

UC Santa Barbara

Newsletters

Title

NCOS News - May 2021

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8dz44567>

Authors

Clark, Ryan
Stratton, Lisa
Tindall, Beau

Publication Date

2021-05-01

[We recommend viewing this email in your web browser](#)

UC SANTA BARBARA North Campus Open Space Restoration Project

NCOS NEWS

May 2021



Photo of a long-tailed weasel at NCOS by Jeremiah Bender. Read more about this elusive mustelid below.

UPDATES

T-Shirt Artwork to be Displayed at Visitor Plaza

While we finalize the selection of the artwork for the new NCOS t-shirts that will be available later this year, we'd like to encourage you to come view some of the entries in the new display case at the Visitor Plaza. Over the next month, we will display prints of the top four entries in the contest. Feel free to send us your thoughts on the artwork by emailing ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu.



The display case at the Carlton-Duncan Visitor Plaza, currently housing the NCOS Funders Acknowledgement Sign.

New Electric String Trimmers Now In Use Thanks to TGIF!

As part of our ongoing efforts to increase the sustainability of our operations, CCBER recently launched the use of two new battery powered string trimmers with funding awarded by a recent grant from the students of UCSB through [The Green Initiative Fund!](#) TGIF's earlier funding of the 24KV solar panel system on the ROOST enabled us to harvest the sun's energy to charge our electric "gators", and this new grant helps us to expand the use of the system to our land management tool portfolio.



One of CCBER's new battery powered string trimmers funded by TGIF in action at NCOS.

The two Oregon brand string trimmers contribute to reducing CCBER and UCSB's environmental impacts by saving energy, limiting air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions, and reducing noise levels. In a comparison with our gas powered trimmers, the noise level of the new electric trimmer ranged between 65 to 70 decibels (dB) while the gas powered trimmer reached between 80 to 85 dB. According to [this source](#), 80 dB is twice as loud as 70 dB and could potentially cause hearing damage after 8 hours of exposure.



One of CCBER's new battery powered string trimmers (left) next to a gas powered trimmer (right) for comparison.

We hope this improvement enhances everyone's enjoyment of NCOS. Thank you UCSB Sustainability Students and Staff for your [support](#)!

Cliff Swallow Nesting Structures Coming Soon

Cliff Swallows have been very appreciative of the quality and quantity of clay in the wetlands along the western arm of NCOS, and while several Ocean Walk homeowners have been welcoming to the swallows building nests on their homes, not everyone enjoys sharing their home with these birds. Building on some of the excellent information reported by the [Cliff Swallow Project](#), CCBER and one of our new Nature Guides-in-training are working on plans to construct some artificial nesting structures similar to those at Fort Carson, Colorado (see image below).



A Cliff Swallow nesting structure at Fort Carson, Colorado. Photo obtained from <https://www.cliffswallow.org/faq.html>

We plan to install these structures later this month, and while the swallows may not use them for this year's nesting season, we hope to familiarize them with the structure by placing it along their major flyway to the wetland (see the yellow rectangle in the map below). To help attract the swallows to build nests on the new structure, we would like to glue some nests or parts of nests onto the structure. If you have an abandoned nest on your home and we can figure out how to get it off, please send an email to ncos@cber.ucsb.edu. The goal is to continue to support these unique and beautiful birds without impacting homeowners.



Map of the western half of NCOS with the yellow rectangle indicating the location where a nesting structure for Cliff Swallows will be installed.

Cliff swallows are colonial nesters and forage primarily on swarming insects, and as Karen's photo (below) suggests, they are also part of the food chain for other species.



An American Crow captures a Cliff Swallow at NCOS. Photo by Karen Lunsford.

Long-tailed Weasel Sightings

Several trail users and some CCBER staff have recently reported sightings of a weasel at NCOS. The elusive critter is a long-tailed weasel (*Mustela frenata*), and it's not the first time one has been spotted on site. In fact, others have been seen in the region, including in [Isla Vista](#) (and you can see where other sightings have occurred and report your own sightings on [iNaturalist](#)!) According to a species profile by the [Ojai Valley Land Conservancy](#), it is generally a solitary species except during the breeding season, and is most active at night though can be seen during the day, including occasionally hunting amongst rocks at the outlet of a pond or stream, which is where one has most recently been seen at NCOS. The weasel dens in burrows under stumps or beneath rock piles and usually does not dig their own dens but instead uses abandoned dens dug by ground squirrels.



Short video of a long-tailed weasel at NCOS, recorded by Conor McMahon.

NCOS Nature Guides Resources Online

We are very excited and grateful for our first cohort of Nature Guides, who are now about halfway through training. All of the educational resources, including recordings of the zoom sessions and pre-recorded presentations, are being made available online and we are happy to share them with anyone in the community who would like to learn on their own time or join the current team and catch up! Email us at ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu to learn more.

FEATURE STORY

[Preserving a Precious Ecological Resource at NCOS](#)



A Common Goldenstar (*Bloomeria crocea*) in bloom at NCOS.

During pre-restoration vegetation surveys at North Campus Open Space, small populations of three species of geophytes were discovered. In [this story](#), CCBER Restoration Coordinator, Beau Tindall, tells us about the ecological importance of these special plants and the steps that CCBER is taking to help preserve and propagate them so that their populations can grow and persist well into the future.

[This feature story is continued on page 16.](#)

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!

No Dogs Off Leash, Please!

A community member shared with us that a dog owner who visits NCOS early in the morning before staff are on site lets the dog loose and it has run into the ponds scaring birds such as the Canada geese and their goslings (see photos below). This is a reminder that we do have a law requiring dogs be kept on a leash as part of making NCOS safe and comfortable for everyone, including and especially wildlife. We encourage everyone to help us deliver the message regarding the leash law, violations of which incur a \$500 fine, and inform resistant dog owners of locations where they can legally let their furry friends run free.



Gorgeous Great Horned Owlets & Green Herons by Susan Cook



© Susan T Cook



© Susan T. Cook



Received this email from a friend? [Click here](#) to subscribe to our mailing list.



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

Copyright © 2021 Cheadle Center for Biodiversity and Ecological Restoration (CCBER), All rights reserved.



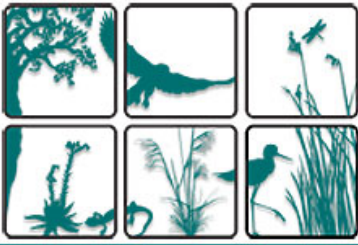
Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#)

This email was sent to <<Email Address>>

[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)

Cheadle Center for Biodiversity and Ecological Restoration (CCBER) · Bldg 578 Harder South · UCSB, MC 9615 · Santa Barbara, CA 93106 · USA





[Home](#) | [News](#) | [About](#) | [UCSB Natural History Collections](#) | [Ecological Restoration](#) | [Data & Research](#) | [Education](#)

[Home](#) » [Blogs](#) » [Ryan Clark's blog](#)

PRESERVING A PRECIOUS ECOLOGICAL RESOURCE AT NCOS

During pre-restoration vegetation surveys at North Campus Open Space, a small population of three species of geophytes were discovered on South Parcel. Geophytes are perennial plants that sprout strikingly beautiful and delicate wildflowers and propagate from small underground bulbs as well as through the production of seeds. Tens of thousands of small geophyte bulbs were located from a few flowering heads within several small areas where soil movement and grading for the NCOS restoration project was anticipated. These caches of bulbs were harvested and preserved so they could be re-established in new, safe locations. The three species discovered on site are Mesa Brodiaea ([Brodiaea jolonensis](#)) which is an endemic to California, Common Goldenstar ([Bloomeria crocea](#)), and Blue Dicks ([Dichelostemma capitatum](#)).



Left image: Mesa Brodiaea (*Brodiaea jolonensis*). Right image: Blue Dicks (*Dichelostemma capitatum*).

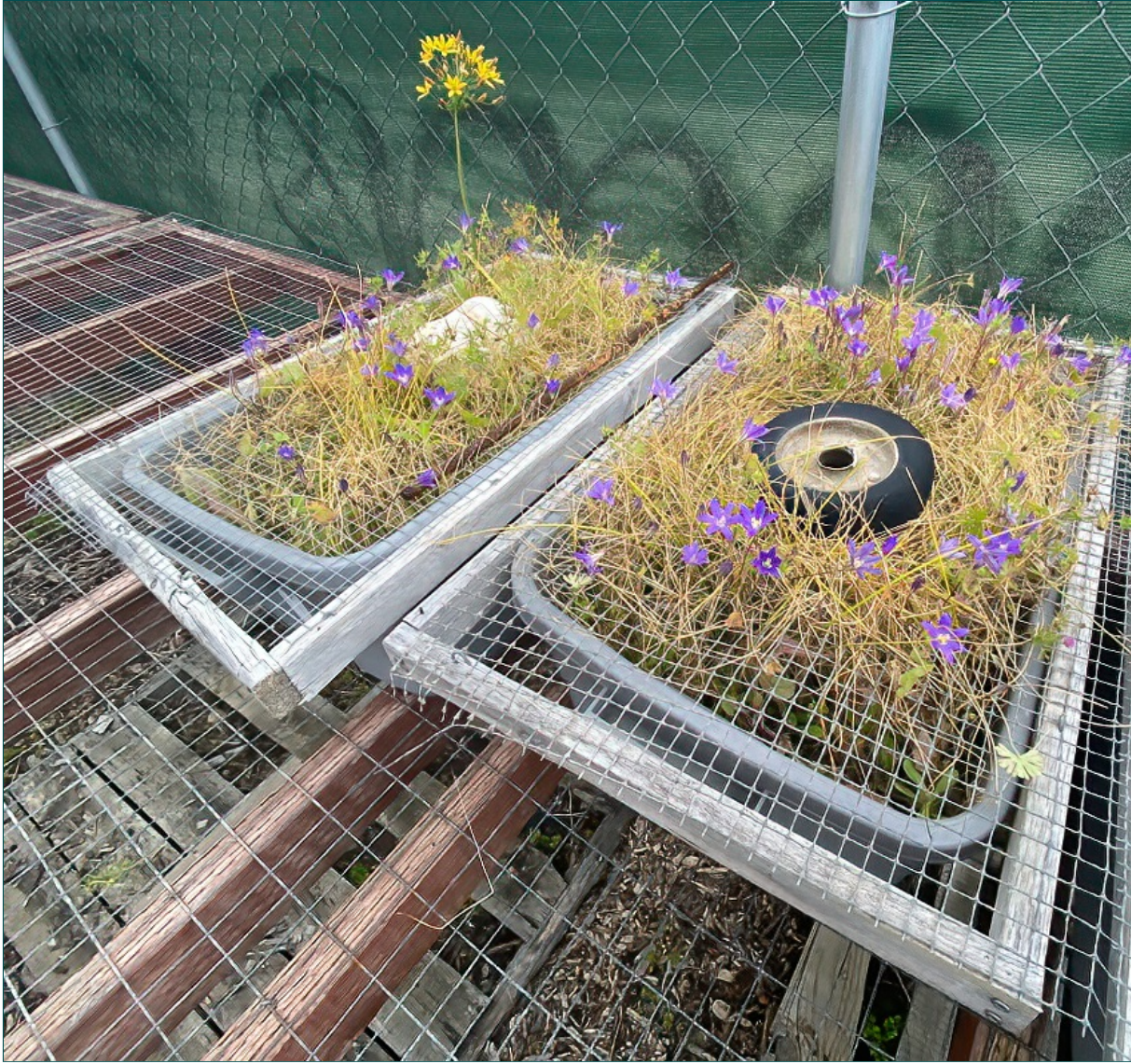
Historically, geophytes in our region were likely present in all local native grasslands, but they are now rarely seen along the coast. Native American's valued these plants for their nutrient rich bulbs and harvested them with digging sticks that stimulated their growth by breaking apart the reproducing bulblets from the main bulb, and they harvested only a portion of the bulbs.

The life cycle of a geophyte is largely unassuming, and since they spend much of the year as an unseen underground bulb and sprout a small green leaf that precedes a floral stalk, they can easily be missed. But for a few weeks in the spring when these small flowers bloom, they are quite beautiful and hard to miss. The plants provide a nutrient dense meal to wildlife and are a valuable resource to our local ecosystem.



A Common Goldenstar (*Bloomeria crocea*) in bloom at NCOS.

CCBER has taken two approaches to help preserve and propagate these precious geophytes. First and foremost, we out-planted thousands of harvested bulbs around the recently created vernal pools on the NCOS mesa as well as near the older, more established pools in the South Parcel area. For the second approach, we created bins to grow the geophytes in ideal conditions that allow them to propagate vegetatively. This strategy will allow us to maintain a nursery population of bulbs from which we can continue to outplant into the field year after year. We have also contributed bulbs to Coal Oil Point Reserve, which will help bolster the populations there. We hope our efforts will see these geophytes continue to thrive and become a common site in our restored grasslands in the future.



Geophyte propagation tubs at the CCBER nursery.

This article was written by CCBER Restoration Coordinator, Beau Tindall, and edited and formatted for the web by Lisa Stratton and Ryan Clark. Photographs are by Jeremiah Bender.

Date:

Friday, May 14, 2021 - 10:15

[Contact Us](#)

Cheadle Center for Biodiversity and Ecological Restoration • [Earth Research Institute](#)

Copyright © 2007-11 The Regents of the University of California, All Rights Reserved.

UC Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara CA 93106 • [Terms of Use](#)

[UCSB website](#)

