

UC Santa Barbara

Newsletters

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UCSB Restoration Register - September 2023

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UC **SANTA BARBARA**

Cheadle Center for Biodiversity
& Ecological Restoration

Restoration Register

September 2023



White-tailed Kite at NCOS. Photo by Susan Cook.

Student Volunteer Groups at NCOS



In July, the Cheadle Center welcomed two different high school volunteer groups to the North Campus Open Space for several days filled with fieldwork and nature walks. The groups included students from Oxnard High School and another group from New Jersey, organized in conjunction with Channel Islands Restoration. During their time at NCOS, students assisted in the removal of several invasive plant species and gained knowledge about the various aspects of ecological restoration involved in a project like the North Campus Open Space.



Cheadle Center staff lead students on walking tours of NCOS.



Bringing back Our Wetland Showing



Join the Santa Barbara Urban Creek Council and the SB Public Library for a special screening of the film *Bringing Back Our Wetland* for SB Creek Week. The screening will take place on Tuesday, September 26th at the Faulkner Gallery in the Santa Barbara Public Library and includes a post screening Q&A session. [Click here](#) to check out more fun SB Creek Week events!

Native Plant of the Month - Spiny Rush (*Juncus acutus* ssp. *leopoldii*)



Juncus acutus ssp. *leopoldii*, the spiny rush, or Leopold's rush. Photo by Daniel Forseth.

Juncus acutus ssp. *leopoldii*, the spiny rush or Leopold's rush, is a clumping, perennial rush in the Juncaceae, or rush family. It is a relatively large rush, second only to *Juncus textilis*, and it can be found from San Luis Obispo County southward into Baja, where it may occur in rivers, streams, and saline desert wetlands. In our area and across much of its range it primarily thrives in coastal salt marshes, where it adapts to the wet, salty soils. The Chumash use of this plant is somewhat ambiguous, as their folk taxonomy was occasionally based on plant uses rather than reproductive structures. Nevertheless, it does appear to have been utilized in twined basketry (Timbrook, 2007). With sharp, needle-like tips, it is indeed very spiny, which may have contributed to its removal and ultimate extirpation in the Carpinteria and Goleta sloughs. All the plants you see on campus today have been reintroduced over the last 20-30 years.

The endangered Ridgeway's rail, a ground-nesting bird that inhabits Southern California salt marshes, once had its northern limit at Carpinteria salt marsh, where around a dozen pairs still lived and bred in the 1990s. High densities of raccoons, red foxes, and other mesopredators have recently eliminated all the Ridgeway's rails, partly due to the absence of this plant. Successful nesting for the Ridgeway's rails is thought to heavily rely on stands of spiny rush for shelter, cover, and protection from predators. Currently, the Cheadle Center is growing hundreds of these rushes specifically for introduction to Carpinteria salt marsh, using seeds from Pt. Mugu, with the long-term goal of reestablishing the endangered Ridgeway's rail there. Spiny rushes fall within the rare plant spectrum and are assigned a California Rare Plant Ranking (CRPR) of 4.2 due to their limited distribution.

Feature Story

Prescribed burn at North Campus Open Space will revive an ancient tradition

Indigenous burning practices will return to coastal Southern California this fall. Members from multiple bands of the Chumash collaborated on a one-day burn at UC Santa Barbara's North Campus Open Space scheduled for September, a time of year when cultural burns were traditionally practiced. The event will take place in conjunction with Santa Barbara County Fire and UCSB's Cheadle Center for Biodiversity and Ecological Restoration.

The burn will restore traditional practices that enhance the biodiversity of native grasslands and reduce the risk of unintentional fire by eliminating dried thatch. It will also help the community build a stronger connection to the land, plants and wildlife by reconnecting with the long history of indigenous burning and assessing its value as a land management tool in the face of climate change and invasive plants. Approximately 14 acres of restored native perennial grassland will be burned on a permissive burn day. The burn will be ignited in several small plots, each of which could burn for 20-30 minutes. Staff at the Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District have reviewed the Smoke Management Plan and provided conditions to minimize smoke impacts. The burn will be conducted under the most favorable meteorological conditions to direct smoke away from population centers.



The cultural burn will eliminate the large amount of dried thatch within the North Campus Open Space grassland area and provide learning opportunities.

The Chumash and other Indigenous Californians used fire regularly as a tool to manage vegetation across the state for many thousands of years, until the Spanish governor banned the practice in 1793. In addition to the deep relationship that the Chumash have with fire, burning was also used to achieve diverse goals in different landscapes. Burning increases the germination and growth of culturally important plants and animals and reduces the build-up of dry fuels. The practice also enhances access to plant and animal resources such as redmaids, chia, edible bulbs, insects, small mammals and woody stems useful for constructing nets, baskets and animals' homes.

Cheadle Center staff have planted native bulbs and wildflowers at the North Campus Open Space following the seeding of native purple needle grass in 2017 and 2018. While mowing can reduce the buildup of dried thatch, a light cultural burn has the potential to eliminate the thatch from invasive

grasses, trigger growth by the native bunch grasses, stimulate germination of the native wildflowers and provide an opportunity for local Chumash representatives to re-ignite these practices on the coast of Santa Barbara after a 230-year hiatus.



Bulbs of Mesa Brodiaea (*Brodiaea jolonensis*) (left), Blue Dicks (*Dipterostemon capitatus*) (right), and Common Goldenstar (*Bloomeria crocea*) (below) have been planted within the grassland in preparation for the cultural burn.



This burn is planned and coordinated by the Santa Barbara County Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District (APCD), San Luis Obispo County APCD, San Joaquin Valley APCD, Ventura County APCD, and the California Air Resources Board in order to minimize impacts on air

quality on surrounding communities. The burn depends on weather and air quality conditions favorable to smoke dispersion. If the conditions are not within prescription, the burn will be rescheduled.

Volunteer Opportunities



"Second Saturdays" at NCOS

September 9th, 9:00 - 12:00

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

Thursdays 9:00 - 12:00

Come help transplant seedlings of native plants with the CCBER team. To join, please send an email to ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu.



Nature Guide Tour

September 16th, 9:30 - 11:00

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

Community 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!



Say's Phoebe fledglings rest on the fence at NCOS. These flycatchers have been present on the North American continent for a long time - paleontologists discovered Say's Phoebe fossils in Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas dating back to about 400,000 years ago! Photo by Susan Cook.



Hooded Oriole at NCOS. Orioles are members of the blackbird family (Icteridae), along with meadowlarks and cowbirds.

Birds in this family all have very strong, long, and pointed bills. They use their bills to get at foods other birds can't reach, such as prying apart thick patches of grass, opening up flowers, enlarging holes in tree bark, and digging into ripe fruits for their juice. Photo by Susan Cook.



Great Blue Heron at NCOS. Photo by Susan Cook.



Yellow-crowned Night Heron at NCOS. While mostly found in coastal areas, Yellow-crowned Night-Herons in North America can breed inland by feeding on crayfish in streams, and can be found as far north as Michigan and Ontario.

Photo by Lynn Scarlett.



22 of the 32 Snowy egrets seen recently at NCOS foraging on fish in a collaborative manner. Photo by Lynn Scarlett.



Red-tailed Hawk at NCOS. Photo by Daniel Forseth.



White-faced Ibis foraging in the upper seasonal pond at NCOS. They are both visual and tactile feeders, foraging by lowering their bills into the water or mud to feel for prey, or by swinging the bill side to side through water. Photo by Jeremiah Bender.



Long-billed Dowitchers possess numerous tactile receptors known as Herbst corpuscles at the tip of their bills, enabling them to locate prey through touch. This individual was seen foraging in the seasonal pond at NCOS. Photo by Jeremiah Bender.



Blue-eyed Darner hunting over Whittier Pond at NCOS. Photo by Jeremiah Bender.



Common Blue Damselfly pair laying eggs in Whittier Pond at NCOS. Photo by Jeremiah Bender.



Black-and-yellow Mud Dauber Wasp collecting mud for its nest. Seen on the shore of Whittier Pond at NCOS. Photo by Jeremiah Bender.



Metallic Green Sweat Bee on a Gum Plant (*Grindelia camporum*) flower at NCOS. Photo by Jeremiah Bender.



Double rainbow over NCOS. Photo by Scott Jasechko.

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