



THE ISLAND INSIDER

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A PUBLICATION OF CHANNEL ISLANDS RESTORATION



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THE ISLAND INSIDER FALL 2018

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The Island Insider

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Fall color in the San Rafael Wilderness Backcountry
Greg Giloth



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Channel Islands Restoration is embarking on our busiest year ever, and you are invited to come along for the ride! For eighteen years CIR has restored habitat on remote islands, in our own backyard and now in the forest backcountry, and we are relying on our volunteers and members to help us accomplish great things in the coming year.

CIR was recently awarded over \$930,000 in grant funding to work in the Los Padres National Forest (see story inside)! This funding will allow our staff and volunteers to remove invasive tamarisk trees in new areas and watersheds in the Forest. These grants also demonstrate the degree to which agencies like the Forest Service trust CIR to accomplish complicated restoration projects. We are also removing giant reed (*Arundo donax*) from the Hedrick Ranch Natural Area on the Santa Clara River and we just finished the first phase of removing European sea lavender from the Carpinteria Salt Marsh.



All of these are large projects, and they represent a huge scaling up of our operation. We are busy hiring staff, purchasing supplies and equipment (including a pickup truck) and everything else needed for work on this scale. Grant funding only covers a portion of these costs, but, CIR is up to this great challenge! We have a professional staff and volunteers who are eager to help with the work, and we have members who support the organization financially (which helps us pay for expenses that are not covered by grant funding).

How can you get involved with this busy and exciting year with CIR? We are offering volunteer opportunities right now in the Los Padres National Forest, and your help is needed to complete the work. Many of these volunteer opportunities will be finished before you know it, so join us soon, and you will be directly helping to save threatened and endangered species while learning a lot and having a great time!



SELECT CURRENT & UPCOMING PROJECTS



SAN NICOLAS ISLAND RESTORATION

With 54 trips and counting to San Nicolas Island this year, it has been one of our busiest yet. This year we planted 11,200 plants to provide habitat corridors for island night lizards and other species. Read more on page 5.



BACKCOUNTRY TAMARISK ERADICATION

This year, Channel Islands Restoration received more than \$930,000 to remove tamarisk from watersheds in the Los Padres National Forest. Tamarisk (*Tamarix ramosissima*) is an invasive plant that out-competes native trees and thereby reduces habitat for native birds and other wildlife. Read more on page 6.



CARPINTERIA SALT MARSH SURVEYS AND INVASIVE PLANT ERADICATION

Channel Islands Restoration has embarked on a multi-year project to eradicate European sea lavender (*Limonium duriusculum*) from the Carpinteria Salt Marsh. European sea lavender invades coastal salt marshes and displaces native plants. Read more on page 9.



ARUNDO ERADICATION IN THE SANTA CLARA RIVER

CIR staff are working to remove giant reed (*Arundo donax*) from a 33-acre ranch adjacent to the Santa Clara River. The amount of water an acre of Arundo can take up in a year is equivalent to the annual water use of 200 households, so removing Arundo is an important and effective means of conserving water. Our staff are hard at work crawling through a dense “jungle” of riparian plants. So dense in fact that we have had to chainsaw access trails and use GPS units to ensure that we don’t get lost in there.



QUAIL SPRINGS RESTORATION PROJECT

CIR conceived of a project and was recently awarded a grant to map, prioritize and remove invasive weeds from Quail Springs, a privately-owned permaculture farm and ranch in the high desert above the Cuyama Valley in Ventura County, within the watershed of Mount Pinos. It is surrounded on three sides by the National Forest. Much of the surrounding landscape on the Forest is Pinyon-Juniper Woodland as well as shrublands and grasslands. The objective of the project is to restore 400 acres of the habitat at Quail Springs. The work will occur in 2019.



RESTORING A NURSERY IN SUMMERLAND

CIR rebuilt a nursery in Summerland. This is now the third nursery we are managing, in addition to the nursery on San Nicolas Island, and the other in Camarillo. We look forward to growing plants for the San Marcos Foothills, Hammond’s Meadow, and other restoration sites in the near future.



SAND POINT ROAD RESTORATION

CIR wrote a restoration plan and is now implementing native habitat restoration on the edge of the Carpinteria Salt Marsh along Sand Point Road. The CIR crew recently removed iceplant along the edge of the marsh and propagated native plants at CIR’s native plant nursery. We will be planting 1,500 native plants on the edge of the marsh soon and will provide an opportunity for volunteers to assist with this fun project.



VENTURA COUNTY SEED COLLECTION AND PROPAGATION

Channel Islands Restoration currently has hundreds of plants native to Ventura County available for sale. In 2017, Channel Islands Restoration gathered native seeds from many Ventura County watersheds. Little did we know that the Thomas Fire would burn many of the mountain sides and other areas so soon after we collected the seeds. Since then, we have propagated these seeds in our native plant nursery in Camarillo. We are now excited to make them available for sale for native habitat restoration to public agencies and to private landowners. Head to cirweb.org/plant-sale for more info.

RESTORATION ON SAN NICOLAS ISLAND

At 60 miles from the coast, San Nicolas Island is the most remote of the Channel Islands of California. Despite this, the Gateway Inn on the island was almost a second home to some of our project leaders and volunteers this year!

2018 was one of our busiest years on San Nicolas Island with 54 trips to the island since January 1st. This year we planted 12,800 plants to provide habitat corridors for island night lizards and other species.

We installed plants in rows along 3 miles of road, with hardy species like saltgrass and yarrow closest to the road and larger plants like buckwheat, southern island silver lotus, cactus, and silver lupine farther from the road. Every single plant was hooked up to an irrigation line with a drip emitter. This project is a resounding success and we're incredibly grateful to all of the volunteers that made this possible.

The work was hard, the weather was harsh, but our staff and volunteers persevered. Much of the roadside soil was packed firm, requiring us to put away the hand trowels and bring out the auger drill and pickaxes. In fact, the soil was so hard in some places it actually broke a drill head on one of our augers. It was no small feat that we installed roughly 11,200 plants in about two months.

Our second project this year was focused on creating "habitat corridors" to connect isolated patches of island night lizard habitat. By building corridors, this will allow the lizards to move between the larger patches and when complete, these lizards will be able to move from one part of the island to the other. This will help them diversify their gene pool which will increase the likelihood that the species will survive environmental change.



San Nicolas Island Fox



Island Night Lizard

This second project required another round of seed collection, propagation and then planting in harsh conditions. For this project, we installed 1,600 plants – mostly prickly pear cactus and boxthorn – into the hardest soil we had yet faced.

New soil needed to be imported from other parts of the island because the existing soil was almost entirely hard-packed clay. Despite the difficulties, this project has also been successful thanks to the hard work from our volunteers.

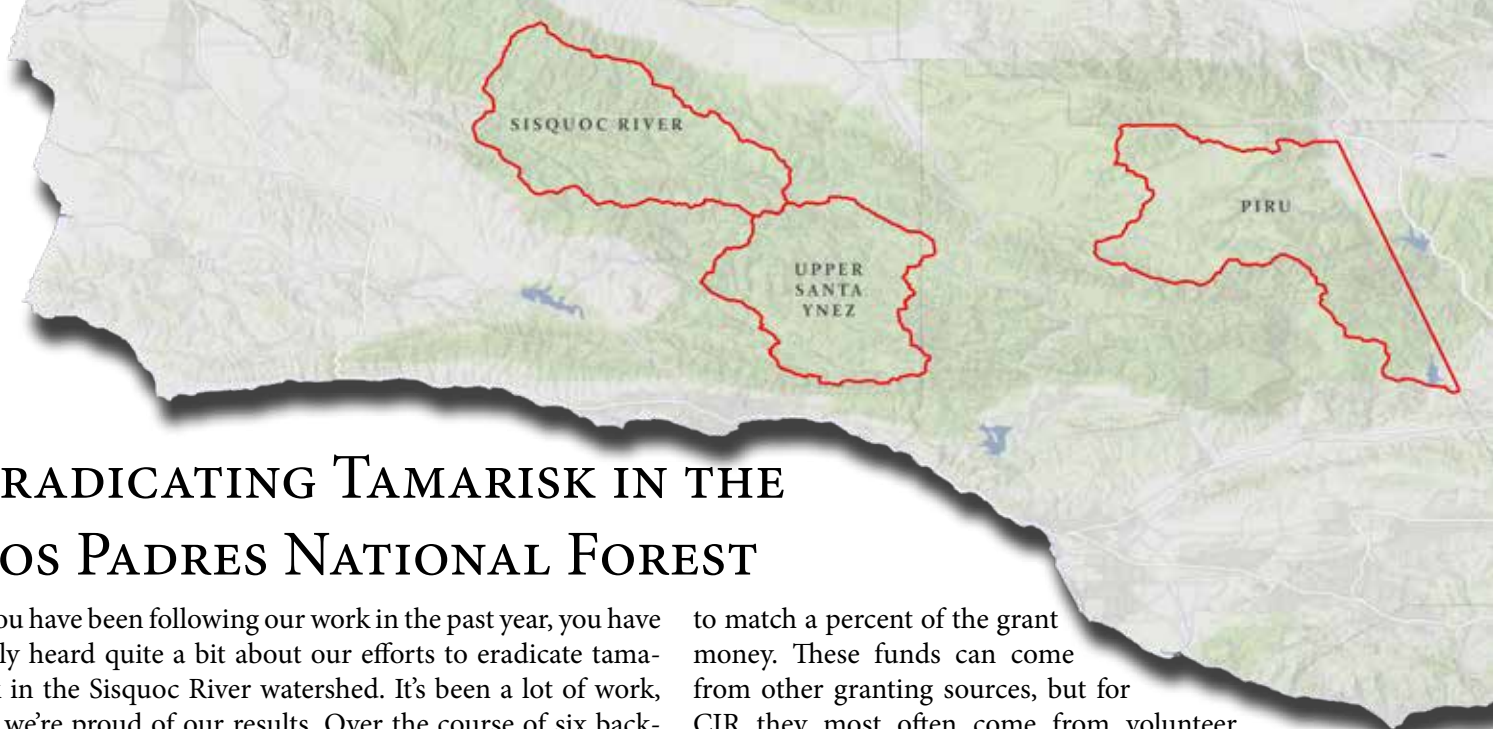
Since the plantings, we have been watering, fixing irrigation lines, and weeding around the sites throughout the year and we are happy to report that they are doing very well. Many plants have already flowered and dropped seeds that will spread throughout the island and hopefully take root on their own. Our next project has this specifically in mind, and we intend to install native plants in areas where seeds will be blown into barren areas throughout the island and contribute to passive habitat restoration.

This work would absolutely have not been possible without each and every one of our incredible volunteers. During the winter we worked in biting cold winds of up to 60 mph and the summer heat scorched the island without a breath of wind. We worked in these conditions for 8 hours a day, sometimes multiple days in a row, and yet the average SNI volunteer went on two to three trips to the island.

We work hard, but we also strive to give everyone a positive experience. We take sightseeing trips all across the island to see places that few others see - even Navy personnel stationed on the island. But beyond that, there is a deep sense of connection between volunteers and the landscape we work with.

Some of our most avid volunteers cite how incredible it is to be able to propagate, plant, and care for their own plants. People returning throughout the years or even just later in the year can get a real sense of how much of an impact their work has made. And then there are the fellow volunteers themselves. We are fortunate to be able to work alongside such incredible people each and every time we head into the field.

Thanks to all of our fantastic volunteers. Because of your work, the island is a better home to foxes, night lizards, and all other creatures on it.



ERADICATING TAMARISK IN THE LOS PADRES NATIONAL FOREST

If you have been following our work in the past year, you have likely heard quite a bit about our efforts to eradicate tamarisk in the Sisquoc River watershed. It's been a lot of work, but we're proud of our results. Over the course of six backcountry trips, we treated nearly 700 adult trees and pulled up more than 94,000 seedlings.

As a result of our hard work and results, we were granted \$930,000 to expand the scope of our tamarisk eradication efforts. This year, and in the coming years, we will be working to eradicate tamarisk in the Piru Creek watershed (in Ventura County), the Upper Santa Ynez River watershed above Gibraltar Dam, and to continue our work in the Sisquoc.

The funding for these projects comes from a settlement agreement after the Zaca fire and Piru fire that was set aside for post-fire restoration services. A number of groups have received grants to conduct research or restoration programs, and Channel Islands Restoration has been entrusted to eradicate tamarisk from a massive portion of the National Forest.

Our work will benefit more than 470,000 acres of the Los Padres National Forest (roughly 50% larger than the area of the city of Los Angeles). Luckily tamarisk grows primarily along streams, which means we don't have to hike every last acre of that, but it remains a daunting task. However, we have proven that we are an effective force for tamarisk eradication and we have the trust of the US Forest Service to carry out this project.

The tamarisk grants are a lot of money, but in no way does that mean we don't need support from volunteers and donations! As with many other projects we work on, we are required to contribute a certain amount of funding

to match a percent of the grant money. These funds can come from other granting sources, but for CIR they most often come from volunteer hours and donations. For example, federally, a volunteer's time is valued at \$24.69 per hour. So over the course of a five-day backpacking trip with 8 hours of work per day, an individual volunteer can contribute \$987.60 of matching funds. People's support can quickly add up! Furthermore, your support is critical in itself. Volunteers help us cover more ground and allow us to work more efficiently. Your monetary donations help us cover costs like buying new equipment, repairing gear, and more.

Our volunteer trips are a chance to experience the Los Padres backcountry in a way that few others have. Our trips often start at the end of forest service roads that are closed to the public, allowing us to start in remote areas that would otherwise take days of hiking to reach. Each day we hike through some of the most scenic and awe-inspiring lands in the region. Along flowing creeks, past secluded swimming holes, to hidden waterfalls, and through deep canyons. Over the course of a season, we experience the whole of the forest, from towering pine trees, through sage-scented chaparral, and down to the cottonwood lined streams. Help us protect these iconic places!

We have a lot of work to do, and we need your help. Join us in the backcountry or donate today to help prevent tamarisk from taking over some of the most important watersheds in the Los Padres National Forest!

Visit cirweb.org/sisquoc for more information about volunteering!



*Rattlesnake Falls,
Sisquoc River*

2018 IN REVIEW

Projects

1. Sisquoc River - tamarisk eradication
2. Santa Ynez River - tamarisk eradication
3. Hollister Ranch - fennel eradication
4. Refugio State Beach - Arundo removal
5. Maria Ygnacio Creek - invasive plant removal
6. Goleta Slough Tide Gates - habitat restoration and restoration plan
7. San Marcos Foothills Preserve - grassland restoration and invasive plant control
8. Elings Park - habitat restoration
9. Hammond's Meadow Preserve - invasive plant control and restoration plan
10. Greenwell Preserve, Summerland - new native plant nursery built
11. Carpinteria Salt Marsh - invasive plant removal
12. Rincon State Beach - CIR Membership Picnic
13. McGrath State Beach - invasive plant removal
14. Camarillo Native Plant Nursery - seed propagation
15. Santa Clara River - Arundo removal
16. Thousand Oaks - invasive plant removal
17. Piru Creek - tamarisk eradication
18. REI Campout - guided hikes and nature programs
19. Santa Cruz Island - school trip
20. East Anacapa Island - school trip
21. San Nicolas Island - native plant growing and planting
22. *To be Announced*
23. *To be Announced*

By the numbers

- 734 Volunteer Opportunities
- 371 Individual Volunteers
- 106 Volunteer Trips
- 54 Trips to San Nicolas Island
- 203 Days in the Field
- 11,090 Volunteer Hours
- 97 Students brought to the Channel Islands
- 3,359 Cumulative Backcountry Miles Hiked
- 230 Acres of the Carpinteria Salt Marsh surveyed
- 25,000+ Plants grown
- 16,000+ Plants installed
- 307 Donors
- 1 Channel Islands Restoration



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INVASIVE PLANT ERADICATION AT THE CARPINTERIA SALT MARSH

Channel Islands Restoration has been hard at work in the Carpinteria Salt Marsh surveying for endangered plants and eradicating invasives.

The Carpinteria Salt Marsh is a haven for migratory birds, a hunting ground for birds such as osprey, a nursery for fishes such as halibut, and a home to a diversity of plants and animals.

The marsh supports a number of endangered and threatened species like Salt Marsh Bird's-Beak, Coulter's Goldfields, and Belding's savanna sparrow. There are even plans in the works to reintroduce the Light-footed clapper rail, which has been on the endangered species list since the 1970's and only lives in salt marshes along the coast between Santa Barbara and San Quintin Bay in Baja California.

CIR is working to protect this important ecosystem by eradicating invasive European Sea Lavender (*Limonium duriusculum*) from the Carpinteria Salt Marsh. This invasive plant has the potential to displace native marsh plants like California Sea Lavender (*Limonium californicum*) or the endangered Salt Marsh Bird's-Beak (*Chloropyron maritima* spp. *maritima*). Displacing

these plants and all other native plants would greatly diminish the habitat quality of the marsh.

Last year, we surveyed the entire 230-acre marsh and mapped all of the locations of endangered salt marsh bird's-beak.

Salt marsh bird's-beak is a unique plant. It is an annual parasitic plant that steals nutrients from other plants around it. Unfortunately, it often grows next to the invasive plants we are trying to remove. Luckily European sea-lavender is a perennial plant, so after the bird's-beak drops its seeds and dies back we have a small window to get in and remove the invasive plants before the bird's-beak plants sprout again.

We kicked off this new eradication project with another survey, this time for the invasive sea lavender. We found that the extent of the invasive sea lavender had expanded since last year.

CIR staff and volunteers have been working tirelessly to pluck and bag every individual clump of invasive *Limonium* in the marsh. We are removing the plants by hand to ensure that we have as little impact as possible on the



marsh, especially around the endangered bird's-beak. We then need to bag every plant we pick so that it does not re-root itself. It is difficult, yet important work.

The Carpinteria Salt Marsh Preserve is normally not open to the public, so if you're interested in joining us and exploring this unique ecosystem, be on the lookout for upcoming volunteer opportunities!

Top: European sea lavender is picked by hand and then bagged up to be disposed of.

Bottom: Staff and volunteers remove European sea lavender near roped-off endangered bird's-beak.



OAK PARK UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT VISITS ANACAPA ISLAND

On October 25, CIR took 42 high school students, teachers, and administrators from Oak Park Unified School District on a day trip to East Anacapa Island to help get plants in the ground before the next wet season. One of the challenges on these trips (besides keeping everyone safe) is to pique the interest of the students and encourage them to ask questions about what they see.

Many of the students commented on the barren appearance of the island, giving CIR and NPS educators and workleaders the opportunity to discuss plant adaptations and how they enable plants to survive the hot, dry weather we experience each year in Southern California. When the students asked why we work on Anacapa, we told them about how Anacapa provides critical nesting habitat for sea birds such as Xantus' Murrelet and Cassin's Auklet.

We also described Anacapa in the spring, when the giant coreopsis is out of dormancy and in full bloom, as well as Anacapa during gull nesting season. The "barren" appearance of the island in October also lent itself to discussions of the importance of native plants in providing shade and protection from the wind to the gull hatchlings.

Finding bones on the trails led to opportunities to talk about how sheep ranching also was detrimental to island plants, and we shared some of the history of the island, including the recent restoration efforts. Returning back to the "why Anacapa?" question, we told them why the eradication of ice plant on Anacapa was chosen as the 2016 centennial goal of Channel Islands National Park. And in answer to the question of what's wrong with ice plant, we replied that there's nothing wrong with it in South Africa, but how a monoculture of ice plant isn't ideal on Anacapa. Why? This led to telling them about the importance of native plants, as well as endemic Anacapa plants and animals, such as the Anacapa Deer Mouse.



As always on day trips, there was not enough time to do everything, but everyone did make it out to Inspiration Point, and planted island natives grown by the California Institute for Environmental Studies (CIES), whose staff are currently managing the Anacapa shade house which was pioneered by CIR.

While Oak Park has recently been in the news because of the Woolsey fire, the name Oak Park has other, much more pleasant associations for those of us who accompanied them on this trip. Anthony W. Knight, superintendent of Oak Park USD, has worked with CIR to send students to the islands to participate in habitat restoration for many years and accompanied us on the trip, as did Kent Cromwell, the principal of Oak View High School. Seeing their head administrators working alongside them during the trip showed the students that their school's commitment to nature based education goes beyond lip service to an academic goal and illustrated that service to the environment and community is a worthwhile activity. Our thoughts are with the students and administrators as they deal with the aftermath of the fires.

We particularly value the continued participation of Oak Park USD as restoration efforts like those on Anacapa are long term programs which need long term support to be successful. CIR continues to participate in restoring Anacapa by providing volunteers and coordinating trips.

Many thanks to the other CIR/NPS workleaders and educators who served on this trip, Randy Bowin, Beth von Gunten, and Caitlin Kimmick, as well as the CIES staff.



WHY WE RESTORE HABITAT

Channel Islands Restoration spends countless hours doing hard, manual labor in often harsh conditions just to remove some plants and plant different ones. Why?

BIODIVERSITY

What's the difference between an empty lot or the same sized area along your favorite Central Coast hiking trail? It's the plants and animals that they contain. Healthy ecosystems are incredibly complex, but at the base of any healthy ecosystem is a wide diversity of plants. Many animals are adapted to specific habitats. San Nicolas Island night lizards, for example, rely on prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia littoralis*) for shelter, island foxes eat the berries from manzanita, willow flycatchers nest in arroyo willows, and so on. This system is kept in a delicate balance through ecosystem interactions, ensuring that any given plant or animal does not become too abundant and dominate an ecosystem. So when a new plant is introduced to an ecosystem that no animals use or graze, it can have devastating consequences.

Plants that are introduced into an ecosystem and can quickly grow unimpeded are called invasive plants. Drive through Gaviota in the spring and you'll likely see acres upon acres of golden hillsides - hillsides covered with black mustard (*Brassica nigra*). Apart from being pretty (though arguably a hillside covered in native poppies and lupines would be prettier), this uniform monoculture of plants provides very little habitat. Compared to an area with native habitat, you'll be hard pressed to find more than a few birds or maybe a snake. You can stand in native habitat (may we suggest the San Marcos Foothills?) and almost certainly listen to a cacophony of bird song. In a field of mustard, you may be able to hear the wind blowing through the stalks, perhaps the distant cry of a red tailed hawk.

In this age of urban expansion, deforestation, pollution, and human caused disturbances, healthy habitat is important. Habitat loss is the leading cause of this increased rate of extinction that we are experiencing. Channel Islands Restoration was founded to bring the community together to help restore habitat on the Channel Islands. Together we removed groves of eucalyptus, acres of fennel, and worked with a number of agencies to rebuild habitat for the species that relied on it - species found nowhere else in the world.

THE BENEFITS OF A HEALTHY ECOSYSTEM

But why is a healthy ecosystem important? Why is it important that we protect our plants and animals? Why is nature important? Any person that has visited a National Park can answer that. It inherently is. The need for nature, the need for birdsong and the smell of sage in the wind, is inherently important to our mental and spiritual wellbeing. Never mind that healthy riparian corridors can help slow mudslides, plants can provide medical advancements (see: aspirin), or estuaries help protect the coasts from flooding during hurricanes. No, nature is important simply because it is inherently important to us as human beings.

Countless studies are now coming out that definitively prove that nature positively affects our mental health, helping to alleviate growing epidemics of anxiety, depression, even ADHD, and more. It's not just that being outside means you are being active. Walks along trails have been shown to improve mental and spiritual wellbeing significantly more than walking in a city does.

The staff and volunteers of Channel Islands Restoration toil in harsh conditions to ensure that we have healthy ecosystems that can support a wide diversity of plants and animals. For the benefit of all species that rely on it - lizards, foxes, and humans alike.



WHY YOUR DONATIONS MATTER

We say this a lot, but every month it remains true: we need your help now more than ever. Your donations are vital to the success of Channel Islands Restoration.

We receive grants and contracts that pay for the majority of our large-scale restoration projects, but your support is critical to the success of our mission. Here are a few reasons why your donation matters.

1. Grants don't often cover our administrative costs. Grants don't cover our office rent, the costs to keep the lights on or provide health insurance to our employees. Your donations are vital to the backbone of CIR to ensure that we can continue our work.
2. As CIR grows, our equipment and resources are stretched thin as we work on multiple projects at once. In the past year, we have needed to purchase new equipment like augers for San Nicolas Island or saws for Arundo work, and a new truck to replace our aging current vehicle. We have also needed to put time into hiring more staff so we can be in more places at once. We turn to donors to help us grow to meet the rising demand.
3. Grants don't cover the time it takes to apply for them. We put dozens of hours into applying for each grant – and many more so for large grants like those for San Nicolas Island or the Los Padres National Forest. We take time to research and write smart and effective restoration plans that make our work worthwhile. Without donations however, we wouldn't have the funding to put time into our applications and we would not be able to apply for new projects.
4. Our public outreach events and lecture series, like our talks at REI or events like *An Evening with Tanya Atwater*, or parties like the Annual Holiday Party, are almost entirely funded by donations. Your support ensures that we can continue to bring our community together to learn more about our natural environment here on the Central Coast.
5. Grants don't cover community outreach, like this newsletter, our website, or our Earth Day presence. Your donations ensure that we can continue to reach out to the public and bring in new members and supporters.
6. In this age of technology and social isolation, exposing kids to the outdoors is becoming increasingly more important, but funding to do so is increasingly scarcer. Your donations ensure that we can continue to take students out to the islands and into nature in a way that will make a lasting impression.



Our new truck!



Santa Barbara Earth Day

Your donation keeps CIR thriving and growing and it is important now more than ever. Please make a donation today to contribute to restoring habitat and promoting environmental education here on the Central Coast.



An Evening with Tanya Atwater

THE CHANNEL ISLANDS RESTORATION TEAM

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Kelle Green, Nursery Manager
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Thank you for being a part of the team!

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