



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office

2023 Year in Review



Conservation success stories from the people of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Ventura who work to protect fish, wildlife, plants, and natural habitats of the Central California coast.

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Based in Ventura, our biologists and natural resource professionals work across the Central California coast in Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey, Santa Barbara and Ventura counties; portions of Los Angeles and San Luis Obispo counties; and the northern Channel Islands.

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On the front cover: A species portrait of a California condor in celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Endangered Species Act. Artist: Cal Robinson/USFWS.

On the back cover: California red-legged frog themed jalapeno cheese bread. Credit: Olivia Beitelspacher/USFWS

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The complex block features a background image of a website screenshot for the Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office. The website header includes navigation links for SERVICES, SPECIES, VISIT US, GET INVOLVED, NEWSROOM, INITIATIVES, and ABOUT US. The main content area displays a video player with the title 'Sea Otter Awareness Week 2023' and a description: 'Learn more about southern sea otters' return to ecological relevance and potential reintroductions to their historical range.' Below the video player, there is a section titled 'About Us' with a brief description of the office's mission.

From the Field Supervisor

Dear reader,

Join us as we take a look back at some of the highlights from this past year as we celebrated the 50th anniversary of a bedrock conservation law, the Endangered Species Act.

We announced the delisting of two island plants on the northern Channel Islands with conservation partners.

We proposed ESA protections for the western pond turtle due to drought, invasive species, and habitat loss.

We determined southern sea otters still need ESA protections and hit the road to hear perspectives from local communities in Northern California and Oregon on sea otter recovery efforts.

We welcomed new faces to our team including our third Kendra Chan Conservation Fellow to carry on a legacy that champions diversity in conservation.

We connected with people online and in-person with a vision to reflect the diversity of the communities in which we serve because the outdoors is for everyone.

We can't wait to see what 2024 has in store!

Estimado lector,

Miremos algunos de nuestros éxitos de este año.

Celebramos 50 años de protecciones para la vida silvestre bajo La Ley para las Especies en Peligro de Extinción, conocida como la ESA.

Junto a nuestros socios de conservación, anunciamos el retiro de dos plantas isleñas encontradas sobre los Channel Islands de la ESA.

Propusimos protecciones para la tortuga del Pacífico debido a la sequía, especies invasoras, y la pérdida de hábitat.

Determinamos que las nutrias marinas del sur siguen necesitando protecciones de la ESA y recorrimos la costa de Oregon y el norte de California para escuchar perspectivas de la comunidad local sobre el esfuerzo de recuperación de las nutrias marinas.

Le dimos la bienvenida a nuevos compañeros de trabajo, incluso a nuestro tercer recipiente de la Beca de Conservación Kendra Chan quien continuará el legado



de Kendra para incluir más diversidad en la conservación.

Nos conectamos con nuestra comunidad en persona y en línea con el intento de representar la diversidad de las comunidades en las que servimos - porque todos pertenecemos al medioambiente.

¡Estamos emocionados para ver lo que el año 2024 nos trae!

Stephen P. Henry
Field Supervisor

Channel Islands plant species declared fully recovered



*Santa Cruz Island dudleya (Dudleya nesiotica) found on Santa Cruz island.
Credit: USFWS*

Two plants that live on California's Channel Islands and nowhere else on earth – the Santa Cruz Island Dudleya and island bedstraw – have been declared fully recovered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service due to the collaborative efforts of conservation partners and no longer require Endangered Species Act protections. The delisting of the two species arrives as the Endangered Species Act celebrates 50 years of conservation in 2023.

The successful recovery of two plants adds to the list of species that have now successfully recovered on the islands, including the island fox, peregrine falcon, bald eagle, California brown pelican, and island night lizard. Recently, the Service also announced the delisting of five species on San Clemente Island: San Clemente Island paintbrush, lotus, larkspur and bush-mallow plants and San Clemente Bell's sparrow.

“Today we celebrate the flourishing return of two plant species to the Channel Islands thanks to the tireless work of scientists, land managers, and the local community to restore the health of California’s island ecosystems,” said Paul Souza, regional director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Pacific Southwest Region. “We also celebrate 50 years of the Endangered Species Act, a bedrock conservation law and catalyst that brings momentum, energy, and attention to help recover species that need it most.”

“Today we celebrate the flourishing return of two plant species to the Channel Islands thanks to the tireless work of scientists, land managers, and the local community to restore the health of California’s island ecosystems,” said Paul Souza, regional director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Pacific Southwest Region. “We also celebrate 50 years of the Endangered Species Act, a bedrock conservation law and catalyst that brings momentum, energy, and attention to help recover species that need it most.”

“The delisting of these species represents another victory for island conservation as staff and partners continue to work tirelessly at restoring the five islands within the park,” said Ethan McKinley, superintendent of Channel Islands National Park. “Make no mistake, there is still a great deal to accomplish before these islands are restored to their natural state.



Kathryn McEachern (USGS), Cameron Williams (NPS), and John Knapp (TNC) study Santa Cruz Island dudleya. Photo by USFWS. Credit: USFWS

Recovery of native plants remains a keystone to preserving Channel Islands National Park for current and future generations.”

The ESA has been highly effective and credited with saving 99% of listed species from extinction. Thus far, more than 100 species of plants and animals have been delisted across the country based on recovery or reclassified from endangered to threatened based on improved conservation status, and hundreds more species are stable or improving thanks to the collaborative actions of Tribes, federal agencies, state and local governments, conservation organizations and private citizens.

Scientists say their understanding of the plants’ ecology, habitat needs, and status has improved due to the diligent efforts of the U.S. Geological Survey, The Nature Conservancy, National Park Service, and Santa Barbara Botanic Garden to survey, study, and conserve habitat on Santa Cruz Island and San Miguel Island, two of California’s northern Channel Islands.

In 1997, the Service determined 13 plants on California’s northern Channel Islands needed ESA protections as a result of decades of habitat loss and alteration due to sheep grazing, competition from non-native grasses and soil loss caused by rooting of non-native feral pigs. By 2000, sheep grazing ended, and by 2006, all non-native feral pigs had been removed from the islands. In 2000, the Service worked with botanists and land managers to publish a recovery plan that would guide future recovery efforts for the imperiled plants.

The delisting is a result of collaborative partnership and research across multiple agencies and organizations.

“Today we get to celebrate the recovery of these two species no longer faced with the imminent threat of extinction, and tomorrow we will be back in the field for those species that still need a helping hand,” said John Knapp, senior scientist with The Nature Conservancy. “All visitors to the islands can be part of the success by staying on established trails

and roads to protect vulnerable populations. Recovery doesn’t happen overnight. It takes sound science, collaboration with many partners, and most importantly commitment.”

“We make conservation our life’s work because we care about biodiversity, but also because it can take a lifetime to see the fruits of our labor,” said Heather Schneider, senior rare plant conservation scientists with the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden “Humans did our part by removing introduced animals from the islands and the plants did theirs by slowly revealing themselves to us. Let us use this delisting as inspiration to propel us forward and bring renewed attention to the conservation and recovery challenges that remain on the islands and beyond.”

“The Navy, as owner and co-steward of San Miguel Island, is proud to have shared more than 50 years of collaboration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and partners to improve the habitat and recover these plant species,” said Capt. Robert “Barr” Kimmach

The Nature Conservancy senior island scientist John Knapp looks for very small plants. Credit: Vanessa Morales/USFWS.





Island bedstraw (Galium buxifolium) found on Santa Cruz Island. Credit: USFWS

III, commanding officer, Naval Base Ventura County. “This announcement is a milestone in our efforts and should be celebrated. The Navy remains committed to our conservation efforts, and to being good stewards of the natural resources we manage as part of our national security mission.”

Post-delisting monitoring plans have been developed to monitor the plants’ status to verify that the species remain secure from risk of extinction.

About the two island plants

Island bedstraw

The island bedstraw (*Galium buxifolium*) is a long-lived woody shrub with small flowers that lives on coastal bluffs, steep rocky slopes, sea-cliffs, and occasionally pine forests, of Santa Cruz and San Miguel Islands. At the time of listing, population estimates were in the hundreds. Helicopter surveys from 2017 estimate more than 15,000 individual plants now occur on the islands.

Santa Cruz island dudleya

The Santa Cruz Island dudleya (*Dudleya nesiotica*) is a flowering succulent perennial that lives on the marine terraces of Santa Cruz Island. Scientists say after its initial recovery the population has remained relatively stable over the last 25 years, with current estimates around 120,000 individuals. Santa Cruz Island is collaboratively managed by The Nature Conservancy and Channel Islands National Park as a single biological unit.



ESA protections proposed for two species of *western pond turtle*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced a proposal to list both species of western pond turtle, the northwestern pond turtle and the southwestern pond turtle, as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. The Service is also proposing a 4(d) rule, that would support conservation of both species. The northwestern pond turtle occurs in Washington, Oregon, Nevada and throughout much of northern and central California. The southwestern pond turtle occurs in southern California from Monterey County south to Los Angeles, Riverside and San

Diego counties into northern Baja California, Mexico. The turtles use rivers, lakes, ponds, streams other water sources and terrestrial habitats throughout their lives.

Ongoing threats to both species include worsening drought conditions, habitat loss and fragmentation, and predation by invasive species such as non-native bullfrogs.

“Food, water and shelter for northwestern pond turtles and southwestern pond turtles are becoming scarce across the

western United States,” said Paul Souza, director of the Service’s Pacific Southwest Region. “We are working alongside federal and state agencies and private landowners to implement conservation actions for northwestern and southwestern pond turtles, and we need everyone’s support to help them thrive in the wild.”

The Service reviewed the best available science to evaluate the status of both species by preparing a Species Status Assessment, including information provided by species experts.

“Food, water and shelter for northwestern pond turtles and southwestern pond turtles are becoming scarce across the western United States,” said Paul Souza, director of the Service’s Pacific Southwest Region. “We are working alongside federal and state agencies and private landowners to implement conservation actions for northwestern and southwestern pond turtles, and we need everyone’s support to help them thrive in the wild.”

The assessment found that although the southwestern pond turtle and northwestern pond turtle are likely to sustain populations in the wild in the near term, both species have increasing risk of extinction due to population losses, decreased genetic diversity, and a reduced ability to adapt to changing environmental conditions in the next half century, thus warranting listing as threatened under the ESA.

The Service is also proposing a 4(d) rule that allows activities that support conservation of both species, including wildfire suppression and management, maintenance of existing livestock ponds, habitat restoration, and non-native species removal. The 4(d) rule would allow land managers and others to carry out these activities without the risk of

violating the Endangered Species Act on their properties because they are expected to have beneficial or negligible impacts to pond turtles and their habitat.

Ongoing conservation efforts continue to support populations of southwestern pond turtle and northwestern pond turtle in the wild.

These include development of a range-wide management strategy by federal, state, and private partners to guide efforts to enhance, protect and restore pond turtle habitat; collaboration with military installations to formalize management recommendations on thousands of acres of military land; and development of habitat conservation plans that provide landowners opportunities to assist


in conserving the species and their habitats.

For example, the state of Washington implemented habitat management and predator control measures while raising northwestern pond turtles in captivity for release into the wild to help boost populations.

An adult female western pond turtle from the Truckee River in Nevada. Credit: Mark Enders/Nevada Department of Wildlife.

A big step to recover a tiny **California fish**



A biologist wearing a yellow cap and waders is standing in shallow water, pouring water from a white cooler. The water is blue and has some green seaweed floating in it. The background shows a body of water and some buildings on a hillside.

Found exclusively in California, the endangered tidewater goby (*Eucyclogobius newberryi*) is a tiny grey-brown fish rarely exceeding two inches in length and whose brief lifespan provides no shortage of challenges and threats to its survival. The fish has been listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act since 1994, prompting scientists to work to save and recover the species.

After years of studies and planning, in late September 2022, biologists from federal and state wildlife agencies and universities worked together to catch and move 500 tidewater gobies from Topanga Lagoon (home to a thriving population) to Malibu Lagoon, where the population of tidewater gobies saw a great decline

approximately two decades ago and has remained low ever since. Gobies from Topanga were put into coolers to be driven up the Pacific Coast Highway for release into Malibu Lagoon. This process is known as a translocation.

The biologists are hopeful this translocation will result in an increase in the population of the tidewater gobies in Malibu Lagoon. The augmentation of the endangered fish's population would not have been possible without the support and permission of California Department of Parks and Recreation, since both Topanga and Malibu Lagoons are found on state park lands.

“We are pleased to support the tidewater goby augmentation in

Two biologists pour the contents of the coolers into Malibu Lagoon. Credit: Vanessa Morales/USFWS



Close up of tidewater goby individual. Credit: Christine Fox/USFWS.

Malibu Lagoon and look forward to continuing our partnerships that allow this great work to take place,” said Danielle LeFer, senior environmental scientist at California Department of Parks and Recreation, who participated in the translocation.

Nurseries of the sea

Estuaries and lagoons are found where freshwater from creeks, rivers, and streams meet and mix with the salinity of the ocean. This delicate balance of salt and freshwater, or brackish water, provides a place for food, feeding, breeding and migration for a wide variety of fish, plants, and wildlife, including the tidewater goby.

Not only do lagoons such as the Topanga and Malibu Lagoon nurture biodiversity and allow it to thrive, but they also help produce fish, store carbon dioxide, purify water, and protect shorelines from floods and erosion. Moreover, they are sometimes referred to as “nurseries of the sea” because they provide important breeding and feeding habitat for fisheries. Estuaries are also meaningful to the people who live in nearby communities because they provide places to gather, encourage recreation, and boost the local economy.

Despite the numerous benefits brought by these bodies of water, more than 90% of the lagoons and estuaries once found along

the California coast have been developed or destroyed. Those remaining are often polluted, littered, dredged or filled. Biologists and water scientists are working hard to optimize and improve the few estuaries and coastal lagoons that are left.

Species like the endangered tidewater goby depend on it.

The problem

Historically, tidewater gobies inhabited the brackish waters of lagoons along California’s coastline. However, in the 1980s, researchers observed the fish’s populations were vanishing from many of those bodies of water.

Tidewater gobies face numerous threats to survival, primarily habitat loss, the introduction of non-native predators, and drought. The destruction of coastal habitat and the decline in goby populations led the species to be listed under the Endangered Species Act.

In Malibu, native tidewater gobies disappeared from the Malibu Lagoon in the 1960s and re-established with fish from the Ventura River in the early 1990s. Tidewater gobies remained relatively abundant up to 2005, but their population declined for reasons that remain unknown.

In 2012, California Department of Parks and Recreation led the Malibu Lagoon Restoration and

Enhancement Project which provided many goals and benefits to Malibu Lagoon, such as improved water quality and improved native wetland and coastal habitat. Despite these efforts and improvements, the population of the tidewater goby has remained low in Malibu Lagoon.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service completed the Tidewater Goby Recovery Plan in December 2005 with the assistance of species experts. One of the key recovery actions in the plan is to implement translocations where appropriate.

Due to the unsuccessful attempt to recover the small fish after the Malibu Lagoon restoration, a local working group of agency staff and tidewater goby experts came together to address the problem. Meanwhile, surveys conducted annually in Topanga Lagoon for multiple years showed a robust population of gobies. The idea came forth that perhaps some Topanga fish could be moved to Malibu, but biologists would have to ensure gobies could survive and reproduce in the new location. In 2021 the California Department of Parks and Recreation funded a study to investigate water quality and suitable habitat.

In May 2022, the results of the study confirmed Malibu Lagoon was a viable home for tidewater gobies.

As a result of the study’s findings, the working group proposed to

boost the tidewater goby population in Malibu Lagoon by translocating 300-500 individuals from Topanga Lagoon. Finally, the tidewater goby translocation to Malibu Lagoon would become a reality.

In late September 2022, biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Parks and Recreation, the Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains, and California State University Channel Islands met at Topanga Lagoon to initiate the translocation. Outfitted with waders, the biologists carefully entered Topanga Lagoon with a seine net to catch tidewater gobies.

Each time a net was pulled, hundreds of tidewater gobies were caught. Occasionally, a non-native or invasive species, such as red swamp crayfish, would be captured and removed.

Next, the biologists examined the seines and selected the tidewater gobies that would be moved to their new home. Hand nets were used to transfer the tidewater gobies from the seine nets into buckets of clean water from Topanga Lagoon. The rest were immediately released back into the lagoon.

After 500 individuals were collected, biologists placed them into coolers and loaded them carefully into a truck to make the journey north. After arriving at the release location in Malibu, the gobies were given time to acclimate to the warmer waters of the Malibu Lagoon. Three sites were deemed suitable for tidewater goby release, based on available food sources and substrate. The coolers were carried or floated across the water so the fish could be released. The excitement was palpable among the biologists.

“This translocation of tidewater gobies is really exciting because it is a bit of a homecoming,” said Kirby Bartlett, a biologist at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Ventura.



Two biologists dressed in waders holding a seine net in the Topanga Lagoon. Credit: Vanessa Morales/USFWS.

“The large tidewater goby population in Topanga Lagoon was recolonized by individuals initially from Malibu Lagoon in 2001. Tidewater gobies exist in a metapopulation network, which can be thought of as a network of individual populations that are occasionally linked through dispersal. Human impacts can inhibit how the metapopulations typically function, which can result in prolonged local extinction events like we saw in Malibu Lagoon. This translocation event will help strengthen the metapopulation network for tidewater gobies in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties,” she continued.

“This translocation of tidewater gobies is really exciting because it is a bit of a homecoming,” said Kirby Bartlett, a biologist at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Ventura.

At last! The tidewater gobies had been released into their new home in Malibu Lagoon. The biologists who had been working for years on this release were elated to see this historical translocation and hopeful boost to the tidewater goby population.

The expected outcomes

This translocation promotes recovery and provides an important buffer to reduce the likelihood of elimination of gobies from Malibu Lagoon.

“This was a great team effort, and we look forward to checking on the gobies in the spring, hoping to see increased numbers,” said Eric Morrissette, senior biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Ventura, California.

All the biologists were excited to participate in the process and remain hopeful for this extraordinarily unique California fish species in Malibu.

California condor 550 ready for the *spotlight*

Condor 550 is a California Condor Recovery Program success story. She survived lead poisoning, found a mate and become a mother herself. Credit: Tim Huntington/Ventana Wildlife Society

Hiking through Pinnacles National Park in central California, you may be lucky enough to see the shadow of a massive wingspan or even catch a glimpse of a California condor soaring through the skies. The park is home to several endangered California condors, including condor 550, the condor featured in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife's new poster commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Endangered Species Act.

California condors were listed as an endangered species in 1967. By 1982, only 23 condors existed in the wild. In 1987, all remaining wild condors were humanely captured and taken into care at the Los Angeles Zoo and the institution now known as San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance to launch a captive breeding program for the species. In the first 10 years of the California Condor Recovery Program, hundreds of condors were hatched and raised at multiple zoos in California, Oregon and Idaho and released into the wild. Today, more than 300 free-flying condors live in the wild.

“The California Condor Recovery Program is a shining example of how a species can be brought back from the brink of extinction through partnerships with states, Tribes, federal partners, non-profit organizations, and even other countries. Together, we are making a difference in this species' future

and conserving it for generations to come,” said Ashleigh Blackford, California condor program coordinator at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

In 2010, condors 317 and 318 found each other and became the first pair to nest at Pinnacles National Park. It was an exciting but worrisome moment because condor eggs in the wild were experiencing eggshell thinning issues.

“When biologists at the park noticed that 317 and 318 laid an egg, they talked to partners and decided to carefully remove the egg and replace it with an egg from the San Diego Zoo Wild Animal Park,” explained Alacia Welch, Condor program manager at Pinnacles National Park. “Doing so would increase the chances of the chick hatching and give researchers an opportunity to better understand the causes of eggshell thinning.”

The pair accepted the new egg as their own, and on March 24, 2010, the pair successfully hatched condor 550.

Long-time volunteer with the Ventana Wildlife Society, Tim Huntington, saw first-hand the attentive parenting behavior of 317 and 318 when 550 was hatched.

“During a hike at Pinnacles National Park, we got to the other side of the Steep and Narrow, and two birds flew over us. It was condors 317 and 318 swapping nesting and scavenging duties. We watched one of them circle down to where the nest was,” he recalled.

Condors can be identified by tags placed on their wings by biologists. In California, the tags show the last two numbers of their three- or four-digit identification number and vary in color. For example, condors with blue tags (like condor 317) were born between 2003 and 2005 and are represented by the number 300. That means a blue tag with a 17 is condor 317. Condors with black tags, like 550, were born between 2009 and 2010.

About a month after hatching, park biologists entered the nest to check on the health of 550. They discovered that she had been exposed to lead, the leading threat to condor recovery.

In early May 2010, discussions between the biologists at Pinnacles National Park, Los Angeles Zoo and U.S Fish and Wildlife Service determined that 550 should be removed from the nest and taken to the Los Angeles Zoo for treatment. Condors receive chelation therapy to treat lead poisoning which involves providing medicine to the bird as a series of daily shots. Condor 550 responded well to the

treatment and fully recovered. She stayed at the zoo and was raised alongside other young condors until 2011.

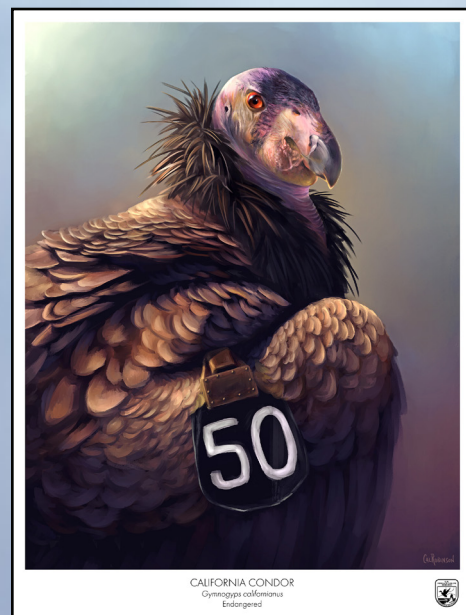
In August 2011, 550 was returned to Pinnacles National Park. She was held in an outdoor structure to reacclimate to the environment and was released back into the wild in October.

In the years since, condor 550 expanded her home range beyond Pinnacles National Park and took up residence on the Big Sur coast. There, she paired with condor 652. They started nesting in 2020, and their first young made it to fledge, but died shortly after. They nested again in 2021, and successfully raised another young bird to fledging.

“We are excited to see condors 550 and 652 nesting again this year, and we’re hoping that another chick will hatch soon,” said Welch. “It’s so touching to observe how gentle condor parents are with their newly hatched, fluffy chicks, and it means so much to see them bringing up the next generation.”

In 2022, the annual condor population count identified 347 wild, free-flying condors. While this is a positive sign, the birds still face several threats, including lead poisoning and microtrash. Lead ammunition fragments upon impact, and if it is used for hunting wildlife, those fragments can be found in any remains left on the landscape. When condors and other scavengers feed on the animal remains, they ingest the lead fragments, which can result in lead poisoning and

death. Microtrash refers to small bits of trash such as bottle caps, hard plastic shards or soda can tabs. Condors are curious birds, and sometimes adult condors bring microtrash to their chicks. The chicks eat the trash, but it cannot be digested, resulting in starvation and death.



A species portrait of a California condor in celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Endangered Species Act. Artist: Cal Robinson/USFWS.

“The best way you can help us recover condors is to use non-lead ammunition or collect your gut-pile when you hunt. Of course, always pick-up your trash when out in nature. These little changes can make a big difference,” said Blackford.

The Condor Recovery Program continues to address threats to the species in the wild and support captive breeding, release and monitoring of condors at field sites. The program also includes ongoing research, education and outreach. Avian influenza has become a new threat to the condor, and this program and its partnerships are more important than ever for the species’ recovery.

As for condor 550, “She still makes her way over to Pinnacles regularly just like all the other condors. In general, the central coast population of condors routinely traverses back and forth between the coast and the inland range that includes Pinnacles. It takes them less than an hour flight time to go between the two!” said Welch.



Finding his calling: Nick Stanley's journey to *leadership*

During his childhood summers in Fort Worth, Texas, Nicholas Stanley would regularly get woken up by his grandmother for full days of fishing. She would strap down five long cane poles on top of her minivan and drive them to wherever the fish were biting, and she and Nick would sit along the riverbank for hours until they had caught their limit before heading home to have themselves a delicious fish fry. He fondly credits his grandmother for inspiring him to fish, chase bugs, and embrace the landscapes and wildlife around him at an early age.

Following these warm memories, Nicholas, who goes by Nick, attended Grambling State University, a historically Black university in Louisiana to pursue a career working with animals. After learning about the university's wildlife program and being taken under the wings of dedicated

mentors, Stanley soared into a wildlife conservation career. This trajectory would eventually bring him into various leadership roles across the U.S. The National Wildlife Refuge System is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and provides habitat for wildlife and public recreation opportunities for visitors far and wide.

Jumping in order to fly

Determined to help animals, Stanley was initially enrolled in the pre-med/veterinary program at Grambling.

One day while walking down his school's hallways, he was intrigued by a Department of the Interior logo posted outside of the office where he learned about the school's wildlife program. He then attended several speeches given annually by

refuge manager, Pon Dixon about working for the Service. Dixon would later become one of Stanley's greatest mentors. The decision to change his course to pursue a wildlife degree would lead him to work with some of the nation's most spectacular wildlife from bighorn sheep and sandhill cranes to the California condor, meeting his initial goal to assist animal species in ways he never imagined.

While completing his degree, Stanley gained early experience through an internship program (now part of the Pathways Program) at Desert National Wildlife Refuge in Las Vegas. He fell in love with the National Wildlife Refuge System after seeing his first bighorn sheep there many years ago. His decision to intern paved the way toward a career with the federal government.

Nick Stanley, project leader for the Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge Complex, smiles while standing in front of a field of yellow wildflowers. Credit: Vanessa Morales/USFWS

After graduating, he took a leap of faith and moved his family from Texas to California where he took his first permanent position at the Kern National Wildlife Refuge as a refuge operations specialist and at Pixley as a refuge manager. At Pixley, he learned everything about natural resource management while managing the refuge's 3,500 acres of grassland and waterfowl habitat. Nick worked diligently for years at those refuges, taking on more responsibility until he eventually became the project leader at Kern.

“My career progression was not traditional. I feel grateful that I was able to stay in the same place for much of my career, but I got a wide variety of experience doing different things at the same location,” said Stanley. “I always challenged myself to try to do something different, not just being

the status quo at that refuge. That helped me grow as a leader and as a refuge manager.”

After more than 20 years of working at Kern, Stanley gained the expertise needed to lead his current team at Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge Complex, championing efforts to save North America's largest bird, the California condor, from the brink of extinction.

A birder at heart

While studying at Grambling, Stanley participated in weekly bird surveys as part of the wildlife program for more than two years. He studied all types of birds from neotropics and waterfowl to wading birds while living in Louisiana.

“I do consider myself a birder at heart,” said Stanley. “When I was

at Pixley, I fell in love with the sandhill crane. So much so, that it inspired me to write a children's book called *Sandy's First Flight*.” Pixley National Wildlife Refuge receives anywhere from 5,000 to 12,000 sandhill cranes, annually and provides significant seasonal marsh wetland habitat other waterfowl.

Now at Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge Complex, which manages the California Condor Recovery Program, Stanley has found a passion for the California condor, a species that had only 22 birds left in the wild in 1982. Today, the Service, and its public and private partners, have grown the total wild free-flying condor population to more than 300 condors through the Recovery Program.

“Their recovery story alone makes you fall in love with them to

Nick Stanley looking through a pair of binoculars. Credit: Olivia Beitelspacher/USFWS



persevere and make it back from the brink of extinction. Although we still have a long journey ahead to get the California condor population where it needs to be, we are in the fight,” Stanley says.

Outside of work, Stanley keeps a list of all the birds he’s seen in his life, traveling as far as Costa Rica to see new birds and wildlife. “Getting out into nature and enjoying it helps center me, and it helps reinvigorate the passion I have for wildlife,” he said.

In addition to birding, Stanley and his family enjoy the outdoors through hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, and simply hanging out in their backyard.

When speaking about his experiences outdoors, whether professionally or recreationally, Stanley says, “It is not for one particular group over another. Just because you’re the only one who looks a certain way, doesn’t mean it’s not for you, it just means you need to bring more friends with you.”

When speaking about his experiences outdoors, whether professionally or recreationally, Stanley says, “It is not for one particular group over another. Just because you’re the only one who looks a certain way, doesn’t mean it’s not for you, it just means you need to bring more friends with you.”

Others like me

Thinking back on his time at Grambling State University, Stanley fondly remembers the kindness and mentorship offered by Dixon of the Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge, who ultimately encouraged him and other wildlife program students to pursue wildlife conservation careers with his monthly visits to the historically Black university. “I am thankful for the energy he put into us...I appreciate him for always coming back to Grambling and recruiting us. He still checks in on me.”

He also recalls the influence of Jerome Ford, a national wildlife refuge manager in Louisiana at the time, and now the Assistant Director of the Migratory Birds Program who also regularly visited Grambling to recruit and encourage African American students to take on conservation careers. “He let me know there were other people who looked like me that did this job, which I was not aware of at the time.”

There were other mentors, who were not people of color, who were equally as devoted to helping Stanley develop into the leader he is today. “David Hardt at Kern, who took me under his wing...he didn’t look like me, but he treated me like his own son, and I learned everything that I could from him.”

Flying Full Circle

Reaching the role of a project leader, where he was often the only person of color within leadership, was not easy, but he is proud of

the increased emphasis on hiring diverse staff within his region.

When speaking about being a Black leader in the Service, Stanley says, “I’m still adjusting, for lack of better terms, to often being the only one, professionally. I think we have made huge strides as far as diversifying the workforce within refuges. It used to be that I was the only person of color, and now I’m not and which says a lot about the leadership we have within refuges. Within the Service as a whole I am proud to be one of three refuge project leaders of color in the nation, at least that I know of.”

Stanley emphasizes the importance of his mentors in helping him reach the level of leadership he has obtained which now motivates him to foster and help the next generation of diverse leaders. “I think it is my responsibility now, to do what Pon Dixon did for me, which is mentor the new people who are coming in, who aren’t so sure of their place in the Service.

“My advice to everyone is, don’t be afraid to step out on faith and be the only one.” “That gives you the opportunity to help change things from within.”

Southern sea otters keep ESA *protections*



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced that southern sea otters will retain their status as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. Following an in-depth review of the species' status, including information provided by species experts, the Service has announced a not-warranted 12-month finding on a petition to remove ESA protection for the southern sea otter. Read the species status assessment [here](#).

“While southern sea otters have made strides toward recovery after coming back from the brink of extinction in our recent history, they continue to face significant threats

from climate change, shark-bite mortality, and limited range,” said Steve Henry, field supervisor for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Ventura. “Based on scientific projections of future conditions for the species, these threats will continue to impact southern sea otter abundance and connectivity between populations in ways that will most likely reduce the ability of the species to sustain itself in the future.”

Climate change is expected to increase exposure to harmful pathogens and algal and cyanobacterial blooms, increase susceptibility to white shark bites through losses in kelp canopy cover

and increases in thermal conditions favorable to subadult white sharks, and decrease some prey availability through ocean acidification. Climate change is currently influencing these hazards and is expected to amplify them in the future.

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In 2021, the Service received a petition to delist the southern sea otter. In August 2022, the Service published a 90-day finding that the petition presented substantial scientific or commercial information indicating that delisting may be warranted, prompting an in-depth review of the species status and 12-month finding. The Service reviewed the best available science to evaluate the status of the species by preparing a species status assessment. This species status assessment and associated 12-month finding contributes additional information to help inform recovery efforts for southern sea otters.

In 2021, as directed by Congress, the Service assessed the feasibility of reintroducing sea otters to portions of the west coast in Northern California and Oregon where they once thrived. The assessment concluded that reintroduction was biologically feasible and may have significant benefits for sea otters and nearshore marine ecosystems, but that additional information about how reintroduction would affect stakeholders and local communities is needed before considering next steps. There is no active proposal to reintroduce sea otters at this time.

Southern sea otters float close together at Moss Landing, California. Credit: Lilian Carswell/USFWS

Field Feats

Final Recovery Plan for Ventura marsh milk-vetch released

This March, we announced the final Recovery Plan to guide conservation efforts for the Ventura marsh milk-vetch. The species was believed to have become extinct by the 1960s but was rediscovered in Ventura County in 1997 by a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist.

Since its rediscovery, several attempts have been made to reintroduce the species at various locations, including at the UCSB North Campus Open Space. The North Campus Open Space was previously a golf course and is being restored to a coastal estuarine system with associated wetlands and upland habitat.

The restoration of this coastal wetland system will help move rare species like the Ventura marsh milk-vetch towards recovery by providing habitat and year-round educational and recreational opportunities for the local community.

Recovery plans are based on the best available science on what species need to persist into the future. These plans outline recovery actions aimed at reducing threats and promoting long-term viability. We are committed to working with partners to continue the recovery of this rare, federally endangered plant!



Ventura marsh milk-vetch. Credit: Colleen Grant/USFWS

Lompoc yerba santa seed collection with Vandenberg Space Force Base

Working with partners on Vandenberg Space Force Base (VSFB), our biologists collected seeds from one of the area's most endangered plant species, Lompoc yerba santa (*Eriodictyon capitatum*) at two locations where seeds were discovered to be viable. Scientists collected and transported the seeds to the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden (SBBG) to be cleaned, processed, banked, and used for research to preserve important unique genetics and safeguard the plant against extinction.

“We are thrilled to be working with our base partners to help promote the recovery of Lompoc yerba santa. Finding out these populations produced seed was very exciting and a lot of helpful lessons were learned along the way,” said biologist Sarah Termond. “The simple action of seed collection is a big first step in not only safeguarding against extinction by helping preserve important unique genetics, but presents the invaluable opportunity to continue future collaboration with the base.”



Lompoc yerba santa. Credit: Heather Schneider/SBBG



Biologist stands in front of Morro manzanita tree in San Luis Obispo County. Credit: USFWS

Ongoing science behind Morro manzanita conservation

Biologist Christopher Kofron is working alongside partner Dr. Claudia Tyler from University of California Santa Barbara, to conduct a field study to supplement the current understanding of the biology and conservation status of Morro manzanita *Arctostaphylos morroensis*, a threatened species occurring only in Los Osos, San Luis Obispo County.

The study will include its current distribution, abundance, ecology, threats and management in 2023 and 2024.

Field Feats

Verity's dudleya recovery

Our botanists joined partners from the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and CSU Channel Islands to monitor the recovery of Verity's dudleya, (*Dudleya verityi*), a federally threatened plant that blooms in late spring. While out in the field they discovered that the winter rains have allowed the species to begin recovering from the 2013 Springs Fire that burned its entire range and subsequent drought that threatened its existence.

“We are grateful to our partners that collaborate with us to promote the conservation and recovery of listed species,” said Mark Elvin, botanist. “This work could not be completed without the generous support of participating biologists and landowners.”



Botanist surveys for Lyon's pentachaeta. Credit: Mark Elvin/USFWS.



Verity's dudleya. Credit: Mark Elvin/USFWS

Lyon's pentachaeta restoration

We recently partnered with staff at the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SAMO) to collect seeds of the federally endangered Lyon's pentachaeta (*Pentachaeta lyonii*) for use in restoration and recovery efforts!

Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office botanists Mark Elvin and Ken Niessen each spent a day with SAMO staff, interns, and biotechs collecting seeds at two locations on SAMO property.

These seeds will be bulked (multiplied) to increase the amount of existing seed. The seeds will then be used in an attempt to create a new

population of Lyon's pentachaeta and enhance existing populations. Additionally, our botanists hope that there will be enough remaining seed to put some in a long-term seed storage bank. Recovery efforts like this seed collection and bulking are critical in directing Lyon's pentachaeta to recovery!

Refugio Beach Oil Spill Restoration Progress

The Refugio Beach Oil Spill Trustee Council, represented by state and federal agencies, oversees restoration in areas impacted by the Refugio Beach Oil Spill of 2015. The Trustee Council celebrated ongoing restoration projects including funding for the Channel Islands Marine & Wildlife Institute, the restoration of black and red abalone, and restoration for lost outdoor recreational use caused by the oil spill.

The natural resource trustees are the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Office of Spill Prevention and Response; California Department of Parks and

Recreation; California State Lands Commission; University of California; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; and the Department

of Interior through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



Funding will support Channel Islands Marine and Wildlife Institute operations. Credit: USFWS

Light-footed Ridgway's rail releases

If you love something, set it free! Seven light-footed Ridgway's rails were released in the Mugu Lagoon at Point Mugu Naval Base last week after being raised at the San Diego Zoo!

Chances are you've never seen a light-footed Ridgway's rail in the wild. Found only in Southern California and northern Baja California, Mexico, the bird was listed as federally endangered in 1970s, due mostly to destruction of their native coastal wetland habitat.

The team is composed of organizations dedicated to the study, restoration, and introduction of rails in Southern California led by Living Coast and includes San Diego Zoo Global, SeaWorld San Diego, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Huntington Beach Wetlands

Conservancy, among others. They aim to support the rail population through collaborative efforts in zoological propagation, field research, annual census, monitoring, banding, genetic sampling, and introductions

into the wild throughout the region. Thanks to the team's efforts, over 900 rails have been zoologically propagated and introduced into the wild since 2000, with a recent one being right here in Ventura County.



Light-footed Ridgway's rail. Credit: Joanna Gilkeson/USFWS

Field Feats

Pismo clarkia has a forever home at Pismo Preserve

Thanks to collaboration and partnership, the federally endangered Pismo clarkia (*Clarkia speciosa ssp. immaculata*) finally has a forever home on the Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County's (LCSLO) Pismo Preserve located in western San Luis Obispo County.

Pismo clarkia is an annual species threatened by development and other land uses, invasive species, and climate change. It lives on sandy soils derived from ancient marine terraces only throughout the Five Cities area in San Luis Obispo County. Much of its habitat was converted to residential homes within a highly desirable coastal real estate market over the past few years.

In 2019, the Service funded collection of Pismo clarkia seed and worked with the California Botanic Garden to process, store, and bulk the seed.

to help recover the species. We also partnered with a group of advanced GIS students from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo (Cal Poly) and Professor/City of San Luis Obispo GIS Manager David Yun to build a habitat suitability model for Pismo clarkia to identify the most optimal areas for outplanting the species on the Pismo Preserve. We chose this site because the species once occurred there, the site is conserved and managed in perpetuity, and because the site provides important connectivity between other extant Pismo clarkia occurrences.

In 2021, the Service, LCSLO and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife secured funding to restore habitats and outplant the species at the Pismo Preserve, resulting in nearly 600 new plants surveyed in summer 2023.

“We’ve worked vigilantly and strategically over the past several years to achieve this particular Pismo clarkia recovery goal, and many people and partners are responsible for the success of this project,” said botanist Kristie Scarazzo. “Recovery efforts such as these are often about the ‘long-game’ and require a sort of relentless persistence and grit. This achievement for Pismo clarkia is definitely something to celebrate and I am so grateful for our dedicated, innovative, and willing recovery partners.”

This project is the first and only fully protected Pismo clarkia occurrence and immediately lessens the risk of extinction. We are learning valuable, new information about how best to manage and support new Pismo clarkia populations. Through these incredible partnerships Pismo clarkia has a forever home at the Pismo Preserve.

Pismo clarkia outplanting at Pismo Preserve. Credit: Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County



Black Lake restoration at Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes Complex

At the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes Complex, a crew comprised of biologists from the Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office and the Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo started work removing dirt and overgrown vegetation from Black Lake to restore and improve habitat for the California red-legged frog and the western pond turtle. The team was aided in their work by a pontoon excavator and dump truck thanks to funding from the National Coastal Wetland Conservation Grant Program and a collaboration between the Coastal Program and the Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo. The improvements will also create better conditions for planting and growing the endangered La Graciosa thistle and marsh sandwort. The project will also include planting nectar plants in the nearby overwintering grove for monarch butterflies.



Senior biologists, Colleen Grant and Shawn Milar, stand in front of an installed water well. Credit: Nick Stanley/USFWS



Black Lake is the deepest of the Dune Lakes. Credit: USFWS



Preparing to take a core sediment sample from the center of Black Lake. Credit: Emily Levin/USFWS

Understanding present day hydrology at Dune Lakes

Biologist Chris Kofron is also working with partner Dr. Robert Dull from California Lutheran University, to take core sediment samples from the Dune Lakes, San Luis Obispo County. The Dune Lakes comprise 10 natural lakes in the Callender Dunes,

which are important habitat for the endangered La Graciosa thistle *Cirsium scariosum* var. *loncholepis*. They are studying the historical ecology of the lakes in an effort to better understand the present day hydrology.

Our Community

Outreach and events

Buena High field trip to San Buenaventura State Beach

Nearly 100 marine biology students from Buena High school joined U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologists for a field trip at San Buenaventura State Beach this past April!

The students broke into multiple groups to learn about different careers in wildlife biology through stations about native pollinators and plants, shorebirds, sand crabs and beach health, and coastal cleanup. On the beach, students collected and analyzed data using sand crabs as a bioindicator of the health of the sandy beach ecosystem and observed shorebirds like western grebes and brown pelicans with the help of binoculars and field guides.

Photo credit: Vanessa Morales/USFWS



Pollinator Palooza at Barranca Vista Park



There was a lot of buzz at the 1st annual Pollinator Palooza hosted by City of Ventura - Government at Barranca Vista Park this May!

We enjoyed connecting with our community about creating habitat through native seed plantings to help pollinators and monarch butterflies!

Photo credit: Vanessa Morales/USFWS

Oxnard Insect Festival



We were totally buggin' out at the Oxnard Insect Festival! Our staff enjoyed talking community members about monarch conservation and the importance of planting native plants! We talked with visitors about the monarch migration pattern, handed out common yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) seeds, and showed people plant anatomy under the microscope! Catch you again next year!

Photo credit: USFWS

Playdate in the Garden at Museum of Ventura County

¡Nos encantó poder pasar tiempo con nuestros visitantes hace dos semanas! Estamos agradecidos que el Museo del Condado de Ventura nos invitó a hablar sobre la mariposa monarca, los polinizadores, y como poder ayudarlos con plantas nativas. ¡Gracias a todos los que vinieron a escuchar el libro de las mariposas monarcas, aprender sobre el ciclo de vida de ellas, decorar su mini maseta, y los que sembraron las semillas (*Achillea millefolium*) en casa! ¡Hasta la próxima!

Photo credit: USFWS



Our Community

Outreach and events

Louie Ocaranza, refuge manager for the Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge Complex, spoke with zoology students from Moorpark College about careers in wildlife conservation. Louie shared his story, including his study and career path, discussed the California Condor Recovery Program, answered questions about working for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and about his role as a refuge manager.

The students, who are part of the American Association of Zookeepers, eagerly asked questions and engaged with the educational material brought by the refuge. The Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge team continues to seek out opportunities to reach their community.

Photo credit: Vanessa Morales/USFWS

Moorpark College and American Assoc. of Zookeepers



Condor Kids at the Santa Barbara Zoo



In early June, staff from the Hopper Mountain NWRC and the Ventura FWO connected with 300 third graders and teachers over two days at the Santa Barbara Zoo. This visit was a culminating field trip for the students after completing the CondorKids curriculum in their classrooms over the school year.

The children experienced different facets of condor biologist and refuge staff work by learning about telemetry, bird identification, condor life and behavior, and using a spotting scope through stations set up by the refuge staff around the zoo. Interested in teaching about California condors in your home or school?

Check out the CondorKids website for the full curriculum! <https://ow.ly/xR0550Pem9V>

Photo credit: Vanessa Morales/USFWS



Día del Niño at Santa Barbara Zoo

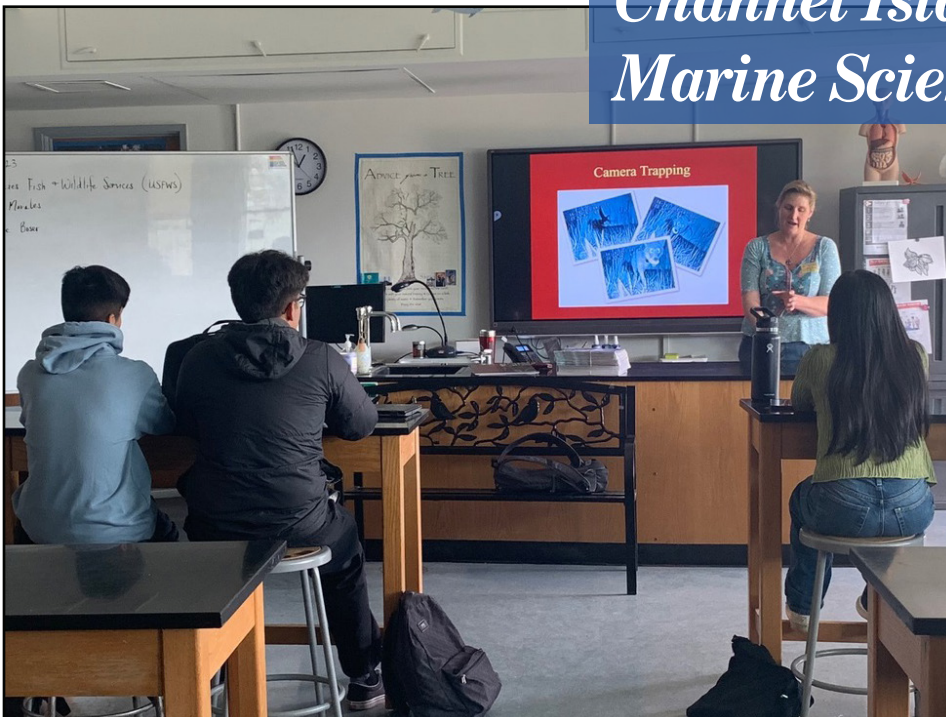
¡El domingo nos acompañaron cantantes, mariachis, bailarines, y hasta robots en el Santa Barbara Zoo en la celebración de Día del Niño! Hablamos sobre los cóndores de California con los visitantes, enseñando sus plumas y réplicas de sus huevos.

¡Celebramos la importancia de los niños en nuestra sociedad mientras recordándoles que los jóvenes pueden hacer mucho para ayudar con la conservación de nuestros animales y plantas!

Photo credit: Vanessa Morales/USFWS



Channel Islands High School Marine Science Academy



We had a great time presenting about our careers at the Channel Islands High School! Wildlife biologist Christie Boser and communications specialist Vanessa Morales spoke with students in the Marine Science Academy and answered questions about their experiences and unique journeys to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

We appreciated the opportunity to present to students in our community who are the future generation of conservation professionals!

Photo credit: Vanessa Morales/USFWS

Our Community

Outreach and events

In early October, we attended the Wildlife 2 Watts event as part of Urban Wildlife Week, hosted by Save LA Cougars, The National Wildlife Federation, and 3rd Rock Hip Hop. Urban Wildlife Week is a week-long celebration uniting people through a love for wildlife and learning to coexist. Our staff enjoyed talking to the many attendees to who stopped by to learn about some of the best ways to help pollinators and monarch butterflies thrive, such as planting native plants such like common yarrow!

“Attending community events such as Wildlife 2 Watts is just one of the ways the Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office shows its commitment to better connect with underserved communities,” said bilingual public affairs specialist Vanessa Morales. “We loved engaging with folks in Watts, because many had never heard of us or our mission but were excited to take action with the seeds we distributed to help pollinators!”

Photo credit: Vanessa Morales/USFWS

Wildlife 2 Watts



Ventura County Walk in the Watershed

Did you know the same Santa Clara River watershed that supports our agricultural industry and several urban communities is also home to federally threatened and endangered species such as the yellow-billed cuckoo, California red-legged frog, and the least Bell’s vireo?

We joined Ventura County the Ventura County Public Works Agency’s second annual Walk in the Watershed by leading a hike and

providing information about the habitats of these species along the Santa Clara River near Ojai.

Photo of a yellow-billed cuckoo by USFWS.



Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes Film Festival



One hundred years ago, in the sands of the Guadalupe Dunes near the site of what is now the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Cecile B DeMille created the epic film, *The Ten Commandments*. It was the largest and most expensive set ever produced and set a precedent for the Hollywood film industry. Nearly every resident of Guadalupe participated in the making of the film in some capacity, from acting as extras to feeding and watering livestock. When filming was completed, DeMille buried the massive set. And there it remained hidden for 88 years.

To celebrate the 100th Anniversary of this piece of history, events took place around Guadalupe during the first weekend of October. Staff from the Hopper Mountain NWRC office and the Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office joined the celebration to discuss the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes NWR, its protected species, and why it is important to protect its habitats.

Photo credit: Vanessa Morales/USFWS


Día de Muertos

Monarch lovers with painted faces fluttered to Ventura FWO's booth during the Oxnard Día de Muertos celebration in early November. Staff offered bilingual information about monarch butterfly migration and conservation, and many visitors shared their stories of having seen the monarch groves in Michoacan, Mexico. The legend of the monarch butterfly on Día de Muertos is that they are ancestors returning to Mexico to visit their families, so visitors were excited to take home seeds to provide native plant habitat for this iconic butterfly and other pollinators.

Photo credit: Vanessa Morales/USFWS




2023 Featured Women in Science



Wildlife biologist Christie Boser talks about the importance of diversity and inclusion in conservation and shares how her love of travel inspires her to look at the world from different perspectives.


Watch Christie's video: bit.ly/3Q6tBby



"I've always been a biologist, but I've called myself a lot of different things - I've been a biologist, an avian ecologist, an evolutionary ecologist, an ornithologist."

Meet **assistant field supervisor Sam Lantz** and learn about her experiences studying birds and why she believes having different perspectives is important in academic work.

Watch Sam's video: bit.ly/3F1NVEz



Wildlife biologist Erin Arnold talks about the strong women in her life, including her mom, and how they helped set her on a path towards conservation. She gives great advice to inspire future generations.

Learn more about Erin's path to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Watch Erin's video: bit.ly/3tbIkss

Watch all of our videos on our Youtube Playlist at <http://bit.ly/3rMigYF>

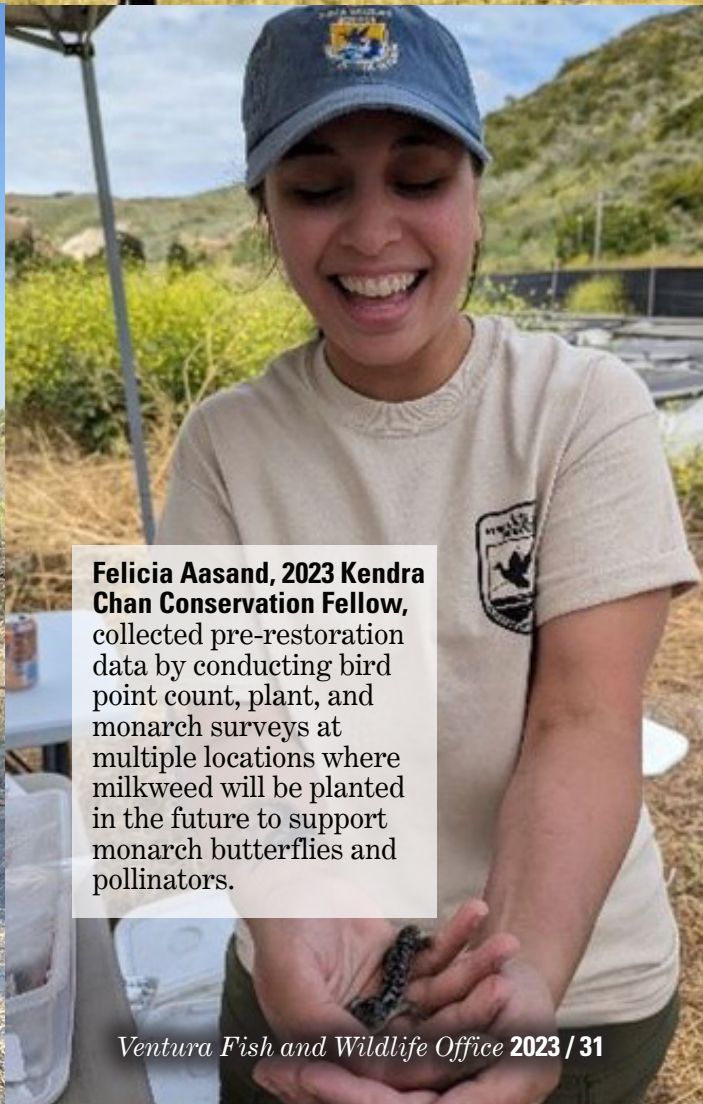
Congratulations to our 2023 interns



Imani Russell is a **Pathways biology intern** supporting the BeachCOMBERS project which helps us understand the health of our coastlines through citizen science. She is compiling and analyzing data from different formats and sources to standardize it to keep it consistent moving forward.



Ayanna Browne worked on an outreach project to educate anglers about bird entanglements as a **Pathways intern**. This work is supported as part of restoration efforts following the Refugio Beach oil spill that impacted the Gaviota coast in 2015.



Felicia Aasand, 2023 **Kendra Chan Conservation Fellow**, collected pre-restoration data by conducting bird point count, plant, and monarch surveys at multiple locations where milkweed will be planted in the future to support monarch butterflies and pollinators.

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December 2023



California red-legged frog themed jalapeno bread

Ingredients

1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups water, warm
3-3 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups bread flour
1 large jalapeno, diced
1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
1 $\frac{2}{14}$ tsp. fast acting yeast
1 tbsp. granulated sugar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp. garlic powder
3 tbsp. olive oil
1 tbsp. salt
1 egg (for egg wash)

Get the full recipe here:

<https://www.fws.gov/story/2023-01/california-red-legged-frog-jalapeno-cheddar-bread>

Tutorial by Olivia Beitelspacher/USFWS

