



# **FLYING HIGHER TOGETHER**

ANNUAL REPORT: JUNE 1, 2024 - MAY 31, 2025

# REFLECTING ON 2025 and the Power of *Partnerships*

What a transformational year it has been, reaching new heights together as an organization. After a year-long, inclusive process involving board, staff, members, and community partners, we officially changed our name to San Diego Bird Alliance to better reflect our mission, values, and commitment to welcoming all people into the birding and conservation community. While our name has changed, we remain an affiliated chapter of the National Audubon Society.

The value of partnerships, particularly those in our San Diego community, cannot be overstated. Partnering with the UC San Diego Natural Reserve System for the past 20 years in the annual Love Your Wetlands Day, and with numerous other conservation, cultural, and business groups is critical for achieving our goals. Building bridges with Indigenous communities and integrating Kumeyaay knowledge and cultural programming into our own objectives has paved the way for joint grant successes and enriched the educational component of our programs, while expanding our communications reach through bilingual media. These bridges have enlivened outreach to underrepresented communities and have allowed us to build on our shared love for the birds and other wildlife who call this county home.

Other achievements this year include expanding Earth Advocates and our Conservation Strategy Team capacity. Bird Festival attendance grew this year as well, bolstered by increased accessibility and representation. And, of course, we hit a major milestone: 75 years of defending our region's birds, unique biodiversity and threatened habitats throughout San Diego County. Approximately 1500 people attended our Anniversary celebration at Liberty Station, where 60 partner organizations exhibited information, services, and products. The San Diego City Council proclaimed October 20th, 2024 "San Diego Bird Alliance Day" and honored our mission of engaging diverse audiences by sharing our love of nature and our active advocacy through programs such as Love Your Wetlands Day, Latino Conservation Week, and the San Diego Bird Festival. Our after-school education programs, along with many birding and hands-on restoration events, strengthen an ever-expanding legacy.

As we look back over the past year, we extend our deep thanks to outgoing board members Eowyn Bates, Lisa Chaddock, Lesley Handa, and Vickie Church for their time and energy helping to lead our organization. We end the year filled with gratitude and hope as habitats have rebounded with our efforts, birds have been protected across the county, and our communities have rallied together in the name of bird conservation. Thank you to all our members for your continued support and for remaining steadfast partners ensuring a brighter and birdier future for all.

Flying higher together!

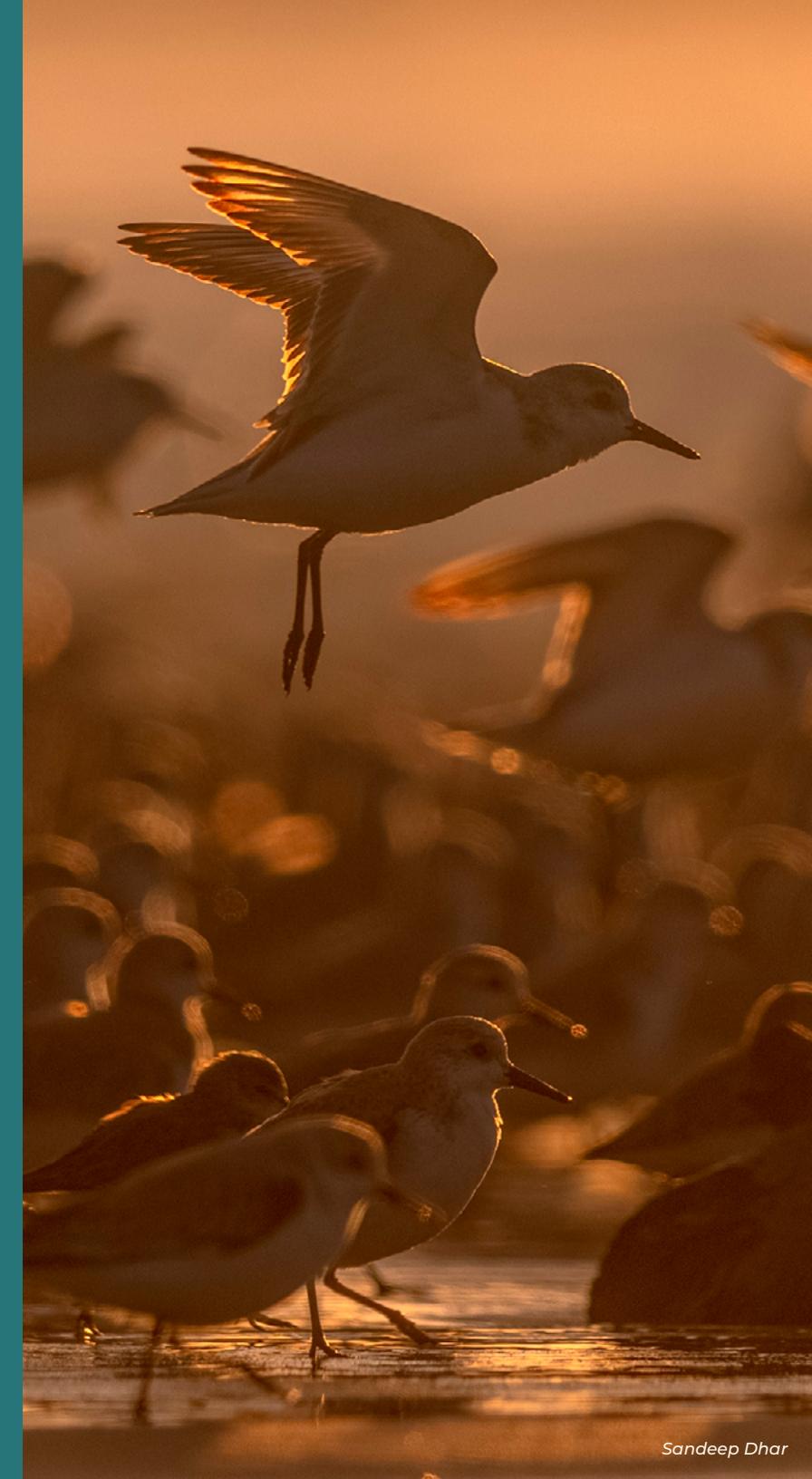


Travis Kemnitz  
Executive Director

# GROWING OUR *Impacts*

2024 2025

	2024	2025
<b>EDUCATION PROGRAMS</b> Students engaged	1,442	1,818
<b>PUBLIC PROGRAMS</b> Participants	1,077	1,319
<b>CONSERVATION</b> Restoration events volunteers	1,303	1,560
<b>SILVERWOOD</b> Wildlife Sanctuary visitors	1,405	1,536
<b>ANSTINE</b> Nature Preserve visitors	1,475	1,635
<b>TOTAL VOLUNTEERS</b>	1,621	1,939
<b>TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS</b>	8,957	10,979
<b>BIRDATHON</b> Fundraiser	93 participants supported by 203 donors	125 participants supported by 312 donors
<b>LOVE YOUR WETLANDS DAY</b> Attendees	1,024	1,300
<b>BIRD FESTIVAL</b> Participants	1,500	1,700



# PARTNERSHIPS PROPEL OUR VISION *Forward*



Natalie Ruane

## SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY & SAN DIEGO REGIONAL FIRE FOUNDATION

**Program:** *Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary Wildfire Resilience / Silverwood Fire Education*

Docent-led Fire Resiliency "Walk and Talks" launched this year educated Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary visitors about the wildfire ecology of our native chaparral ecosystem, the causes and impacts of fire on the wildland-urban interface, and ways they can help reduce fire risk in their community. These walks highlight our ongoing work with Urban Corps of San Diego County to remove invasive high-fire-risk plants across Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary, promoting native biodiversity and protecting this refuge for generations to come.

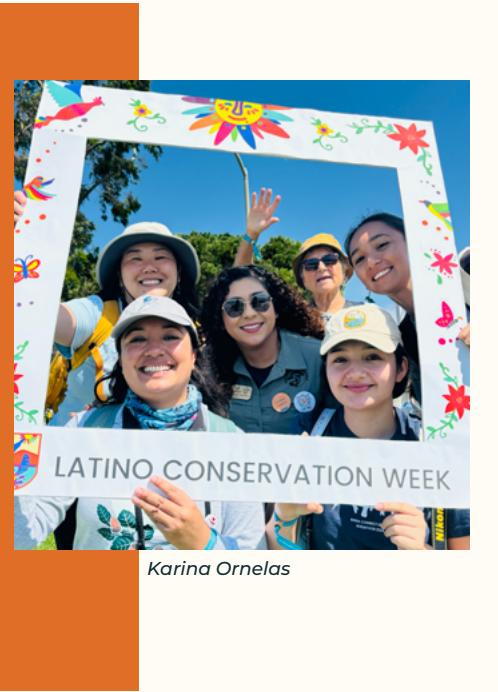


Cassandra Gonzalez

## THE DORRANCE FAMILY FOUNDATION

**Program:** *Protecting and Conserving Coastal Lagoon Habitat*

From funding Rail cameras to building Kumeyaay connections and enhancing coastal sage scrub protection, the Dorrance Family Foundation has supported the San Diego Bird Alliance since 2022, investing heavily in the health and habitats of Mission Bay. The Foundation's substantial investment in new and better trail fencing to protect Ridgway's Rail habitat helped compel the City to officially identify the San Diego River Mouth as a California Least Tern nesting site. At Famosa Slough, Foundation funds have helped us connect our trail and habitat restoration supporting the Friends of Famosa Slough's projects into a closer Kumeyaay connection as a proof-of-concept harvesting site for culturally important resources. Our West Ski Island calls to action during 2024's epic Elegant Tern nesting and our annual Love Your Wetlands Day and monthly Wander the Wetlands programming have all been made possible through the Dorrance Family Foundation's strategic support, for which we are truly grateful.



## U.S. BANK

**Program:** *Latino Conservation events*

With U.S. Bank's support, as we've done for the past four years, the San Diego Bird Alliance participated in "Latino Conservation Week" events celebrating the Latino community and the important conservation work that it spearheads. Alongside over thirty Latino-serving community organizations, SDBA led five events and tours at the Chula Vista Marina Bayfront Park for our "Viaje Por Los Humedales—Journey Through the Wetlands," where hundreds of community members experienced scenic habitats and guided walks to an important marsh for endangered Ridgway's Rails while observing every bird we could, from Black Phoebe to Elegant Terns, and later enjoyed food and games among fellow conservationists. Funding from U.S. Bank also allowed us to highlight Latino conservation leaders through bilingual talks at the 2025 San Diego Bird Festival and at community events helping Burrowing Owls and California Least Terns throughout the year.



Coral Weave

## U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE

**Program:** *Sharing Our Shores South Bay School Program and Restoration*

Our long-standing partnership with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service supports the "Sharing Our Shores: South Bay" program, in which young people learn about the delicate balance of wetland ecosystems and the critical importance of safeguarding nesting shorebirds. This year students and staff planted over sixty native plants along the South Bay Bikeway, a hands-on experience that deepened their connection to place, inspired environmental stewardship, and provided a lasting impact on habitat health. Our dedicated team returns regularly to weed, water, and care for the growing plants, ensuring that the students' efforts take root and flourish. This ongoing collaboration not only improves bird habitat but also cultivates a community of conservation-minded individuals who are learning, through action, how to care for and restore the natural world.



## MALK NATURE FUND

The Malk Nature Fund has generously supported our bird and habitat advocacy for over eight years, helping to fund our ReWild Mission Bay project, our Earth Advocates training programs, and several programs to connect birds to native plants, including our Narrowleaf Milkweed "zine" (booklet) and our Native Seed Libraries around the County.

This year, we upped our game and successfully built the "Your City, Your Flower" coalition to convince and ultimately work with the City of San Diego to change its flower from a nonnative to the native Blue-eyed Grass. Our engaging and fun outreach and education for this project resulted in a new, native official flower for San Diego!



Right: City Council President Pro Tem Kent Lee and Council President Joe LaCava

Natalie Ruane

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## Janet & Steve Shields

My journey as a birder is a long and deeply satisfying one. My parents and maternal grandparents were all birders, and they shared their love of birds as I was growing up. I was exposed to the subtle beauty of a California Towhee in preschool, listened for the clear call of a white-crown when autumn came, and sometimes joined our outings with the local bird club. In college, I got very enthusiastic about birding and also introduced my husband (then boyfriend), Steve, to this fun way to enjoy nature. We didn't bird a lot while working and raising kids, but it was an ongoing interest.

We were first really aware of the San Diego Bird Alliance—then the SD Audubon Society—when our son was 12 and working on the Boy Scout Birding badge. He had to take pictures of birds but was not yet strong enough to hold a camera with a regular zoom lens. So I took him out to Silverwood where he could sit and the birds would come in close enough for him to photograph. Later, the leadership of Silverwood allowed him to rebuild bridges and repair paths as his Eagle Scout project, which was a good learning experience for us all.

In 2010, as I approached retirement, I thought it would be great fun to get back into active birding. The beginner and intermediate six-week birding classes taught by Phil Pryde were perfect for us! Even better, we went on SDAS-sponsored trips that Phil led to Arizona and Texas. At this point it only seemed fair that we should join the SD Bird Alliance to thank them for these opportunities.

I had no idea, however, how much this membership would mean to me. I was introduced to the Bird Festival, with wonderful outings and lectures. At the festival, I bid on and won an auction item for \$500 off a commercial birding tour to Belize and Guatemala. I had not previously realized there were such things as birding tours, and we have enjoyed many more since then. SDBA also introduced us to the Christmas Bird Count, and Phil invited us to join his Birdathon team! These are both enthusiastically anticipated events in my annual schedule. Through the society, we have met lots of great folks, some of whom go birding with me every week. And Phil, at age 87, is still a wonderful friend.

Our donations have significantly increased over the years, as we learned more about the important work SDBA does locally. They support getting kids out in nature, and even have educational supplies we can access. They help protect the terns, as well as many species at the San Diego River mouth, and there are several links for visitors who wish to find a guide for the day and links to pelagic trips. I must say, we joined SDBA mostly to thank them for the classes, but I had no idea how much this membership would enhance our lives while also providing a way for us to support their excellent work in the community.

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## EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS

2025 saw inspiring growth for the San Diego Bird Alliance's Education program, which included 1,818 students, up from 1,442 in 2024, an increase of over 20%. This expansion reflects our commitment to creating meaningful, hands-on experiences that deepen young learners' connections to the natural world across San Diego County. A key highlight is our ongoing partnership with the Barona Cultural Center & Museum, whose guidance helped us integrate Kumeyaay perspectives and Traditional Ecological Knowledge into our Silverwood Science Discovery program. This enriching collaboration fosters respect for the land and its stories. Building on this foundation, we are excited to bring these teachings into our "Sharing Our Shores: Mission Bay" program in the coming years, nurturing a new generation of thoughtful environmental guardians rooted in a holistic understanding of ecology.

## CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF LOVE YOUR WETLANDS DAY

What began in 2005 with just a few dozen visitors exploring UC San Diego's Kendall-Frost Marsh has grown into an annual tradition, drawing over 1,300 participants in 2025. This record-breaking turnout reflects the power of our community and the dedication of the ReWild Mission Bay coalition to restore and protect our wetlands. Co-hosted with the UC San Diego Natural Reserve System, Love Your Wetlands Day demonstrates how partnerships propel conservation forward by connecting people to the marsh, inspiring the next generation of scientists and advocates, and advancing our shared vision of a restored northeast corner of Mission Bay. This year's guided marsh and kayak tours, research talks, and hands-on restoration work celebrated the marsh's beauty and ecological value while fueling the collective action needed to ensure a healthier bay. Reaching the 20-year milestone truly showcases the community's growing commitment to the environment, research, and stewardship.

Left: Lindo Park Elementary field trip to Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary.  
Below: Fish seining at Kendall-Frost Marsh for Love Your Wetlands Day 2025.

## CONSERVATION COMMUNITY SCIENCE

Community science projects engage members and volunteers in gathering data critical to our mission of protecting birds. Projects like monitoring *Light-footed Ridgway's Rails* and their dwindling tidal marsh habitats at the Bayshore Bikeway, Paradise Creek Educational Park in National City, the J Street Marsh, the San Diego River Mouth, and UCSD's Kendall-Frost Marsh fuel our advocacy for better management and restoration of these critical habitat areas.

King Tides surveys via kayak and perimeter walking at Crown Point and the Stribley Marsh, Kendall-Frost Marsh, the Love Your Wetlands Day parcel, and West Ski Island allow us to identify the ways extreme high tides (and rising sea levels we anticipate in the future) impact rails, *Belding's Savannah Sparrows*, and other birds and wildlife that call our marshes home.

And our BioBlitz events over the past year all around the County—including many English/Spanish bilingual events—made close to 3500 observations of over 600 species, adding to the data we rely on as we advocate for our region's avian populations.

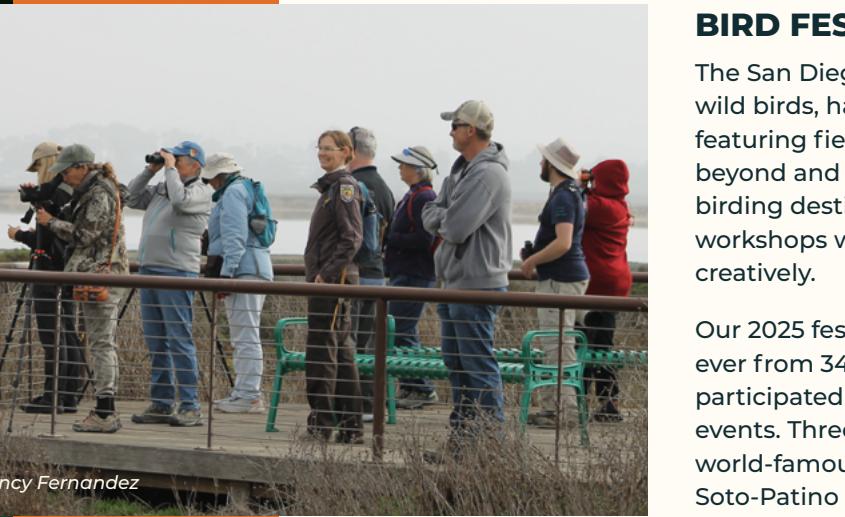
Below: Volunteers at our BioBlitz event.  
Right: Light-footed Ridgway's Rail

Far right: Monitoring rail rafts at Kendall-Frost Marsh.



Scan the QR Code to visit our iNaturalist project, or find more community science details at the SDBA website [Blog](#) page.





Nancy Fernandez

## BIRD FESTIVAL

The San Diego Bird Festival is a celebration of the wild birds, habitats, and bird lovers of San Diego, featuring field trips to every corner of our county and beyond and myriad presentations on topics from birding destinations and bird identification skills to art workshops where attendees express their love of birds creatively.

Our 2025 festival attracted more attendees than ever from 34 different US states and 9 countries who participated in 121 field trips, lectures, and social events. Three well-attended keynote presentations by world-famous author Amy Tan, as well as Juliana Soto-Patino and Alvaro Jaramillo, were a highlight.

Our 50 community partners and exhibitors benefited,

along with SDBA, from the over 90,000 social media engagements referencing the festival.

New this year, our courtyard "street fair" allowed visitors to interact with animal ambassadors while visiting art exploration tables and non-profit conservation and natural history organizations. Silent auction and pop-up bookstore proceeds support the Education, Conservation, and Sanctuary programs of SDBA.

**Mark your calendars for next year's Bird Festival at the Marina Village Conference Center: February 25 – March 1, 2026.**



Roslyn Rivas



The year ahead is full of promise and it is clear our work is needed more than ever before. With your partnership, San Diego Bird Alliance is ready to turn hard-won victories into lasting change for birds, people, and the places we share. After last year's major win for ReWild Mission Bay and the Ridgeway's rails who depend upon this critical habitat, we now move forward with urgency—securing funding, advancing restoration plans, and working with the City to bring thriving wetlands and public access to life as quickly as possible.

While our support of numerous threatened and endangered species will continue and expand, we will intensify our survey effort for the Ridgeway Rail, one of our region's rarest and most secretive species. Be on the lookout for information on Playback and Passive Acoustic surveys—pioneering methods that deepen our understanding and sharpen our advocacy. At the same time, we are broadening our reach: building capacity with allied organizations and chapters, exploring opportunities like a Binational BioBlitz, and ensuring every program reflects the diversity of voices and communities that make this region so unique.

Most importantly, we are committed to growing programs that inspire action—programs that invite new voices, foster lifelong connections with birds and nature, and generate the resources to sustain our mission. Together, we are creating spaces where accessibility, learning, and joy converge—paces that nurture both people and the wild world around us. Look out for exciting new programs on the horizon, and be sure to sign up for our nationally recognized San Diego Bird Festival—one of the premier birding gatherings in the country—where inspiration takes flight year after year.

We are excited to welcome Muriel Spooner as our new board president, alongside dedicated continuing and new board members who bring fresh energy and vision. Guided by their leadership, and powered by your commitment, San Diego Bird Alliance is poised to soar higher than ever.

Thank you for standing with us. Together, we will restore critical habitats, protect threatened species, and expand the circle of people who find meaning, belonging, and inspiration in birds. The horizon is wide open—and we are just taking flight.

# FINANCIALS 2025

JUNE 2024 - MAY 2025

## REVENUE

Contributions & Membership	\$ 971,032
Grants	\$ 692,746
Program Fees	\$ 372,522
Investments / Interest / Gain / Loss	\$ 506,985
Other	\$ 14,549
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$ 2,557,834</b>

## EXPENSES

Conservation, Education, Sanctuaries	\$ 1,581,105
Management	\$ 655,729
Fundraising	\$ 156,113
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 2,392,948</b>

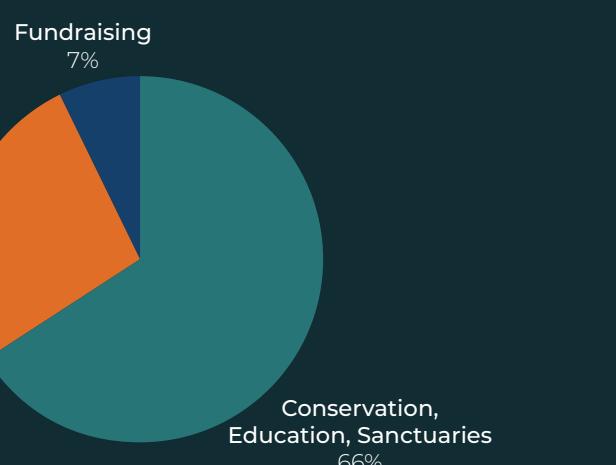
## NET ASSETS

Beginning of Fiscal Year	\$ 7,375,903
End of Fiscal Year	\$ 7,540,789
<b>CHANGE</b>	<b>\$ 164,886</b>

## WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM



## WHERE THE MONEY GOES



# OUR DONORS

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 Conrad Prebys Foundation  
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 National Audubon Society  
 Port of San Diego  
 Resource Conservation District of San Diego  
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 San Diego River Conservancy  
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Everett L. Douglas  
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Frimmel Smith  
Gabriele Wienhausen  
Gail Gasior  
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John Bruin  
John Bush  
John E. Sturla  
John Falconer  
John Nickel  
John Rouse  
Gwen Carrier  
Gwen Morien  
Gwendolyn Osgard  
Hans Petermann  
Heather Henter  
Henrietta Staley  
Henry Malec-Scott  
Hillary Hankey  
Hiroko Masamune  
Holly Hogan  
Hugh Ellis  
Irene Vanhulsentop  
Iris Siefert  
Jackson Gray  
Jacob Dusa  
Jacqueline Kim  
James Ballantine  
James Eastman  
James Johnson  
James Pea  
James Potter  
James Toothaker & Betsy Smith  
Jane Howell  
Janet & Melvyn Dutton  
Janet Peyton  
Janine Julia Smock  
Jean Hines

Lisa & Monte DeBel  
Nancy Arthur-McGehee  
Nancy Fisk  
Nancy Hartmann  
Rob Pecsar  
Nancy J. Jones  
Nancy Lindborg  
Nancy Stassinopoulos  
Nancy Taylor  
Nancy Uffelman  
Natalie Nuckols  
Ned Krumrey & Susan Farrell  
Nick Thorpe  
Nicole Mizzi  
Niels Klitgord  
Norma Kreischer  
Olivia Arizmendi  
Oskar Fonseca  
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Pat & Max Warren  
Pat Dugan  
Patricia & Ronald A. Yourczek  
Patricia Masters  
Barbara Morton & Mary Severine  
Mary Swenson  
Mary Yang  
Matt & Natalie Kansteiner  
Matt Albright  
Maureen Russell  
Meg Sutherland-Smith  
Megan Gibney  
Meganne Dermont  
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Michael Fremont  
Michael Gleason  
Michael Kalichman  
Michael Meacham & Debbi Dodson  
Michael Nies  
Michael Wittmer  
Michelle Haglund-Reilly  
Michelle Hose  
Michelle Leon-Mondragon  
Michelle Mark  
Micquie Anthony  
Mikel & Elizabeth Weinberg  
Linda McDonald  
Linda Smith  
Lindsey Miles  
Kathleen Sciuto  
Kathryn Elsaesser  
Kathryn Waer  
Kathryne Thorpe  
Kathy Goggin

Rick Grove  
Rick Olson  
Rita-Maria L. Kafalas-May  
Nancy Hartmann  
Nancy J. Jones  
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Susan Guzzetta  
Susan Kennedy  
Anonymous (3)  
Susan Lederer  
Amy Kimball  
Nancy Newlin  
Andrew B. Zingale  
K. Barry & Jan Sharpless  
Susan Quinn  
Nancy Hartmann  
Robin & Kathy Becker  
Rochelle Ippis-Gordon  
Nancy Lindborg  
Nancy Stassinopoulos  
Nancy Taylor  
Rosalyn Eileen Magnatta  
Rosemarie Lugmair  
Tandora Grant  
Roxanne Hunker  
Natalie Nuckols  
Ruslan Balagansky  
Ruth Hayward  
Sally Veach  
The Meyer Family  
The Nickel Family  
Samantha Yurman  
San Diego Oasis  
Sandeep Dhar  
Sandra Stocking  
Sandy Woodhouse  
Sara Hickmann  
Sara Oswald  
Sara Skjelstad  
Sarah Durrand  
Sarah Hilton  
Sasha Wilson  
Satchel Tucker  
Patti Knight  
Patti Langen  
Patty Bribiesca  
Maureen Russell  
Meg Sutherland-Smith  
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**GREAT EGRET SOCIETY**  
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John & Liz Walters  
John E. Kramer  
K. Barry & Jan Sharpless  
Kathy & John Romine  
K. Moser  
Kenneth & Yu Linda Song  
Kris & Jim McMillan  
Lisa & Craig Chaddock  
Lisa Heinz  
Wayne & Margaret Harmon  
Melinda Newman  
Melissa Freed  
Mike & Genevieve Matherly  
Molly & Robert Schulze  
Muriel Spooner & Kim Howlett  
Padma Jagannathan & Ananth  
Kandhadai  
Pamela Fair & Glen Sullivan  
Pamela Portillo  
Elba Watkins  
Travis Kemnitz  
Trish Jones  
Valerie E Polichar  
Valerie Schwarz Charitable Fund  
Vance Adams  
Vanessa Malcarne & Kennon Kashima  
Drs. Jong Hwan Yun & Vi Thuy Nguyen  
Victoria Lea  
Victoria Martin  
Vincent Minerva  
Virginia D. Forrest  
Virginia Howlett  
Wendy Czech  
William King & Lisa Capper  
William Norcross  
Shirley Malcarne  
Paula Miranda  
Peggy Wilcox  
Peter & Millie Thomas  
Peter & Raydene St Clair  
Peter Webb  
Philip Nordhues  
Ed & Phyllis Mirsky  
Phyllis Morris  
Priyadarshani Bendale  
Rachel Chen  
Randall Stevenson  
Randi Feinberg  
Rebecca Arlauskas  
Min-Young Kwon  
M. Dan McKirnan  
Mitchell Nuckols  
Molly & Brian Gee  
Monica Elrod  
Monica Penner  
Richard Schulte

Shea Vavra





William Farnsworth

**WE ENVISION** a region in which people and nature are interconnected and thriving, where diverse communities find common ground to prioritize and respond to the climate crisis and other urgent threats to birds and the natural world, and give shape to an enduring culture of conservation and sustainability.



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