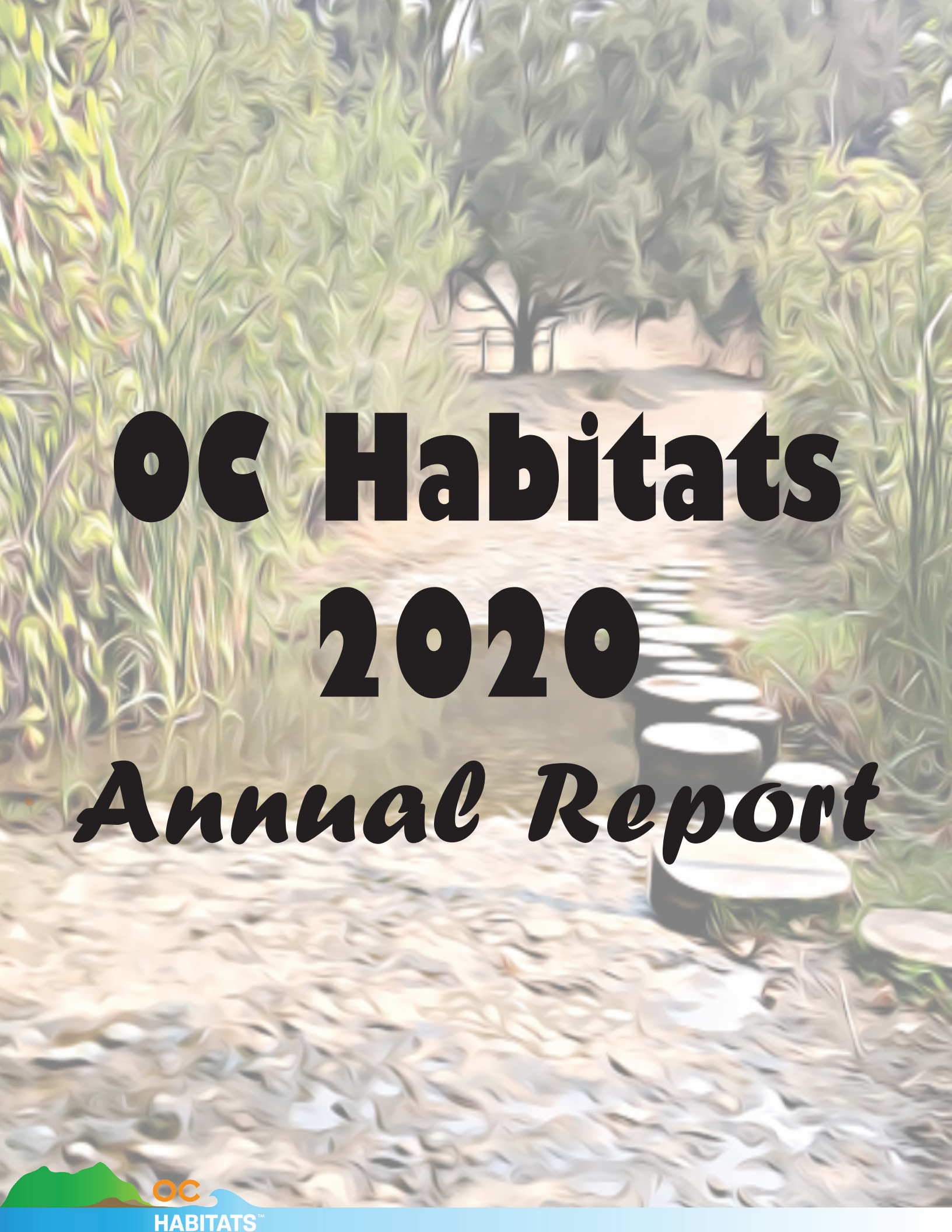


# OC Habitats 2020 Annual Report

OC HABITATS™

## Message from the President

It goes without saying that 2020 was a year like no other, for OC Habitats and for the world. OC Habitats started out strong working on a variety of programs and projects in monitoring, restoration, and education in January and February 2020. We were able to do some in-person programs in the beginning of the year and then virtual from March to the end. We were able to continue both our monitoring and restoration activities most of the year and make good progress in both areas. On the administrative side, we continued to work with California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) on our business and marketing plan, which was complete by June 2020.

2020 pushed OCH to rethink and design new ways to stay relevant in what was fast becoming the new normal, we started going virtual by initiating our OCH Happy Hour Program which was an hour long discussion the public could join in on to discuss environmental topics and our Volunteer Spotlight program where we interviewed and highlighted our great volunteers. Both of these programs are proving to be a great addition to our overall goals and mission and we will continue them regardless of pandemic restrictions. We hosted several programs from elementary to high school levels virtually, which not only acted as a substitute for our normal programs but will act as an enhancement to future programs.

Our team grew and changed in 2020 from our OCH Friend volunteers to our board. We drew in many new volunteers from local high schools and colleges in Orange County as well as adults already in their careers. In addition, our intern program grew quite a lot as we added students from UCI and CSULB to our list of partner schools. In the midst of all this growth, we also had some board changes with Adelle Bennett, Alice Carter, and La Kinya Allen-Hall stepping down and Ross Griswold and Kimi Garcia stepping up. With all the additions and changes we were able to organize our projects with teams, be more efficient and effective in our endeavors.

Our team pulled together, gave their best, and helped OC Habitats thrive despite less than optimal conditions. Although the pandemic threw some curve balls at us, it helped us to grow and develop new programs that we can use well into the future. I am proud to be a member of this team and to work alongside our enthusiastic and passionate board, interns, volunteers and partners.

~ *Stacey Chartier-Grable*

# Monitoring

**Habitat Monitoring**

*Coastal Dune Habitats*

In 2020, we continued to consistently monitor 23 beach segments across Orange County. While the pandemic impacted surveys when surges hit resulting in the closing of beaches, we saw positive impacts on Western snowy plover populations as they appeared on beaches not previously seen! We were able to host our 2020 Annual Bird Tour, which is a program we have for internal training for our monitors. We also maintained one monitor at the Bolsa Chica Ecological Preserve for the Bolsa Chica Conservancy program "Eyes on Nest Sites (EONS)" and two monitors at Huntington Beach State Park (California State Parks) to monitor the populations of Western snowy plovers and California least terns.

In the summer, we were able to restart our monitoring and restoration programs with strict COVID restrictions of masking and social distancing. We were able to continue to make a difference in these two areas, get outdoors, connect with others, and still remain safe and healthy.

Ross Griswold took over the monitoring program in the summer of 2020 and became the new lead by offering training opportunities for new volunteers on a weekly basis. With that being said, we additionally developed a new training protocol where we now only offer training outside of breeding season, or from September through February. Although we were slowed due to the pandemic, we were able to train a fair amount of new monitors (5) to make up for the monitors we lost due to academic and work commitments (4).

Lastly, we developed a new monitor form and a new data entry system. The information being collected remains the same, but the process will now be more streamlined and efficient. Technological kinks are still being worked out, but this protocol will be launching in 2021.

*Tide Pool Habitat Training*

In preparation of a more intense and in-depth intertidal program, we began training volunteers on tide pool habitat monitoring at sites in Laguna and Newport Beaches. These trainings ran from July to December and served to educate volunteers on local intertidal ecology and prepare for new programs initiating in 2021.

# Education & Outreach

**Habitat Education Programs**

Although our programs had to make substantial shifts in 2020, we still managed to provide education and outreach programming to students and the public reaching approximately 500 individuals in 2020.

Early in 2020, we were able to partner with OC Coastkeepers by providing habitat education to approximately 100 students from Ladera Ranch in San Mateo/Trestles habitats in South Orange County. In addition, we hosted Inspire Charter School students of approximately thirty students and parents on a field trip to the tide pools in Newport Beach.

At the onset of the pandemic, we switched gears as quickly as possible and began developing and hosting virtual programs for our volunteers and the public through our OCH Happy Hour Program. We hosted events and discussed a variety of environmental topics including environmental documentaries, presentations and discussions on fast fashion, recycling, and sustainable holidays (eating and shopping).

We provided a virtual coastal dune program for Saddleback College students in September (15 students), an eight week marine education program to Tierrasanta high school students starting in September (8 students), and a tide pool program to local girl scouts (GSOC) to earn one of their STEM badges in November and December (25 girls).

**Outreach and Speaking Engagements**
Harding Nature Trail - Jan & Feb 2020
Beach Clean-Up - Mar 2020
Mother Earth Clean-Up - May 2020
Individual Clean-Up Week -May 2020
Happy Hour - Jun - Dec 2020
HBWC Restoration - Jul - Dec 2020
Project Grow Restoration - Sept - Dec 2020

# Habitat Restoration

Before the pandemic we were able to get some good work done in Irvine Regional Park and Upper Newport Bay with our project partners, OC Parks and Project Grow. Although the pandemic did not end, it lightened up in June in Southern California and we headed back to the outdoors. We have been able to work with both Project Grow in Upper Newport Bay (UNB) and Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy on some new projects in the salt marsh and riparian habitats. In all of our in-person restoration projects, we have mandated strict health and safety standards to ensure the safety of all.

Our work with Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy from July onwards was aimed at salt marsh restoration This project's goal is to restore the habitat to support salt marsh bird's beak (Chloropyron maritimum), which is a listed endangered species that can only be found at less than ten salt marsh sites on the west coast -- two of which are located in Orange County. Our volunteers worked on invasive species removal, native plantings, and debris clean-ups within the site and have learned a lot along the way.

We also began a long-term partnership with Project Grow in Newport Beach by helping with two major restoration projects in different habitats in the Upper Newport Bay Nature Preserve. These projects were managed by Matt Yurko (Project Grow) and funded through the Metropolitan Water district as an off-site mitigation project. This site had been impacted by a prolific invasive species called Algerian sea lavender (Limonium ramosissimum) and our focus was to remove those individuals and clean out debris. Once the bulk of the initial invasive plant removal was complete, we have been returning to the site monthly to do qualitative monitoring and remove any recurring individuals with the oversight of Dudek biologists. The maintenance of this site will continue for five years and we are excited to see this project through from beginning to end.

Our second project with Project Grow are two mitigation plots in riparian habitat in Newport Valley, NV1-NV2, funded by OC Parks. Those plots are considered an off-site mitigation project for work being completed by AECOM. A third riparian project, MWD-NPV, was added at the end of the year, which is being monitored by Dudek biologists and funded through MWD. Our goal for these projects has been to clear foliage in order to make space for future plantings of native riparian species. This project has also included routine quantitative transect monitoring and work in the nursery to prepare the native cuttings.

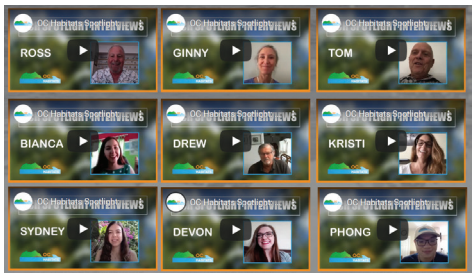
All of these projects will be on-going in 2021 as we continue our mission of providing public service to restore natural habitats in Orange County. We are excited to continue to see the positive changes we make on these native habitats.

# Special Projects

**Habitat Clean-Ups**
Just before the shut-down, we were able to host our largest beach clean-up to date, bringing in 45 volunteers to the Balboa Peninsula in Newport Beach. Once the pandemic hit, we had to pause our in-person work and initiated our first Annual Mother Earth Clean-up the week after Mother's Day where we asked the public to do habitat clean-ups in their own neighborhoods with their families and post pictures to our social media sites. It was a well received event and we will continue the new tradition into 2021

**Habitat Video Project** continues. Videos on the overall history and habitats of Orange County was published in early 2020 and our tide pool and coastal dune habitat videos were published in the Fall and Winter.

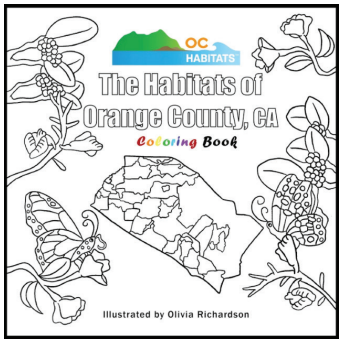
**Tide Pool Project** was a deeper dive into the intertidal ecosystem along our coast. This comprehensive project was complete at the end of 2020 and has been published in January of 2021.




**OCH Volunteer Spotlight Video Project** began as a way to engage our volunteers and community about the work of OC Habitats and the volunteers who do it. This got such a great response from the public that we decided to continue this and will be added volunteers in 2021 and forward.

**OCH Happy Hours** has become a regular part of our outreach programming. We were able to do quite a few things with this project this year and will continue to expand it into the future as we explore more habitats and dive into the issues that impact our environment.

**OCH Coloring Books** are part of our outreach program to educate about the various habitats in Orange County. We were able to self-publish and print these books at the end of 2020 and plan to use them in the future for our in-person outreach events and programs.




**OCH Earth Day Shirts** were created as a part of our originally planned Earth Day events, which were all canceled. We instead used them as gifts to the public and donors for the various events we hosted throughout the year.

# The Numbers

**Volunteer Team**

Our volunteer base expanded as well, with over 30 new volunteers joining this year. In addition to our volunteer base, we added our first employee to our team with another on the way in 2021.

Total OCH Crew 2020: 57
Long-term Crew: 51 (end of 2020)
OCH Friends (Event only): 328

**Volunteer Hours:**
Total: 5015
Monitoring: 25%
Outreach & Education: 25%
Restoration: 40%
Administration: 10%

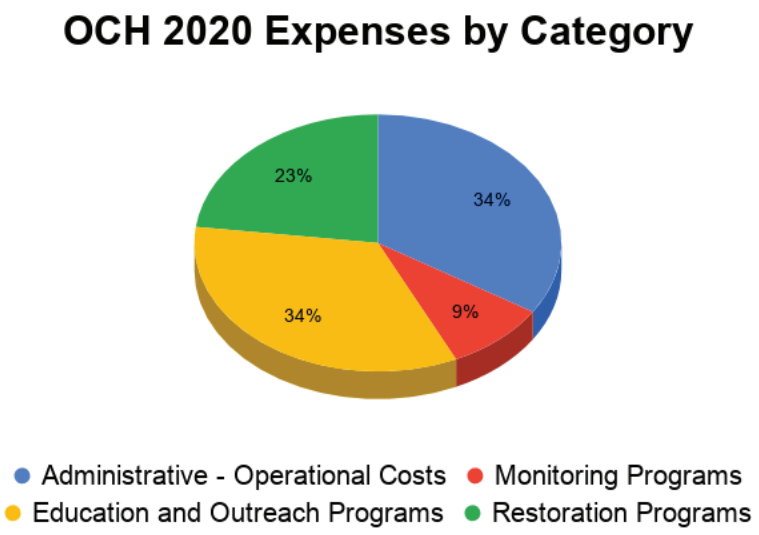
**Financials**
All funds obtained through grants, sponsorships, program fees, donations and fundraisers were used to benefit our mission through our programs: monitoring, outreach and education, and restoration.

Grants, Fundraisers, and Donations
We were awarded several grants and donations in 2020 from the Griswold Family Foundation ($17,000), Deutsche Bank Matching Grant Program ($2,000), GivingTuesday Donation Drive ($4,035), Walmart Grant ($600), Board Donations ($800), and Earth Day and Coloring Book Funds ($80). Projects funds obtained were from OC Coastkeepers ($150), Girls Scouts of Orange County ($75), and TierraSanta ($560).

| | |
|---|---|
| Total Revenue: | $ 24,122 |
| Total Expenses: | $ 12,735 |
| **2020 Total Net Assets:** | **$ 32,435** |

Project Expenses: (% of Revenue)

| | |
|---|---|
| Administrative - Operational Costs: | 34% |
| Monitoring Programs: | 9% |
| Education and Outreach Programs: | 34% |
| Restoration Programs: | 23% |



# OCH Crew and Info

### 2020 Board of Directors

2020 Board Members
Stacey Chartier-Grable, President/Ex. Dir
Alice Carter, Treasurer (through June 2020)
Adelle Bennett, Member-at-large (through March 2020)
La Kinya Allen-Hall, Secretary (through May 2020)
Ginny Gregurek, Member-at-large (through June 2020),
then title to Resource Interpretation Director
Ross Griswold, Monitoring Director (start May 2020)
Kimi Garcia, Treasurer & Secretary (start June 2020)

### 2020 Volunteer and Intern Team

**Volunteers**

La Kinya Allen-Hall
Melody Aminian
Adelle Bennett
Judy Berman
Bianca Borja
Caitlin Callin
Alice Carter
Tracey Clark
Tilly Duong
Matt Franklin
Kimi Garcia
Jessica Gasser
Tom Gee
Samantha Grable
Ginny Gregurek
Ross Griswold
RJ Gugliemo
Mark Holland
Melissa King
Drew Kosicki
Ashley Lockwood
Morgan Martin
Dominique Murillo
Haruka Noda
Devon Ohlwiler
Marco Prado
Marina Premoli
Keeley Rasich
Sydney Rilum
Danny Rivas
Tim Roberts
Darian Rubow
Crystal Ryan
Ash Srivastava
Trevor Stocking
Hayley Taylor
Georgia Thompson
Phong Tran
Allie Wright
Amanda Yamamoto

**Interns**

Joshua Ball
Kevin Bollman
Michaela Coats
Abby Foster
Kyle Fructuoso
Brett Fuller
Tania Garcia
Madison Goetz
Ariel Kuo
Michelle Lee
Olivia Richardson
Tom Riley
Amanda Savage
Gina Thompson
Jackie Tran
Joyce Vu

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# Looking to 2021

As we look forward to 2021, we have many plans, some that we will be able to implement now and others that will need to wait until we are able have events in-person.Our intern team is larger and stronger than ever and with our new staff we are looking forward to a year of growth and development that will only benefit the environment through our mission and goals. We have many exciting projects planned for our organization and our staff, interns, and volunteers will be leading the way with their enthusiasm to bring a fresh perspective to our ongoing projects and programs.

Our intentions for 2021 include:

1) We will continue to develop more virtual programs for school aged students and offer virtual outreach events each month. When things lift, we will target a broader audience of students and the public in the Fall of 2021.

2) We are currently working on bulking up our monitoring program by getting our monitor director, Ross Griswold, fully permitted to allow more opportunities to help in our coastal dune habitat work with listed species.

3) We will continue our partnerships with Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve and California State Parks to monitor and help protect both of the listed species that breed in our area, the Western Snowy Plover and the California Least Tern.

4) We will continue our partnerships with Project Grow, HBWC, and OC Parks as permitted and build our restoration programs.

5) We hope to begin our tide pool monitoring program, our area hike programs, and have monthly MPA hikes to offer to the public throughout the coming year.

6) Continue to recruit passionate, enthusiastic, and committed individuals to our team of volunteers, interns, staff, and board.

7) Become more involved with organizations such as OCMPAC, OC Coastkeepers, OC River Park, and other like minded organizations to collaborate and promote a better world for all species.

8) We will continue to work on obtaining funding through grant work, sponsorships, and fundraisers to maintain our current level of work and staff and potentially add to that to include an office space, more hours for staff, and purchase needed equipment for our projects.