



## Essential Work on the Preserves Continues throughout Pandemic

"If the storm forgets to bring a rainbow, paint your own," wrote author Matshona Dhliwayo. The Conservancy has done just that by adapting to changing county and state guidelines in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the challenges, the Conservancy has safely conducted day-to-day activities in a safe manner in order to continue providing restoration on the Peninsula's beautiful natural lands.

In addition, field work has continued non-stop for the past seven months. A range of projects are underway at different stages. The ongoing work of planning, site preparation, weeding, planting, trail maintenance and signage installation continues with appropriate health precautions. The staff plans upcoming projects in advance. They collect wild seeds, then process them at the Conservancy's native plant nursery before sorting and growing. They care for new plants in the nursery by watering and weeding them until they are established, then transfer them to designated rehabilitation areas. To guide planting decisions, vegetation surveys and wildlife monitoring continue uninterrupted as part of the Conservancy's habitat management of the 1,400-

continued on p 7

## Conservancy Completes New Project for Invasive Acacia Removal and Monitoring

The Conservancy has completed a project to reduce the fuel load in the Palos Verdes Nature Preserve by removing hazardous acacia vegetation and engaging in a monitoring program that will help target future work. Acacia removal was funded with major support from the City of Rancho Palos Verdes. Acacia is comprised of approximately 90% dry plant matter and volatile resins, making it highly combustible. As an invasive species, it also inhibits the growth of native plants that are both more fire tolerant and necessary as habitat for local wildlife.

The Conservancy provided expert guidance on vegetation, natural resource management and wildlife monitoring of protected species to reduce fuel load vegetation in compliance with the Natural Community Conservation Plan and Habitat Conservation Plan (NCCP /HCP). Seeking to assemble a trained monitoring team as well as provide hands-on field conservation learning opportunities for college students, the Conservancy launched a new Field Monitoring Internship.

The Field Monitoring Internship was made possible with major support from the Alice C. Tyler Perpetual Trust, Richard and Melanie Lundquist



continued on p 7



Virtual class with Education Program Manager Holly Gray

## Education Program Brings Nature to Students at Home

For more than 25 years, the Conservancy's Student Naturalist Program for Third Graders has annually provided environmental education to thousands of local children. In past years, dedicated, well-trained docents have provided hands-on learning experiences both in the classroom and in outdoor field experiences on the Peninsula. At the start of the COVID-19 lockdown, the Conservancy immediately un-

continued on p 4



## A Message from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

As we approach the end of 2020, all of us at the Land Conservancy hope you and those you hold dear are staying safe and healthy.

Through the challenging circumstances of this past year, we have learned a lot about ourselves as individuals, the resiliency of our community and our collective ability to unite in tough times. We have also been inspired by the strength of the Conservancy community as well as its essential purpose to protect our precious wild lands and enable them to adapt to a changing world. After all, a healthy environment ensures that we as a community are also healthy.

People need nature more than ever as we navigate a world of physical and social distance guidelines. Many are struggling to cope with the strain the pandemic has placed on everyday life. Researchers have shown that immersion in nature, or simply gazing on open, undeveloped land, can lift spirits and improve mental health. We have all felt this at some point when admiring the Peninsula's rolling hills and dramatic coastline.

The Conservancy continues to restore habitat for endangered and threatened species such as the Palos Verdes blue butterfly. The importance of this task is underscored by the United Nations' declaration of 2021-30 as "The Decade on Ecosystem Restoration." Staff and volunteers have found new ways to safely conduct important stewardship tasks, so that our projects remain on track. The Conservancy is also proud of its unwavering endeavor to bring nature education to third grade students, who continue to study remotely this fall semester.

Please consider contributing this year to ensure our stewardship and education work remains steadfast. Opportunities are available if you wish to provide time and talent by volunteering solo or with your family to help this winter's planting efforts at Abalone Cove; or by becoming a docent engaged in virtually introducing students to the Peninsula's natural environment.

Enjoyment and the protection of natural, open land will sustain us through tough times. We are in this together. Simply put, we can't do this important work without your help and support!

With warm regards,

Adrienne Mohan  
Executive Director



### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Carolynn Petru, President  
Rob Kautz, Executive Vice President  
Diana Bailey, Secretary  
Rick Wallace, Treasurer  
Bill Ailor  
Lew Enstedt  
Bob Ford  
Allen Franz  
William Glantz  
Randy Harwood  
Amy Morris  
Dave Pilon  
David Snow

### STAFF

Adrienne Mohan, Executive Director

#### Administration

Jill Wittman, Administrative Assistant

#### Land Stewardship

Cris Sarabia, Conservation Director  
Johnny Perez, Stewardship Manager  
Austin Parker, Stewardship Associate  
Hugo Morales, Stewardship Technician Lead  
Humberto Calderon, Stewardship Technician  
Michael Heine, Stewardship Technician  
David Olsen, Stewardship Technician  
Neli Gonzalez, Lead Nursery Technician  
Eric Wolterding, Field Operations Specialist

#### Education & Science

Holly Gray, Education Program Manager  
Alex Kovary, Nature Center Manager

#### Development & Communication

Susan Wilcox, Director of Development  
Louise Olfarnes, Manager of Marketing Communications  
Laura Lohnes, Development Associate

#### Volunteer Programs

Brittany Goldsmith, Volunteer Program Manager  
Megan Wolff, Volunteer Coordinator

Ellen Girardeau Kempler, Open Spaces Editor

## Show your Passion for Natural Land

The end of the year is a great time to make a gift to the Conservancy. Please consider a gift of support by "adopting" a goat for \$100. This will pay for one goat for one day to prepare land for planting. For your gift, you will be invited to a small spring event for a family portrait with the goats (exact date will be announced in April).

Thank you in advance for your generous donation and for the many ways you support the preserves. Further details are available at [pvplc.org/Support](http://pvplc.org/Support) or contact Susan Wilcox at (310) 541-7613, x 202.



## news items

- p1 [Essential Work on the Preserves Continues throughout Pandemic](#)
- p2 [A Message from the Executive Director](#)
- p3 [Volunteer Cactus Wren Monitoring Safely](#)
- p5 [Conservancy Recognizes Outstanding Volunteers](#)
- p6 [Docent Enrichment Activities Go Virtual](#)
- p8 [Special Events Calendar](#)

## Volunteer Cactus Wren Monitoring Safely

This spring, the Cactus Wren Community Science Monitoring Program began as in prior years, involving a fun, in-person training of more than a dozen volunteers to learn all about cactus wren habits, identification and monitoring methods. During this training, volunteers were lucky enough to observe the male wren's courtship dance, a rare treat.

Due to the importance of the Cactus Wren Monitoring Program as part of the Conservancy's habitat management responsibilities of the Palos Verdes Nature Preserve, the activities were deemed essential under COVID-19 guidelines. Monitoring volunteers were allowed to enter the preserve under strict social distancing and safety conditions required by the state.

Each volunteer performed a minimum of four hours of monitoring each month, although, not surprisingly, some were compelled by the charismatic wrens to do more. The thirty-one dedicated volunteers logged 503 monitoring hours total. Their work helps broaden our understanding of important cactus wren breeding areas within the preserve. This data informs Conservancy priorities for the management of crucial habitat for this special at-risk species on the Palos Verdes Peninsula.

Said volunteer Michael Bell, "The opportunity to survey the cactus wrens is hard to resist. Weekly walks, tracked on my Fitbit, gave me a valued purpose while I enjoyed seasonal changes in weather, vegetation and wildlife." The data collection will help the Conservancy to maintain habitat for the dwindling local population of these fascinating birds with their amazing nests and distinctive voice. "So unusual are the calls of the cactus wren, they are used in at least three Tarantino's films during ominous scenes," said Bell.

Conservancy Stewardship biologist Austin Parker is grateful for the resiliency of the Conservancy's community scientists. "The amount of passion and consideration these volunteers show for the cactus wrens in Palos Verdes is inspiring to me, and I'm proud to lead this program into the future," he said.

Thank you to all of the amazingly dedicated volunteers who gave their time during this unprecedented year.



Cactus wren in restored area of Alta Vicente Reserve taken by Volunteer Michael Hakimi



### "Adopt-a-Plot" Provides Socially Distant Volunteer Opportunity

If you are interested in a safe volunteer opportunity, the Conservancy invites you to join the "Adopt-a-Plot" program where individuals or families may provide assistance independently to help steward a habitat restoration site. The program is perfect for those who want to make a difference to the land and get outside safely. By adopting a plot of land, volunteers can devote time on their own schedules. Help via video training and support from staff members will provide instruction for how to eradicate invasive species and reintroduce native plants. Join us at beautiful locations like Abalone Cove Reserve in Rancho Palos Verdes or White Point Nature Preserve in San Pedro to feel the rewards of nurturing a small area that will be part of a coordinated effort with a big result. For more information, please contact Volunteer Coordinator Megan Wolff at [mwolff@pvplc.org](mailto:mwolff@pvplc.org)

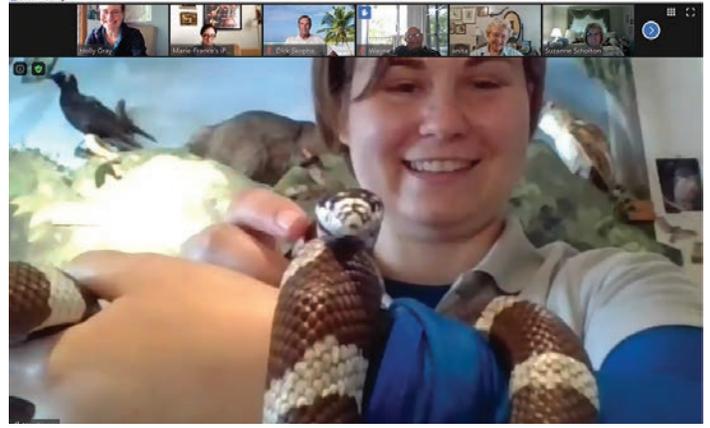


This photograph of cactus wren in Alta Vicente Reserve making a nest was taken by Volunteer Monitor Tania Morris

derstood the necessity of adapting the program so that third graders wouldn't miss out on this environmental education opportunity.

The Conservancy acted quickly to successfully convert the whole Third Grade program to a distance-learning format. Nearly two dozen schools accessed a modified Student Naturalist Handbook and participated in Zoom sessions with docents and guest speakers; video footage of Peninsula wildlife recorded by motion-activated field cameras; and virtual live tours of nature centers featuring animals and conservation projects to carry out at home. "We had to make sure that the third grade class of 2019-20 didn't miss out on this important learning experience," said Adrienne Mohan, Executive Director.

Holly Gray, the Conservancy's Education Program Manager, developed live virtual field experiences featuring one naturalist exploring the Preserves with a live camera feed, while another led students through a Zoom classroom session.

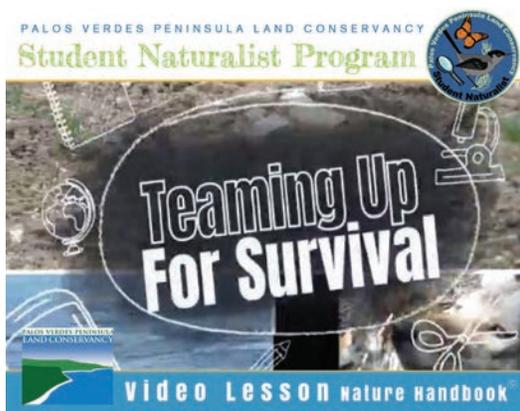


Nature Center Manager Alex Kovary appears live from George F Canyon to speak to students about reptiles

The two approaches provided instruction and imagery for impromptu discoveries on the trails. Nature Center Manager Alex Kovary introduced children to the Conservancy's native California king snake, Ms. Penny, during a virtual lesson on the Peninsula's reptile population.

Many parents, teachers and students made use of the Conservancy's online educational resources, such as the home-based Peninsula Wildlife Survey and Habitat Survey home lessons.

During the 2020-21 school year, the Conservancy will once again offer a remote version of the Student Naturalist Program, adding a series of newly recorded video lessons, such as "The Endangered Palos Verdes Blue Butterfly: Applying Life Cycle Knowledge to Conservation" to ensure that the 25-year tradition continues in whatever format is safest and most effective for reaching students with nature-based learning during the pandemic



New video resources to accompany the Nature Handbook are available for educators at [pvplc.org/education](http://pvplc.org/education)

## Abalone Cove Restoration Project Update

Habitat restoration and enhancement has begun on over 13 acres of designated land at Abalone Cove Reserve. Early on, goats feasted on the proliferation of non-native weeds, while the Conservancy deployed its field crews along with specialized arborists to remove the razor-sharp, invasive cat claw acacia and other shrubs. After clearing nonnative plants, the crew installed temporary irrigation lines. The lines serve two purposes. The first is to assist with the "grow and kill" method of flushing out invasive plants by watering and germinating and then removing them before they can set their seeds. The second is to judiciously water the native plants that have been transferred to the site in the last few weeks.



Plants installed will mimic the natural distribution and vegetation mosaic of adjacent healthy habitats



Temporary irrigation lines enable newly planted seedlings to take root

Please take a moment to look at the results of this hard work the next time you are near Abalone Cove Reserve. After clearing nonnative plants, the crew installed temporary irrigation lines. The lines serve two purposes. The first is to assist with the "grow and kill" method of flushing out invasive plants by watering and germinating and then removing them before they can set their seeds. The second is to judiciously water the native plants that will be transferred to the site in the fall, after the weather cools. Please take a moment to look at the results of this hard work the next time you are near Abalone Cove Reserve.

## Conservancy Recognizes Outstanding Volunteers

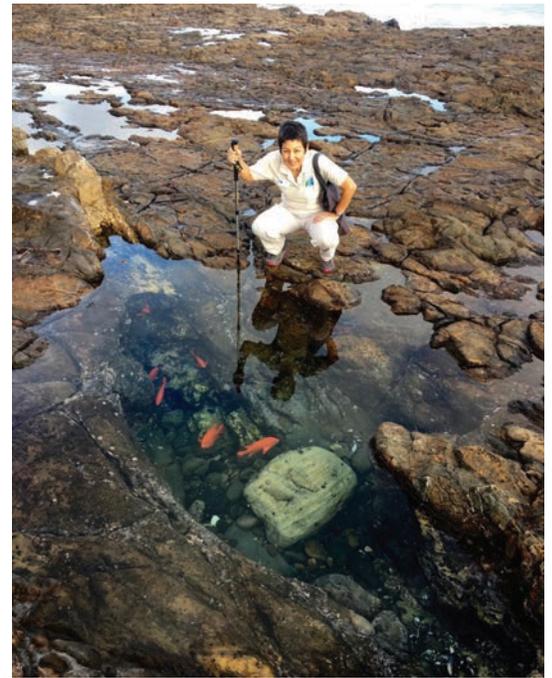
Each year, we honor all the dedicated volunteers who help the Conservancy preserve and restore natural areas on the Peninsula and educate the public about the benefits of a healthy ecosystem. As part of the annual recognition, we single out several individuals for their ongoing contributions to the success of the Conservancy's work. The following are this year's award recipients.

As co-leader of the Nature Walk program, Cindy Akiyama goes the extra mile to help coordinate materials and activities. Cindy conducts special "pre-walks,"



Sandy Scholton

preparing updated highlights for each of the walks, usually held the second Saturday of the month. She creates posters and brings hands-on materials for participants to enjoy. During the current nature walk hiatus, Cindy has identified and shared enrichment activities for walk leaders to enjoy online.



Cindy Akiyama



Tammy Nguyen

Sandy Scholton is a valued volunteer who gives his time in a variety of ways. From leading student fieldtrips, greeting visitors in the nature centers and helping Scouts earn a badge to spreading mulch, assisting at plant sales and maintaining a weather station, it seems Sandy can and does do it all.

California State University Long Beach student Tammy Nguyen started as a Native Plant Demonstration Garden volunteer at the White Point Nature Education Center. She devoted her time and dedication to the critical task of monitoring vegetation and wildlife as part of an Acacia Removal Project that provided fuel modification and habitat restoration benefits. Her commitment and strong work ethic have improved the Conservancy's ability to conduct the year's critical fuel load reduction.

major contribution through her hard work collecting and cleaning seeds and potting and transplanting native species. She has learned an incredible amount about how to best propagate plants."

Dolores Keeling has been a dedicated Native Plant Nursery Volunteer since 2017, logging over 360 hours. According to Nursery Technician Lead Neli Gonzalez, "Dolores makes a



Dolores Keeling

Tania Morris is a committed and highly regarded member of the Community Science Cactus Wren Monitoring and Wildlife Tracking Program. Over the past two-and-a-half years, she has contributed to the improvement and growth of the program's data collection capabilities through her accomplished monitoring, reporting and photography.



Tania Morris

Rick Phillips is a member of the Conservancy's Audit and Investment committees, serving as Investment Chair since 2018. Rick lends his wealth of experience and knowledge of investment banking to oversee our organization's investment portfolio and to ensure that contributions are carefully stewarded and cultivated in order to support the mission and operations to the fullest extent.

We thank all of the dedicated volunteers who are doing so much to protect, preserve and restore the Peninsula's natural lands for native and rare wildlife and plant species.



Rick Phillips

## Docent Enrichment Activities Go Virtual

The constraints of social distancing have not stopped the determined Conservancy Docents. Not long after California's safer-at-home orders went into effect, Education Docents were already learning the ropes on Zoom in order to virtually connect with students for the Student Naturalist Program for Third Graders. Over the summer, the docent team has provided suggestions on curriculum development and has attended virtual enrichment sessions. The sessions were conducted by staff, fellow docents and other inspiring experts in various related fields to hone their knowledge of local natural history. Recently, Greg Pauly, Curator of Herpetology at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, provided insight on the changing reptile fauna of the



Tony Baker gives an enrichment presentation on Local Native Plants

Peninsula. Other workshops focused on local abalone with Cabrillo Marine Aquarium Curator of Education Jim DePompei and cactus wren by Conservancy Cactus Wren Monitor Evi Meyer, who shared experiences and photographs from her book, "A Bravo for Charlie" published by the Conservancy and available online at: [pvplc.org/Shop](http://pvplc.org/Shop).

Docent Wayne Greenfeld said of volunteering, "My dog, Red, and I have been Docents for several years now. During the pandemic, I have missed the in-person interaction, so I am very thankful for the virtual docent enrichments via Zoom! They keep me in touch with the team and provide me with the continued learning opportunities I enjoy so much."

The youngest docent volunteers, Aurelia (age 6) and Andrew (age 9), are featured in a new video lesson series to accompany the Third Grade Student Naturalist Program. In their segment "Protecting Wildlife" they share steps with other students about how to protect local fauna and care for the environment as "Adopt-a-Plot" volunteers.

The docents are gearing up for another year of inspiring youth with the wonders of nature here on the Peninsula. There are many unknowns in an uncertain landscape, but the docents are ready to meet the challenge. "Our docent team is composed of such talented, creative and passionate members, they won't let difficult times get in the way of enjoying nature and sharing their knowledge," said Education Program Manager Holly Gray. For information about



Education docent Rochelle Port on a Zoom Enrichment presentation



## Beautify Lunada Bay Project Enters Phase II

In the city of Palos Verdes Estates, the Conservancy supports the Beautify Lunada Bay Project by collaborating with the Lunada Bay Homeowners Association to provide technical expertise and volunteer recruitment.

The first one-acre phase of the project near Lunada Bay Elementary School was completed in 2019, with the installation of waterwise irrigation, attractive native plants and a stone-lined path for the community to enjoy. Elementary school students, in particular, use the sitting rocks as vantage points to closely observe the area's diversity of native plants, birds and insects.

To continue the successful transformation of bare and weedy bluff tops, the Lunada Bay Homeowners Association has proposed planting a native grassland meadow with a path boasting views of the coast. Planning and permits for the next project phase are underway. Work will begin in 2021.

acre Palos Verdes Nature Preserve.

With social distancing and COVID-19 prevention practices in place, the stewardship crew removed over 60 acres of invasive weeds and non-native trees as part of ongoing fuel load reduction and habitat restoration work throughout the Portuguese Bend, Filiorum, Three Sisters, San Ramon, Abalone Cove and Agua Amarga reserves. The crew also installed over 4,000 native plants to support the threatened California gnatcatcher; the California cactus wren (a species of concern); and the endangered El Segundo and Palos Verdes blue butterflies at Abalone Cove Reserve. The crew worked to keep the trails safe and enjoyable by weeding overgrowth, addressing erosion issues and maintaining the surface soil tread.

The Conservancy is grateful for the community support that has made the stewardship team's essential work possible and allowed it to continue maintaining restoration sites through the coming fall and winter seasons.



Staff and crew work safely with newly acquired work truck paid for by generous supporters

Conservancy Completes New Project for Invasive Acacia Removal continued from page 1



Removing and mulching acacia

and Legacy Circle members Becky Cool, Carolyn Hadley Colburn and Noel Park. These generous funders enabled the Conservancy to provide opportunities for four college students to work alongside experts in the field, where they gained experience and discovered one of many career opportunities in conservation.

Staff biologists and land stewardship personnel selected four Field Monitoring Interns, then trained and supervised them for six months. The students spent over 345 hours collecting

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) digital mapping data in a custom mobile phone application. They monitored where acacia had been removed and documented any regrowth and seedling germination in these areas for additional treatment and removal. They collected plant and soil data for each treated project area and conducted monthly photo point monitoring to document the recovery of native vegetation by assessing changes in plant health and size. After special training by staff on bird identification and wildlife observation protocols, the students also helped to monitor bird nesting and foraging in treated project areas, focusing on the activity of the Federally Endangered California gnatcatcher and Species of Concern coastal cactus wren protected under the Rancho Palos Verdes NCCP.

Field Monitoring Intern Michael Hakimi said the opportunity was "an invaluable hands-on experience using GIS technologies and survey protocol under the close direction of Conservancy's expert staff. Prior to the internship I didn't really know what I wanted to do with my biochemistry major, only that I didn't want to work in a lab. I immediately found my passion in doing field work." A recent CSULB graduate, Michael immediately found a job with ERM Group Inc., a consulting firm working with Southern California Edison to locate wildlife prior to vegetation clearance around telephone poles.

"The Conservancy is grateful to the generous funders whose support is helping to create opportunities to shape the world's future ecologists," said Executive Director Adrienne Mohan. The data from the Field Monitoring Interns will enable the Conservancy to develop a habitat enhancement plan that identifies strategic priorities for additional projects to remove acacia and other combustible vegetation in the Preserve and benefit protected Peninsula wildlife.



GIS Intern Michael Hakimi

IN HONOR

Your celebration and remembrance gifts create a lasting tribute to friends and loved ones by helping to protect the beauty and character of the Palos Verdes Peninsula.

Remembering

- Jeanne Batchelder given by Philip Batchelder
- Arlene Carloff given by Betsy Anthony
- Allen and Marjorie Clark given by Carl and Barbara Cambilargiu
- Robert Clifford given by Melissa Clifford
- Joan Cobble given by The Taylor Family
- Daisy given by Jill Hollingshead
- Emil De Portofino given by Henry Rasof
- Mary S. Franz given by Allen Franz
- Jeanne Hadley given by Debra Fournier
- Dorothy Hebner given by Michael and Bernice Green
- John and Helen Ireland given by Vicky Leo
- John Wesley Jones given by the staff of the Point Vicente Animal Hospital
- Ron Marinkovich given by Leah Marinkovich and Pam Weiss and John Woolington
- Adela Mescall given by Megan Alpers-Raschefskey
- Robert Mucha given by Marianne Albright, Marlene Mattis, and Mary Wiltse
- Ramona Pack given by Susannah Garcia
- Diana Park given by Noel Park
- Alex Polack given by David Rosenblum
- Richard Seamans given by Susan Seamans
- Betty Strauss given by Bruce Biesman-Simons and Hale Field
- Betty A. White given by Becky, Donita, Karen from the RM Cool Company
- Yolande Windsor given by Marie J Corr
- Glenn Yamamotoya given by Becky Cool

Celebrating

- Emily Arison given by Marc Kawakami
- Bruce Bond given by Gabrielle
- Becky Cool given by John Shadden
- Becky Cool given by Susan Wilcox
- Bob Ford given by Roger and Isabella Ford
- Jack Kagdis given by June Kagdis
- Kevin Michael Kane given by Mary Beth Kane
- Allen and Dottie Lay given by Bruce Biesman-Simons and Hale Field
- Amy and Ed Morris given by Erin Douglass
- Lily Morse, Eagle Scout given by Gregory Scott Morse
- Ollie the Goat given by Marylyn Ginsburg-Klaus
- Will Thomas and Araceli Campelo given by Bill and Annie Courtney
- Calvin and Joshua Ting given by Sonia Ting

If you would like to make a donation in remembrance or celebration, please call Laura Lohnes, Development Associate at (310) 541-7613 x206.

Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy  
PO Box 3427  
Palos Verdes Peninsula, CA 90274  
T: (310) 541-7613 E: info@pvplc.org  
www.pvplc.org  
f www.facebook.com/pvplc.org

NONPROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
MAILED FROM  
ZIP CODE 90503  
PERMIT NO. 102

The logo for SYRCL's Wild & Scenic Film Festival features a green circle with a white fish, a green film strip, a yellow and grey bird, and a brown and black butterfly.

**SYRCL's WILD & SCENIC<sup>®</sup> FILM FESTIVAL**

**SUNDAY JANUARY 17, 2021**  
COMING "VIRTUALLY"

Tickets on sale January 1st online at: [pvplc.org](http://pvplc.org)

Artwork by Obi Kaufmann

## special events

january to august

### Jan 9 nature club for families

**Virtual Activity 9:30 am - 10:30 am** Join us for behind the scenes activities from our nature centers, animal encounters, and fun! Visit [pvplc.org](http://pvplc.org) for event link.

### Jan 17 wild & scenic film festival

**Virtual Event 4 pm** An exciting selection of adventurous and inspirational films about nature. You'll be moved, transfixed and energized to make a difference in our world. Tickets \$30 per household advance purchase or \$40 on 1/17 at [pvplc.org/calendar/fundraising](http://pvplc.org/calendar/fundraising) events starting January 1, 2021.

### Jan 24 nature talk

**Virtual Tour 11 am** Join nature walk leaders for a virtual tour of the preserves to learn about unique features, trail highlights, geologic and natural history with live Q&A. Visit [pvplc.org](http://pvplc.org) for event link.

### Jan 30 and Feb 6 volunteer trail watch training

**Virtual Training 10 am - 12 noon** Like to hike, ride your bike or horse? Want to help protect habitat and wildlife? Become a Trail Watch Volunteer and make a difference by reporting trail conditions! Must attend both sessions. To sign up visit: [pvplc.volunteerhub.com](http://pvplc.volunteerhub.com).

### Mar 20 docent training

**Virtual Training 9 am - 12 noon** Would you like to share your love of nature with others? Here is your chance. The Conservancy is recruiting volunteers interested in sharing the unique geographic and historical features of the area with visitors. Sign up at: [pvplc.volunteerhub.com](http://pvplc.volunteerhub.com).

For more information visit: [pvplc.org/calendar](http://pvplc.org/calendar)