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# UC SANTA BARBARA North Campus Open Space Restoration Project

## NCOS NEWS *June 2022*

**Black-necked stilt chicks foraging near Venoco Bridge. Photo by Jeremiah Bender.**

## UPDATES

***Rare plants are thriving at NCOS!***

**Coulter's saltbush (*Atriplex coulteri*) on the mesa.**

Coulter's saltbush (Atriplex coulteri), is a small, rare member of the Chenopodiaceae. Known from just a few collections on the mainland, its sole original population on campus encompasses a few square feet near the stairs at Manzanita Village. The CNPS gives them the rare plant ranking of 1B.2, just one ranking from the rarest possible. They do not compete well with the ubiquitous weeds that now are so common in California, which they have difficulty escaping even in their preferred niche. They seem to grow best in lightly salty, nutrient poor, compact soils near the coast.

**Coulter's saltbush (*Atriplex coulteri*) producing numerous seed stalks.**

After painstakingly searching for seed on the ground beneath tiny, rabbit-nibbled plants, we eventually managed to get about 50 plants to germinate. They were left to grow larger for a full year before being transplanted into pots in which they sat for almost another year. Early this spring, 49 small plants were planted in 3 select bare patches on the grassland mesa at NCOS, where essentially nothing, native or non, would grow.

**Western pygmy blue butterfly on Coulter's saltbush (*Atriplex coulteri*).**

After 2 months of being carefully given about 2 cups of water each per week by our student worker Griselda Robles Olague, they are now enormous, making thousands and thousands of seeds and attracting swarms of Western pygmy blue butterflies. We are already identifying many similar areas to expand the population further and cannot wait to collect seed and grow another generation of these rare plants.

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***Vegetation Monitoring Begins***

**Staff member Oliver Fahrner and student worker Kevin Tessier monitor coastal grassland habitat  on the Mesa.**

If you walk the Marsh or Mesa trails you may have noticed Cheadle Center staff and student workers utilizing measuring tapes and PVC squares while staring intently at the ground. This means its vegetation monitoring season! Every year the Cheadle Center uses the quadrat-transect method to monitor the non-riparian areas of NCOS. This method involves laying a measuring tape (transect) between two points and moving along the transect in set intervals and alternating sides with a quadrat (PVC square) which is used to estimate the percentage cover of plant species present. The data from these surveys is used in the NCOS monitoring reports to estimate the overall percentage cover of natives and non-natives.

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**FEATURE STORY**

***Mesa Trail is open!***


**Staff member Carlomagno Calderon gives an explanation of ethnobotany to curious visitors.**

The Cheadle Center is proud to announce the opening of the Mesa Trail at the North Campus Open Space! The trail was officially opened and celebrated on May 14th with a public event showcasing the history and biodiversity of the land. Visitors were invited to take part in a Mesa Trail scavenger hunt that led them along the new trail to various tables where Cheadle Center staff set up posters and displays offering information on the Mesa's past and present. These tables helped inform visitors on a range of subjects pertaining to the Mesa habitat, including its Ethnobotany, Ornithology, Hydrology, Entomology, and Botany. This feature story is continued on page 15.

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## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

### "Second Saturdays" at NCOS

**This month: June 11, 9-12**

**Please RSVP to ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu**

**Help us restore and create NCOS with plants and more! Meet at 6969 Whittier Drive at 9am. Bring water, sunscreen, and wear a hat, clothes and shoes that are suitable for outdoor work.**

### 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@ccber.ucsb.edu.**

### Nature Guide Tour

**This month: June 18, 9:30 -11**

**Come take a walk around NCOS and learn about native plants and animals with a trained Nature Guide.**

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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. Thank you!

**Red-tailed hawk with ground squirrel prey in the northwest of NCOS. Photo by Jeremiah Bender.**

**Western pygmy blue butterfly on Wooly sea blite (*Suaeda taxifolia*). Photo by Jeremiah Bender.**

**Black necked stilt chicks leave the nest shortly after hatching and feed themselves, although they are closely watched by both parents. Photo by Pamela Viale.**

**Black necked stilt parents perform distraction displays to protect their young and will even strike unwelcome visitors from behind with their legs. Photo by Jeremiah Bender.**

**California kingsnakes are relatively immune to some types of snake venom, including rattlesnake and coral snake. Photo by Connie Weinsoff.**


**Young great horned owls can fly at 9-10 weeks and are tended and fed by parents for up to several months. Photo by Susan Cook.**

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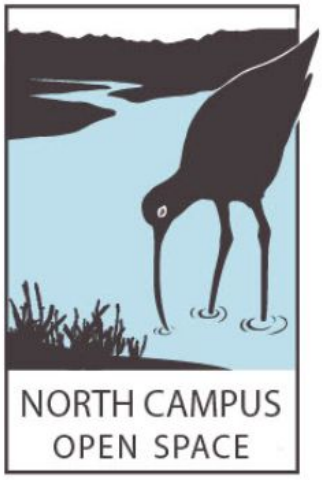
**For more information on the**
**North Campus Open Space Restoration Project,** Click here**, or email** ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu




CCBER
CHEADLE CENTER FOR BIODIVERSITY
& ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION

# Mesa Trail is Open!

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The event began with a Circle of Gratitude during which members of the local Chumash tribe led a group prayer and danced their traditional Snake Dance.

After the welcoming ceremonies, the scavenger hunt got underway! The first table along the Mesa trail detailed ethnobotanical practices and described how the Cheadle Center integrates traditional ecological land management practices into their work. This table included displays that demonstrated how several native plant species were and continue to be utilized by local Chumash peoples.


From there, visitors were encouraged to walk through the native coastal grassland to the central overlook, where they could get up close to raptors from the Audubon Society's Eyes in the Sky program. The Audubon Society set up birding scopes and binoculars which allowed the public to utilize the vantage point from the central overlook to search the slough

channel for different bird species. This station also had owl pellets that visitors could dissect to learn more about the diet of these fascinating raptors.

At the next station, microscopes brought the world of tiny aquatic invertebrates and zooplankton into view. These minuscule organisms inhabit the wetland areas of the site and are an important food source for the many bird species that hunt on North Campus Open Space.

The next table along the Mesa trail focused on the entomology of NCOS, and was staffed by members of the Cheadle Center's Collections department. This table displayed the many different bee species that have so far been observed and collected on NCOS, which allowed participants of the scavenger hunt to get an up close look at some of the most important pollinators on the restoration site.

The final stop on the Mesa trail scavenger hunt was at a table set up to display some of the rare plants growing on NCOS. Cheadle Center staff discussed some of the adaptations of these plants and the techniques used in restoration to ensure these rare plants can succeed. Overall the Mesa trail opening event was a success thanks to the hard work of the Cheadle Center staff and the Audubon Society along with the appreciation and engagement from the public. The Cheadle Center hopes that visitors will continue to explore all that North Campus Open Space has to offer by utilizing this new trail and taking in the Mesa habitat that has been several years in the making!

**Date:**
Wednesday, June 8, 2022 - 16:00