEM and South Parcel sites.



Map showing the six main zones or regions of NCOS, including the EEM region to the west, between NCOS and South Parcel.

In 2018, twenty-two tons of Pampas grass, an invasive species from South America, was removed from the site. This was mostly done using an excavator, but in the swales where it was not feasible, many hours were spent digging up individual plants. As you can see from the pictures below, simply removing the Pampas grass allowed for a natural population of Spike rush (*Eleocharis macrostachya*) to flourish as well as for water to pond during the wet season. Removing the Pampas grass also provided us with the opportunity to plant a trial population of the endangered Ventura marsh milkvetch (*Astragalus pycnostachyus* var. *lanosissimus*).



Pre-project photo from April 2017 showing several clusters of Pampas grass.



Removal of Pampas grass at the EEM site using an excavator.



Photo taken in July 2020 of the same Pampas grass covered area restored with native plants.



This photo shows Spike rush growing in a swale beneath the willows (lower right) where Pampas grass was removed in 2018-2019.

More than three acres of the site was dominated by an annual non-native mustard (*Brassica nigra*), which has proven to be quite a challenge to completely remove because of its long-lived seed that can persist in the soil and germinate for years. To combat this, we have spent two full growing seasons assuring that no mustards went to seed either with mowing or solarization. As you can see in the following pictures, it was a solid carpet of mustard prior to being solarized. This plan works well until you plant native plants, and then that's when hand weeding and some small use of herbicide comes into

play. We have successfully begun the process of transforming this section of EEM from a non-native dominated area to a beautiful patch of flowering coastal sage scrub species.





The three images above show a progression from (Top) - the pre-project dense patch of Mustard on EEM to (Middle) - solarization method applied to remove mustard, and (Bottom) - newly planted native coastal sage scrub species flowering.

The other multi-acre zone that we have spent a lot of effort on was primarily dominated by two challenging invasive plants, Fennel and Harding grass. This area was also treated for two years with solarization and is now a beautiful flowering coastal sage scrub habitat.





The three images above show a progression from (Top) - a pre-project dense patch of Fennel, Harding grass and ripgut brome on EEM to (Middle) - solarization method applied to remove weeds, and (Bottom) - newly planted native coastal sage scrub species flowering.

The last section of EEM that is the process of being restored is a trail that ran directly through the last remnants of the original, pre-golf course salt marsh along the Eucalyptus windrow. With this trail now closed off and replanted, we have a much higher likelihood of seeing Belding's Savannah Sparrow nesting in this habitat because of the enhanced connectivity to the larger restored salt marsh on NCOS.



Two views of the informal trail through the remnant saltmarsh area of EEM: (Left) - photo from April 2017 prior to fencing of the area, (Right) - photo from July 2020 showing regrowth of vegetation covering much of the old trail.

As you begin to explore the EEM site, which we highly encourage you to do, you will discover that it contains a lot of unique aspects. The area has unusually fine sandy soils, a perched water table supporting water loving plants such as willows and cottonwoods, and a wide diversity of smaller annual flowering plants such as Sand pygmyweed (*Crassula connata*), Miniature lupine (*Lupinus bicolor*), and Cleveland's cryptantha (*Cryptantha clevelandii*). We encourage you to enjoy this nature experience while being respectful to these small plants. This is a wonderful place for kids and adults to play in nature on foot, but if you have a dog please keep it on a leash so that quail, bobcats and children can enjoy the area safely.

Date:

Tuesday, August 4, 2020 - 12:30

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