



**OC Habitats**

**2023**

**Annual Report**

# Message from the Executive Director - Stacey Chartier-Grable



We were fortunate to move into our new office space in The Village in Santa Ana where our OCH family was able to work and grow, adding staff, interns, board members, and volunteers to our team. We continue to focus on our three main goals: education, restoration, and monitoring.

**Education:** We added classes and schools to our Title 1 programming for campus programs which helped us to serve an additional 250 students last year. We hosted 14 guided hikes with schools and the public. We had the pleasure of speaking at two different dive clubs (South OC and Veteran's NB), the Women's Club of Fullerton, and University Library in Irvine.

We hosted our own Earth Day event at The Village and manned 15 outreach booths with the City of Irvine, GSOC, OCSD and more. We morphed our Coffee & Conservation (C&C) program to include a podcast on [Spotify](#) as well as video and in-person formats, this has allowed us to reach more people.

**Restoration:** We had the pleasure of working with four different partners in our restoration efforts: Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy, Project Grow (Upper Newport Bay), City of Irvine (Turtle Rock Nature Center), and City of Santa Ana (Santiago Park). We made great strides in all of the sites, removing invasive species and debris, creating new wetland channels, clearing out riparian zones of waste and microplastics and educating our volunteers throughout the process.

**Monitoring:** We finalized our two-year monitoring projects at Tucker Wildlife Sanctuary (TWS). We are especially proud of our work at TWS and hope for future opportunities to work with similar organizations/projects. We felt stretched thin so we closed out our MPA Watch collaboration with OC Coastkeepers and focused on our Coastal Dune Habitat (CDH) and Sea Urchin monitoring. We will be wrapping up our CDH program in 2024 but will continue to stay abreast of this habitat and species through our partnerships with other organizations. We worked with Dr. King (UCI) to understand the trends of this project over the last six years and hope to use the results to build a page on our website to educate the public.

We launched our [2023 Sticker Series](#), created by Michelle Lee, who shares her talents with OCH in the form of her art. Our inaugural online silent auction event went better than expected and we are excited to continue this in 2024 during our Annual Fundraiser. This funding is going a long way to ensure we can continue to provide programs and projects to our local communities.

Our organization succeeds due to people who support us through time or treasure. We are so thankful for our OCH Family of volunteers, staff, and board members. We hope to continue to expand our impact in the community and welcome the public to join us, volunteer with us, or donate to our mission.



~ Stacey Chartier-Grable





# Habitat Monitoring



OCH has had a very successful monitoring year! We have continued to work on ongoing monitoring projects, as well as made updates.

**Coastal Dune Monitoring:** OCH continued to monitor our Coastal Dune Habitats and the species therein. We were able to fully launch our monitoring app prepared for us by Commit the Change (UCI) and this proved to be a game changer on the data collection side of our work. We worked with a UCI professor, Dr. Christine King, and hope to use this analysis to build educational pages on our website in 2024. Due to lack of funding, OCH has decided to close out our Coastal Dune Habitat monitoring program in September of 2024 as other organizations are doing similar work. However, we will continue to stay abreast of the habitat and species issues.

**Sea Urchin Monitoring:** This project was created in collaboration with Nancy Caruso from Get Inspired (GI). The goal of this program is to get an understanding of how many urchins are in our local tide pools and if they pose a threat to neighboring kelp forests in our local marine habitat. This information can be used to inform marine biologists, specifically those specializing in kelp forest restoration, if preventative measures need to be taken. We paused the project due to permitting issues but were able to resume once the permits we secured. While we waited for permit approval, OCH continued conducting initial site surveys to determine what tide pools contained high densities of urchins. Once the initial site surveys were completed, and the permit was attained, OCH's and GI's combined urchin team started performing full surveys with equipment in the Fall and have almost finished the first cycle of both our visual and focused surveys.

**Bird Box Surveys at Tucker Wildlife Sanctuary:** OCH returned to Tucker Wildlife Sanctuary this year to continue with the Bird Box surveys. We monitored the bird boxes from March to July. At the end of the monitoring period, we provided monthly updates and a final report. This was a really great project for us to help the Environmental Nature Center make changes to their sanctuary as they expand their projects and programs at the site. We hope this project and its relative success will open doors for us with ENC and other organizations for monitoring projects in the future.

**Program Wrap-Ups:** MPA Watch Monitoring: Although we wanted to support this program, we realized that we did not have the bandwidth to add this to our monitoring programs schedule. We support our partner, OC Coastkeepers, in their efforts to collect this important data and will send volunteers who are interested in this particular project their way. Eyes on the Nest Site (EONS) with Bolsa Chica Conservancy was tabled in 2023 due to lack of OCH availability and to a lack of species at the monitoring site. We may revisit this project in 2024 or beyond if it makes sense for us to do so.



# Education & Outreach

In 2023, OC Habitats provided more habitat education programs to various schools and districts in Orange County, as well as partnered with more fellow environmental organizations in our effort to engage local communities. Among our continued and expanded programs, OCH developed and provided our 2nd Grade Habitat Education and Reduce-Reuse-Recycle-Compost programs for the first time in 2023! We served about 1725 members of the public through education and outreach in 2022. In 2023, we served approximately 4070!

## Schools Served (\*New schools/programs in 2023)

Greentree Elementary\* - Irvine  
Gates Elementary\* - Saddleback Valley  
Peters Elementary - Garden Grove  
R.H. Dana - Capistrano  
Our Lady of Fatima Academy\* - Capistrano  
Eastbluff Elementary - Newport-Mesa  
Pio Pico Elementary\* - Santa Ana  
Las Palmas Elementary - Capistrano

## Clubs/Groups/Homeschools Served (\*New in 2023)

Girl Scout of OC (GSOC) Programs for all levels,  
R.H. Dana Eco Club, Suhana Homeschool Group\*,  
South Orange County Dive Club\* and Veteran Dive Club\*, Cub Scouts\*

## Guided Hikes Program (Public Outreach) (\*New hikes for 2023)

Marine Protected Area (MPA), Hagador Canyon, O'Neill Regional Park, Laguna Canyon, Buck Gully, San Mateo, Santiago Oaks, Peters Canyon, Annual Bird Tour, Carbon Canyon\*

## Outreach Events

Sustainability Fair at CSULB (April), OCH Booth at 4 LUSH locations (Summer), Kelp Fest (June), Cool Irvine Sustainability Fair (June), The Woman's Club of Fullerton (Sept), University Library of Irvine (Oct), Sustainability Decathlon (Oct), GSOC Fall STEM Expo (Oct)

## Educational Videos and Pages

[Habitat Video Series: Grasslands of CA](#), [Species Spotlight: Elegant Terns](#), [Endangered Species Act of 1973](#), [Animals of OC](#), [Indigenous Peoples of OC](#)



## Coffee & Conservation (C&C) 2023 (\*Available as OCH Podcast)

[Coastal Dune Plants by Eric Peña](#)  
[Beach Wrack Ecology by Evie Andrade](#)  
[HB Wetlands by Chloe Van Grootheest](#)  
[Pollinators of OC by Cameron White](#)  
[History of Earth Day by Katarina Sielen](#)  
[Irvine Spectrum Wildlife Corridor by LGI\\*](#)  
[Western Snowy Plovers by Seth Perez](#)  
[Monarch Butterfly by Rebecca Cummings](#)



# Habitat Restoration



OC Habitats had a groundbreaking year for restoration in 2023 as we organized more events this year than any previous year. We continued working with our partner organizations on salt marsh and riparian habitats to restore important and fragile ecosystems within Huntington and Newport Beaches, Santa Ana, and Irvine. These partnerships continue to support the development of relationships with local communities in Orange County.

**Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy (HBWC).** With the permission of HBWC, OCH installed our own storage shed so our tools could stay on site at HBWC in 2023. We hosted 16 public restoration events, which included our monthly restoration work and additional events with the City of Irvine's Youth Action Teams (YAT). With the help of HBWC and OCH volunteers, we managed to remove 9,440 lbs of invasive species/debris (3,190 lbs higher than 2022). We installed approximately 1,675 native plants in the marshes, helped to build a new wetland structure (streams, mounds, and plateaus), and saw our listed Coast woolly head (*Nemacaulis denudata*) spreading throughout the marsh. OCH assisted HBWC with hurricane prep in August for the Wetland & Wildlife Care Center. Through these continued efforts, we will be able to provide expanded habitat for the native flora and fauna that rely on these marshes for food, shelter, rest, and breeding.

**Upper Newport Bay Restoration (UNB - Project Grow).** In 2023, we continued to collaborate with Project Grow in restoring the riparian and salt marsh habitats within the preserve and within the Newport Valley site in Upper Back Bay. We worked in clearing the areas in the Newport Valley Riparian corridor of non-native and/or invasive plants to make room for future installation of native species. OCH and Project Grow removed over 1,308 lbs (approx. 14,300 plants) of non-native/invasive species in 2023 in the salt marsh. We had to pause our efforts while we sought funding and plan on returning to the UNB salt marsh in 2024.

**Turtle Rock Nature Center (TRNC - City of Irvine).** This little gem is located in a local neighborhood in Irvine. It is a 5-acre site that has a variety of native habitats (e.g., riparian, coastal sage scrub, desert, woodlands). OCH continued to work with the TRNC team in restoring these habitats to provide greater biodiversity and educational opportunities for the general public, particularly younger students. In 2023, we had frequent collaborations with the Irvine's Youth Action Team and were able to complete various projects including removing over 500 lbs of plant matter, clear existing pathways and created a new pathway. TRNC has shown gratitude for our help in managing projects and volunteers and we look forward to continuing that relationship into 2024.

**Santiago Park Clean-Ups (City of Santa Ana).** The Santiago Park Clean-up is our latest restoration project that started in late 2022. In 2023, we continued to make great improvements at the site, where we held five restoration events in collaboration with the City of Santa Ana and City of Irvine's YAT. With public volunteers' help, we were able to remove 475 lbs of debris from the Santiago Creek and surrounds. This site is very important to the local community as it is the City of Santa Ana's only wildspace and the creek flows into the Santa Ana River and Pacific Ocean. Through park cleanups, we stop hundreds of pounds of trash from reaching the ocean while simultaneously engaging the local community.



# Our Numbers

2023 Volunteer (Dec 2023)

Active Crew Members: 48

Active Crew Hours: 5819

OCH Friends: 777

OCH Friends Hours: 2063

Total Volunteer Hours: 7882

## Volunteer Hours by Programs

Restoration: 32%\*

Outreach/Education: 31%\*\*

Monitoring: 17%\*

Administration: 20%\*\*\*

\*Restoration projects are performed by our OCH Staff, Interns, Active Crew and OCH Friends (Public) volunteers.

\*\*Education/Outreach and Monitoring are performed by OCH Active Crew (trained and regular volunteers)

\*\*\*Administration is performed by OCH staff and board members

Staff Hours (5 part-time): 2533.75

## Income & Grants

LUSH \$25K

Total Fundraising: \$22,326 (includes amounts below)

KP2 Trucking Sponsorship: \$3000

Silent Auction: \$2,410

2023 Giving Tuesday/Annual Fundraiser \$9,358

OSOFit 5K Fundraiser: \$475

Birthday P2P Fundraiser (StaceyChartier-Grable): \$505

Board Dues: \$1800

Program Fees: \$26,491

HBWC \$18,325

GSOC \$1,352

RH Dana \$560

OC Coastkeepers \$2,410

Tucker Wildlife \$1,000

Total Revenue: \$82,385

Total Expense: \$79,311

2023 Total Net Assets: \$105,653

## Program Expenses (% of Revenue)

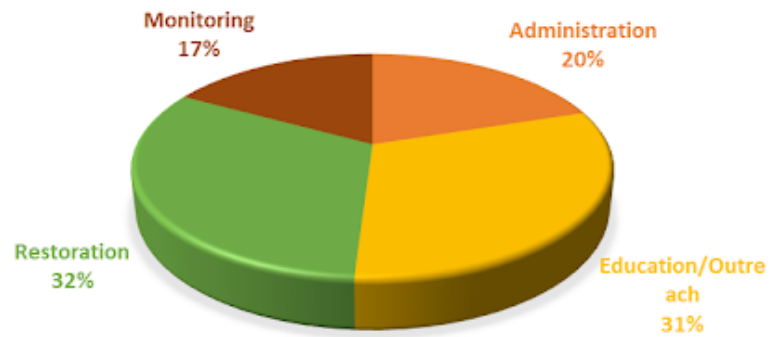
Administrative (Operational Costs) 34%

Monitoring Programs 11%

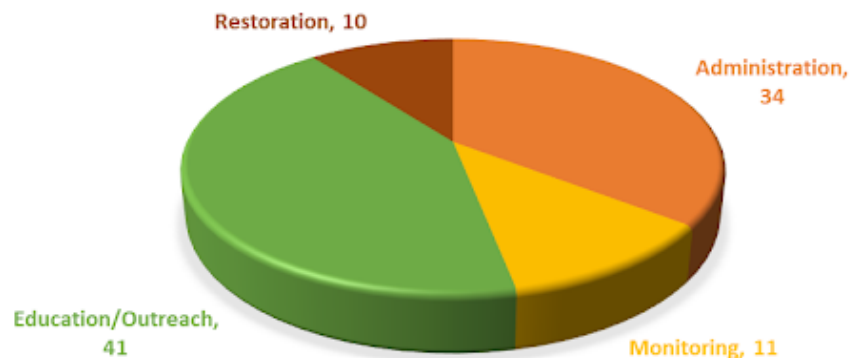
Education/Outreach Programs 41%

Restoration Programs: 10%

## VOLUNTEER HOURS BY OCH PROGRAMS & PROJECTS %



## EXPENSE AS % OF REVENUE %





# Looking to 2024

## Our OCH Family and Goals

Our OCH family continues to grow. We had 11 interns in 2023, three new staff members, and three new board members. With all this new blood, we have made great progress in new ideas, growth and sustainability.

### Board of Directors (December 2023)

Stacey Chartier-Grable, President  
Cheryl Dyas, Treasurer  
Susie Gottlieb, Secretary  
Melissa King, Monitoring Co-Chair  
Wendy Berube, Education Co-Chair  
Sanjay Das, Restoration Co-Chair  
Bianca Borja-Barba, Fundraising Co-Chair  
Sheen Sidhu, Jr. Board Member  
Alice Carter, Advisory Board

### Staff

Kim Yumul - Project Manager  
Gina Thompson - Project Lead  
Jess Brogna - Project Lead  
Gabby Lopez - Project Lead  
Linsey Schroll - Project Lead

### Interns

Eric Pena                      Seth Perez  
Evie Andrade                Linsey Schroll  
Cameron White              Michelle Gonzalez  
Katarina Sielen              Ellis Waterman  
Johnny Texeira                Rebecca Cummings  
Faith Lim

Our internship program continues to be strong. We continue to recruit students from CSULB, CSUF, UCI, Vanguard (College Corp, UCI (Field Study and College Corp), and local high schools (Crean Lutheran, Northwood, University High School, and Irvine High).



## Goals of 2024

As we look to the future our main goals are to:

1. Improve and expand our educational, restoration and monitoring programs/projects within the county with existing and new partners.
  - a. Expand our partnership with Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy to implement educational programs.
  - b. Collaborate with Chapman University to provide environmental education to the underserved
  - c. Return to Upper Newport Bay Salt Marsh to continue our wetland restoration efforts
2. Complete a second year of surveys and data collection for our sea urchin monitoring program with Get Inspired.
3. Continue to provide volunteer opportunities for the community at our sites. These events not only include restoration but educational opportunities for attendees so that we are promoting environmental stewardship through our work.
4. Wrap up our Coastal Dune Monitoring program (September 2024) and focus on programs where we can make a more significant impact.
5. Work with USC PR students to develop a strong fundraising plan for 2024.
6. Pursue an average of one grant proposal per month to secure funding and support for our programs and projects.