

UC Santa Barbara

Newsletters

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UC SANTA BARBARA

North Campus Open Space Restoration Project

NCOS NEWS

July 2019



An American Avocet wading in the NCOS wetland north of Venoco Bridge on June 27. Photo by Jeremiah Bender.

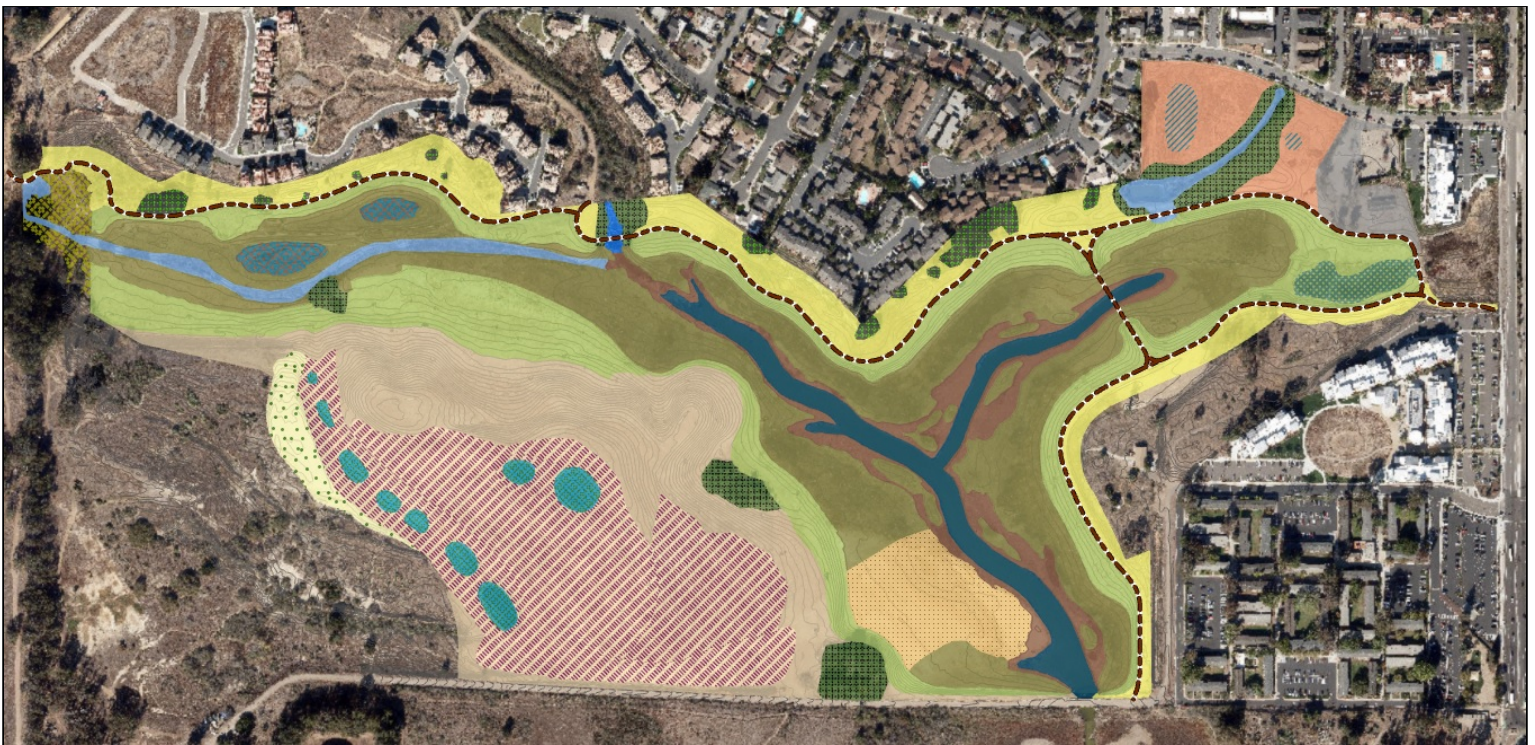
UPDATES & EVENTS

Summer Happenings at NCOS:

- NCOS Operations will go 100% sustainable this summer when the 24KW solar system is installed on the roof of the ROOST!
- The construction of the Visitor Plaza and Discovery Trail is slated to begin later this summer. When it's complete there will be interpretive signs, benches and overlooks along the trail, and more!
- Restoration work this summer will focus on planting the slopes of the Mesa with a mix of coastal sage scrub, chaparral and grassland species. Come help us plant anytime, including at our monthly ***2nd Saturday this week on July 13, starting at 9:30 am*** (more information in the Volunteer Opportunities section below).



The roof of the ROOST building at NCOS will soon be covered with solar panels.

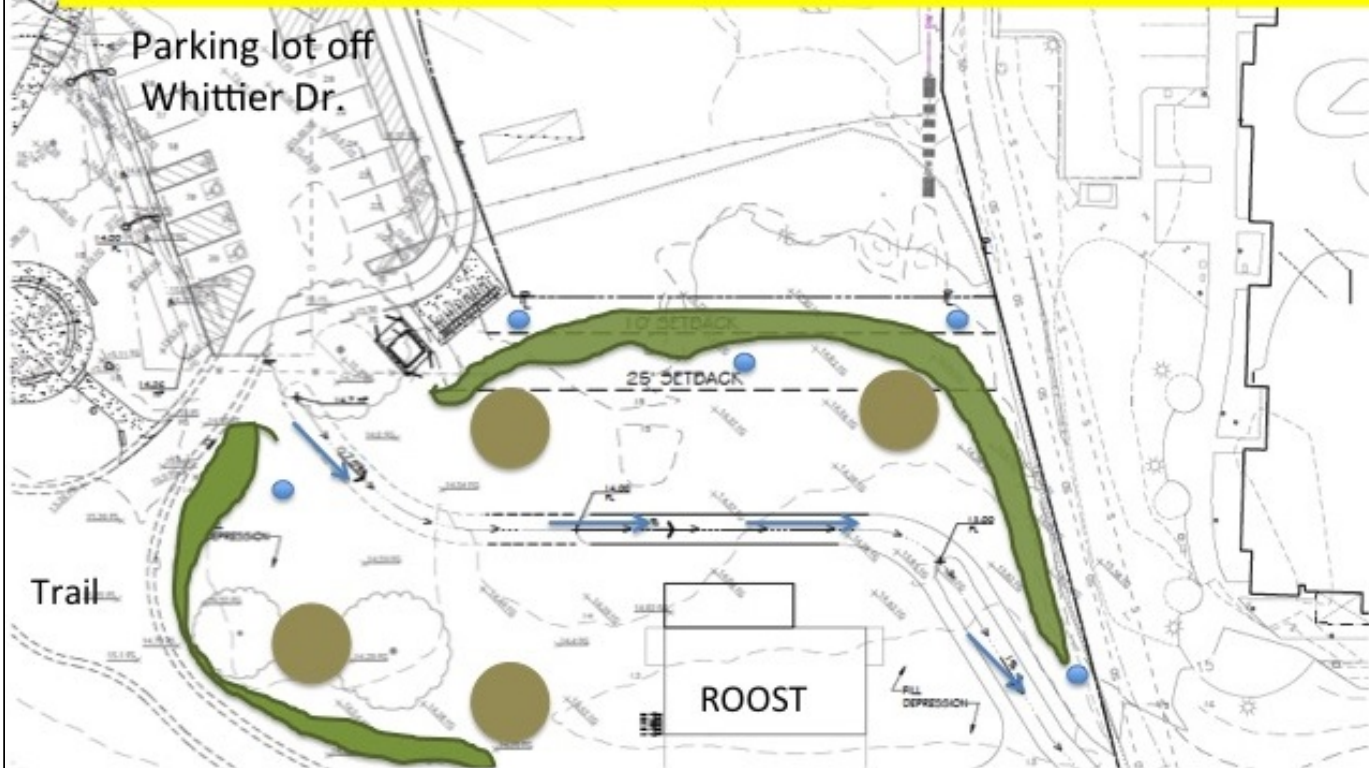


Map of the habitats at NCOS. Planting this summer will be focused in the beige colored area - the slopes of the Mesa.

Grant Submitted for Green Infrastructure Project

CCBER has applied for a Green Infrastructure grant to improve public access through projects which address stormwater flow and ecosystem function. We hope to renovate the parking lot with permeable pavers, create an outdoor learning area adjacent to the ROOST building (see draft plan drawing below), and restore a carbon-sequestering, perennial grassland adjacent to Whittier Drive. We have also requested funds to improve trail smoothness in the loose areas and purchase an all-terrain wheelchair. We expect to hear the outcome of the grant selection early next Spring, and will solicit community feedback as we move forward.

DRAFT SITE PLAN FOR ACTIVE LEARNING AREA COMPONENT



The Active Learning area will have a shallow swale (blue arrow) running through it and four small learning areas (brown circles) with log benches set up in a U shape. The area between learning areas will be planted with low growing, native salt grass and site will be buffered from adjacent houses and trail with mounds vegetated with coastal sage flowering plants (green). Three trees exist on site and 5 more oaks will be planted to provide shade (blue dots). The central area will be open for group activities and programs.

2019 United Way Day of Caring is Coming!

[Sign up](#) for this year's United Way Day of Caring at NCOS!



28TH ANNUAL UNITED WAY

DAY OF CARING

SEPTEMBER 14, 2019 | 9 AM - 12 PM

North Campus Open Space
Restoration Project

PITCH IN | GIVE BACK | JOIN US
volunteer registration is now open
WWW.IA.UCSB.EDU/UW

Day of Caring is a community-focused project where more than 1,200 volunteers work at local organizations. Join the UC Santa Barbara Team today!

UC SANTA BARBARA

FEATURE STORY

[Exclosures Deployed to Help Snowy Plovers in Tough Breeding Season](#)



The threatened Western Snowy Plover faces many challenges when attempting to successfully reproduce. This breeding season, crow predation on plover eggs has been so intense on COPR and NCOS that something creative needed to be done or the plovers would not be able to reproduce successfully. [This feature story is continued on page 11.](#)

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES



"Second Saturdays" at NCOS

This month: July 13, 9:30 - 12:30

Please RSVP to ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu

**Help us restore and create NCOS with plants and more!
Meet at 6975 Whittier Drive at 9:30 am. Bring water, sunscreen, and wear a hat, clothes and shoes suitable for garden work.**

Saturday Tree Plantings

See in you in the Fall!

You can help Your Children's Trees plant oaks and other saplings at NCOS! Please contact [Your Children's Trees](#) for more information and to RSVP.



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@ccbber.ucsb.edu.

Group Volunteer Opportunities

We gladly welcome local business, non-profit, school and other community groups to come out to NCOS to help with planting and other activities. For more information, please send an email to ncos@ccbber.ucsb.edu.

COMMUNITY FORUM & PHOTOS

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



David Levasheff captured this photo just the other day of a rare visitor to NCOS, a Yellow-crowned Night Heron! It's still there today - near where Phelps Creek enters the site.





If you've been on the trail in the past month, you may have noticed what resembles a putting green from a distance (top image) is actually a layer of *Azolla filiculoides*, or water fern, covering the surface of Whittier Pond (bottom image).

Photos by Jeremiah Bender.



Hover fly visiting a Golden Yarrow in June 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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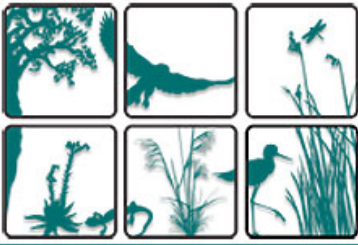
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EXCLOSURES DEPLOYED TO HELP SNOWY PLOVERS IN TOUGH BREEDING SEASON



A Western Snowy Plover at NCOS incubates its nest under an enclosure designed to prevent predation by Crows and Owls.

The threatened Western Snowy Plover faces many challenges when attempting to successfully reproduce. One of those challenges is a shortage of safe, suitable nesting habitat, much of which has disappeared or is under threat from human development, recreation, and sea-level rise. The NCOS restoration project created a new nesting habitat for the plovers, augmenting the existing habitat on the neighboring Coal Oil Point Reserve (COPR). In the future, this new nesting habitat could become a refuge should the beach habitat at COPR become threatened by sea level rise. Last year, at least one nesting attempt was observed on this new habitat at NCOS, and more attempts have occurred this year.

While nesting habitats can be protected from human disturbance by installing fencing and signage, plover nests and chicks are still vulnerable to predators such as crows, ravens, owls, hawks, and skunks. Once these predators discover a nest, they usually go back, scanning for more, and are capable of eating all plover eggs and chicks available. These predators are native to California but in some cases their numbers may be higher than normal because they tend to thrive well in human dominated environments. Crows overpopulate cities because they exploit trash and steal pet food. Owls and hawks feed on plovers and use the non-native Eucalyptus and Cypress trees to perch and nest near plover breeding sites.

One method to help protect the plover nests is to create an "exclosure" - a mesh structure that surrounds the nest and allows the plovers to get in and out, but excludes larger predators. These exclosures have been used at Coal Oil Point Reserve (COPR) in the past to reduce crow predation but an unwanted outcome was that owls learned to sneak up on the plovers and grab them through the mesh when they were trying to flee.



A Western Snowy Plover on its nest under a re-designed enclosure near the beach at Coal Oil Point Reserve.

This breeding season, crow predation on plover eggs has been so intense on COPR and NCOS that something creative needed to be done or the plovers would not be able to reproduce successfully. The enclosure was re-designed to make it more owl-proof: with double-walls so the plover parent had time to choose the best exit if an owl approached and with a solid roof so the owls could not see the plover from above. The experiment appeared to be working since nests in the modified enclosures have not been predated on by crows or owls, however baby skunks appear to have been slim enough to fit through the plover-sized mesh and consume another round of egg laying on the NCOS and Slough nesting areas. In addition, and unfortunately, at the beach nesting area, large waves, just before the 4th of July washed away the majority of nests on the beach.

It has been a challenging breeding season for this special bird at COPR and NCOS. This is in stark contrast to last year's breeding season - the most successful for the plovers at COPR since the recovery program began ([more details in the 2018 COPR Newsletter](#)). Due to this variability, the success of recovery efforts is measured by the average number of chicks fledged at several beaches and by the average number fledged across many years for each site. As long as these averages are increasing over time, the populations are recovering. Currently, the overall population of Western Snowy Plovers across their entire Pacific Coast range is increasing.



COAL OIL POINT RESERVE
UC SANTA BARBARA NATURAL RESERVE SYSTEM

This story was written in collaboration with Cris Sandoval, COPR Director, and Jessica Nielsen, COPR Conservation Specialist.

Date:
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