



SAN DIEGO CHILDREN AND NATURE COLLABORATIVE

2012 year-to-date Accomplishments

January 1 to December 31, 2012

Founded in 2009, the San Diego Children and Nature Collaborative (SDCaN) is a regional collaborative of organizations, individuals and businesses. Its' vision is a world in which all children play, learn and grow with nature in their everyday lives. The mission is to inspire communities to nurture, empower, and engage youth in cultivating their relationship with nature.

This document lists accomplishments completed from January to December 2012 that were inspired, convened, and/or organized by SDCaN, also known as the Collaborative.

Goal 1. Increase public awareness of the value of nature and outdoor experiences.

Website. The website, www.sdchildrenandnature.org, was redesigned and launched in April with expanded information about programs and pages for educators, families, and design and health professionals. The FindNature features includes 177 local natural areas, beaches, lakes, parks, and community gardens.

Community Fairs. Loose Parts Nature Play activities were organized for unstructured play with children and parents at EarthFair in Balboa Park on April 22 and at the Military Family Nature Day at Camp Pendleton on April 28. Co-sponsored exhibit at San Diego Science Festival on March 24 with Chula Vista Nature Center (now Living Coast Discovery Center).

Loose Parts Nature Play. Children are invited to play with natural materials, in unstructured outdoor play. Bamboo poles, tree cookies, pine cones, twine, sheets, boxes, palm fronds, and other natural materials are provided to inspire forts and tepees and more!



Military Family Nature Days. Family Nature Fun activities were organized with 17 exhibitors at Kids First Fair at Camp Pendleton on April 28, supported by the Sierra Club Military Support program. A Military Family Nature Fair was held on November 3 at Mission Trails Regional Park (MTRP), with 20 exhibitors with children's nature and outdoor recreation activities. Loose Parts Nature Play activities were featured at both. Cooperators were Sierra Club-San Diego Chapter,



Institute for Conservation Research-San Diego Zoo, Family Adventures in Nature, Mission Trails Regional Park, and SDCaN.

Presentations.

- “Healthier by Nature,” to East County Health Providers, February 12
- “High Touch in a High Tech World” to 300 graduate faculty of National University on February 29
- “Happier by Nature: Places for Children’s Outdoor Play” to San Diego Association of Educators of Young Children conferences on April 18 and October 20
- “Family Nature Clubs” to national Children & Nature Network conference on Aug. 29-31 in Shepherdstown, WV
- “Nature-based Curriculum for Pre-schools,” to Rock Academy Pre-school, August 31
- “Designing Living Environments for Children and Other Creatures” at the 10th Annual Natural Learning Initiative Design Institute, in Chapel Hill, NC, October 11-12
- “Healthier by Nature,” to Pediatric Leaders at Sharp Rees-Stealy Pediatric Medical Group, October 22
- “Schoolyard Nature Safari,” for Green Classroom Professionals teacher workshop and Green Apple Day of Service, US Green Building Council, September 29
- Loose Parts, Nature Play at Merry-go-round Preschool, San Diego French-American School, and at birthday parties
- “Healthier by Nature,” to National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, November 7
- “Healthier by Nature,” to Advisory Committee meeting of American Academy of Pediatrics, December 12
- *Mother Nature’s Child* film shown to groups of families, educators, and other professionals

Goal 2. Enhance schools’ ability to connect children to nearby nature

Local Shrublands Curriculum. The five-lesson curriculum on *San Diego’s Native Habitats: Shrublands* for fourth-grade teachers is taught before students take field trips to the Silverwood Audubon Sanctuary in Lakeside with San Diego Audubon Society, to Crestridge Ecological Reserve in El Cajon with Earth Discovery Institute, and to other

Grant for Schoolyard-based Lessons. The Collaborative was awarded a grant from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) for “Urban Forestry Education: Teachers and Students Choosing Lessons in Nature.” The goals of this project are to develop, offer, and evaluate local nature-based urban forestry lessons. Students will be engaged in reading about trees, then in science lessons in their schoolyard and neighborhood, and then in tree inventory, citizen science, or oak restoration projects. They’ll discover that “trees are cool!”

Local urban foresters provided input on what students should learn about trees; students in San Diego State University (SDSU) credential class on science education developed lessons for this grant, after attending Project Learning Tree training; and SDSU undergraduate students and an evaluation consultant drafted the evaluation plan. Local curriculum consultants are writing lessons, and four nature coordinators have been selected to work in eight pilot schools in 2013.

Project-based Learning with High School Teachers. In the University of San Diego ScienceBridge program that enhances college preparedness, six teachers in four high schools organized nature-based projects on canyons and wetlands within walking distance of their schools: Serra High School (HS) in Shepard Canyon, Kearny HS in Tecolote Canyon, and



Mission HS at Rose Creek and Kendall-Frost Marsh-UCSD Reserve. SDCaN coordinated naturalists and contributed to program evaluation.

Schoolyard Habitat Workshops. Seventy teachers, parents, and gardeners attended the first set of workshops on planning schoolyard habitats (May 19 and 23). Sixty attended the second workshops on selecting and growing native plants, held at the Water Conservation Garden (August 23), SD Botanic Gardens (August 30), and Southwestern College (September 8). Workshops were co-organized with Master Gardeners and California Native Plant Society-San Diego Chapter. Requests for School Garden consultants have increased!

Nature-based Science Educator Workshops. For two "STEMposium2012" teacher workshops in July, training was given on nature-based curriculum for grades 4-5 and bird-related science for teachers of grades 6-8. SDCaN led field trips to a schoolyard habitat, a nearby natural area, and a nature center. In October, SDCaN taught part of "Green School Professionals" certification class to 25 teachers in Santee, including designing and using nature settings for learning. Eight workshops formed a "Nature strand" at the SD Computer-Using Educators and SD Science Educators' Association conference on November 3 at California State University-San Marcos.

Early Childhood Education. Meeting convened on December 11 with early childhood education professionals and nature educators. Local interests, resources, and opportunities were outlined, and a proposal outlined to increase awareness of, planning for, and implementation of nature-based activities and settings in early childhood education centers.

Escondido Nature Educators' Group. Convened by SDCaN, the group began meeting in June and has produced an "Escondido Creek Watershed Nature Guide," participated in Escondido Educators' Night Out on September 27 at the San Diego Children's Discovery Museum," and is gathering information on nature resources at the 23 elementary and middle schools in Escondido.

Greater San Diego Science and Engineering Fair. Awards were given on March 21 for five nature-based science projects. Congratulations to:

- Ants of Southern California, by Adam Recht and Gabriela Rothman, San Diego Jewish Academy (Senior)
- Small Insect, Large Dilemma, by Boris Stepanyuk, High Tech High (Senior)
- Hooked by Bait or Lure, Desi Charfauros, Good Shepherd School
- Influence of Tides on Behavior of Light-footed Clapper Rails, Daniel Vitenson, Rhoades School
- Osage Orange: Does It Have Antibacterial or Insect Repellent Effects? Erica Barrett, Rhoades School

San Diego Citizen Science. New group established and met October 19 and December 10, convened by SDCaN, UCSD ScienceBridge program, and Institute for Conservation Research-San Diego Zoo. Discussions include how citizen science projects are established and how they enhance learning in nature and nature-based learning in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) classes.

Goal 3. Partner with community groups to value, promote and provide opportunities for outdoor experiences.

Family Nature Clubs. More than 750 families have had more than 400 opportunities to participate in family nature activities over the past two years. Ten active Family Nature Clubs are organized, offering weekly or bi-weekly nature outings in the SD region. The Family Adventures in Nature helps families get nature back on their calendars with a variety of opportunities each month. A weekly email is sent to outline the upcoming events and adventures. More information at www.FamilyAdventuresinNature.org.

Healthy by Nature. In a pilot study, two pediatric health providers gave patients (during “well-child” visits) a NatureRx prescription form to spend time in nature and to limit screen time, briefly speaking to parents and children about those health benefits. Both providers reported very positive qualitative responses from families regarding their intention to adhere to the prescription’s directives. A fact sheet for well-child visits was prepared, in response to requests from pediatric health providers after presentations on “Healthy by Nature.”

Naturalist Guide Coordination. Thirty naturalists attended workshop on new California Master Naturalist program on February 22. An Interpretive Skills for Naturalists was piloted at the July 11 meeting. Fifteen completed internationally-recognized 32-hour Certified Interpretive Guide class in August, focused on principles of interpretation, connecting with audiences and tailoring for diverse learning styles, interactive group activities, and emphasis on working with children in nature. A committee developed and presented the “Birding for Naturalists” training module at the November 8 and December 4 meetings, and the SD Naturalists group will sponsor this training and Interpretive Skills training in early 2013.

Nature Awareness Day Camp. A weeklong day camp, “Sagebrush Survivors,” was offered at South Bay YMCA in June, with four hours in nature each day. Campers learned how indigenous people lived without the trappings of modern civilization, got to know the plants and animals that live in the canyon, learned wilderness safety, and built confidence in the outdoors. It was adapted from Wilderness Awareness School in eastern Washington, and the *Coyote Guide to Mentoring* by Jon Young.

Goal 4. Drive change in attitudes, skills and behaviors that lead to positive relationships with nature.

The cumulative and collaborative efforts of many nature educators have contributed to this goal.

Goal 5. Promote learning, sharing and networking

Collaborative Partners and Members. Additional Collaborative Partners were invited, bringing the total to 20. There are now 530 members, who are those listed on the contact list.

Meetings. Six general meetings were held.

- January 25 meeting featured the film, *Mother Nature’s Child* and elected the slates of the Advisory and Working Boards
- March 15 meeting, “Connecting Children and Families to Nature: What, so what, and now what?” with Marti Erickson, Ph.D. (national Children & Nature Network board chair) and Janice Swaisgood

- May 15 meeting, “Nature-based Science Learning: Local High School Students, Projects, and Possibilities
- July 31 meeting, “Innovating and Inspiring to Increase Nature Experiences for Children,”
- October 9 meeting, “Community Connections for Children and Nature”
- Instead of a general meeting for SDCaN in December, invitations were issued for three coordinating meetings: December 4 for naturalists, December 10 for citizen science, and December 11 for Nature in Early Childhood Education.

Awards. The School Gardens Program of the San Diego Master Gardeners received the “Sustainable Program” award from the San Diego Science Alliance, at their Partner Awards program on May 23. The award recognized them for accomplishments and advocacy for establishing and using school gardens and schoolyard habitats for learning. Currently the 60 volunteer School Garden consultants work with schools that have a garden and/or schoolyard habitat in San Diego County.

Community Leadership. SDCaN met with County Supervisor Diane Jacobs on January 18, discussing her interest in health issues, especially in East County. Meeting held with aide to SD County Supervisor Pam Slater, focused on early childhood programs. The SDCaN Board developed but didn’t implement an initiative to engage community participation, for “Healthier, Happier, and Smarter in Nature.”

National Children & Nature Network. Family Nature Fun event at Camp Pendleton on April 24 was designated as the local event for the nationally-coordinated “Let’s G.O. (Get Outdoors)” events. Two attended the national Children & Nature Network meeting on Aug. 29-31 in Shepherdstown, WV. Resources are drawn for local programs, from the Natural Families, Natural Teachers, and Natural Leaders efforts.

Goal 6. Build sustainable organization to support mission

Governance. Separate Advisory and Working Boards were set up in 2011, and were merged in August 2012. Meetings were held on January 18, February 7, March 14, April 18, May 2, June 11, July 17, August 24, October 3, November 7, and December 5. San Diego Audubon Society continues to serve as fiscal sponsor. Steps to consider incorporation as a non-profit organization were reviewed. Meetings of San Diego Science Alliance were attended, with possibilities of becoming a nature-based program under their fiscal sponsorship.

Administration. The contact list was maintained, and members were sent periodic email messages about meetings and resources. Audubon provided administrative support for the grants received. Checking account was opened.

Grants. The following grants were received:

- \$5,000 from the Sierra Club for family nature activities at the Kids First Fair at Camp Pendleton.
- \$2,500 donation to give presentations to design, health, and early childhood education professionals.
- \$82,000 from California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection for “Urban Forestry Education: Teachers and Students Choosing Lessons in Nature”
- \$5,000 awarded for Schoolyard Habitats from the Sempra Energy Foundation (San Diego Science Alliance serving as fiscal sponsor).

Contributions. In-kind contributions from:

- Adventure 16 for prizes at Military Family Nature Fairs
- ICF International for printing Family Nature Guides for north county and mid-county
- Meetings held at Girl Scouts of San Diego-Imperial Council program center in Balboa Park, Mission Trails Regional Park, San Diego Botanic Garden, Southwestern College, and Water Conservation Garden.

Proposals. Proposals were written for the following, and were not funded:

- Nature Prescriptions, submitted by a University of Vermont professor to the National Institutes of Health for nature prescriptions
- “Healthier by Nature: Prescription Trails Project,” submitted to The San Diego Foundation with outcomes to educate health care providers, increase nature-based activities (Otay Valley Regional Park and Chollas Lake areas, in cooperation with the City of San Diego), and strengthen connections among healthcare providers, public lands, and families.
- “Rare Fruit Trees in San Diego’s Schoolyards” and “Teacher Workshops for Schoolyard Habitats and Fruit Trees,” submitted to San Diego Chapter of California Rare Fruit Growers, both in cooperation with Master Gardeners
- Preliminary proposal submitted to National Science Foundation program for Advancing Informal STEM Learning, focused on developing citizen science programs that engage students, families, and adults in gathering data to address local conservation issues.
- “Capacity-building proposal,” discussed informally with several potential local funders

Corporate Sponsorship Package. The Board identified six projects and invited corporate support for them: nature-based learning, outdoor nature-based activities, nature prescriptions, schoolyard habitats, naturalist guide fund, and family nature clubs. Corporate sponsorship packet developed.

Selected Success Stories from Collaborating Partners

Nature-based Videos. Jim Karnik has made more great short films that can be used in educational and public programs, view them at <http://www.fieldnotes.com/videos.html> (in vimeo format). Examples are the Children and Nature video filmed at Mission Trails Regional Park, <http://www.fieldnotes.com/csdprcn.html>.

OutdoorExplore! After-school Program. The OE! after-school program and the field trips for 28 classes in East County to Silverwood Audubon Sanctuary will be funded by grants just received by SD Audubon Society from The San Diego Foundation and San Diego Gas & Electric. Both use the Nearby Nature Field Trip Guide, and the classes use Exploring San Diego’s Shrubland Habitats curriculum lessons before the field trips. Feedback from students, after-school staff, and naturalists is being collated for the OE! Program over the past two years. Audubon held a thank-you lunch for naturalists in both programs, on August 22.

You are invited to provide more stories and successes!

For more information, contact Anne Fege at fege@sandiegoaudubon.org or 858-472-1293