



2024 Annual Report

Message from the Executive Director and President, Stacey Chartier-Grable

We celebrated our seven-year anniversary and have come so far—what a year 2024 has been! OC Habitats (OCH) expanded our work, particularly in education and restoration. We welcomed new members to our board (Sydney Rilum and Bianca Borja-Barba) and formalized our advisory board by adding more members and committee structure.

Education: We expanded our educational efforts across most of our focus areas: campus programs, field trips, outreach, and speaking engagements (C&C's). We added a couple new schools to our campus programs, reaching more underserved students in Orange County.



OCH started partnerships with the City of Santa Ana (Wilderness Club), City of Mission Viejo, and Cancer Kinship nonprofit to provide guided hikes in Orange County. We had an incredibly busy Earth Month (April 2024) and expanded our network of friends and partners within the county. We hosted two Coffee & Conservation events, in April and December, covering topics like sharks, hiking, plankton, and animal abilities. Both events brought together the public from all over Orange County. Additionally, we had the opportunity to speak at University Park and La Habra Libraries, and two senior communities on the many habitats in Orange County.

Restoration: We secured a grant from the Rose Foundation (Wildlands Fund) that enabled us to continue our restoration work at Upper Newport Bay with Project Grow on ASL removal. We continued our work with HBWC, making progress in all four marshes (Newland, Magnolia, Talbert, and Brookhurst). Our work also expanded with the City of Santa Ana at Santiago Park and Creek, thanks to the support of Councilmember Jessie Lopez and her team. Our relationship with the City of Irvine at Turtle Rock Nature Center also continues as we help manage their 5-acre site and provide educational opportunities.

Monitoring: Our monitoring program was the only area where we reduced our projects. We concluded our Coastal Dune Habitat Surveys in June 2024 for shore species. After seven years of surveying and collecting data at our local beaches, it was time to focus our time elsewhere, as many other organizations were doing similar work. However, we stayed busy with work on the 2nd and 3rd cycles of Sea Urchin monitoring program throughout the year, particularly during zero-negative tides, and we are seeing population changes in our local species. This is good news for the habitat overall, though not as positive for the urchins themselves, as they struggle with black spot disease.

Internship Program: We hosted over 18 interns/fellows in 2024, coming from universities in Orange County and beyond. This is a program we are especially proud of, as we have hired several past interns and helped others secure positions with other environmental groups within the field.

Sustainability & Future Goals: One of our main focuses in 2024 was sustainability. We pursued funding from a variety of sources and increased our staff hours and wages to provide a more livable wage. We will continue this effort moving forward. Our 2024 Annual Fundraiser and Silent Auction goals were exceeded, which will help us provide more programs and projects to the community in 2025 and help us to retain our excellent employees.

As always, we are deeply grateful to the many people in our community who support our work with their time, talent, and treasure. We invite you to join us in 2025 and be a part of our conservation efforts in Orange County.

Stacey Chartier-Grable

Education & Outreach

Environmental education is at the cornerstone of our work at OC Habitats (OCH). In 2024, the OCH Education Team provided more habitat education programs to schools and districts throughout Orange County, while also partnering with more environmental organizations to engage local communities.

These efforts reflect our ongoing commitment to fostering environmental stewardship in the next generation. By bringing habitat education to local schools, we empower students to understand and appreciate the natural world around them, ensuring they become dedicated advocates for conservation in the years to come. As we look ahead, OC Habitats remains committed to expanding these programs, reaching even more communities, and continuing to make a lasting impact on environmental awareness in Orange County.



[From left to right] Habitat program at Greentree Elementary, guided nature hike with Girl Scouts of Orange County at Turtle Rock Nature Center, habitat lesson for the Santa Ana Wilderness Club, OCH booth at Barks & Brews in San Clemente.

Schools and Groups Served (*New in 2024)

- Greentree Elementary - Irvine
- Gates Elementary - Saddleback Valley
- Peters Elementary - Garden Grove
- Hazard Elementary - Garden Grove
- Newhope Elementary - Garden Grove
- Eastbluff Elementary - Newport-Mesa
- R.H. Dana Eco Club - Capistrano
- Kinoshita Elementary - Capistrano
- Ladera Ranch Middle School - Capistrano
- San Juan Elementary - Capistrano
- Youth Action Team - Middle and High School Students
- Legacy Preparatory Academy*
- Girl Scouts of Orange County - Programs for All Levels
- City of Santa Ana's Wilderness Club*
- Brookdale Anaheim Senior Community*
- Capriana Senior Community*

Coffee & Conservation (C&C) Podcast on Spotify

- Fire Ecology and Management
- Sea Urchins
- Plankton
- Ecotourism
- Braiding Sweetgrass
- Taxonomic Classification (Phylum)
- Eco-Grief
- Parasitic Animals
- Parasitic Plants
- Human Parasites

Guided Nature Hike Program (*New in 2024)

- Weir Canyon*
- Huntington Beach Central Park*
- Arroyo Trabuco Trail*
- O'Neill Regional Park
- Annual Bird Tour at Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve
- Hagador Canyon
- Laguna Canyon
- Buck Gully
- San Onofre State Park
- Santiago Oaks Regional Park
- Peters Canyon
- Carbon Canyon

Outreach Events (*New in 2024)

- OC Green Expo*
- Volunteer Fair at Newport Harbor High School*
- UCI Sustainival*
- Barks & Brews*
- Children's Water Education Festival*
- SoCal Ecology Night (Concordia Elementary)*
- Me Encanta Santa Ana*
- Saddleback College Earth Day Event*
- Santiago Canyon College Earth Fest*
- International Coastal Clean-Up Day Celebration*
- La Habra Library*
- Irvine University Park Library
- LUSH Earth Day Event

Habitat Restoration

OC Habitats had a groundbreaking year for restoration in 2024. We organized 42 events, hosted 1,503 volunteers, and removed 21,995 lbs of invasive species and debris. Our work continued with partner organizations focused on salt marsh and riparian habitats, restoring critical and fragile ecosystems in Huntington and Newport Beaches, Santa Ana, and Irvine. These partnerships also support the development of relationships with local communities across Orange County.



[From left to right] Public volunteers at Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy, Upper Newport Bay Ecological Reserve, Santiago Park, and Turtle Rock Nature Center.

Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy (HBWC): In 2024, we hosted 17 public restoration events, including our monthly restoration work and additional events with the City of Irvine's Youth Action Teams (YAT), Samuelli Academy, Collage Corps, and Hyundai Glovis. With the help of HBWC and OCH volunteers, we managed to remove 19,351 lbs of invasive species and debris—9,911 lbs more than in 2023. We installed and transplanted approximately 4,022 native plants in the marshes and helped prep Talbert Marsh for their Living Shoreline Project. We also saw the sensitive species Coast woolly head (*Nemacaulis denudata*) spreading throughout the marsh, along with the release of several Ridgway's rails (*Rallus obsoletus*) into the marshes. These continued efforts will expand 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 2024, we continued our collaboration with Project Grow on the Algerian Sea Lavender (ASL) Mitigation Project in the salt marsh habitats of Upper Newport Bay Ecological Reserve. We've seen a significant decrease in ASL at this mitigation site compared to when the project first began in 2020. Over nine events, OCH and Project Grow removed more than 695 lbs of non-native and invasive species from the salt marsh. We have also received funding from the Rose and Warne foundations to continue our efforts in 2025!

Turtle Rock Nature Center (TRNC - City of Irvine): Turtle Rock Nature Center is a 5-acre site with a variety of native habitats, including riparian, coastal sage scrub, desert, and woodlands. In 2024, OCH began hosting intern-led restorations in collaboration with the TRNC team to restore these habitats and provide greater biodiversity and educational opportunities for the public, particularly younger students. We held six restoration events with Irvine's Youth Action Team and completed several projects, including the removal of over 410 lbs of plant matter, clearing existing pathways, and creating a new pathway. TRNC has shown great appreciation for our help in managing projects and volunteers, and we look forward to continuing our partnership into 2025.

Santiago Park Restoration/Clean-Ups (City of Santa Ana): The Santiago Park Clean-Up is our newest restoration project, which began in late 2022. In 2024, we continued to make significant improvements at the site, holding 10 restoration events in collaboration with the City of Santa Ana and City of Irvine's YAT. With the help of public volunteers, we removed 1,170 lbs of invasive species and debris from Santiago Creek and the surrounding nature center. This site is especially important to the local community as it is Santa Ana's only wild space, and the creek flows into the Santa Ana River and Pacific Ocean. Through these park clean-ups, we prevent hundreds of pounds of trash from reaching the ocean while simultaneously engaging the local community and encouraging stewardship.

Habitat Monitoring

2024 brought significant changes to our monitoring program, including the conclusion of our Coastal Dune Habitat Monitoring program and the continued success of our Sea Urchin Monitoring program. Our team is focused on honing their monitoring skills through both hands-on and specialized training with our staff and partners.



[From left to right] Western snowy plover with banding, Stacey Chartier-Grable during monitoring training for the coastal dune survey, measuring a purple sea urchin during a focused survey, OCH and Get Inspired team post-survey.

Coastal Dune Habitat Monitoring

Due to a lack of funding, OC Habitats decided to close out our Coastal Dune Habitat Monitoring Program at the end of June 2024. Other organizations were conducting similar work and we felt our time and resources were better allocated elsewhere. Although it was difficult to end this program, we remain aware of the ongoing issues and impacts affecting local listed species on our beaches. While we no longer collect data, we continue to stay informed on habitat updates and educate students and the public about coastal dune habitats and wildlife through guided hikes, field trips, and outreach talks.

Sea Urchin Monitoring

In collaboration with Nancy Caruso from Get Inspired (GI), our Sea Urchin Monitoring program aims to understand the population densities of the native Pacific purple sea urchins (*Strongylocentrotus purpuratus*) and red sea urchins (*Strongylocentrotus franciscanus*) and track changes over time in our local tide pools. We also monitor whether these populations are spilling over into neighboring kelp forests. This data will help inform marine biologists, particularly those specializing in kelp forest restoration, about potential preventative measures needed to protect these vital marine ecosystems.

We conduct two types of surveys

- Visual Surveys: These are conducted without equipment and are used to assess whether a site has densities that require more in-depth investigation.
- Focused Surveys: These require a permit and specialized equipment, providing more comprehensive data on population densities.

In 2024, we completed Cycle 1 focused surveys, Cycle 2 visual surveys, and began Cycle 2 focused surveys and Cycle 3 visual surveys. Unfortunately, we are observing some population declines in certain sites due to black-spot disease. While this is not ideal for our local urchins, it may help to keep their populations in check and prevent overgrazing of kelp forests.

We continued our collaboration with Get Inspired to monitor sea urchin populations along the Orange County coastline. Our team surveyed tide pools in Dana Point, Newport Beach, and Laguna Beach to identify dense populations of urchins that could be harmful to adjacent kelp forest ecosystems.

Our Numbers

2024 Volunteer Hours (as of Dec 2024)

Active Crew Members and Hours: 41 People, 4958.80 Hours
OCH Friends Volunteers and Hours: 1342 People, 3651.35 Hours
Total Volunteer Hours: 8610
Total Value of Volunteer Hours: \$332,438 (CA Vol rate of \$38.61/hr)

Volunteer Hours by Programs

Education & Outreach (35%): 3013.5
Restoration (42%): 3616.2
Monitoring (10%): 861
Administration (13%): 1118.3

*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): 3668.2

Income

Total Revenue: \$121,996
Total Expenses: \$118,127
Total Net Assets: \$110,271

Total Program Revenue: \$29,416

- Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy - \$16,595
- OC Coastkeeper - \$7,615
- Girl Scouts of Orange County - \$1,629
- City of Mission Viejo - \$879
- Board Member Dues - \$2,700

Program Expenses (% of Revenue)

Administrative: 28%
Education/Outreach Programs: 47%
Restoration Programs: 13%
Fundraising: 6%
Monitoring Programs: 3%

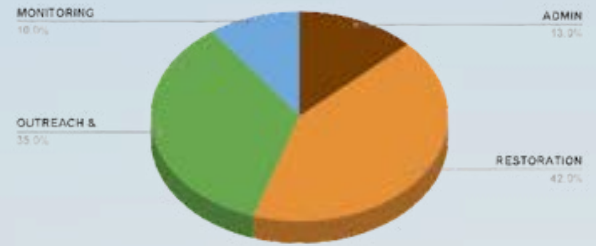
Total Grants: \$15,000

- Orange County Community Foundation (OCCF) \$10,000
- Rose Foundation \$5,000

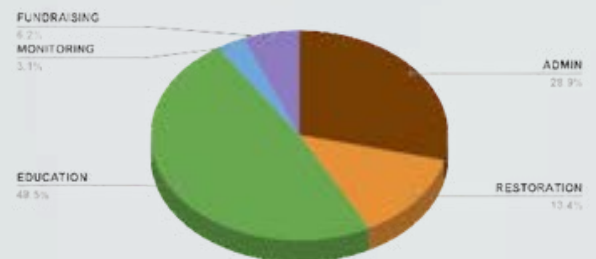
Total Fundraising: \$61,398

- Andrew Kosicki Memorial Fund \$15,000
- Jo and Marjorie King \$8,000
- One Sol \$4,825
- Charities Aid Foundation (Deutsche Bank match) \$4,150
- City of Santa Ana \$3,050
- K2 Lopez Trucking \$3,000
- Whole Foods \$3,000
- Stacey Chartier-Grable \$3,000
- AES \$2,500
- Armes Electric \$1,500
- T&B Planning \$1,000
- Peters Elementary \$1,000
- Community Hub de Santa Ana \$1,000

VOLUNTEER HOURS BY PROGRAM



PROGRAM EXPENSES AS REVENUE PERCENTAGE



Our OCH Family & Goals for 2025

Our OCH Family is always growing, thanks to the influx of new volunteers, interns, staff, and board members. In 2024, we welcomed new board members and bid farewell to others. While saying goodbye is never easy, we're grateful that all of our departing board members left in good standing and on positive terms. We are proud to have what is considered a young board, though that also means we sometimes compete for time amidst our team's professional and personal obligations.

OCH also reached a milestone in 2024 by welcoming a record number of eighteen interns, hailing from a variety of schools including UC Irvine, Vanguard, CSU Long Beach, and CSU Fullerton. Their enthusiasm and fresh perspectives have been invaluable to our work, and we look forward to continuing these relationships in 2025.

Board of Directors (*Member at Large)

Stacey Chartier-Grable, President
Cheryl Dyas, Treasurer
Susie Gottlieb, Secretary
Melissa King*
Wendy Berube*
Sydney Rilum*
Bianca Borja-Barba*
Sheen Sidhu, Jr. Member (thru June 2024)

Advisory Board

Sanjay Das (former member-at-large)*
Alice Carter
Marjorie King
Jo King
Lucio Chen

Staff Members

Kim Yumul - Project Manager
Linsey Schroll - Project Lead
Gabby Lopez - Project Lead
Gina Thompson - Project Lead
Jess Brogna - Project Lead (thru July 2024)

Committee Chairs

Education - Wendy Berube and Stacey Chartier-Grable
Restoration - Amanda Park and Eric Peña
Monitoring - Melissa King and Jess Brogna
Fundraising - Bianca Borja-Barba and Stacey Chartier-Grable
Social Media - Gabby Lopez

Our Goals for 2025 include launching and expanding several initiatives. Below is a sneak peek at some of the key projects we're working on.

Expanding Environmental Education at Title I Schools: Thanks to a generous donation through the *Andrew Kosicki Memorial Fund* and the *Inspire Teacher Grant (OCCF)*, we're able to expand our environmental education programs at Title I schools. This funding will help cover costs for existing programs and allow us to introduce our initiatives to new schools. Our commitment to providing educational opportunities in underserved communities across the county will remain a top priority.

Habitat Restoration Projects: We've received grants from the *Henry W. & Ellen R. Warne Family Endowment Fund* and the *Rose Foundation* to continue and expand our restoration work at Upper Newport Bay and in Santa Ana. Additionally, we've secured a contract with the Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy (HBWC) to host 20 events throughout 2025, with potential for even more as new projects are launched at the site.

Sea Urchin Monitoring with Get Inspired: We're wrapping up Cycle 2 and kicking off Cycle 3 of our Sea Urchin Monitoring project. This ongoing program will help us track population changes in local sea urchin species and gain insights into marine life health along the Orange County coastline.

New Educational Coloring Book: Our dedicated staff, interns, and volunteers are hard at work on the 2025 edition of our educational coloring book! We're excited to bring you a fresh, fun-filled book packed with engaging and informative content for all ages.

Seeking Board Members: Adding new people with fresh ideas and perspectives is key and we are seeking individuals who are passionate about the environment and have skills to share in fundraising, finance, marketing, and human resources.