

# CHANNEL ISLANDS RESTORATION

Volume 7, Issue 1

December 2009



## SEMPRA AND PATAGONIA AWARD MAJOR ANACAPA GRANTS TO CIR FOR 2010

October was a memorable month for CIR, as we were honored to receive two significant grants that will advance CIR's important restoration work on Anacapa Island in Channel Islands National Park.

Sempra Energy Foundation presented CIR with its \$25,000 inaugural "Environmental Champion" award

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Students from Ventura schools remove iceplant on Anacapa Island

## CIR PROTECTS ENDANGERED SPECIES ON THE MAINLAND

Who do you call when invasive species are threatening endangered plants and animals? Increasingly, environmental professionals are turning to Channel Islands Restoration to perform complicated restoration work in close proximity to species that are on the brink of extinction. CIR is trusted to carry out this work in highly

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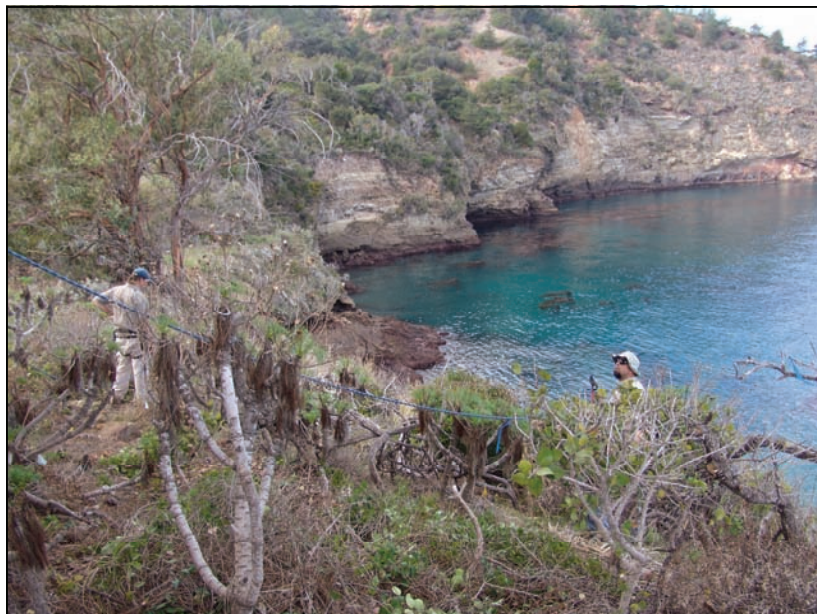
*Arundo* removal near the Santa Ynez River

### CIR AND TNC CONTINUE WORK ON SANTA CRUZ

Climbing ropes and sharpshooter shovels were “weapons” in CIR’s arsenal to rid Santa Cruz Island of the invasive and tenacious *Vinca major* (periwinkle) in 2009. Continuing our almost 10 year collaboration with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), CIR staff and volunteers removed *Vinca* from large areas in Canada del Puerto and from steep cliffs at Pelican Bay. Staff faced special challenges at Pelican, where *Vinca* was intertwined with the federally-endangered sea-cliff bedstraw (*Galium buxifolium*) plant. Up to 50 pounds of supplies were backpacked in and out each work day over several miles of rough terrain, and staff had to carefully protect the *Galium* during treatment.

Our successful work here has clearly established CIR’s credentials as the go-to contractor for removing invasives while carefully protecting endangered species

This project was funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and CIR conducted the work in partnership with the United States Geological Survey and County of Santa Barbara Weed Management Agency. We are also grateful for



CIR personnel work at Pelican Bay on Santa Cruz Island. CIR is removing periwinkle (*Vinca major*) at Pelican where it is encroaching on sea-cliff bedstraw (*Galium buxifolium*), a federally listed endangered species.

the assistance of Lyndal Laughrin, Director of the University of California Santa Cruz Island Reserve, which donated vehicles, housing and other facilities. Almost all of our work on the island has been done in partnership with David Chang, of the County of Santa Barbara. CIR owes David a debt of gratitude!

Other projects on TNC portion of Santa Cruz included removal of invasive kikuyu grass in Canada del Puerto and eradication of invasives around other rare and threatened natives in over a dozen locations on the island. We also worked with the Sierra Club National Service Trip program to build and improve trails near the Main Ranch and on Diablo Peak. CIR Board member Dave Edwards has managed our trail projects, which have continued for nearly four years.



Trail work with Sierra Club

CIR looks forward to continued collaboration with The Nature Conservancy, the UC Santa Cruz Island Reserve, and other island partners, in expanding cooperative programs in 2010 and beyond.

### CIR AND NPS TO BUILD NURSERY ON ANACAPA

Through the generosity of a grant from Patagonia, donations from CIR board members and other private sources, CIR plans to embark on a major project in early 2010 to build and maintain a small nursery on Anacapa Island in cooperation with Channel Islands National Park (CINP).

CINP has set a goal of removing the most invasive iceplant from all of Anacapa by 2016, in time for the nationwide National Park Service Centennial celebration. But eradicating invasives is only part of the effort; native species will need to be planted and maintained over the large areas where iceplant has been removed. To accommodate propagation activities, CIR will build a temporary nursery on the island; Board Member Gordon Hart has agreed to organize this task and welcomes volunteer help.

The NPS nursery on Santa Barbara Island will serve as a model for the Anacapa project. It will be a simple structure constructed with PVC piping and shade cloth. It will have a sophisticated watering system that will be automated, thereby minimizing the need for daily staffing. The hope is to produce at least 2000 native coastal bluff scrub species from seed collected on the island. Growing plants on the island is a necessity to avoid the accidental introduction of non-native species and to eliminate the need to transport plants to the island.

However, logistics will be challenging as all materials, including water, will need to be transported from the mainland to the nursery area. In addition to removing invasives, a nursery on Anacapa will provide additional benefits, as volunteers will have the opportunity to participate in a full-circle restoration project, including collecting seeds, soil preparation, propagating plants and planting and maintaining endemic and native species on the Island.



Nursery facilities on Santa Barbara Island. Photo by Laurie Harvey, Channel Islands National Park.

CIR Receives Major Anacapa Grants  
(Continued from page 1)

for Ventura County. Funding will be used to expand restoration trips to Anacapa for low-income students and families in Ventura and Oxnard. The funding will also provide pre-visit educational programs highlighting the science of environmental restoration and the special nature of the Channel Islands.

According to Sempra Representative Michele Pettes, "We were impressed by CIR's record in educating and providing memorable restoration experiences for underserved local populations and wanted to support their future efforts". For many students, it will be their first time on a boat and their first visit a National Park. Schools, staff and volunteers are currently being recruited and trained for the trips. 2010 will mark the fourth year that CIR has worked with Ventura County schools removing iceplant on Anacapa. Every year we take out hundreds of kids to the island to restore the habitat and to learn about the park.

Also in October, CIR was one of three local environmental groups selected by Patagonia's "Vote Your Choice" contest, and emerged the winner of \$2,500 after a month of store-based voting support. Patagonia, whose corporate headquarters are in Ventura, is a renowned outdoor clothing and gear company, which pledges 1% of annual sales to support environmental activism. CIR will use the Patagonia grant to construct a small temporary nursery on Anacapa, in cooperation with Channel Island National Park's iceplant removal effort.

CIR is deeply appreciative to both Sempra Energy and Patagonia for this funding, as CIR is a non-profit environmental organization that must raise all its revenues from projects, grants and private donations.

*"We were impressed by CIR's record in educating and providing memorable restoration experiences..."*

*Michele Pettes—Sempra Energy Foundation*



4th graders hand-removing iceplant on Anacapa Island



3rd and 4th graders watch common dolphins en route to Anacapa Island



East Anacapa Island in Spring: native Coreopsis are seen in the foreground, and non-native red-flowered iceplant can be seen in the background

CIR Protects Endangered Species on the Mainland  
(Continued from page 1)

sensitive habitats and in a strict regulatory environment. Our specialized and careful work is a major component of efforts to recover these species.

As an example, CIR began work on a major project last spring to restore dune and wetland habitat near McGrath State Beach. The environmental firm, LFR an ARCADIS Company, hired us to remove invasive species around the Ventura marsh milk-vetch, which was once thought to be extinct until it was discovered growing there. This is the only natural population of this plant, and CIR carefully removed invasive trees, iceplant and other weeds in close proximity to the milk-vetch, which is a federally-listed endangered species. CIR also supervised crews from the California Conservation Corps to remove invasive plants from many other locations at the site.

CIR is working with the Santa Barbara County Land Trust on two projects on the Gaviota coast, designed to improve habitat for endangered species. At the Arroyo Hondo Preserve we recently treated large stands of invasive weeds along the creek where three threatened and endangered animal species are struggling to recover. At Refugio Creek we recently completed work to remove miles of giant reed (*Arundo*) and we are in the process of planting more than 6000 natives there. This is part of an ongoing effort to preserve habitat for endangered species found in the creek, including red-legged frogs and steelhead trout.

CIR is eradicating weeds at Pelican Bay on Santa Cruz Island that are crowding out sea-cliff bedstraw, a rare endemic plant at the site. This is highly specialized work performed in partnership with two federal agencies and The Nature Conservancy.

CIR recently removed large stands of *Arundo* along a tributary of the Santa Ynez River for the Chumash Band of Santa Ynez Indians. This is part of an ongoing effort to restore habitat along the river.

In Goleta, we started a project to restore a portion of the lake margin at Lake Los Carneros



CIR personnel supervise members of the California Conservation Corps removing invasive species on a major dune restoration project near Oxnard.

Park. Under this project (funded by the Goleta Valley Land Trust) CIR will present multi-media programs to organize members of the community to help with the restoration work. This project improves habitat for the rare Santa Barbara honeysuckle that grows at the lake edge.

CIR continues to perform invasive plant removal at Coal Oil Point Reserve near the UC Santa Barbara campus. We have removed invasive trees and shrubs from the Reserve since 2002. This work is done in conjunction with the University and Santa Barbara Audubon Society and directly supports the threatened snowy plover that nests at the reserve.

We are also consulting on a new project to restore Ojai Creek in downtown Ojai. This project is funded by the Wetland Recovery Project and is performed under the direction of the Ojai Valley Green Coalition.



CIR crews survey for red-legged frogs with project biologist Vince Semonsen at Arroyo Hondo Preserve.

532 CIR volunteers contributed 8,352 hours  
on the Channel Islands in fiscal year 2008/2009

## Educational Programs

CIR has become known primarily for on the ground restoration services, but we also have developed informative, engaging and entertaining educational programs for all groups who assist with our



Students from Ventura schools take a nature hike on Santa Cruz Island with CIR staff.

Invasive Plant Council, the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, Ventura Continuing/Adult Education, public and private schools, and community organizations.

If you know of a group that would enjoy learning more about this amazing local resource, contact Executive Director Ken Owen at [kowen@channelislandsrestoration.org](mailto:kowen@channelislandsrestoration.org).

## CIR Plants Over 400 Natives at Scorpion Canyon

Students from Ventura to Minnesota and adult volunteers helped CIR plant 429 natives at Scorpion on Santa Cruz Island last spring and summer. Over 150 individuals helped with the planting, which also involved clearing tall weeds and follow-up watering.

The plants were left over from thousands planted at Scorpion Rock as part of Park Service restoration there. CIR was asked to install these plants along trails and in the remnant wetland at Scorpion.

CIR worked with several local schools on this project; three from Ventura and Ojai, plus two from Minnesota. We also worked with a Girl Scout troop from Northern California, and a group of 28 adults from our general volunteer list. We consulted closely with David Mazurkiewicz of the Park Service on



CIR volunteers plant natives at Scorpion Canyon on Santa Cruz Island

restoration activities. Over the past nine years, CIR has produced a variety of multi-media programs highlighting general natural history and island biogeography, geology, plant communities, natural resource conservation, restoration techniques and even evening programs about astronomy. This educational component is part of CIR's mission statement.

In addition to multi-media programs offered before and during island trips, CIR staff have conducted trainings for the Channel Islands National Park and National Marine Sanctuary Naturalist Corps, Elderhostel, California

this project, and the plants were grown by Growing Solutions.

### Anacapa and Santa Rosa

In 2009, CIR also worked with adult volunteers on Anacapa Island to clear iceplant, and we planted native seed near Inspiration Point. On Santa Rosa Island, we worked on an ongoing project to remove an invasive thistle and nightshade, and we removed tamarisk trees and fennel.



### Board of Directors

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## CIR Highlights Our Growing Staff

If it seems that 2009 was a very busy year for CIR, it's because it was! Working on island projects, and on the mainland from the scenic Gaviota coast to the natural dunes near McGrath State Park, CIR staff has grown, and we have been kept very busy with a variety of restoration activities. In fact, none of this program expansion could have happened without CIR's dedicated field staff! We plan to highlight staff in upcoming newsletters, in appreciation for their day to day work.



Kevin Thompson, CIR's Operations Manager, working at Pelican Bay

Supervising the field work and all the staff is CIR's Operations Manager, KEVIN THOMPSON. Kevin has worked as a volunteer naturalist for the California State Parks at Pt. Mugu State Park, and is a member of the Channel Islands Naturalist Corps, leading whale watch trips and island hikes.

Kevin joined the CIR staff in 2007 to work on the huge *Arundo donax* removal project at Refugio Canyon. Kevin is renowned for his hard work, patience, safety awareness, a wicked sense of humor and for being a great motivator and mentor.

When asked what he thinks is most important about CIR's work, Kevin said, "Give credit to the staff 'on the ground'. Their blood, sweat, and tears day in and day out physically make this important restoration work actually happen." Well said! Thank you, Kevin, and to all the CIR field staff, for the excellent work you do to advance CIR's mission.

CIR currently employees 10 people, most of which are part time. We typically hire seasonal staff in the fall for work on mainland creeks. We are very busy in spring and early summer with island work and other mainland projects.

### CIR Staff:

**Executive Director**  
Ken Owen

**Restoration Biologist/Project Manager**  
Duke McPherson

**Operations Manager**  
Kevin Thompson

**Special Projects Manger**  
Julie Kummel

**Crew Leader**  
Robert Kestler

**Invasive Plant Technicians**  
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Julia Kosowitz  
Eric Tomczak  
Thomas Swetek  
Anthony Dinovitz

## "Ecological Islands Trip" – CIR to Offer July 2010 Outing to White Mountains



Bristlecone pine

The concept of an "island" is no longer confined to land surrounded by water. Modern ecologists recognize that islands can exist wherever one ecosystem is surrounded by an unlike ecosystem. In the spirit of this new definition, CIR is sponsoring its first ever weekend field trip to the White Mountains, on the eastern edge of the Owens Valley, near Bishop.

Limited to just 20 people, our group will stay in dorm accommodations at the Crooked Creek facility (10,200'), part of the UC's White Mountain Research Station complex. Knowledgeable and enthusiastic naturalists will guide small hiking groups through the variety of ecological communities found in the Whites, as we study and enjoy the fascinating natural history of this scenic and unique California mountain range. An outstanding feature of the White Mountains are the bristlecone pines (*Pinus longaeva*). These are the oldest trees in the world, living nearly 5,000 years! Exact trip dates will be available in January. A second trip is planned for the Cambria/Big Sur area in September, 2010.



A view of the Sierra Nevada Mountains from the White-Inyo Range

## CIR Programs Need YOUR Help!

Many of our supporters do not realize that CIR has to raise all its operating funds; we have no ongoing source of income to finance our many worthwhile projects.

If you would like to help CIR achieve its goals of protecting and restoring habitat and educating the public about the critical need for environmental conservation, please consider a **tax-deductible donation**.

Here's how:

Donate through  
our  
web page:

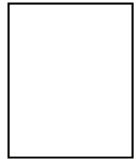
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