

# EnviroNews

Newsletter of the Santa Clara University Environmental Studies Institute

Volume XVIII

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## Burrowing Owls

by Oli Francis

Four months after their on-campus burrow was closed to make way for construction projects, SCU's very own burrowing owls continue to be spotted on campus. We don't yet know if they have found a new nesting site off-campus. We do know that Burrowing owl populations have dropped dramatically in the last several decades due to lack of suitable habitats, leading some experts to suggest that they should be added to the endangered species list. In fact, the San Jose Mercury News reported that on April 7, 2003 a coalition of environmental organizations filed a petition seeking listing of the western burrowing owl as a threatened or endangered species under the CA Endangered Species Act. The petition is likely to be strongly opposed by developers.

Burrowing owls live in underground burrows dug by other animals, an example of a symbiotic relationship. After initial sightings post the burrow closure, the Environmental Studies Institute received an outpouring of support for this owl pair. It has been truly amazing to discover just how many members of the Santa Clara Community have enjoyed watching and researching the burrowing owls over the last ten years. The email list of interested and concerned individuals includes 59 people. The owl pair is active during the night, as they fly silently and are very peaceful and curious. Many people have donated their time at night looking for these spectacular owls. The owl pair has been sighted a number of times hunting for insects on Bellomy field and investigating the site of their closed burrow. If you would like to enjoy an evening walk, consider the track around Bellomy field; look carefully across the grass and on the fence posts. Pictures and additional information about our local burrowing owls can be found at <http://home.earthlink.net/~henryfaithowl/web.htm>. Please report all owl sightings to [henryfaithowl@earthlink.net](mailto:henryfaithowl@earthlink.net).

Environ.Studies Radio is back!!

*Environmental Voices*

Mondays 4:45-5pm

KSCU 103.3 FM

Pizza and Advising!

Thursday, May 15<sup>th</sup>

5:30-6:30pm, Alumni Science 120

Hear about new classes. Get advice for fall classes, study abroad, or just about anything else.

Bring a friend!

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## LEED on SCU's Campus by Dave Zwaska, '04

SCU is planning on adopting LEED guidelines and to make it a new initiative for this year and next. LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design and it is a Green Building Rating System. It is a voluntary, consensus-based national standard for developing high-performance, sustainable buildings. LEED emphasizes state of the art strategies for sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality. You can check out their website at [http://www.usgbc.org/LEED/LEED\\_main.asp](http://www.usgbc.org/LEED/LEED_main.asp)

The Facilities Department wants to apply LEED Guidelines to the Business School and Library! Currently, the Library is supposed to cost \$75 million and the Business School \$40 million. That's \$115 million on two buildings! Can you imagine if they were GREEN buildings? This is very exciting news and it looks as if SCU is really becoming more environmentally sustainable. In case you haven't heard, the entire campus is now using recycled water, which is a much more sustainable practice than using fresh water.

Joe Sugg is in charge of University Operations and the following is directly from an email from him about specific steps SCU is taking:

1. Internally, we have done our homework on LEED implementation and have attended a number of seminars and presentations. Last week I attended the Pacific Region conference of Society of College and University Planners, where we obtained good information on other college projects.

2. We have identified a project manager to oversee our implementation of LEED guidelines in our campus building projects. This is not a LEED specialist. This is a person to oversee the process and make sure we stay on track.

3. I attended a LEED Certification session in Oakland.

4. We have identified a firm who specializes in LEED consulting work who is preparing a proposal to help us apply LEED guidelines to the Business School. When we set up the interview we will let you know. We are shooting for late in April.

5. Our game plan for the remainder of this year is:

- a. continue our personal development program for LEED education
- b. Apply LEED Guidelines to the Business School and Library and make recommendations on application of specific guidelines, goals, and funding.
- c. Finalize general guidelines for application to both new construction and renovations.
- d. When released by LEED council, use LEED existing building guidelines to begin assessment of existing buildings and make recommendations on building upgrades to improve building performance relative to the guidelines.

**HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO:** E-mail Joe Sugg ([jsugg@scu.edu](mailto:jsugg@scu.edu)) and thank him for supporting LEED and Green Building and encourage him to follow through and implement LEED with the library and the business school. Mention the \$115 million and how much Green Building and sustainable development mean to you. Feel free to contact Joe Sugg ([jsugg@scu.edu](mailto:jsugg@scu.edu)) or the ESI office ([mdindia@scu.edu](mailto:mdindia@scu.edu)) with any questions or comments.

## Historical Ecology Update by Prof. Shana Weber

Plans are moving ahead to formalize an ESI - San Francisco Estuary Institute (SFEI) partnership in response to the need for a locally-based historical ecology project for the South Bay.

Historical Ecology data-collection efforts continue as we build our Geographic Information Systems project under the guidance of Mary Tsui, GIS consultant. We continue to focus on re-constructing historical changes in waterways, as well as building a present-day picture of the campus and surrounding area. With today's information, we can begin to follow changes back in time and create a series of maps depicting local alterations in habitat and ecological function over the past 250 years.

We have compiled, as GIS layers, a high-quality high-resolution 1994 ortho-image aerial photograph, a campus schematic (original data provided by Campus Facilities, modifications by Lynx Technologies), and a research grid designed to be useful for multiple scales of inquiry. All of these layers have been geo-referenced, providing invaluable information to users who need to know exactly where the features are, using standard coordinate systems.

Dr. Alan Brown visited last month and provided invaluable insights and guidance to Bay Area historical ecology efforts. His public lecture at SCU (sponsored by ESI, SFEI, SCU Archaeology, and local historical societies) was filled to capacity, and his presence added new enthusiasm to historical ecology efforts and discussions for the South Bay. Based on high demand, his lecture will be available in manuscript format through the SCU Archaeology Dept. and ESI Manuscript Series in the near future. For more information, contact Prof. Weber at 551-6006, or stop by Daly Science 204.

## Learn More About LEED...

The American Institute of Architects, Santa Clara Valley (AIASCV) would like to invite you to take part in a Sustainable Design Symposium on Friday April 25th. The purpose of this symposium is to gather architects, engineers, the city planners and other interested parties to develop ideas for sustainable design projects in the Bay Area. This will educate participants in the basic concepts of sustainable design, the LEED rating system and how all of the many pieces of the puzzle fit together. It will include presentations by experts in the design field, case studies of local existing buildings and Darren Bouton speaking on his experiences helping to set up the City of San Jose's Green Building Program. Finally, all participants will be teamed with architects familiar with the specific constraints of the Bay Area to develop a palette of potential sustainable design solutions for either a residential, commercial or civic site. At the conclusion of the program, the results of the charrette will be compiled into a document which will be distributed to the participants. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call (408) 298-0611.

## **Ulistac Update** by Kelly Crowley\*, '99

Volunteers turned out by the dozens at a City of Santa Clara Parks and Recreation public meeting in mid-March to register their vehement opposition to the City's plans to relocate 4.6 acres of constructed wetlands in Ulistac Natural Area. The new proposed location would cause over two-thirds of the oak woodland and oak savannah sections of the restoration project to be inundated, leading to the loss of as many as 80 of the over 120 oak trees that have been planted there.

In November 2001 the City conducted soil testing in the original proposed location, as an initial step in the construction of the wetlands. They discovered arsenic and DDT contamination. After deciding that the \$3-4 million it would cost to dispose of the soil in a special landfill was more than they could afford, the City started working with their consultants to find an alternate location in the park where they could put 4.6 acres of contiguous wetland. The new location they chose was directly on top of the restoration project.

Due to the outpouring of opposition, including a boycott of work at the site by Wilcox High School classes, City staff is now evaluating their options, and working with the permitting authorities to determine whether they can break up the wetland into several small pieces, locate some of the wetlands elsewhere in the region, or clean up the contamination for a reasonable price.

Although we have made progress, the restoration project is still in jeopardy. Please take the time to write to the City Council. Express your interest in Ulistac Natural Area, and urge the Council members to do three things: protect the restoration project, find another location for the wetlands, and clean up the contamination. It is exceedingly important that the Council hear from the community.

On a lighter note, we had a very well-attended April work day for the employees of NUMMI auto plant. They were enthusiastic, even in the rainy weather, as they planted nine relatively large oak trees and weeded a small section of the Butterfly Garden.

Erin Nuccio, '04 is currently putting together training materials for new volunteers, as well as organizing a workday in May. If you are interested in being an intern or volunteering, look for the Ulistac table at the Earth Day Fair on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, join Intel employees for their Earth Day celebration at Ulistac on Saturday, April 26<sup>th</sup> from 10-2 (directions available on the website: <http://www.scu.edu/envs/ulistac/index.htm>), or contact Kelly Crowley, Ulistac Outreach Coordinator, at 554-5419 or [kcrowley@scu.edu](mailto:kcrowley@scu.edu). Don't forget to write to the City Council: 1500 Warburton Ave., Santa Clara, CA 95050.

\*Kelly was first introduced to Ulistac Natural Area (UNA) a Santa Clara University environmental studies student in the winter of 1998-99, when plans for the restoration were just getting underway. After graduating from Santa Clara that spring, Kelly moved to Indiana to pursue her Master's in Public Affairs (with an emphasis in environmental policy). Upon graduation, she returned to the Bay Area to work for the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, where she did grassroots and political organizing around innumerable wildlife, open space and habitat issues throughout the Santa Clara valley. One of the projects she consistently followed was the Ulistac Natural Area restoration project. Kelly is now working at Santa Clara University as the part-time Outreach Coordinator for UNA, where she is training and coordinating volunteers, as well as establishing a permanent volunteer center and outreach office.

## **Ulistac—Opinion Piece aired on *Environmental Voices* on KSCU** by Alana Monge, '03

I first started volunteering at Ulistac about two years ago and have gone out a handful of times with other Santa Clara University students. One of the major adjustments that I have had to deal with while going to school in Silicon Valley is the lack of open space, the industrialization, and everything that comes along with that. I am originally from the mountains of Colorado and it was shocking, in a way, to move out here freshman year. I have gone through periods of feeling very claustrophobic and frustrated with all of the continuous development happening here and lack of natural settings. Ulistac is, sadly, the last 40 acres of open space in Santa Clara, which makes it unique and special. Being able to bike to a place like that and get my hands in the dirt, help with restoration, meet new people, and have fun outside with friends has helped me cope with the enclosure of buildings and cement that exists here.

Every time that I have been out at Ulistac there has been a different mix of volunteers working on the restoration project as well as various people walking through the area enjoying the peace that can be cherished on this patch of land. Hearing about the proposition to create a required wetlands area over part of the restoration project was infuriating, frustrating, and reflective of regional, national, and international issues that are faced within the environmental sphere. It's very ironic that the city is required to create this wetlands habitat in order to mitigate land destroyed by a development project elsewhere, but in the process, they are thinking of destroying another valuable piece of land.

Many people have put hours into volunteering at Ulistac and there is a sense of connection and sentimental value to the project and the area. The original idea for putting the wetlands where they discovered toxic levels of chemicals in the soil, could still work...it would require cleaning up the toxic soil. In my opinion, this would be a responsible thing to do.

I hope that through the various meetings with community members and city decision makers that have happened, and should continue to happen, the city and parks and rec. department will realize what they would be taking away, destroying, if they don't choose an alternate location, even if this means it might cost more money. The people involved in this situation have an opportunity to be role-models in environmental decision making.

## Environmental Activities / Colloquia on Campus @ Spring Quarter 2003

### **Regular Events / Meetings:**

Tuesdays 4:30-5:30pm: Tuesday Teach-Ins Daly Science 207

Wednesdays 8:00pm: GREEN Meetings Sobrato 31- the Den

### **Colloquia\***

April 29<sup>th</sup>: Leon Panetta, Rob Wilder, and Pietro Parravano "Cleaning Up the Oceans: A Global Ethical Challenge" 6:00pm in the Arts and Sciences Foyer

April 30<sup>th</sup>: "International Oil: Human, Environmental, and Cultural Costs" 4:00pm in Brass Rail

May 7<sup>th</sup>: "Designing for Living: 'The Next Industrial Revolution'" 4:00pm in Sobrato Commons

May 12<sup>th</sup>: Kerry Vander Meer, Eco-Artist 2:30- 3:30pm in Alumni Science 155

Topic: Amphibian Decline and Recycled Materials in Art

### **Events**

April 26<sup>th</sup>: Ulistac-Intel Earth Day Festival 10:00am- 2:00pm at Ulistac

May 30<sup>th</sup>: ESI Celebration of Success 3:30-5:30pm in Arts and Sciences 133, and the Foyer

\*To receive credit, send an email to [mdindia@scu.edu](mailto:mdindia@scu.edu) with the title and a brief description of the event a few days after attending.

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