Annual Report for Marsh Education Project 2020

Prepared by Project Director Trude Hurd (seaandsage@sbcglobal.net)

Despite the global pandemic that caused the closure of our educational programs at the San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary, Sea and Sage Audubon’s Education Team continued to create ways for people to learn about birds and nature. Our staff worked safely from home and quickly learned about Zoom, Google Classroom, and virtual programming. We developed videos about birds, activities for virtual coastal bird camp, and weekly Facebook posts about nature at the marsh. We hosted monthly zoom meetings with our teenage Junior Naturalists plus social meetings and Pondside Chats to engage our naturalists. The pandemic didn’t stop 51 volunteer naturalists and one teen from donating 2,040 hours to share the wonders of birds! We appreciate that the Irvine Ranch Water District kept the wetland open to the public as a quiet oasis during this difficult year.

Outdoor Adventures scholarship (coordinators Trude Hurd and Deborah Brin)
- We educated 1,945 elementary students in 67 Santa Ana classes about the importance of wetland habitat and how they can personally protect the environment. We completed 73% of field trip programs by March. All Santa Ana students received 3 Audubon Adventures youth newspapers.
- NEW: Our Project Director produced 2 videos for teacher use in May:
  - Adaptations of Bird Beaks at https://www.youtube.com/vfJX9VHIU7M
  - Raptor Adaptations at https://youtu.be/iuSeKVIPi3M
- NEW: Our staff and several naturalists have begun preparing several virtual science lessons based on input from our Santa Ana teachers.

Camp Reunion and Virtual Coastal Birds Camp (coordinators Bev Spring, Carolyn Noble, and Deborah Brin)
- Winter Reunion: 55 children participated in a bird walk, painting on canvas or bird houses depending on age, games, and dinner.
- NEW: We created a self-paced Virtual Coastal Birds Camp featuring PowerPoints about Shorebird Identification, OC Endangered Birds, and Bird Sounds. The 48 children and adults enjoyed fun activities such as Mystery Bird, Visit a Shorebird Aviary, Nature Journaling, Ocean Plastics videos, Eco-Art, Poetry, and Virtual Birdathon. Contact Trude to enroll!
- We are grateful to 13-year-old Lara Tseng for daily technical support.

Nature Walks (coordinator Linda Thomas)
- January, February, March events reached 71 people.
- NEW: Thanks to Linda Thomas, we developed a new weekly Facebook post called Take A Nature Walk to share current nature happenings at the marsh. Since September, we produced 19 posts of photos and text.
- Each season, we updated the SJWS parking lot kiosk display about common marsh plants and animals plus restocked literature holders.

Community Tours (coordinator Jay Miller)
- 11 people enjoyed a group tour at the marsh.

Nature Discovery Kits (coordinator Marilyn Walter)
- Local educators borrowed our kits to educate 72 children and 9 adults.
Junior Naturalists (coordinator Gail Richards) (chickadee art at left by teen Jonathan)
- The teens traveled by train in January to L. A. Natural History Museum for behind-the-scenes with Kimball Garrett and the ornithology collection.
- **NEW:** Teens went birding on their own each month (Sept-Dec) to a specified site and then met by zoom to discuss results and win prizes.

Naturalist Support during Pandemic
- **NEW:** Pondside Chats. Our Project Director created special monthly reports about ladybugs, white-crowned sparrow, Earth Day yard birding results, hooded oriole, Earthday results, matilija poppy, local turtles, Biodiversity day, Thanksgiving, SJWS pond updates and Annual Report.
- **New:** Backyard Birding events. Our Project Director created two special events to engage naturalists with their avian neighbors: Earth Day yard birding with 21 participants (see attachment) and Birds of Rainbow Colors for Summer Solstice.

Naturalist Meetings
- **NEW:** Outdoor Adventures Naturalist zoom social meetings in Sept- Oct-Nov-Dec helped overcome pandemic loneliness and isolation.
- Our annual Audubon Naturalist meeting in January featured Krisztina Scheeff (San Diego wildlife photographer) who spoke about behaviors of Western and Clark’s Grebes including their courtship dance across water.
- Naturalist Jenny Golden created cloth masks with beautiful bird patterns as gifts for any naturalist who needed one.

Special Projects (NEW)
- Our Project Director began designing new education pages for our new Sea and Sage Audubon website. She is working with Hunter Craft (Yale graduate who attended our camp and teen program for 10 years) to create 2 new videos about backyard birding and CA native gardening.
- Our Project Director assisted chapter development of a survey about car break-ins at Bolsa Chica wetlands to document thefts for local agencies.
- Our Project Director created a bilingual photo guide to Common Birds in Santa Ana Neighborhoods for the Consul of Mexico-Santa Ana.

Quotes from Program Participants
- “Thank you for helping to entertain us and teach us at the same time. Kids and I enjoyed participating.” Amanda G. (Earth Day birding)
- “One of my students who struggles in reading and math really felt empowered by the experiences we all shared at Audubon. He says he ‘loves’ science and wants to make a difference in our world.” Fifth grade teacher Diana E., Kennedy Elementary, Santa Ana.

Grants and Special Donations
- Anonymous Foundation ($50,000). We greatly appreciate you!
- Orange County Community Foundation’s Environment Fund ($7,500).
- Donations (over $500) totaled $13,725 from Anonymous, Judy Gordon, Kate Haug & Kurt Noble, and Bob McElhiney Camp Memorial.