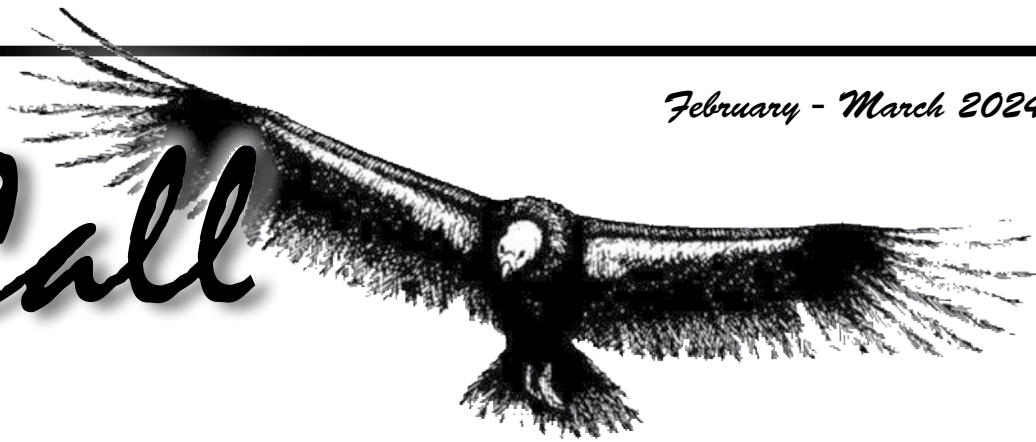


Condor Call

Journal of the Sierra Club's
Santa Barbara - Ventura Chapter



© Photo by Mark Wilkenson - SB County Trails Council

What's up 2024? ... WBC's Teresa ... Climate Watch ... Volunteers ... MiniNature

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Back page

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What's up in 2024 and are we up to it?

Editor's note: At the end of the author's New Year Priorities for our chapter, he asks: "We have an ambitious agenda to tackle; are we up to it? You bet we are, we cannot let down our precious wildlife and our great wild places."

While perusing the list, perhaps you want to help. If so contact our Executive Director:

jonathan.ullman@sierraclub.org

We resume with the Jim Hines Chronicles, reflecting the emails by our premier lobbyist on the joy and sorrows of environmental activism. This covers the last two months (Dec-Jan). Jim is vice-chair of our Chapter and Ventura Network. He is available as a speaker.

By Jim Hines

It's a new year and here are the Chapter's priorities:

~ Continue advocating for the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary. Biden Administration says it will be a reality this Summer but Congress says not so fast.

~ Passage of the Central Coast Heritage Protection Act and the Rim of the Valley Corridor Protection Act. Election year politics will make this a tough challenge.

~ Expand our campaign to protect more critical lands in the Santa Monica Mtns.

~ Work with House Rep. Salud Carbajal's office for wilderness legislation for Channel Islands National Park.

~ Mountain Lions FOREVER Team is gearing up for state hearings on critical habitat designations to protect mountain lions in our region.

~ Help provide a vision for the Sky Valley Preserve in the Simi Hills.

~ Express our opposition to expanded oil and gas drilling next to Hopper Mtn National Wildlife Refuge where endangered CA Condors nest.

~ Work on Biden Administration Task Force on urban wildlife refuges to include proposed Ormond Beach National Wildlife Refuge.

~ Secure protection for the Malibu Springs watershed in southeastern Ventura County.

~ Team to ban nylon lines used to secure crab traps to the

ocean floor, which can harm whales etc.

~ Expand our wildlife overpass campaign.

We have an ambitious agenda to tackle; are we up to it? You bet we are, we cannot let down our precious wildlife and our great wild places.

Jan 18: **A friend of mine** sent me the link about a local organization formed to create MiniNature Reserves in Oxnard, see story on back page.

Jan 15: **I should ask** House Rep. Ted Lieu's office to amend coastal wetland protection legislation to include Ormond Beach Wetlands in Ventura County and include the fact that it has been proposed as a National Wildlife Refuge. Congressional budget talks have included NO expansion of America's national wildlife refuge system.



Beavers may want to come back to Sespe Creek (with human help), see Jan. 11 notice. (Photo courtesy of Sierra Magazine)

Jan 13: **The beautiful** Santa Monica Mountains running from Griffith Park in Los Angeles County to Pt. Mugu in Ventura County, is a place where we all love to hike and a place where entire coastal ecosystems are at threat, a land where mountain lions roam in dense human population centers.

It's time for our annual trek – to the offices of the National Park Service! We'll ask for federal protection and funding in the Ventura County portion. They are Malibu Springs-Yerba Buena Canyon, Laguna Peak and Long Grade Valley areas.

Jan 13: **I will take** this beautiful Winter weekend to get recharged and inspired with the world of beauty which surrounds my home, So much is in bloom. Soak in the beauty, feel the tensions of our challenges disappear and know that with your passionate commitment to all that is WILD! that we will have victories coming up.

continued on page 2

EAVESDROP

"Instead of saving the environment, we're destroying it . . . "Forty-nine percent of our emissions come from vehicle traffic, and it is going up."

~ SB County Board Chair Das Williams during a state of the county meeting Sept. 8. He noted the county is not on track to meet carbon emissions in half by 2030, mostly because of high housing prices that encourage commuting from lower-priced housing areas.

Condor Call

Journal of the Sierra Club's
Santa Barbara - Ventura Chapter

February - March 2024

Oily deal doomed to fail

Sable Investors Beware Offshore Oil Plan Doomed to Fail

A December 2023 investor presentation by startup energy company Sable promises a quick restart of Exxon's three shuttered offshore oil platforms off the Gaviota coast and a long and lucrative payoff to would-be investors. As is often the case when something seems too good to be true, they left a lot out.

The idea is that Exxon would loan Sable \$623M to purchase the oil field and associated assets including pipelines and the Las Flores processing plant on the coast. Sable would merge with blank check company Flame, already listed on the NY stock exchange, to raise more funding.

Sable fails to mention that a sale from Exxon to Sable would have to be approved by Santa Barbara County and the California State Lands Commission, both of which will be highly skeptical of Exxon offloading liability for their aging oil operation to a startup that would disappear in the event of a spill or other disaster.

Exxon's oil platforms were once the major local oil producer responsible for 90% of the offshore oil in the channel, but production had been trending down since peaking in the 1990s. Then in 2015 a pipeline burst spilling 142,800 gallons of oil into one of the richest and most biologically diverse stretches of the Pacific coastline, killing hundreds of animals, tanking tourism and closing our beaches and fisheries for a time.

The oil operation has been shut down ever since, now almost nine years.

Sable's investor presentation calls this a "pipeline issue" and promises a restart of their entire operation in July 2024. Sable claims that the State Fire Mar-

shall will approve the restart of the pipeline by March. However, that's unlikely as of January the State Fire Marshal says, "they are not currently considering or reviewing a proposed startup plan."

The truth is there is no safe route to the market for oil from these platforms.

The spill uncovered the fact that the pipeline was badly corroded and unsafe to use. At the criminal sentencing hearing after Plains was convicted by the State and County District Attorneys for negligence in failing to maintain the pipeline and causing an oil spill, the prosecutor tried to prohibit Plains from restarting or even threatening to restart the pipeline transporting the oil to re-

fineries.

Exxon seemed to agree that the pipeline is unsafe and impossible to fix, which is why they proposed trucking the oil and building a new pipeline instead. Trucking oil on dangerous, windy roads was denied by Santa Barbara County and a judge upheld that decision when Exxon sued. Exxon has dropped the new pipeline plan due to environmental impacts.

Now the only possible route to market is using the damaged pipeline. Work on that pipeline was denied by the County due to huge risks of restart and opposed by landowners where the pipeline is located.

continued on page 2

Help lead our chapter

On behalf of all of us at the Santa Barbara – Ventura Chapter Sierra Club, thank you for your incredibly generous donations of time, talent, and treasure throughout 2023.

Together, we are working harder than ever because the path to a cleaner, healthier planet and community is hard, there are many obstacles to success. But we also have fun, such as providing free hikes every week, or planting native plants at our local parks. And enjoying our success.

We are humbled by your ongoing support. Your volunteer time and donations help protect wilderness, wildlife, waterways, and public access throughout Southern California from the Los Padres National Forest to the Carrizo Plain National Monument.

Supporting your local Sierra Club chapter is one of the most direct ways to ensure that you have a powerful voice in how our region's public lands are conserved, protected, and managed . . . so you, your family and community can enjoy it.

All but a handful of people are paid because the Sierra Club has always been a volunteer organization.

Chapter leadership uses your contributions wisely and strategically to defend the sanctity of our region's public lands for the benefit of our communities, climate, and future generations.

We'll continue to reach out over the coming year with volunteer opportunities and updates.

Opportunities such as becoming a hike leader, using your voice at public meetings, helping with our outreach efforts, spreading the Sierra Club's motto: *Explore, Enjoy and Protect the Planet*.

Please get involved. Join our activities and activism; see Group News box on page 3 for contacts and links where you can get involved or enjoy our free hikes via links on page 5, including via MeetUp and internet lists.

Donations help a lot, and the money stays here at home doing good stuff. Donate here:

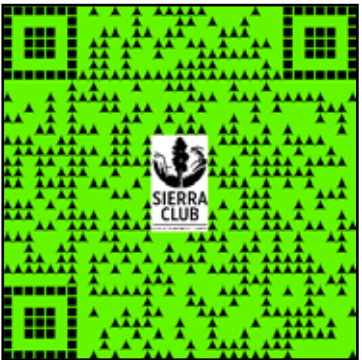
www.sierraclub.org/donate/1000

In the meantime, reach out to Jonathan Ullman, chapter director if you have any questions about how you can support the chapter in 2024. For the wild!

jonathan.ullman@sierraclub.org

COVER PHOTO

Adventure awaits past the Baron Ranch Gate, via a new trail opening to the public in February, called "a significant milestone" high above the Gaviota Coast. Read the feature story on page 6. (© By Mark Wilkinson – SB County Trails Council)



If you have a printed Condor Call in your hand, you can tap into this QR code to get a full color version that has hot links! Try it.

With your support, we can protect our health and our environment to create a better future for all.

There is so much on the line on California's Central Coast – from stopping the oil and gas industry from continuing to damage our local environment to stopping climate change through large-scale renewable energy projects from solar panels on schools to wind farms in northern Santa Barbara County. Our volunteers work tirelessly to protect vulnerable wildlife like dolphins and mountain lions by supporting the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary and the Wallis Annenberg Wildlife Crossing.

Please Support Your Chapter Today:
sc.org/SBVForward23

Santa Barbara-Ventura Chapter
P.O. Box 31241
Santa Barbara, CA 93130-1241

What’s up...
continued from page 1

Jan. 11: **Sespe Creek** is wild and pristine, filled with fish, bird life abounds, plant life is lush, deer graze along its banks and mountain lion and bear prowls the area -- a biological wonder but one important natural element is missing, beavers. It has been absent of beavers since the last beavers I saw in the 1990s. They belong here and we need to bring them back. To that avail, I have asked the CA Dept. of Fish and wildlife to reintroduce beavers back into the aquatic ecosystem of Sespe Creek.

Jan 8: **Great news** to start off 2024. The non-profit Trust for Public Land (TPL) now has a contract to purchase the 3500-acre Rancho Canada Larga, expiring in Spring 2025. You will soon see a major fundraising campaign for the purchase of this crown jewel of a property to help connect the central portion of the Ventura River and the hills above Ventura with the Los Padres National Forest in Upper Ojai.

Sierra Club is a major supporter of preserving this wild and

beautiful property. Once the purchase is finalized, the TPL will transfer the property to a local conservancy, such as the Ventura Land Trust and/or the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy.

Jan 3: **No stopping us**, we are off and running. Two of our team members have traveled to Washington State to support a program to slow down vessel travel in Puget Sound region to prevent the collision between ships and Orcas. We are headed to Colorado to assist in gathering voter signatures for a ballot to ban the killing of mountain lions. We won on the signature of the Governor of New York to ban wildlife killing contests and now onto other states to ban wildlife killing contests. We are also headed to southern Utah to protect the great wild places of the Colorado River plateau.

Dec 28: **Good Morning** Ventura Network Team. Will we in 2024 be able to protect the Malibu Springs watershed in southeastern Ventura County, gain endangered species status for Burrowing Owl, permanently ban the use of nylon line to secure crab traps that can entangle and kill marine mammals and wilderness status for Superior Ridge north of Lake Casitas?

Dec 27: **I am happy** to see the Sierra Club California (SCC) finally placing a top priority on protecting California’s dwindling wetlands by creating a new conservation committee called SCC Wetlands Committee.

Dec 27: **Happy New Year** . . . what a year 2024 will be. We will be advancing and expanding our campaigns to protect all that is WILD! It is also an election year and beware: voters are electing anti-environment candidates as in the case for Ventura County where we really have our work cut out for us. Santa Barbara County too.

Most important is that the White House is at stake with enormous negative impacts to our nation’s environment if we lose it.

Dec 15: **Good news** to report from our CA Gray Wolf stakeholders meeting on the new gray wolf pack now living in a Giant Sequoia grove in Tulare County. The pack is named the Yowlumni Pack, a local tribal name. It consists of a breeding pair and four pups. We live just 150 miles from there and I am hoping that eventually members of the pack will travel south to the Los Padres National Forest.

Dec 13: **Wildlife Safety:** It’s something we have been advocating for years, thanks to House Rep. Salud Carbajal who announced that CalTrans is receiving \$8 million to reduce wildlife vehicle collisions and connect animal habitats between protected State Park lands on either side of US 101 in the Gaviota area.

Nov 27: **For the new year**, we are renewed, recharged and ready to go on with our newest campaigns to protect all that is wild!

Examples include tackling the squid fishery offshore of Channel Islands National Park and lobbying Congress to pass wilderness land designations for the islands.

We are suing the state of California over management of the Ballona Wetlands Wildlife Preserve and filing appeals of BLM plans in western states for failing to protect precious natural resources.

Too, we are asking the new leadership in Congress not to cut funding for national parks, marine sanctuaries, forest and wildlife refuges.

~ Edited by John Hankins



Exxon still hasn’t given up, guess it didn’t get the memo held by our Chapter Executive Director, Jon Ullman. (Photo by Katie Davis)

Oily deal...
continued from page 1

Sable’s Investor presentation doesn’t mention any of that, and it also fails to mention that the lease for another pipeline through state waters has expired. State Lands Commission did not renew the lease and is undertaking a study of the risks of doing so.

Given that Exxon’s 40-year-old platforms were designed to last 25 years, and State Lands is on record opposing new offshore oil leases, it seems unlikely that the state will risk issuing a new lease that could result in future oil spills.

Offshore oil is wildly unpopular, opposed by 72% of Californians. Most of our population and economic output is in coastal counties that would be damaged by another coastal oil spill. State Lands Commission will likely not approve the transfer of the lease from Exxon to Sable and will likely not approve a lease renewal at all.

In addition to oil spills, a restart of Exxon’s oil rigs goes against state and local goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and it would cause local air pollution to soar. When operating, Exxon’s Los Flores oil processing facility was the largest facility source of greenhouse gas emissions in the County. They were

also the largest source of pollution in the county for Methane, VOCs, PM2.5, and Formaldehyde and one of the largest sources for SOx, NOx, PM10, Benzene and Hydrochloric acid.

PM2.5 is so small it can penetrate deep into the lungs, enter the bloodstream, and be deposited in human organs and tissues, causing DNA damage, inflammation, and chronic disease. It is linked to heart and lung disease, heart attacks, asthma, and premature death. The Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health finds that, “a small increase in long-term exposure to PM2.5 leads to a large increase in the COVID-19 death rate.”

Prior to the spill in 2014 Exxon’s coastal plant was about 43% of PM2.5 facility emissions in the County.

Blank check companies are notoriously bad investments. The owners can promise very optimistic scenarios for unproven ventures to would-be investors like Sable is doing today, but they tend to underperform in the real world.

The word “Sable” can either mean the color black or a kind of weasel, and weasel is a synonym for deceitful. That seems apropos.

My advice is don’t trust anyone trying to sell you a shuttered oil platform off the California coast.

EAVESDROP

“There is not a single area on the coastline where offshore wind is going to be closer than 20 miles, in some cases, 60 miles. In terms of view impact, there will be lights at night, but you won’t see them.”

~ David Hochschild, California Energy Commission, responding to some people who object to floating turbines off our Pacific Coast, notably Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo.

Editor’s note: Floventis Energy Ltd. has proposed building a 6-square-mile wind farm floating less than 3 miles off the coast of Lompoc and the Vandenberg Space Force Base in Santa Barbara County.

EAVESDROPS

“As we face more deadly, extreme weather around the globe, fossil fuel companies are reaping record profits and ramping up their misleading PR tactics to distract from their central role in fueling the climate crisis.”

~ House Committee on Oversight and Reform committee Chair Rep. Carolyn B. Maloney (D-NY).

Condor Call

[SierraClub.org/SantaBarbara-Ventura](#) ~ All phone numbers 1-805 area code

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Photos, news, tips always welcome!

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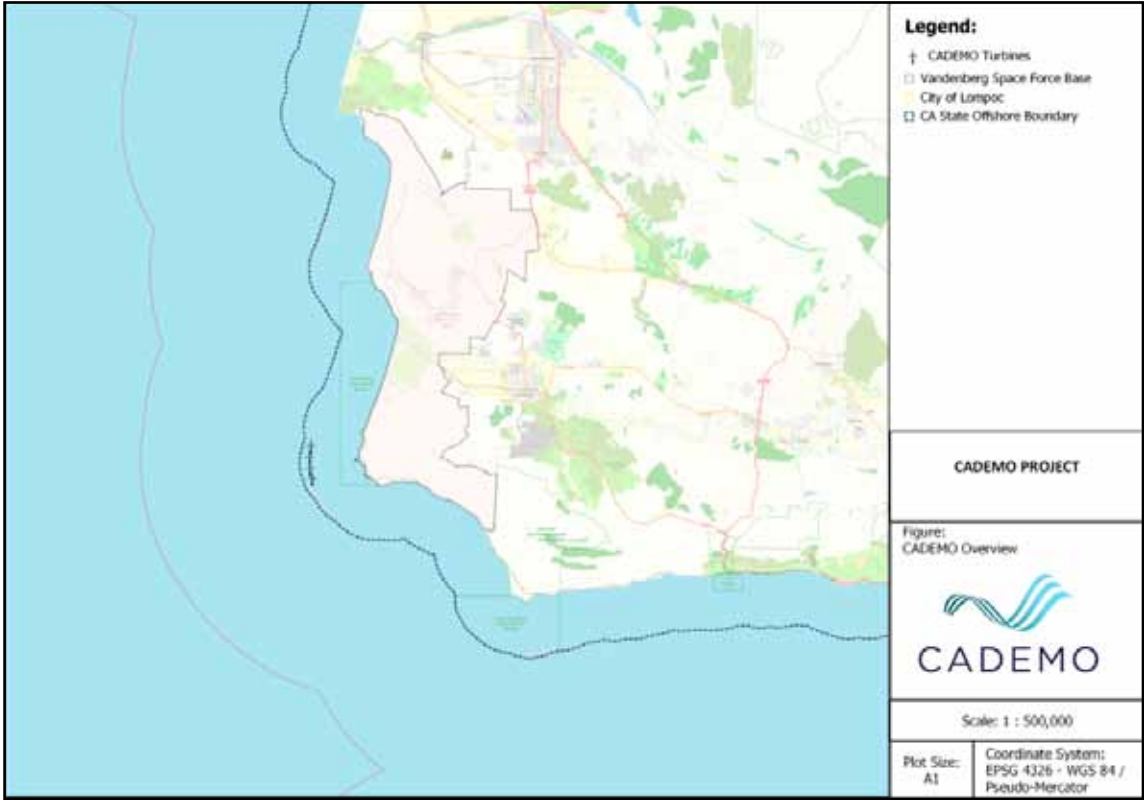
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Typography and production by Dan Fuller



Santa Barbara County already has onshore wind turbines in the hills south of Lompoc that just opened in January, and now there is a proposal to put some offshore in our county. Floventis Energy Ltd. has proposed building a 6-square-mile wind farm floating less than 3 miles off the coast of Lompoc and VAFB. It’s called Cademo, visit [Home - Cademo](#)

Meanwhile, the onshore project of BayWa r.e., began the planning process here in 2011. With a total capacity of up to 95.25 MW, Strauss Wind Project has erected 29 turbines, with state-of-the-art GE technology utilizing the GE 3.8 MW platform. It’s the first wind project on the California coast generating enough clean, renewable energy to power approximately 36,000 homes. (Stats according to the owner)

Founder's 'flounder' inspires WBC course

Editor's note: beginners, day-hikers and experienced backpackers can always learn more to be safe and comfortable outdoors, and the Sierra Club's Wilderness Basics Course will get you there and back with amazing memories. Here's our founder's story to illustrate why.

By Teresa Norris
Condor Call
Feb 2016

As the Grateful Dead song goes, "What a long strange trip it's been."

1996: A memorable year, because I started section hiking the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) at the Mexican border in San Diego County that August. (Still not done . . .)

Mostly, I day hiked. Two years later, having completed almost 190 miles, I arrived in Idyllwild.

From Idyllwild to the Coachella Valley, I needed to do an overnight trip because of the distance. I knew what to do because I had backpacked in the Sierras when I was younger. I felt confident about going by myself.

I planned to use spring break to hike 28 miles through the San Jacinto Wilderness and down to Snow Creek. I knew I'd be out for a few days, so I packed plenty of supplies. My sister-in-law Yvonne helped me with the car shuttle: We left my car in Snow Creek, and then she drove me back up the mountain.

I had stowed my gear in her car in several pieces, but I hadn't put it all together at home. We stopped at the trailhead, and I unloaded my stuff and started to assemble everything.

OMG! It was way heavier than

I had imagined it would be. I could not lift it off the ground. (Did you see the movie *Wild?*) I managed to drag it to a large rock, got it up on the rock and then I was able to put it on my back. It was probably around 60 pounds. I could hardly walk with it. What could I do? My car was dozens of miles away, I didn't want to hitchhike, and we didn't have cell phones back then for me to call anyone.

Of course I needed 6 liters of water (12 pounds), because I might not find any. And of course I needed an extra pair of blue jeans and my big parka. It all added up to a huge burden. Well, that first afternoon

I only went about 1 mile at a snail's pace with frequent stops. I stopped to camp early, exhausted.

I'll fill you in on the rest of my adventure in a future *Condor Call*.

The following year, I enrolled in the Sierra Club's Wilderness Basics Course, and found out how to take just what I needed and how to lighten my load. The gear had changed a lot since my youth. I bought some new equipment and left other things behind.

You don't have to go through the pain I suffered carrying my gigantic pack. You can come to WBC and find out how to do it the right way the first time. Our first class is Feb. 24.

For details, check our website:
www.lospadreswbc.org
www.facebook.com/lospadresWBC
Or email:
lospadresWBC@gmail.com



We'll miss Teresa Norris

"It is with sadness that the family of our incredibly loving Teresa Helena Norris announces her peaceful passing at home with members at her side, on Jan. 3, 2024."

That was the lead to her official obituary by her husband Tom Sommers, who was attracted to her by "her intelligence, cheerful smile, and rosy cheeks."

We at the Sierra Club also feel a great loss for Teresa, who was the prime creator of our very successful Wilderness Basics Course. The WBC led hundreds of students, young and older, tenderfoots and experts on great adventures over its 15 years.

Unfortunately, COVID stopped it and we tried to bring it back last year with fewer students and now we don't know if it will ever be offered again without her incredible leadership.

The Chapter Executive Committee had a moment of silence at its recent January meeting, sparked by Jim Hines and followed by John Hankins, both WBC board members.

"It's heartbreaking," said Ex-Com member David Gold, "Teresa made an enormous contribution to the love for, and appreciation of, the wilderness on behalf of the Sierra Club." Others gave similar statements.

One of her closest WBC pals was Maureen Hernandez, the Ventura Network's hike leader.

"She was my inspiration for joining the Sierra Club and becoming a hike leader. She was not only an amazing outdoorsman (her experience on the Pacific Coast trail alone is a great story she told) but was also an advocate for environmental preservation. She welcomed any interested hiker into her world . . . that's why, to me, she deserved a memorial stone with her name."

Maureen was speaking of the memorial stone at Wheeler Gorge Visitor's Center (Hwy 33) that she helped find and got CalTrans to transport it to the Center. On it, Teresa wanted John Muir's words:

"Going to the mountains is going home."

'Condor' John Hankins, editor of this newsletter, was strongly moved by her passing. He had, for years, tried to convince members to start a WBC, but it wasn't until Teresa came (from the San Diego Chapter), that it happened.

A memorial to this amazing woman will be held March 23 at Bardsdale Methodist Church in Fillmore and Club members are thinking about a memorial meeting at the Rock of Teresa the next day. We'll let you know via social media.

Teresa's Farewell Benediction: "I believe in an afterlife and I'm okay with dying. Tell people to love and forgive each other."



It's the 'Rock of Teresa' (or Teresa rocks!) with the most deserving person ever, enjoying her monument before her untimely passing in January. Thank Ventura's Hike Leader Maureen Hernandez and her many volunteers from the Sierra Club and agencies who searched to find an appropriate rock and it turned out to be two tons! Maureen reached Lennon Bedau of CalTrans who tagged it for us over 20 miles from Rose Valley at a rockslide and brought it to its permanent home at the Wheeler Gorge Visitor's Center. (Photo by Patricia Peinado)



That's WBC's prime founder wearing the symbol and watching with pleasure over a Wilderness Basics Course outing. She changed so many lives. (Photo by Arturo Hernandez)

Read our blog



Our Wilderness Basics Course (WBC) really made a difference among the over 500 students who took the course and had great adventures outdoors in a safe and comfortable manner (by the end of the course!). While Teresa Norris was always the cheerful and expert leader amongst us, she wasn't always that way (well, she was always cheerful with that winning smile, probably from birth!). We decided to reprint this article of her own account published in the Feb/March 2016 edition of *Condor Call*! We deeply mourn her passing in January.

Votes in for SB Group

By Jim Taylor

Recently our membership elected some new Executive Committee members to guide the Santa Barbara Group.

Elected to serve two-year terms beginning in January 2024 were Wendy Santamaria, Bill Woodbridge, Olivia Craig, and Emily Engel.

Bill and Emily have been involved in the SB Group for quite a while; in fact, Emily has served as the group's Secretary for several years and leads our fundraising efforts. This is a feature of our governance, that anybody who wants to have input on our Club's direction can be involved.

If you want to be involved and even direct our group's attention to

your favorite environmental or political issue, please, just show up!

If you would like to attend one of our monthly meetings (second Tuesday of every month at 11am) I will send you a Zoom link; send a note to me at:

jim@carpedata.com

The Dec2023/Jan2024 issue of *Condor Call* published biographies of our new members. Continuing for another year are Jim Taylor, Group Chair and Treasurer, Catherine Mullin, and Geordie Scully. Moving into the emeritus category are Alex Pujo, Robert Bernstein and Katie Davis, though all will continue to be involved. In fact, Katie is Chapter Chair as well as State Executive Committee Member.



January storms and high surf wreaked havoc on the Ventura Pier, which remains closed probably until year's end. However, the part of the pier closest to the shore, including where restaurants are located, remains open. (Photo by Condor John)



Most meetings continue online for now
Group News

The public is welcome to our programs

CHAPTER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

~ Meets 4th Thursday 7pm of every month, via internet for now. Email Secretary Gerry Ching for the agenda: gching@cox.net

~ Chapter website and blog at:
www.SierraClub.org/SantaBarbara-Ventura

SANTA BARBARA GROUP

~ We meet 1st Tuesdays, 11-12pm of each month. For details and to follow the South Coast area, contact:

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<https://tinyurl.com/SBGroupBlog>

ARGUELLO GROUP

Our North County Group will keep you informed on our Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/SierraClubArguelloGroup ~Volunteers needed; your talents could make a difference. Call 350-0629 or: RebeccaAugust@mac.com

VENTURA NETWORK

~ For board meeting dates, times and location email: sierraclubventura@gmail.com

~ Get latest info about the western Ventura County group via Facebook and a blog:

<http://tinyurl.com/VenturaSierraClubFB>
<https://tinyurl.com/VenturaSierraClubBlog>

~New MEETUP site for hikes, outings etc:
www.meetup.com/SierraClubVentura

CONEJO GROUP

~ Events, outings and meetings will be sent to you if you send an email request to:

ConejoGroupHiking@gmail.com.

Or view the Conejo Group website:

www.sierraclub.org/SantaBarbara-Ventura
www.sierraclub.org/SantaBarbara-Ventura/outings



How to save money and resources

By Deborah Williams

Although the US has just a little more than 4% of the world’s population, we consume approximately 25% of the world’s resources. While doing so, we throw out an average of 4.9 pounds of trash per person every day.

Creating new products requires a significant amount of energy and raw materials and generates a lot of greenhouse gases. Throwing products away also generates many additional problems including land, water and air pollution.

There are two very straightforward personal strategies we can all use to help address the adverse impacts of overconsumption. As the EPA states: “Reduction and reuse are the most effective ways you can save natural resources, protect the environment and save money.” Specifically, before buying anything new or throwing away anything of value, here are many positive options for consideration.

Reducing. Prior to making a purchase, it’s important to honestly ask ourselves: Do we really need it? For example, for an infrequently used item, could it be borrowed, rented or shared? Or can an existing item we already own be repaired? For repair tips, check out the website [iFixit](#), whose slogan is: “Never take broken for an answer.” There are also local people who can repair most items.

Buying Pre-Owned. When-

ever possible, buy it re-used. On-line and in-person shopping for used items are becoming increasingly popular, and for good reasons. Buying second-hand, we really can get great deals, while minimizing our carbon and other pollution footprint. There are many ways to do it.

For on-line purchases of gently used items, consider these options: “8 of the Best Places to Buy Used Goods Online” and [The Modest Wallet’s 24 Sites](#) recommendations. There are also lots of options to buy pre-owned items in person, for example, “[The Best Thrift Shops in Santa Barbara](#),” as well as “[17 thrift shops...in Ventura](#).” Furthermore, check-out [Craigslist](#), [Nextdoor](#), [OfferUp](#), [Facebook Marketplace](#) and garage sales for excellent re-use deals. Patagonia has pre-owned items at discounts (link is on its website).

You will find that the savings are amazing. It is a lot of fun, and you often meet very interesting people.

Avoid throwing items away. Before throwing away anything of value, choose to reuse it, sell it, or donate it. First, as noted previously, consider repairing the item and reusing it yourself. If it is not repairable, consider selling it online or in person. You know the saying; one person’s trash is another person’s treasure – and it really is satisfying to help others discover and acquire treasures.

For great on-line site options and sales tips, check out the [11 best websites](#) to sell stuff online and [The PennyHoarder’s 14 websites and Apps](#).

To sell in person, use garage sales, [Craigslist](#), [Nextdoor](#), and/or [OfferUp](#). It’s fun and profitable. Or donate the items(s) ([Goodwill](#), [Alpha Resource Center](#), and more). Through sales and donations of your items, you can make money and/or do good.

Fundamentally, there are so many great reasons to buy pre-owned items: As [Resilience](#) points out: “Used products are less expensive, don’t require new resources, don’t generate pollution, don’t require energy to create, and don’t have packaging. Buying used supports good causes and the local economy.”

What’s more, you can get higher quality products, often with character, for a lower price, eliminate the fear of the first scratch, and enjoy the fact that the items come assembled.

Going even one step further, there are also increased opportunities for community gifting. Check out “[Buy Nothing](#),” which “offers people a way to give and receive, share, lend and express gratitude through a worldwide gift economy.” and [Freecycle Network](#), which is more place-based.

In short, there’s never been a better time with more compelling environmental reasons to reduce and reuse.



It’s literally electrifying to cook great meals on an electric barbecue and the food comes out “first rate and easy,” said Jim Taylor. His morsels include a cod dish (left) and a Beyond Burger. The chef took his own pictures.

Surprise...Electric BBQs work!

By Jim Taylor

Members of the Sierra Club are aware how important it is for society to accelerate the transition from fossil fuels to cleaner forms of energy. Many of us have tried to do this in our personal lives, by driving electric cars, installing solar panels, and replacing gas ranges with induction cook-tops, for example.

But you might be surprised by another way to electrify your life—an electric barbecue. Yes, there is such a thing, and it’s a great way to cook. We have a Weber Q1400 that costs \$250, and I have been using it a few times a week for more than a year. I cook vegetables, fish, chicken, shrimp, sausage, beef & Beyond burgers, etc. and the results are first rate, plus it is super easy to use.

Electric barbecues are primarily sold to condo dwellers whose rules prohibit open flames on their balconies, but in my suburban yard the electric unit sits next to a charcoal kamado grill and a stainless steel natural gas grill. I still use these from time to time, but it is easier and faster to just flip a switch on the electric job.

The Q1400 and its slightly bigger brother look like regular tabletop charcoal barbecues, but just under the grate you will find a resistance heating element not unlike an electric oven or range. It takes a little while to get red hot, maybe 15 minutes, so you turn it on about the time you start making the salad.

It is intended to cook with the lid closed, and once it has warmed up, cooking time is really about the same as any other barbecue, and

it produces very little smoke. Of course, an electric barbecue has its sweet spot. You’re not going to smoke a rack of ribs or a brisket of beef on one of these little guys, and a gas grill can sear a New York steak to perfection, but as far as a normal weeknight dinner for two, it is hard to beat!

Chicken Meatballs / Vegetables / Cod / Beyond Burgers

EAVESDROPS

“A fully charged battery in an existing, affordable EV is enough to get 87 percent of American drivers where they need to go throughout the day.”

~ Nature International Journal of Science.



Interior Secretary Deb Haaland and her team joined House Rep. Salud Carbajal to tour the VenturaWaterPure Ocean Outfall Project at Marina Park and held a press conference on Dec 15, 2023. They are (from left): Ventura councilmembers Mike Johnson, Liz Campos, Joe Schroeder (mayor), Haaland, Carbajal, Dr. Jeanette Sanchez-Palacios (deputy mayor), councilmember Doug Halter and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water Michel Brain. (Photo contributed)

Water Pure Ventura project

Construction of a new ocean outfall has begun for the “VenturaWaterPure” project, designed to provide purified recycled water that will recover, treat and reuse water that is currently discharged into the Santa Clara River Estuary.

It was important enough to draw Interior Secretary Deb Haaland to Marina Park on Dec. 15, along with Mike Brain, her Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, our local Rep. Salud Carbajal, Ventura City Mayor Joe Schroeder and councilmember Dr. Jeannette Sanchez-Palacios.

“Water is life. It powers our economies, sustains our environment, and so much more. It will take all of us working together to address the significant drought impacts that we see across the West,” Haaland told reporters.

This project will divert treated water from the city of Ventura’s wastewater treatment facility to a new Advanced Water Purification Facility (AWPF), where the water will be treated to drinking water standards and then injected into a local groundwater basin for storage, and later extracted and delivered to customers.

The VenturaWaterPure project will allow the City to meet legal and regulatory requirements, improve water quality, and secure a new local source of drinking water that is drought resilient.

However, there is not unanimous applause for the project, as council members Mike Johnson and Liz Campos voted no on accepting federal loans. Johnson has protested that “we hadn’t explored the alternatives, and that years of budget increases on the project would continue. Councilmember Campos joined me in voting no, but it was 5-2. When a couple months later, the budget increased from \$375 to \$550 million, I was angry and dispirited, but I wasn’t surprised.”

The project was announced last

September, and the ocean outfall component is currently under construction. The project is expected to finish this year and provide up to 20 percent of the city’s water supply.

The beginning of the project occurred in 2011 when the Ventura City Council voted on a settlement agreement with Heal the Bay and the Wish-toyo Foundation/Ventura Coastkeeper to preserve the Santa Clara River’s natural habitat. “The consent decree also requires a beneficial reuse of the water to align with the City’s long-term sustainability goals and commitment to responsible water management,” Schroeder said.

The Environmental Protection Agency agreed to a \$173 million loan while the Bureau of Reclamation provided an \$18 million grant. More funds and grants may be coming soon.

The CA Coastal Commission approved the project by a unanimous vote.

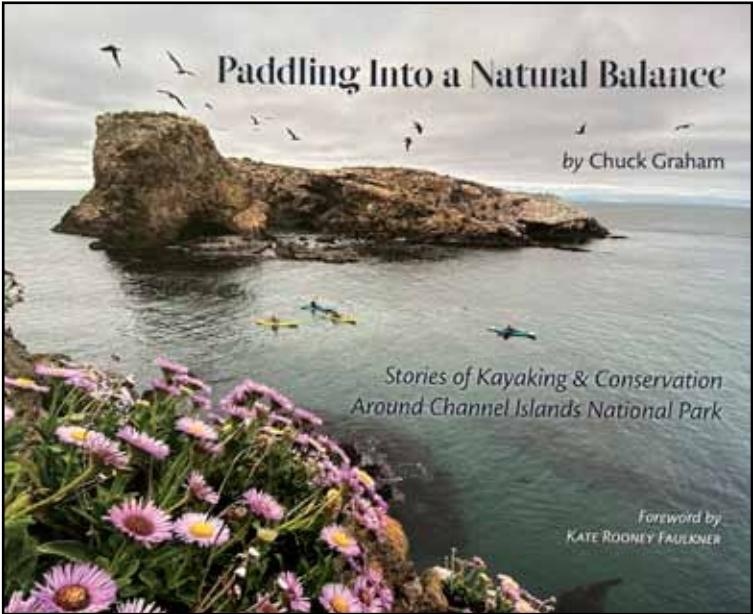
More information and to keep tabs on the project, go to: www.cityofventura.ca.gov/Ocean-Outfall

~ By John Hankins

EAVESDROP

“Heat Records Are Broken Around the Globe as Earth Warms, Fast”

~ Headline in the New York Times, with this explanation: “The spike comes as forecasters warn that the Earth could be entering a multiyear period of exceptional warmth driven by two main factors: continued emissions of heat-trapping gases, mainly caused by humans burning oil, gas and coal; and the return of El Niño, a cyclical weather pattern.” To find out more: <https://tinyurl.com/Climate-Answers>



Paddling into a Natural Balance, Stories of Kayaking and Conservation, by local resident Chuck Graham covers 25 years of paddling trips and photography, involving successful conservation since 1999. Some of the chapters involve island fox and bald eagle recovery, mammoths, seabird restoration, and peregrine falcons. Book is available in many fine book and sports stores in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties. Condor John already has his copy, ordered at: <http://www.chuckgrahamphoto.com>

It's all about the volunteers

Editor's note: Most of our Sierra Club members and public hikers know Gerry Ching as the Chapter's secretary and hike leader. But he also volunteers for Channel Islands Restoration. Their story here is reprinted with permission from CIR's newsletter. You, too, can be part of "Team G". Check them out at: <https://cirweb.org/>

By Morey Spellman

We have embarked on a remarkable trail restoration journey over the past year to enhance the trails at the West Mesa of the San Marcos Foothills Preserve in Santa Barbara.

After joining forces with a community coalition and saving the West Mesa in 2021 from impending development, Channel Islands Restoration (CIR) stepped up to steward the 101-acre property.

As winter turned to spring in 2023, we were fortunate to gain extraordinary help from Gerry Ching, who single handedly founded and has run our boots-on-the ground "Trail Team G" operations as Volunteer Trail Manager ever since.

Trail Team G consists of regularly rotating volunteers who share our commitment to enhancing the outdoor experience for everyone in Santa Barbara County.

The primary goal of our trail maintenance program has been to transform these trails into accessible and sustainable paths for hikers, naturalists, birders, educators, and outdoor enthusiasts, while alleviating off-trail pressure and use. That means stable footing, clearly marked trails, and an overall improved hiking experience for the public while protecting the integrity of off-trail areas and wildlife.

Restoration started in November of last year which provided the ideal conditions for trail maintenance. Taking advantage of the soft ground and cooler temperatures, Trail Team G made the most of their efforts by surveying trails, clearing grass, and creating water bars.

Each month, Gerry and the staff at CIR organize trail days to help maintain the Foothills, while keeping activities light and fun for volunteers. Our community members only work during the cool morning hours to minimize efforts during the middle of the day, when the sun is at its zenith.

Gerry reflects that, "The team has accomplished a lot this year and volunteers have been critical for helping the cross-connect trails, which were once overgrown with grass. These trails serve as a vital link between the west side trail and the east side main trail. They offer a quick route across the West Mesa for everyone who utilizes the Preserve."

Recently, the San Marcos Foothills West Mesa came under new management thanks to incredible support from the County of Santa Barbara.

CIR has worked closely with the County during the transition period, and our team continues to conduct ongoing research as well as restoration to help protect the native plants and animals on the entire San Marcos Foothills Preserve.

This creates a safe space for continued public enjoyment and recreation. We have also worked closely with indigenous Chumash people to seek their advice and encourage participation in our ongoing projects.

You can join Gerry and Trail Team G each month for volunteer trail work. CIR would like to thank all our Trail Team G volunteers for their dedication to the trails we cherish.

For those who want to pick up a shovel and join the fun, we are searching for passionate naturalists, hiking enthusiasts, and members of the community who share our enthusiasm for trail maintenance to help enhance the outdoors for everyone who visits the San Marcos Foothills Preserve.



Our Chapter Secretary and computer maven Gerry Ching gets out from his desk to not only lead hikes (for many years) but also to volunteer for the environment. Here he's taking a short break working with Channel Islands Restoration non-profit. Its work is both on the mainland and islands, get involved here: <https://cirweb.org/>

It's fun and enriching

Now that we are firmly in the new year, those resolutions you made back in January may have slipped.

May we suggest one that will help you feel great while you make a difference? Volunteer at Ventura Land Trust.

VLT volunteers have a variety of valued skills, and we have many options for people of all interests and backgrounds to get involved. Want to get physical? Participate in the Wildlife Habitat Restoration Program (WHIP), which meets 8-10 am on Sunday and Monday mornings at Harmon Canyon Preserve.

In 2023, WHIP volunteers contributed 1,217 hours and cleared out most of the two acres near the main trailhead so that native plants can thrive without competition from invasive plants. Other ways to get physical include regularly scheduled river cleanups and occasional trail work days.

If event planning and administrative tasks are more your thing, we have many events and programs; from the annual Wild and Scenic Film Festival to guided walks and other events, great opportunities abound throughout the year.

Or perhaps you would like to join one of our standing committees, lending your background and expertise to VLT's operations in stewardship, finance, education, and more.

We also seek help with office-based administrative and fundraising work.

VLT ambassadors and docents help with outreach and communication. Harmon Canyon Preserve Docents spend time on the preserve, educating visitors and maintaining it. Next time you visit, look for an orange VLT vest and get to know our excellent docents.

Ambassadors assist with project-based needs and serve either a 6-month or one-year term. Whatever your interest, skillset, and availability, there are opportunities available to get involved and support your local land trust.

We believe that volunteering should be fun and enriching, fostering the joy that comes with community and environmental support. To learn more about the variety of volunteer opportunities, follow the link below or email us:

www.venturalandtrust.org/volunteer
volunteer@venturalandtrust.org



Sustaining members for 2023

We love our Sustaining Members! Thank you for your vial commitment to protecting our environment and ensuring a vibrant natural world with access for all.

All of us at the Santa Barbara – Ventura Sierra Club Chapter appreciate each and every one of you!

With your partnership, we can run strategic campaigns that address the climate crisis and achieve a clean energy future for all. TOGETHER, WE ARE POWERFUL

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Michael Aling | Mary Gosselin |
| Melissa Baffa | Mr. & Mrs. C T Hoskinson |
| Russell and Sarita Baldocchi | Frances Shannon Marsh |
| Reid Bengard | D. McIntosh |
| Katherine Bradford | Catherine Mullin |
| Sharon Bushman | Lucy Nichols |
| Linda Cannon | Amy Parker |
| Jeremy Carroll | Alex and June Pujo |
| Lena Casimano | Virginia Schultheis |
| Jeffrey Chester | Patrick Stevens |
| Margaret Connell | Peter Stricker |
| Irene Cooke | Jim Taylor |
| Gerald Lee Cross | Angus Thomson |
| Katie Davis and Albert Oaten | Nikolaus Volgenau |
| Carla Dilgard | Larry Washburn and |
| B. Fiedel and | Sharon Keigher |
| A. Dusenberg | Linda West |
| Gloria Fletcher | Deborah Williams |
| Constance Ford | Julie Young |
| Warren Freeman | Walter Zabriskie |

SIGHTINGS

Giant waves, Killer Whales, Cape Cod in Oxnard

By John Hankins

We're closing out 2023 with some success, but of course our work is never done in our fight to Explore, Enjoy and Protect the planet (Sierra Club's motto). Check out the stories and links below and throughout this issue as we look back and forward.

Please get involved. Join our activities and activism; see **Group News box** on page 3 for contacts and links where you can get involved or enjoy our free hikes via links on page 5, including via Meet-Up and internet lists.

Donations help a lot, and the money stays here at home doing good stuff. Donate here: www.sierraclub.org/donate/1000

Jan 25: **Flood warnings** about two 'thousand-year' storms are coming to SoCal in the coming weeks into February with Ventura County mentioned, causing Gov. Newsom to declare an emergency. The nickname is an event with only a 0.1% likelihood in any given year.

Jan 25: **Oil Where?** EdHat reports a surprising development that a Michigan-based oil firm wants to drill an exploratory well on a private ranch on an acre of North



Noooooo . . . CalTrans took out the "Peace Tree" that stood for years in between Hwy 101's N/S median strip in Montecito while refurbishing the streets. Photographer Mike Eliason heard about it and snapped this iconic symbol.

Fork Ranch off School House Canyon Road, in the Cuyama Valley. County planners were surprised as no one has proposed new oil in the region in over a decade where most oil rigs are past their prime. But the company will drill down over two miles, more than twice the depth of other oil wells. It's called the Hidden Canyon Test Well in an area near an 840-acre vineyard.

Jan 21: **Fireplace Replacement:** Get up to \$5,000 to replace wood-burning fireplaces and stoves with cleaner-burning and more effective devices, thanks to the Ventura County Air Pollution Control District. To apply or get more de-

tails, visit <http://www.vcapcd.org/Woodsmoke.htm>

There are also more clean-burning wood fireplaces, check it out: <http://tinyurl.com/EPAburnwise>

Jan 20: **Cape Cod in Oxnard?** That's the plan by a new developer named KARLS which is touting the Eastern flavor to revitalize the Fisherman's Wharf area that fell into disrepair since 1996, when 'Bud' Smith (Wagon Wheel) sold the property. The project is expected to go to the Ventura County Board of Supervisors in March or April. Meanwhile, your input is wanted during a series of public forums in February. To find the dates and more information (will it be eco-friendly?), go to: www.ChannelsIslandsHarbor.org

Jan 13: **Citizens Climate Lobby** of Ventura County held its first community event in Newbury Park to help people make the shift to electric appliances and vehicles. The non-profit is seven years old, created by retired physicist Richard Elsley of Thousand Oaks. To learn more or join the effort, go to: <https://www.cclventura.org/>

Jan 7: **Hedrick Ranch** Nature Area located near Santa Paula had people joining the Friends of the Santa Clara River to clear invasive plants in favor of native plants. The State Coastal Conservancy has given grants for this effort, supported by Sierra Club members. It's an ongoing effort, to sign up, go to: <https://fscr.org/support-fscr/volunteer/>

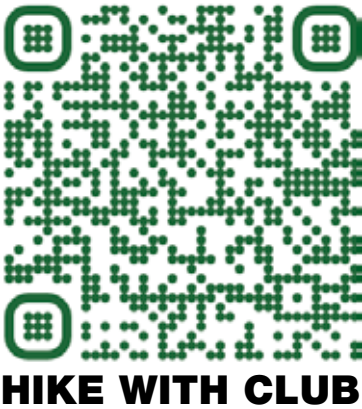
Jan 4: **Future of composting** is happening now in Ventura County.

Agromin won a \$10 million award via CalRecycle. "The funds will energize a major leap forward for recycling in Ventura County, partially funding development of a commercial-scale composting operation on the Limoneira Farm near Santa Paula," wrote David Goldstein in his *Eye on the Environment* column, published in the *Ventura County Reporter*. Agromin expects to open another site, its Mountain View Food Waste Processing Facility.

continued to page 7



The promenade bikeway in the city of Ventura's coastline has been eaten away for years and the January storms pounded it even more. However, there are plans afoot to move the bike and pedestrian trail more inland towards the fairgrounds, from Surfer's Point toward the pier. (Photo by Condor John)



WELCOME HIKERS

The public is welcome at all outings listed, unless otherwise specified. Please bring drinking water to all outings and optionally a lunch. Sturdy footwear is recommended. If you have any questions about a hike, please contact the leader listed. All phone numbers listed are within area code 805, unless otherwise noted.

A parent or responsible adult must accompany children under the age of 14.

See updated listing of all outings via the QR code (above) or: <https://www.sierraclub.org/santa-barbara-ventura>

This website also contains links to Group web pages and other resources. Some regional Groups also list their outings on Meetup sites. See Group News on page 3 for links.



CONDITIONS

Campgrounds trails and roads in Los Padres National Forest can be closed, have restrictions due to habitat protection, repair or weather. Before you go into the backcountry ensure you check conditions with rangers. Numbers to call (805 area unless noted) are:

Los Padres Forest Districts

Headquarters	865-0416
Ojai-Ventura	646-4348
Mt Pinos	(661) 245-3731
Santa Barbara	967-3481
Santa Lucia	925-9538

Other Areas

Santa Monica Mtns	370-2301
Conejo Park	381-2737
Simi Valley	584-4400
Montecito	969-3514

Forest Information

For updated info, maps, news releases, and other goodies:

<http://FS.USDA.gov/LPNF>

Regional Hike Info

Lots of local info on websites that give you varied info on outings, trail profiles, wildflower alerts, work opportunities and much more.

www.sierraclub.org/santabarbara-ventura

www.LPFforest.org

<https://LPFW.org>

www.HikeLosPadres.com

www.SBSierraClub.org

www.SantaBarbaraTrailGuide.com

www.SantaBarbaraHikes.com

<https://SBTrails.org>

www.VenturaCountyTrails.org

<http://Hikes.VenturaCountyStar.com>



Our Sierra Club hikes are free and easy, moderate and difficult. Check out our Meetup and website for hikes for all levels. Here, a group enjoyed a trip to Gaviota Wind Caves, courtesy of hike leader and photographer, Robert Bernstein.

From our Mountains to the Sea: Where to go?

"Maybe they shouldn't be called hikes. Maybe that defeats the joy and the purpose. I don't like either the word [hike] or the thing. People ought to saunter in the mountains - not 'hike!'"

It's a beautiful word and originated away back in the Middle Ages. People used to go on pilgrimages to the Holy Land, and when people in the villages asked where they were going, they would reply, 'A la sainte terre' (To the Holy Land). And so they became known as 'sainte-terre-ers' or saunters.

Given that Sierra Club's co-founder John Muir was one of history's greatest saunters, we should not only allow him his grumpiness, but give it profound consideration. And there is no better place than the Ventura - Santa Barbara region to amble in the great outdoors and give anything consideration.

As a wise soul once said, "It's only in the great open spaces that we find ourselves."

(Editor's note: Taken from Visit Ventura website with light editing to include Santa Barbara! Photo:

<https://www.facebook.com/SteveACattanach>

Click to access all hikes

All links are now live!

We used to print our Sierra Club Outings here covering a two-month period. But we find that planning that far ahead may change due to weather, Covid restrictions, closures etc.

So, we ask that you now rely on the many Meetups and websites for the chapter and some others. For our chapter Meetups go to Group News box always on page 3, otherwise, here we go:

The chapter's website:

<https://www.sierraclub.org/santa-barbara-ventura>

A very special personal website run by Diane Soini which includes our chapter hikes, blogs, connections and a dragonfly on the screen:

Visit Ventura has a lot of information about hikes in the county and the Channel Islands. Go here:

<https://visitventuraca.com/biking-hiking/>

Los Padres National Forest is the turf for Los Padres Forest Association and it's the 'bible' for the forest as it shares amazing information gleaned from hikers and others outdoor sites. Here's its hiking site (see QR code too)

<https://www.hikelospadres.com>

Ojai Valley Land Conservancy has a handy Trailfinder for our phone. Go to:

<http://www.ovlc.org/trailfinder/>

Going a bit more afield, the LA Times has published a trail guide for the So-Cal region here:

<https://tinyurl.com/NearUsLA>

Even more! UCSB's Deborah Williams created a new and expanded website as part of her "Public Lands and Waters" class. Here's the link:

<https://50greatpubliclanddestinations.org/>

Feb. 16 opens 'breathtaking trail'

The Grand Opening of the breathtaking new public Arroyo Quemado Trail is set for Feb. 16 at 10am with guided hikes by experienced naturalists.

The fun continues Saturday, Feb. 17, with guided hikes, including a 12-mile hike to Camino Cielo, a Bird walk, a 6.5-mile hike that takes in the Loop Trail, and a Baron Ranch History hike.

The trail will be open to all users on Sunday, Feb. 18, while trail runners will be moving through the scenic

wilderness in the morning, vying for a personal best in distances ranging from 2-12 miles.

After working in partnership with Santa Barbara County for over a decade, the SB County Trails Council is honored to host the grand opening of this highly anticipated 6-mile trail.

Nestled along the picturesque Gaviota Coast, about 13 miles west of Goleta, Baron Ranch boasts 1,083 acres of rugged terrain, vibrant chaparral, and the meandering Arroyo Quemado Creek. The meticulously crafted trail winds through this captivating landscape, inviting hikers, bikers, and equestrians to experience its wonders.

"The Trail represents a significant milestone in our commitment to providing accessible outdoor recreation for all," said County Supervisor Joan Hartmann. "This project exemplifies our dedication to environmental stewardship and public access, offering a gateway to explore Gaviota's ecological treasures while fostering a deeper appreciation for our natural world."

The trail represents a collaborative effort between the SB County Community Service, Parks, Public Works, Resource Recovery and Waste Management divisions. Also, the U.S. Forest Service, SB County Trails Council, Los Padres Forest Association, and dedicated community volunteers.

"The Alisal Fire and subsequent rains took their toll; however, the outpouring of support from volunteers, donors, and partner organizations has been truly inspiring. We are pleased to celebrate the long-awaited opening," said Otis Calef, Trails Council Presi-



Before the trail was safe for the public, massive work - many by volunteers - worked to alleviate the damage caused by storms, rockfall and wear. Now it's safe! (Courtesy photo)

dent.

The Trails Council acknowledges that the Baron Ranch is the traditional land of the Chumash Native Americans. Indigenous Peoples have stewarded this land for thousands of years, and we give thanks for the opportunity to live, work, and learn in their traditional homeland.

For more information, contact Mark Wilkinson at:

explore@sbtrails.org.

Also visit the website:

<https://bit.ly/baron-ranch>



Upper Sisquoc River is just one of the areas you'll learn about during Trail Talks at the SB main library. (Photo by James Wapotich)

Walk with Trail Talks

The Santa Barbara Public Library will be featuring two new talks in February and March as part of its Trail Talks monthly series. The free talks are in the Faulkner Gallery at the downtown Library from 6:30-7:30pm.

Join James Wapotich as he shares images and stories from his treks and wanders through this unique area of our local backcountry. James is a trail guide, Volunteer Wilderness Ranger with Los Padres National Forest, and author of the hiking column, *Trail Quest*. He leads classes on backpacking, wilderness awareness skills, and mindfulness in nature.

The first will be on Thursday, Feb. 15: *Tending the Earth: Exploring Ethnobotany and Land Etiquette*.

Solange Aguilar will be sharing some practical uses of native plants, gathering tips, and why it's important to know where you are, who the people of the land are, and different ways on how to be a better relative to both the land and the people who have taken care of the land since time immemorial.

Aguilar is a Mescalero Apache, Yo'eme and Filipinx (Kalinga & Kapampangan) artist, poet, and wine-maker currently living in Qenepstin, Chumash Territory (Santa Barbara, CA). In 2020, they won first place in the Santa Barbara Poetry Slam. In 2021, they received an artist scholarship from the Pachamama Skillshare and Women's Creative Collective for Change.

In 2022, their zines "*Alternatives to White Sage, Palo Santo, Cedar, Sweetgrass, and Copal*" and "*Skoden: The Ultimate Indigenous Road Trip Guide*" were both selected to be included in Harvard Library's zine collection. In 2023, their poem "*Alt-Universe*", along with their artwork entitled "*Decolonial Dream #4*", was published in the summer issue of *News from Native California*.

Hiking and Backpacking in the San Rafael Wilderness occurs on Thursday, March 21.

Created in 1968, the San Rafael Wilderness encompasses 197,380 acres of wild lands within Los Padres National Forest. This talk will highlight the hiking and backpacking opportunities in the Upper Sisquoc River, Upper Manzanita Creek, and Upper Santa Cruz Creek drainages, as well as some of the natural history of the area.

SIGHTINGS...

continued from page 5

ity in Oxnard, this year. This site may mash over 100,000 tons of residential and commercial food waste per year. More info in Goldstein’s column at: <http://tinyurl.com/CompostVta>

Jan 1: “**Building with Nature,**” is an essay about bio-based architecture, published in the Jan/Feb 2024 issue of *American Scientist* magazine by Ventura’s own Robert Chianese. “Existing examples of bio-architecture prove that nature can inspire both greater sustainability and more soothing aesthetics,” he writes. He also notes that “when 19th-century homesteaders arrived on the Great American Prairie, they built homes with the only construction material widely available: sod.”

Dec 29: **Giant Waves** sloshed along our coast, wreaking ‘significant damage’ to the Ventura Pier, closure of Emma Wood State Beach (and washing out some campsite), and reaching into 65 homes in the Pierpont neighborhood. In Santa Barbara County, Carpinteria State Beach was closed, numerous ocean rescues occurred and parts of SB Harbor were closed, notably low-lying parking lots and the breakwater. Notably, a video of people running from a wave at the beach end of Seaward in Ventura went viral. Here it is: <http://tinyurl.com/RogueWaveSeawardAve>

Dec 24: **Killer Whales** (aka orcas) were spotted by Island Packers crew during a whale watch trip. “This is unusual to have three different populations of killer whales in one area during the same period,” said Alisa Schulman-Janiger, lead research biologist for the California Killer Whale Project in an article in the *Ventura County Star*.

Dec 21: “**Your work continues** to go beyond mere participation. You embody the spirit of the Sierra Club, showing an exceptional blend of leadership, collaboration, unwavering commitment, and kindness. You are the organization’s heart and soul,” reads an email from the club’s president (Allison Chin) and Executive Director Ben Jealous to our hardworking volunteers.

Dec 21: **Oxnard** suffered from a storm that delivered a “a month’s worth of rain in less than an hour,” according to the *LA Times*.

Dec 20: **We thank** Heal the Ocean for a lot of things, but this time for including our Sierra Club in its Santa Barbara Resource Guide, designed as

a centralized platform to access information about local environmental organizations and resources. Check it out here: <https://www.healtheocean.org/santa-barbara-resource-guide>

Dec 20: **Action Alert** for club members and the public to urge Congress to pass the Farm Bill “benefiting land, climate and communities,” according to our national Sierra Club. Go here: <http://tinyurl.com/FarmAction>

And did you know our club chapter is part of the better farm practices committee? Locally Jan Dietrick of the Rincon/Vitova “Bug Farm” is our chair. You can get on our mailing list by contacting her: jdietrick9@gmail.com

Dec 18: “**Just in time**” for the holidays, Caltrans announced it is reopening State Route 33 to the public between Matilija Hot Springs Road and Lockwood Valley Road in Los Padres National Forest. About 32 miles were closed since January 10, 2023. This section of SR-33 experienced extensive mudslides, rockslides, erosion, and sections of collapsed roadway. Repairs and traffic controls will extend this year at an estimated cost of \$35 million. There will be five different locations with one-way traffic control managed by solar powered traffic



signals.

Dec 14: **Energy regulators** voted to allow the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant to operate for an additional five years, despite calls from environmental groups – including the Sierra Club -- to shut it down. Reasoning by the three officials was that there was not enough ‘clean energy’ available to replace the 2,200-Megawatt facility, which had shut-down date of 2024 and 2025.

Nov 28: **Meiners Oaks** will be getting a community park on the 2-acre county-owned parcel, located at 312 E. El Roblar Dr. Assemblymember Steve Bennett, in partnership with State Senator Monique Limón, secured \$500,000 from the State Budget to create such a park there.

open field, sitting by a flowing creek, touching leaves of grass, walking on the beach, seeing amazing birds fly through the sky and then I know there is goodness in our world.

Our adversaries in our work to protect Mother Earth will never, never stop us for doing the positive work we need to do to be the voice for our voiceless earth and voiceless wildlife. But there are times (a whole lot of times lately for me) when we need healing, we need to slow down and take a personal inventory of what we have done and just what we need to do to save something which must be saved, Gaia, Mother Earth.

So when our work to protect the environment gets overwhelming, step outside like I do into the world of a blooming garden, or into a wild natural world where all things are amazing and all things are possible.

Allow yourself to be renewed, recharged and reconnected.

YOU are the hope for the WILD!

Dare to hike our tallest peaks

Santa Barbara County’s landscape is a tapestry of rugged peaks, sun-drenched canyons, and endless ocean vistas. But nestled within this beauty lies a challenge that calls to the adventurer in each of us: the **Five Peaks Challenge**.

Sponsored by the *Santa Barbara County Trails Council*, the Challenge isn’t just a hike; it’s a test of endurance, a journey of self-discovery, and a celebration of our county’s diverse majesty. Five peaks await your ascent, each a sentinel of a different ecosystem. From the San Rafael Mountain’s windswept peaks to the Santa Ynez Mountain’s sun-baked chaparral, each climb promises breathtaking panoramas and a unique taste of wild landscapes.

The call of the summit isn’t just about the view, though. It’s about the sweat-soaked satisfaction of pushing your limits, the camaraderie of fellow adventurers sharing the trail, and the quiet awe of witnessing the world unfold beneath your feet. With every step, you’ll conquer not just the mountains but also your doubts and fears.

This Challenge is yours to define. Whether you conquer each peak in a whirlwind week or savor the journey over three months, the Five Peaks Challenge is a testament to your spirit and a passport to the region’s most breathtaking landscapes.

So, are you ready to lace up your boots, feel the earth beneath your feet, and rise to the Challenge? The Five Peaks beckon. Will you answer their call?

Organizers will enter the first 100 people to complete the Challenge into a drawing for seven prizes generously donated by REI Co-Op, Patagonia, Toad & Co, Mountain Air Sports, Deckers Outdoor, Santa Barbara Running, Channel Islands Adventure Co. and Santa Barbara County Trails Council. The winners’



Chapter members: Let’s take up the challenge, after all the Sierra Club was formed by hiking mountains. Do it by yourself, friends or a Sierra Club team that we’re trying to form. Condor John will buy you a Sierra Club hat if you do!

As of press time, our sign-ups are on the Ventura MeetUp site which our SB members can certainly use. Go here: www.meetup.com/sierraclubVentura/

prizes will be awarded at a Trails & Ales event in Santa Barbara on Wednesday, May 8 at 6:30 pm.

For the Challenge, we have selected ten iconic peaks as the goals. Anyone who climbs five of the ten has explored the roof of Santa Barbara County and looked down on much of the rest. The mountains have been selected to be accessible on a day trip from anywhere in Santa Barbara County. The peaks include:

- ~ Arlington Peak, 3,258 feet
- ~ Cachuma Mountain, 4,696 feet
- ~ Cathedral Peak, 3,333 feet
- ~ Flores Peak, 3,300 feet
- ~ Gaviota Peak, 2,458 feet
- ~ Grass Mountain, 3,685 feet
- ~ La Cumbre Peak, 3,935 feet
- ~ Little Pine Mountain, 4,480 feet
- ~ Montecito Peak, 3,214 feet

~ Ranger Peak, 4,660 feet

The Challenge is simple: go climb five of the ten peaks. But you need not climb them alone.

The SB County Hikers and other groups will lead hikes up all the peaks this spring. Participation in the hikes will be free, but group hike memberships may apply. The hikes are intended as a physical challenge, ranging from tough-moderate to strenuous.

To verify each climb, participants will submit a photo of themselves at the top on Instagram with peak names and hashtags #SB5Peaks and #SantaBarbaraTrails. Other options include joining: www.strava.com/clubs/1210965 or peak-baggers can submit photos to: explore@sbtrails.org.

Please note that these hikes are highly strenuous. We recommend attempting them only if you are an experienced hiker. Participants will be asked about their experience with climbs of this nature when registering for a 5 Peaks Challenge group hike. Climbing Gaviota Peak via Tunnel View/Trespass Trail is a great hike to get started training for the more grueling hikes.

The Challenge will officially kick off at 9am on Sunday, Feb. 4 with a group hike to Gaviota Peak. Participation in the 5 Peaks Challenge is free, but donations are encouraged to the All-SBC Trails Fund here: <http://tinyurl.com/SBCtrails>

Every summiteer will receive a frameable certificate, and a sticker created explicitly for the Challenge and will be honored on the Trails Council’s social media. Please join the 5-Peak Challenge!

More information is available online at <https://sbtrails.org/peak-bagging/>

Tide pool magic at Gaviota

Gaviota Coast Conservancy gathered on Jan. 13 for a minus -1.38 low tide beach walk at Gaviota State Park with the goal of hoofing it up to Hollister Ranch.

This hike is rarely accessible on the beach as there is a point that protects it from most foot traffic. This was King Tide time of the year, and we didn’t want to miss a special opportunity. We were not disappointed.

The weather was sunny and stiff winds blew down the Gaviota pass. Because the lowest tide was at 5:30pm and the dark would descend before that, we left at 3pm. Some chose to wade around the outcropping in shallow water while others waited until the tide dropped another foot. The wind subsided here. We felt that we were in a wilderness.

The tidepools revealed bright purple, red and orange sea stars and giant tentacled sea anemones with brilliant turquoise centers. Some surmised that this area has such healthy tidepools because they are mostly covered by water and also because there is limited access for humans and dogs.

Someone did report an individual, not in our group, carrying a “starfish” away in his hand. This is a very sad action as so many other tidepools in the Santa Barbara area and elsewhere are void of this kind of abundance. Sea stars are suffering.

These are places we need to protect!

Visit the GCC website for more adventures: www.gaviotacoastconservancy.org



When the Gaviota Coast Conservancy saw a minus tide was going to happen on Jan. 13, it sprung into action for this rare event. Normally, you can’t get past the point (above) to get to the beach below Hollister Ranch. But the intrepid hikers were rewarded with a stunning array of tide pools that are fairly pristine. (Photos by Janet Koed)



See moonrise and sunset

Ojai author-naturalist Lanny Kaufer has several fun and informative talks and walks in February and March. More detail and sign-ups are at: <https://herbwalks.com/>

Feb. 10: **Wheeler Gorge** Nature Hike on a Saturday,

Feb 19: **Presidents’ Day** Monday afternoon Herb Walk on San Antonio Creek Trail in Goleta.

Feb. 24: **Full Moon Sunset**

Nature Hike & After-Party at Ojai Valley Brewery Saturday afternoon.

March 9: **Foraging & Fire** making with Christopher Nyerges and Lanny Kaufer on a Saturday.

March 17: **Spring Equinox**/St. Patrick’s Day Walkabout with Lanny Kaufer at Taft Gardens & Nature Preserve on a Sunday.

March 30: **Ojai Wild Food** Experience with Lanny & Rondia Kaufer on a Saturday.

GREETING FRIENDS

Power of Nature

By Jim Hines

In our seemingly hectic and violent world, we all need to seek the positive power of nature to heal us and to give us strength and hope for the future.

I work in a world which is filled with people who are hostile to the point of being violent to protecting all which is wild, like sitting in a public hearing in Utah to protect national public lands and most of the people around you are wearing guns. But I cannot not allow the hatred of those who seek to destroy our planet and her wild creatures to destroy me.

Which do I do? I garden, grow enormous beds of flowers to cheer me up and I take any negative feelings which have entered my mind to be released from my physic by starting seedlings in the greenhouse, nurturing them along as they grow.

I also spend quiet time absorbing the healing energy of our natural world ... watching deer graze in an

SIERRA CLUB

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MiniNature is a big deal in Oxnard

By **Diego J. Magaña**
President, MiniNature

Our mission is to restore and preserve nature in urban environments through landscape projects that engage, educate, and empower the local community.

We do this by helping low-income communities create what we call "MiniNature Reserves" and "Community Nurseries." A MiniNature Reserve is a native garden in a public park, school, parkway, neighborhood, or small business storefront.

A Community Nursery grows the native plants for these

gardens and sells them at pop-up plant sales or special events to help fund our work. Community Nurseries also double as a green space and free education centers.

We also host "Tending" events during which we gather food, materials, seeds and perform basic maintenance on our MNRs. We host cooking classes led by Indigenous Educators, so people learn how to incorporate native plants into their cooking. There's also no shortage of special events such as our annual Celebration of Community - a collaboration with



MiniNature's first event of OAKtober 2023 kicked off with a Pan y Plantas workshop about cold stratification! Attendees kept warm by sipping on champurrado and pan dulce supplied by Panaderia La Mexicana. (Photo by Kayla Anna Gerardo)

Oxnard Young Ecologists where people make wreaths with native plants and donate toys, food, and clothes to families of Farmworkers.

So far, the group has created seven reserves, planted over 500 native plants and flowers while recovering over 8700 square feet for the preserves.

We also have a robust School Garden and Educational Visits Program. We currently prioritize in-person visits at low-income and migrant schools in the Ventura County area. However, if your school does not fit these criteria, please still feel free to reach out to us.

We offer schools the opportunity to choose from our themed lesson plans. Please browse our lesson plans, terms, conditions, and partnership agreements. In addition, we also assist schools with the installation of native plant gardens. Fill out the form at the website below to learn more, volunteer or donate.

www.mininature.org



At our first event of 2024, 15 volunteers planted over 150 native plants, including buckwheat, yucca, sage, and tidy tips, in front of Panaderia Vanessa in Oxnard. (Photo by MiniNature)



Even with all the rain that day, these volunteers still came out to the latest MiniNature Reserve installation in front of La Botanica Guadalupana in Oxnard (shown), finding a new home for native plants, including white sage, which is a plant found in most botanicas. (Photo by Miranda Magaña)