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Cheadle Center for Biodiversity & Ecological Restoration

Restoration Register

September 2025



Lively snowy plover chicks foraging along the eastern arm of Devereux Slough at NCOS on July 23, 2025

Updates

Snowy Plovers at NCOS

After a gap of three years, snowy plovers once again successfully bred and fledged at the North Campus Open Space! The first family group with two chicks appeared in late July in the eastern salt marsh near Venoco Bridge, and soon after, another nesting bird was documented. In early August, the second nest

hatched, producing two more chicks that successfully fledged on site.



Snowy plover chicks on July 22, 2025. These two chicks are the first seen on NCOS in three years.





Snowy plover chick from the first family group seeks shelter beneath its parent, July 28, 2025.



Another success! A snowy plover chick hatched to the second nesting bird, July 31, 2025.

The threatened Western Snowy Plover faces many challenges when attempting to successfully reproduce, one of the greatest obstacles being the loss of safe, suitable nesting habitat, much of which has disappeared due to human development, recreation, and sea-level rise. An important aspect of the NCOS restoration project is expanding available breeding habitat for snowy plovers, and each year we are hopeful that this small shorebird will successfully nest in the upper reaches of the slough.

Past instances of successful snowy plover breeding at NCOS are limited but encouraging. On June 30, 2022, we documented the first successful fledging at the site: two chicks with attentive parents were seen foraging along the southeastern salt marsh. These chicks grew quickly and remained in the area for about four weeks before fledging. Building on this success, on July 19, 2022, two more chicks hatched in the western salt marsh. They were observed foraging in exposed mudflats and, after several weeks, also successfully fledged.



Snowy plover chick on June 30, 2022.

Devereux Slough Tidewater Goby Survey



Tidewater goby (*Eucyclogobius newberryi*) captured in Devereux Slough at the mouth sampling site.

On August 15, 2025, Cheadle Center staff joined biologists Hannah Donaghe and Olivia Hogan from Catalyst Environmental Solutions for the annual fish survey at Devereux Slough and Phelps Creek. Using a 10 x 4 foot minnow seine with fine 1/8-inch mesh, we conducted hauls ranging from 15 to 30 feet across the channel. The net was then lifted onto the bank, where fish were quickly identified, counted, and safely released back into the water. At rocky sites such as Phelps Creek and Phelps Bridge, where seining was not possible, we used fine-mesh dip nets to conduct multiple sweeps. All organisms collected were identified and then safely returned to their habitat.

A total of 49 tidewater gobies (*Eucyclogobius newberryi*) were captured in Devereux Slough, with 36 individuals at the mouth and 13 at the pier sampling sites. While tidewater gobies had expanded further upstream in 2024, reaching north of Venoco Bridge and into the East Channel, this year they were only observed at the lower slough sites. Because tidewater gobies typically live only one year, these annual surveys are essential for tracking their population and habitat use.

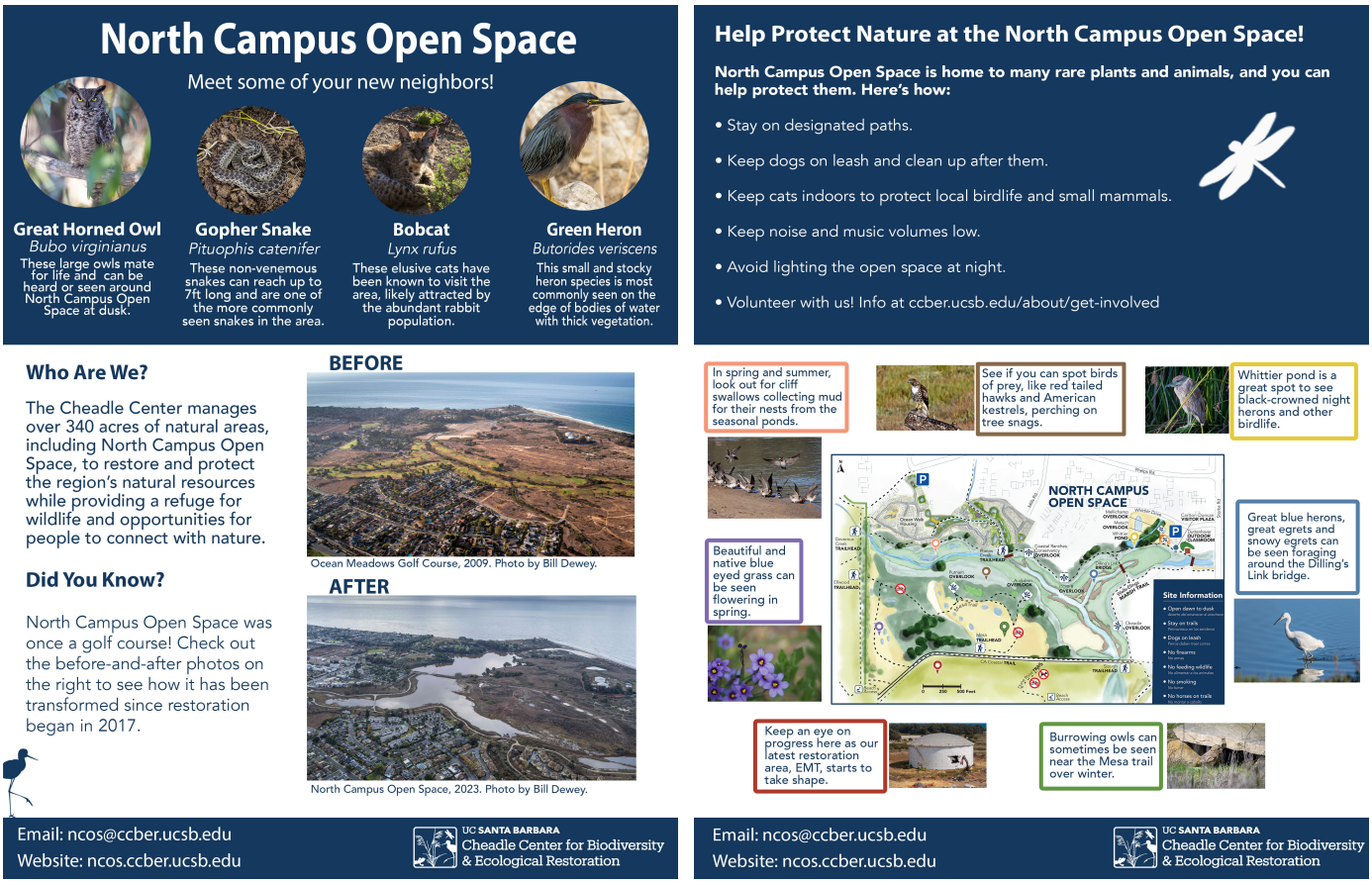
In addition to tidewater gobies, several other native fish species were observed during the survey, including longjaw mudsucker (*Gillichthys mirabilis)*, topsmelt (*Atherinops affinis*), and California killifish (*Fundulus parvipinnis*). Two non-native species were also captured: mosquitofish (*Gambusia affinis*), which were found only at Phelps Bridge and Phelps Creek, and Mississippi silversides (*Menidia audens*), which were present at most sites except Phelps Bridge and Phelps Creek.



Cheadle Center staff and Catalyst Environmental Solutions biologists search for fish caught in the seine net.

The Cove Move-in

The Cove Housing project, located adjacent to the North Campus Open Space, is now complete, and students are moving in. To help welcome our new neighbors, we've created an informative flyer highlighting the fascinating wildlife of NCOS, as well as guidelines for enjoying the open space responsibly.



NCOS informative flyer welcoming new residents of The Cove.

NCOS Mesa Sheep Grazing



Sheep on the NCOS Mesa.

Over several weeks in August, the Cheadle Center implemented a sheep-grazing effort on the mesa to achieve two main goals: reducing the biomass and seed production of two nitrogen-fixing invasive plants (bur clover and sweet clover) and decreasing overall plant cover to create space for wildflowers and other native species to germinate in the spring. Reducing thatch also helps provide habitat suitable for burrowing owls. This year’s grazing effort differed from the 2024 experimental trial in that a much smaller number of sheep were used, they were moved more frequently, and the focus was on a smaller area.

Pre-K Field Trips

Funded by UCSB's Coastal Fund, continued collaboration in 2025 with the Orfalea Family Children's Center (OFCC) provided 62 field trips to North Campus Open Space, as well as many others to the UCSB Lagoon. For many of the Pre-K students at OFCC, "Cheadle Center walks" led by staff and UCSB interns are the highlight of the week at school.



These young students take a moment to orient themselves using the NCOS map before exploring the site.



Wildlife sighting! Egrets are common at Venoco Bridge.



Giant wild rye (*Elymus condensatus*) provides excellent hiding spots.



It's not all fun and games - these students also roll up their sleeves to help remove invasive plants.

Ellwood Marine Terminal

Ellwood Marine Terminal grading and restoration are scheduled to begin in October. Community members are invited to participate in weekend tree planting events, as well as additional weekday volunteer opportunities on-site. This is a valuable chance to contribute directly to habitat restoration and support the ongoing conservation of local open spaces. Stay tuned for updates on volunteer opportunities and contact ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu for scheduling.



The site will soon be ready for planting, and we welcome help from community members to restore the area.

Creek Week Events with the Cheadle Center



Creek Week is back! This annual celebration of our creeks, watersheds, and the ocean brings together organizations across Santa Barbara, Goleta, and Carpinteria to host events that build awareness and stewardship of our natural treasures. The Cheadle Center invites you to join us for the following activities:

NCOS Planting Event: Saturday, September 20, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Location: NCOS Visitor Plaza, 6969 Whittier Drive
Gloves, tools, and plants provided. Wear closed-toe shoes, and bring water and a hat.

NCOS Guided Tour: Sunday, September 21, 9:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.
Location: NCOS Visitor Plaza, 6969 Whittier Drive.

Ellwood Monarch Grove Planting Event: Thursday, September 25, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Meet at the Sperling Preserve across from Ellwood Elementary at 8:45 a.m.
Gloves, tools, and plants provided. Wear pants and closed-toe shoes, and bring water and a hat.

Please RSVP to ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu for these events.

Help Restore Monarch Butterfly Habitat at Ellwood Mesa



You are invited to join us at Ellwood Mesa on Saturday, September 27, to help plant trees and native plants that provide essential food and shelter for overwintering monarch butterflies. Additional volunteer

opportunities will be held monthly through December. Volunteers are welcome to join as many days as they wish - but those who attend all five events will receive a limited-edition Ellwood Mesa T-shirt in recognition of their contribution!

These volunteer days are part of a broader conservation initiative to restore monarch habitat at Ellwood Mesa, one of the most significant overwintering sites for Western monarchs. With butterfly populations declining due to drought and extreme weather, this project will add hundreds of trees and thousands of native plants to provide the protection monarchs need to survive. Your participation is vital to this effort!

Sign up using this online form.

Volunteer Days (Saturdays, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.):
-September 27
-October 25
-November 15
-December 6

How to Participate:
Volunteers will meet at the Main Grove at 9:00 a.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 may change; updates will be provided via email).

What to Bring:
Comfortable footwear, water, sunscreen, snacks, and gloves (if available). Tools will be provided.

Feature Story

Secrets of the Seep: A Hidden Restoration Project



This small but ecologically diverse restoration project includes a perennial, slightly brackish seep.

Many of our supporters are likely aware of our large-scale restoration projects, including North Campus Open Space, Campus Lagoon, and the upcoming Ellwood Marine Terminal project. However, some might be surprised to know that among our over 300 acres of managed lands, we have many small projects, some with outsized biological significance. One is a small, yet diverse, brackish seep, bluff, riparian, and woodland restoration project right in our backyard at the Cheadle Center. Just to the west of Harder Stadium exists a perennial seep that exudes slightly brackish water into the East Storke wetland, a now-tidally isolated portion of the Goleta Slough.

Brackish water is considered 0.5-30 parts per thousand (ppt) salt, and these seeps have salinities of around 4-6 ppt, which rises during the summer due to evaporation. These brackish seeps create a unique series of ecotones and plant communities that allow a diversity of flora to thrive in a relatively small area. Made up of four or five adjacent but distinct seeps, the area we call the Harder Seep is partly filled by the old Storke Ranch “laundry road.” Traces of past land use linger throughout the site: dumping, fill, and a thick mat of iceplant that spills across the ground and into a portion of the western arm of the historic Goleta Slough.

Initial goals for the site included the introduction of the critically endangered marsh sandwort, (*Arenaria paludicola*), but the site’s soils and water proved incompatible. It has, however, supported a wide diversity of native plants that are uncommon on campus including 5 taxa that have California Rare Plant Rankings (CRPRs): Southwestern spiny rush (*Juncus acutus leopoldii*), branching phacelia (*Phacelia ramosissima austrolittoralis*), bitter gooseberry (*Ribes amarum hoffmanii*), cliffaster (*Malacothrix saxatilis saxatilis*), and Santa Barbara honeysuckle (*Lonicera subspicata*

subspicata).

Restoration work at the seep is currently supported by the Wetlands Recovery Community Restoration Program, funded by the Wildlife Conservation Board and managed by the State Coastal Conservancy. Earlier funding for this long-term, small-scale project was provided by the Associated Students Coastal Fund and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Coastal Program.



Cliffaster (*Malacothrix saxatilis saxatilis*) at the seep project.

Currently, staff at the Cheadle Center have been working hard to restore the Harder Seep to a state more reminiscent of a time before cattle and invasive plants dramatically changed the landscape. Initial weed control consisted of removing over 10 large blue gum eucalyptus that lorded over much

of the site, above an understory of diversity-smothering non-native *Carpobrotus edulis*, or iceplant.



The first phase of weed control involved removing more than ten towering blue gum eucalyptus that had long dominated the site.

Native planting has been ongoing since the beginning of this project in 2020. Much of this work has been gradually focused on restoring the areas where water actively seeps through the soil and has centered around riparian and wetland plant communities and the bluff above them. This year, attention has been brought to the peripheral oak woodland and coastal sage scrub habitats, and expanding on the solarization of iceplant to the west. Annual monitoring of the site is set to happen later this fall.



Mulch application around coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) in the peripheral upland portions of the site



Iceplant (*Carpobrotus edulis*) solarization in progress.

Aside from restoration for the sake of restoration, what makes this project an integral part of our mission is the inclusion of plants that have histories of being extirpated from the campus region, or are on the brink of disappearing, and restoring habitats to their full potential to include these species rather than only the most common, hardy natives in the area.

The site is the first reintroduction of Pacific silverweed, (*Potentilla anserina pacifica*) on campus, known to occur at the campus lagoon in the 1950s, and the sedge *Eleocharis montevidensis*, known on campus from a single small occurrence in the same general area that has since been extirpated by drought. By giving these and other rare taxa a new foothold in the area, the constant, gradual loss of biocomplexity is halted and the botanical heritage of the campus is restored.



Pacific silverweed (*Potentilla anserina pacifica*) at the seep project.

The transformation of the site provides an excellent resource for teaching in many ways; academically, creatively, and culturally. In just a few steps you can walk from a budding oak woodland to a slope supporting coastal sage scrub that transitions into a thriving wetland fed by the seep. Here you can find two species of cattails (*Typha domingensis* and *latifolia)*, which produce copious pollen each spring - a traditional California food that we introduced to members of the Chumash community for collection, along with the stems of several species of rushes, used in basketry.



Pollen collected at the seep from cattails (*Typha domingensis* and *latifolia).*

Deepened portions of the wetland created breeding opportunities for Pacific chorus frogs (*Pseudacris regilla*), which now are abundant on the site. Additionally, the site supports several now-robust planted yerba mansa (*Anemopsis californica*) meadows, also seep fed, surrounded by willow, oak, sycamore, and alder trees, with a diversity of rushes and sedges occurring among them. Pacific burr-reed (*Sparganium eurycarpum*), a little-known graminoid sourced from the Goleta Slough, also now occurs on site.



The site now supports several robust, planted yerba mansa (*Anemopsis californica*) meadows, which are also fed by seeps.



Pacific burr-reed (*Sparganium eurycarpum*), a lesser-known graminoid originally sourced from the Goleta Slough, is also established at the site.

Lemonade berry *(Rhus integrifolia*), gooseberry (*Ribes amarum hoffmanii*) and elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*) can be found dotted throughout the area, providing flowers and fruits for resident wildlife. A short distance away lies a recently solarized iceplant area, bordering a sprawl of pickleweed (*Salicornia pacifica*) and alkali heath (*Frankenia salina*) at the edge of the Goleta Slough.

Recently, the Seep has welcomed the restoration help of New York high school students, been the subject environment of multiple art classes, and is actively seeking help from community volunteers. If you are interested in helping to restore this natural classroom for all walks of life to learn from and enjoy, reach out to Wayne Chapman (chapman@ccber.ucsb.edu) or Calen Campos (calenqcampos@lifesci.ucsb.edu).

Volunteer Opportunities

Creek Week Volunteer Day at NCOS

September 20, 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

September 27, October 25, 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 CCBER team. To join, please send an email to ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu.



Creek Week Tour

September 21st, 9:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Please RSVP to ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu

Join us for a walking tour of NCOS and learn how a filled wetland was restored to support endangered species, reduce flooding, improve wildlife habitat, and provide learning opportunities for all ages.

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!



Black-necked stilt and American avocet in Devereux Slough near Venoco Bridge on September 9. Photo by Lynn Scarlett.



Belted kingfisher seen near Whittier Pond at NCOS on September 6. Photo by Lynn Scarlett.



Loggerhead shrike seen near Dilling's Link at NCOS on September 6. Photo by Lynn Scarlett.



American kestrel at the Campus Lagoon. Photo by Lynn Scarlett.



Great blue heron foraging at NCOS. Photo by Sally Colman.



Juvenile Canada geese with parent at NCOS. Photo by Daniel Forseth.



Anna's hummingbird feeding on California fuchsia (*Epilobium canum*) at the NCOS Visitor Plaza. Photo by Jeremiah Bender.



Black-crowned night heron displaying its nictitating membrane. This translucent “third eyelid” sweeps across the eye to keep it clean, moist, and protected from wind, dust, and other hazards. Photo by Jeremiah Bender.



Flame skimmer (*Libellula saturata)* at Phelps Creek. Photo by Jeremiah Bender.



Blue dasher (*Pachydiplax longipennis)* at Phelps Creek. Photo by Jeremiah Bender.

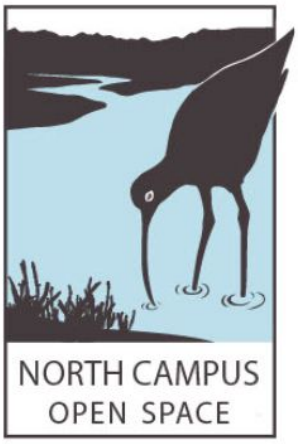
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For more information on the
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