

Upcoming Events

For information, reservations, and directions, call (619) 409-5903.

Gone Birding!

8 am, first, second, and third Saturday each month; free

Gone Birding! 11 am, Sundays; free

Ven Explora la Naturaleza

Conmigo 1 pm, first Sunday each month; free

Nature Discovery Tour

2 pm, Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday; free

Trekking the Refuges

8:30 am, fourth Saturday each month; free

July 23: South San Diego Bay NWR, Imperial Beach

Aug. 27: Tijuana Slough NWR, Imperial Beach

Sept. 24: Tijuana Slough NWR, Imperial Beach

Oct. 22: Otay/Sweetwater NWR, Rancho San Diego

Less Toxic Yard and Garden Care

10 am - noon, second and fourth Sunday each month; free
July 10, 24 / Aug. 14, 28 / Sept. 11, 25

Master Composter Certification Program

Receive certification to teach composting to others. Limited to 10 participants; \$25 (Call for dates)

Docent Training

1:30 - 4:30 pm, Saturdays, August 13 - October 1; free (No class on Labor Day weekend)

Basic Birding

8 - 11 am, Saturdays, August 13 - September 24; \$45 members, \$55 non-members (No class on Labor Day weekend)

Know Your Shorebirds

12:30 - 4:30 pm, Saturday, October 29; \$15 members, \$20 non-members

Know Your Ducks

12:30 - 4:30 pm, Saturday, November 5; \$15 members, \$20 non-members



The Chula Vista Nature Center is accredited by the American Association of Museums, which certifies that this Museum continues to demonstrate a professional level of operation in accordance with the standards of excellence prescribed by the AAM.



We ask individuals requiring special accommodations to visit the Nature Center or participate in a scheduled activity to contact Programs Manager, Barbara Moore, five days in advance at (619) 409-5903.



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Serving, Preserving... Naturally!

ChulaVistaNatureCenter.org

Nature News

Summer 2005



Regal Raptors

Charles Gailband

Amazing Animals, Powerful Symbols

Very few animals have the ability to evoke the feelings of awe and amazement that eagles can, with their large size and intense gaze. Nature Center visitors have been able to experience and learn about the two species of North American eagles, the Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) and the Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), this past year. Guests cannot help but be amazed by the three eagles found in Eagle Mesa, and many are surprised to learn that both species are indigenous to the greater San Diego region.

While both the Golden and the Bald Eagles can be classified as southern California natives, only the Golden Eagle maintains year-round populations in San Diego. Bald Eagles winter in southern California at Lake Henshaw, Lake Wolford, Lake Cuyamaca, the Sweetwater Reservoir, and even the Sweetwater Marsh National Wildlife Refuge, where the Nature Center is located.

During the warmer months, most Bald Eagles migrate to northern states for breeding. However, field biologist and former volunteer, Nick Basinski, has observed Bald Eagle nests and juvenile eagles with their parents at Lake Henshaw. It is possible that Bald Eagles may breed in San Diego in the future, if they have not already begun to do so.

Another difference between the Golden and Bald Eagles is their recent population trends; Bald Eagles are becoming more numerous in southern California, while Golden Eagle numbers are decreasing.

Golden Eagles are top predators, which require large breeding territories. Philip Unit's "San Diego County Bird Atlas" notes that breeding populations in San Diego have declined from 108 to 53 pairs since the early 1900s. This drop is attributed to habitat loss.

Although they are reduced in number, Golden Eagles still reside in our area. The female on exhibit at the Center was rescued from a canyon in Chula Vista; she was found on the ground unable to fly. After being rehabilitated and evaluated by Project Wildlife, it was determined that she suffered from chronic arthritis in her shoulder, likely a natural condition for an older bird, such as herself. Although her exact age is not known, she could be



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After 18 years, the main building's bay and wetland exhibits are tired and ready for an extreme makeover – Nature Center style!

Daniel D. Beintema
Director

Although the process will be complete in only 6 months or so, there will be many changes beginning very soon. Before the demolition begins, all of the animals in the gallery exhibit area need to be relocated to holding tanks away from the construction. Since the Nature Center has limited appropriate outdoor floor space, some tanks will be open to visitors and students, and some animals will need to be located in off-exhibit areas. Our special Rainbow Trout will be spending their vacation at Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute and will return to a brand-new Nature Center home at the conclusion of the renovation.

Very importantly, the Nature Center grounds, classrooms, David A. Wergeland Shark & Ray Experience, and the exterior exhibits will continue to be open to the public throughout the construction period, but when the demolition begins, the gallery portion of the main building will be closed to visitors.

If you have not made your gift to the *Wergeland Family Discovery Center* yet, remember Dr. Wergeland's challenge: he will contribute \$2 for every \$1 you donate to the Friends. Never before has your support had more impact. Let your gift of \$100 instantly become \$300! And for those giving \$500 (which becomes \$1500) or more, you will receive a custom donor recognition tile in the new Discovery Center.

Please bear with us during construction; it will be well worth it. Thanks for your support!

United States, the elimination of lead ammunition for duck hunting, and the Endangered Species Act are all responsible for the amazing restoration of the majestic Bald Eagle.

Bald and Golden Eagles are powerful symbols. The Golden Eagle adorns the Mexican flag and currency, while images of the Bald Eagle are found throughout government seals in the United States. These Eagles also symbolize mankind's relationship with nature - we can contribute to the demise of revered, wonderful animals like the Golden Eagle, but we also have the ability and power to bring back a species from the brink of extinction, as we have done with the Bald Eagle. Fortunately, the choice is ours; we have the power to ensure the continuation of these amazing creatures.

their heads. This year, the Recovery Team will use radio telemetry for several weeks to track a few of the chicks released in the Sweetwater Marsh National Wildlife Refuge.

All of the time and energy put into the work with the Light-footed Clapper Rail is yielding incredible results. None of this could happen without the support of the City of Chula Vista, SeaWorld San Diego, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Unified Port of San Diego, the Friends of San Diego Wildlife Refuges, the Nature Center Bird Crew, Richard Zembal, Sue Hoffman, and many more.

Together we are making a comeback – a few clutches at a time!



Photo by: Mike Armburst

Last summer, the Chula Vista Nature Center's 104th captive-bred Light-footed Clapper Rail was released into the wild. This year's breeding season is anticipated to be just as successful as last year's.

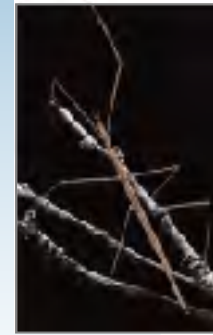
Two of the three breeding pairs at the Nature Center are on exhibit in the walk-through shorebird aviary with chicks from their second and third clutches. This season's chicks are expected to be released in July and August.

Each year, breeding and release activities give the Clapper Rail Recovery Team new insights into Clapper Rail behavior. Most research indicates that Light-footed Clapper Rails do not travel far, however, one of the chicks raised at the Nature Center was spotted over 100 miles away from its release site – a fact that has biologists scratching

For Nature Center membership questions, please call (619) 409-5900.

In Focus

Indian Walkingsticks (*Carausius morosus*)



The Walkingstick, a native to southern India, was likely introduced to the San Diego area in 2001 via the pet trade. It is found throughout the United States, United Kingdom, Europe, and South Africa, in temperate areas that have an abundance of plant life.

Herbivorous, the Walkingstick has a voracious appetite. It can be found munching away on many types of plants in San Diego habitats.

Walkingsticks are 3 to 4 inches long, wingless, and vary in color from shades of green to light brown. Their primary defense mechanism is their ability to mimic and camouflage - they are masters of disguise. Walkingsticks can fold their legs into their bodies and remain motionless for

hours, mimicking a twig. When disturbed, they will even sway back and forth, as if in a gentle breeze.

These insects also have the ability to partially regenerate lost or damaged limbs. If a Walkingstick is injured, its legs can grow back after several successive molts.

Walkingsticks are very prolific and can reproduce with or without mating. If the female does not mate, her young will be identical to her – meaning they will all be female. Since most Walkingsticks produce asexually, only 1 in 1,000 Walkingsticks is male!

A female can lay over 1,500 eggs over her short life of 4 to 6 months. She scatters her eggs in soil, which remain there for about 4 months before hatching. Eventually, the young emerge and take 4 to 7 months to mature.

Come visit the Nature Center and see these unique insects!

New Environmentally-Friendly Bus

Sharks, rays, an eagle, and a sea turtle are among the animals that adorn the new bus carrying visitors to the Chula Vista Nature Center. A recent change has also been made to the schedule that allows the bus to depart from the parking lot and Nature Center with more frequency, making the loop in approximately 15 minutes.

The "wrap," created by the city's Graphic Designer, Kim Shanz, prominently features an egret, an eagle, and shorebirds on one side of the bus and a variety of sea life on the other. All of the animals depicted on the bus can be seen at the Nature Center, with the exception of the Green Sea Turtle, which will be on exhibit later this year with the completion of the new Discovery Center.



The new bus is powered by compressed natural gas (CNG). During the past several years, Chula Vista has started converting its bus fleet from diesel to CNG, and currently has 31 CNG buses in service. These buses are preferable to diesel because of the lower levels of dangerous emissions and decreased maintenance costs.

The Nature Center's new bus was funded by a \$135,000 grant from the Air Pollution Control District and \$183,000 from the City of Chula Vista's Transportation Development Act funds, with coordination provided by the Metropolitan Transit System and the city's Public Works Operations Department/Transit Division.

Enjoy the ride when you begin your next adventure at the Nature Center!

Up Close:



African Clawed Frog (*Xenopus laevis*)

Habitat: Ponds, lakes, and marshes in arid and semi-arid regions of sub-Saharan Africa

Diet: Western Toad larva, young Arroyo Chubs, Mosquito Fish, Tidewater Gobies, and endangered, Unarmored Three-spine Stickleback fish

Reproduction: After heavy rains, mature frogs deposit several hundred eggs in water, which hatch within 36 hours. Adults usually produce multiple clutches per season.

Notes: The African Clawed Frog belongs to the family of tongue-less frogs. Food is ingested by sucking it out of the water, or by shoveling it into their mouths with the aid of their front claws.

They are a non-native species from Africa, which was originally brought to the United States in the 1940s for human pregnancy testing and experimental studies.

Because of the threat to native amphibians and fish, California now prohibits possession of this species.

Regal Raptors

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Update: Light-footed Clapper Rail