

UC Santa Barbara

Newsletters

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UCSB Restoration Register - November 2025

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UC SANTA BARBARA
Cheadle Center for Biodiversity
& Ecological Restoration

Restoration Register

November 2025



This western Palm Warbler was seen foraging at the NCOS Visitor Plaza on October 14, 2025.

Updates

Ellwood Marine Terminal



Deconstruction and grading at the EMT restoration site.

Grading is underway at the Ellwood Marine Terminal restoration site. We are looking forward to completing this phase and beginning the next exciting step, restoration planting. The restoration will establish several native plant communities, including seasonal wetland, perennial native grassland, vernal pools, coastal sage scrub, and oak woodland. Benches will be installed along an overlook trail to welcome visitors to this restored open space.

The project will maintain a relationship with members of the Chumash community, supporting their ongoing cultural revitalization through access for ceremonies and gatherings. Community members are invited to take part in weekend tree planting events and weekday volunteer opportunities at the site. This is a wonderful chance to contribute directly to habitat restoration and help conserve our local open spaces. Stay tuned for more project updates, and contact ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu to schedule volunteer days.



EMT site at sunrise - October 29, 2025.

NCOS Edge Planting

The Cove Housing project, located adjacent to the North Campus Open Space, is now complete, and we have begun restoration planting along the adjoining edge with NCOS that was graded as part of the development. The main species planted in this area are giant wild rye (*Elymus condensatus*) and creeping wild rye (*Elymus triticoides*). We also plan to add a selection of shrubs, such as California rose (*Rosa californica*), to increase plant diversity.



Recently planted giant wild rye (*Elymus condensatus*) at the NCOS/Cove edge.

Ellwood Bluffs and Monarch Grove

WORLD PREMIERE

ELLWOOD MESA: BEYOND THE BLUFFS

Wild and Free Film Festival

Sunday, November 16

2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

part of California Stories Shorts Block

Camino Real Cinemas

7040 Market Place Drive

Goleta, CA



Festival Info & Schedule: www.wildandfreefilm.org

Join us for the world premiere of *Ellwood Mesa: Beyond the Bluffs*! This new short film celebrates 20 years of Ellwood Mesa and shares heartfelt stories from our community about this cherished coastal landscape. The film will debut at the Wild and Free Film Festival on Sunday, November 16 from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m. at Camino Real Cinemas in Goleta, as part of the California Stories Shorts Block. For festival details and tickets, visit www.wildandfreefilm.org.



Monarch butterflies at the Ellwood grove.

One of the most cherished areas of Ellwood is the Monarch Grove, and you can help restore it! Join us for a volunteer day at the Ellwood Monarch Grove on Saturday, November 15, and be part of a larger conservation initiative to restore critical monarch butterfly habitat. An additional volunteer day will be held on Saturday, December 6.

These volunteer days support one of the most important overwintering sites for Western monarchs. With butterfly populations declining due to drought and extreme weather, your participation helps ensure their survival by adding hundreds of trees and thousands of native plants that provide essential food and shelter.

Volunteer days will run from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Parking is available at the Sperling Preserve across from Ellwood Elementary. Please allow 10–15 minutes to walk to the [Main Grove](#) (meeting location updates will be sent via email). Please wear comfortable footwear and bring water, sunscreen, snacks, and gloves (if available). Tools will be provided.

Sign up using the [online volunteer form](#).

New Faces on the Restoration Team

**Katelyn Vidal****Ryan Zimmerman**

We are excited to welcome two new staff members to the restoration team! Katelyn Vidal and Ryan Zimmerman have recently joined us after working as student employees while attending UCSB. We look forward to their continued involvement in restoration projects and to watching them learn, grow, and take on new responsibilities as part of the team.

Feature Story

Ramping up RAMMP: Research and Monitoring Mentorship Program

This month the Cheadle Center welcomed Francis Joyce as the new Restoration Research Coordinator. Francis will manage the new Research and Monitoring Mentorship Program (RAMMP), drawing on the Cheadle Center's rich history of restoration projects and long-term monitoring of campus lands while providing meaningful research experiences for UCSB undergraduates. He brings a broad background in ecology and recently completed his doctoral thesis at UC Santa Cruz, where he studied tropical forest restoration in southern Costa Rica. He is excited to support the ongoing work of the Cheadle Center and explore new lines of research alongside the curious and motivated students that this living laboratory attracts.



Francis carried out seed addition experiments and wildlife camera trapping to study factors limiting the recovery of old-growth tree species in tropical forest restoration in southern Costa Rica.

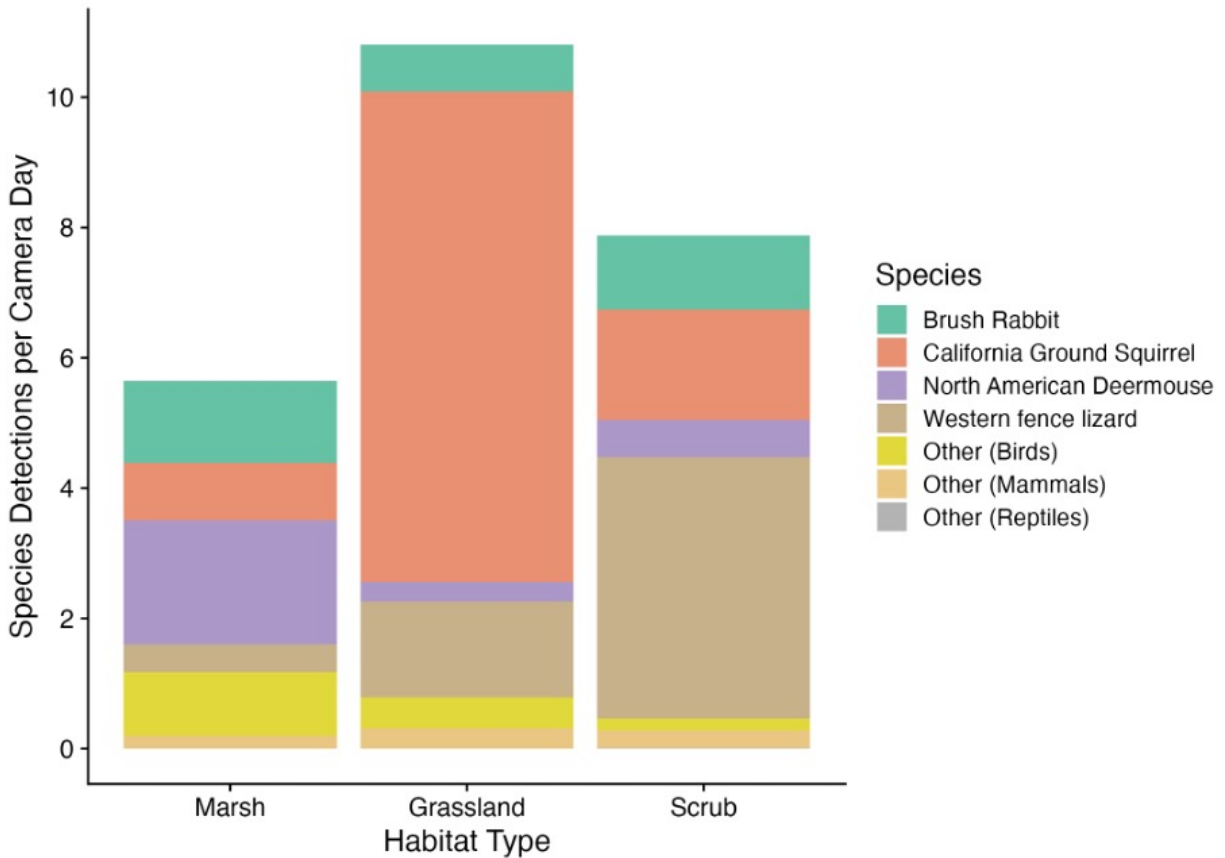
Building on prior projects and long-term monitoring data

One study that exemplifies learning from past Cheadle Center experiences to inform future restoration efforts is a collaborative study led by UCSB alumnus Alistair Dobson. In winter and spring 2021, Alistair set up cameras to explore how wildlife were using boulders, logs, and artificial structures (“constructed hibernacula”) that had been installed to provide cover and underground refugia in North Campus Open Space after it was initially graded. The camera traps captured hundreds of thousands of images—a real hurdle to process!



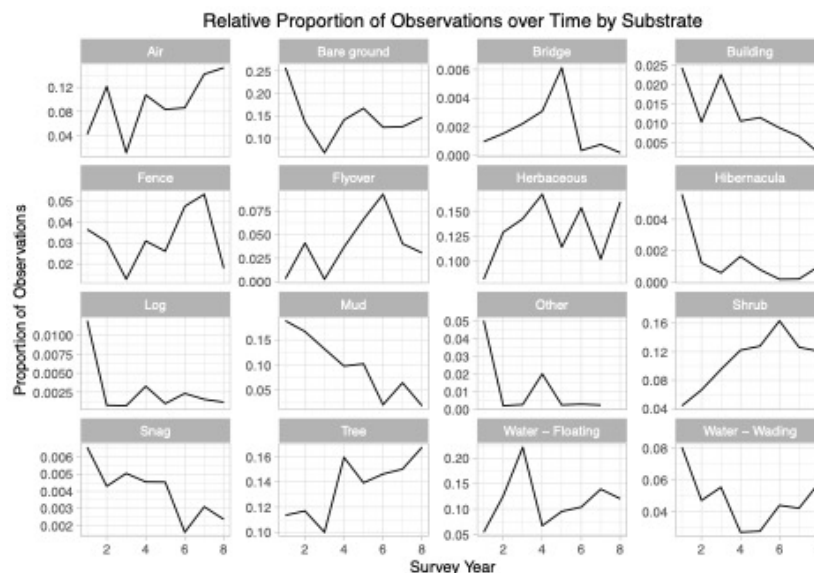
Alistair Dobson setting up camera traps at a hibernacula on the NCOS Mesa.

Recently Bren School graduate student Garrett Craig has been analyzing the data in consultation with Alistair and Francis. Artificial structures had significantly more wildlife detections than the logs and boulders, potentially because they provided more nooks and crannies and underground space. Not surprisingly, the “main characters” varied by habitat. California ground squirrels were most detected in grassland, whereas Western fence lizards were more common in coastal sage scrub, where the structures may have provided more basking benefits.



Detections of wildlife using features varied across different habitats at NCOS. California ground squirrels are considered “ecosystem engineers” because their burrowing activity creates habitat for many other species. (Unpublished figure by Garrett Craig).

To explore how bird use of constructed hibernacula has shifted over time, Matt Vinh, a data science and statistics undergraduate, has been analyzing eight years of NCOS bird monitoring data. The data suggest that hibernacula were more important substrates for birds (as perches or foraging locations) in the early years of NCOS, before much vegetation had recovered.



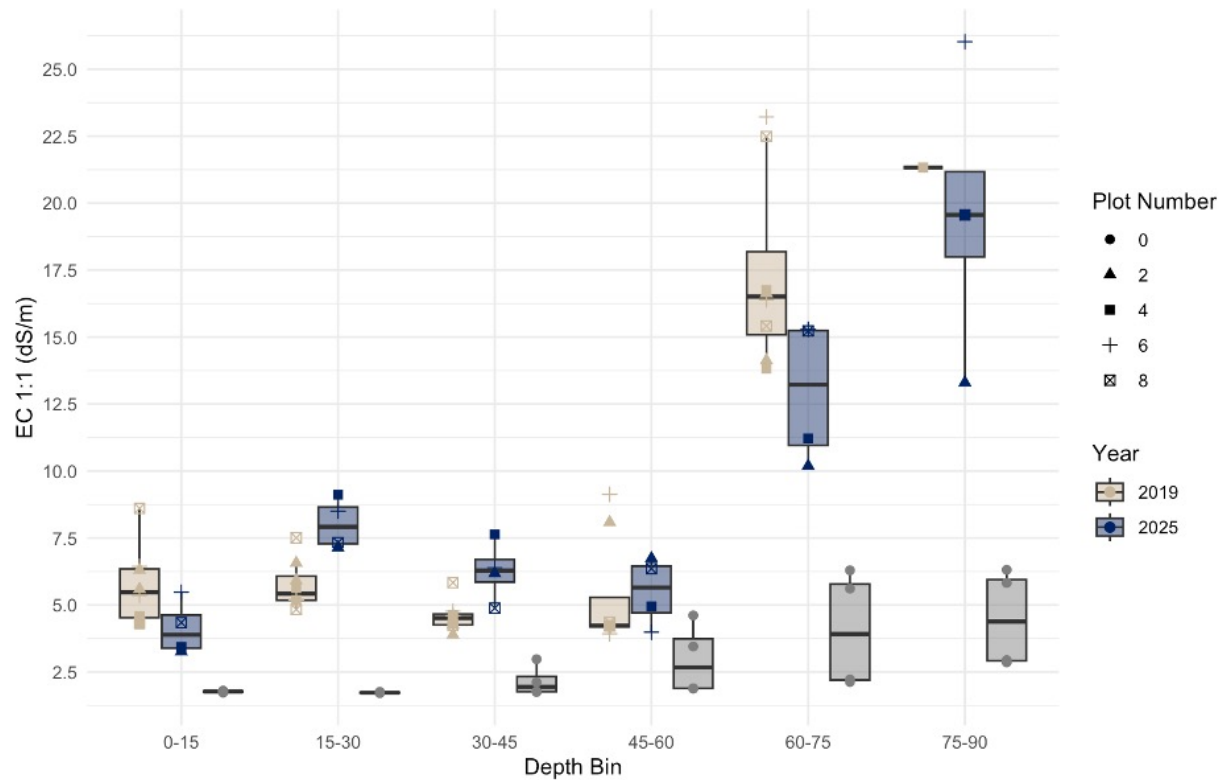
Proportion of bird observations by the substrate they were recorded using over the 8 years of bird surveys at NCOS. As vegetation recovered, detections at hibernacula declined. (Figure by Matt Vinh).

Guiding management into the future

Overcoming restoration management challenges involves solving scientific puzzles. For the past several years, coastal sage scrub plants on the Mesa Slope area of NCOS have not established as expected. The two, non-mutually exclusive hypotheses for why this is are (1) excessive soil salinity from excavated soils and (2) seasonally hyper saturated soil moisture conditions. As we uncover the mechanisms limiting recovery, we hope to not only improve restoration outcomes at NCOS, but also share lessons for restoration projects at other estuarine sites.



Lisa Stratton, Cheadle Center Director of Ecosystem Management, and student intern Emily Doering inspect coastal sage scrub species on the NCOS Mesa.



Soil salinity measurements across different depths and years (2019 and 2025) show that soils in the deepest layers are much more saline than samples from a non-excavated reference site (gray boxes). (Figure by Lara Roelefs).

Stay tuned for more updates on research findings and information on research internship opportunities for undergraduates!

Volunteer Opportunities



Second Saturday Volunteer Day at NCOS

December 13, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Please RSVP to ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu

Help us restore and create NCOS with plants and more!
Meet at 6969 Whittier Drive at 9:00 a.m. Bring water and sunscreen, and wear a hat, clothes, and shoes that are suitable for outdoor work.

Ellwood Monarch Grove Tree Planting

November 15 & December 6, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.



[Sign up using this online form.](#)

Help plant trees and native plants that provide essential food and shelter for overwintering monarch butterflies! Meet at the Main Grove at 9:00 a.m. Parking is available at the [Sperling Preserve](#).



Greenhouse Transplanting

Thursdays 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

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

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!



Osprey over NCOS. Photo by Matthew Vidal.



Red-shouldered hawk at NCOS. Photo by Matthew Vidal.



Cassin's kingbird near Whittier Pond at NCOS. Photo by Sally Colman.



Long-tailed weasel in a hibernacula on the NCOS Mesa. Photo by Jennifer Davila.



Wandering skipper feeding on coastal goldenbush (*Isocoma menziesii*). Photo by Jeremiah Bender.



Least sandpiper on the shore of the Devereux Slough at NCOS. Photo by Jeremiah Bender.



Black phoebe in the salt marsh at NCOS. Photo by Jeremiah Bender.

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

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