



Conservation Committee Letters of Commendation



Photo by Sandrine Biziaux-Scherson

Conservation Letters of Commendation

Each year at the Sea and Sage Audubon Annual Dinner, the Conservation Committee presents Letters of Commendation to individuals or organizations that have made noteworthy contributions to the protection of habitats, natural resources, birds and wildlife, in Orange County (occasionally beyond OC). The table below provides brief summaries on recipients of these letters and their contributions.

Letter of Commendation Recipients

2024	<p>Orange County Parks, Nix Nature Center: for protecting birds from window strikes. The Nix Center installed bird deterrent film with rows of barely visible dots on large windows that were having repeated bird strikes. Birds do not recognize glass as a solid object and when it reflects habitats, it tricks them into flying into the glass and often dying. Researchers estimate that up to 1 billion birds die every year in the United States alone from colliding with glass. The dots are hardly noticeable to human visitors but are real lifesavers to the avian visitors!</p> <p>Huntington Beach Central Library and Supporters: for protecting birds by adding strike deterrents to their windows. After being alerted by visitors and area residents that hummingbirds were dying in large</p>
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	<p>numbers after striking the library's massive windows, the library applied bird deterrent film over selected problem windows. The costs of the treatment were covered by an anonymous donation for the materials and the challenging installation job. Since installation, the library has received no reports of dead birds.</p>
2023	<p>Samuel Bressler: For establishing, organizing, and leading the Puente Chino Hills Count Circle. This count has grown in diversity, participants, and birds counted each year since it began 3 years ago, contributing valuable avian data from a local area previously not included in the Christmas Bird Count.</p> <p>Eco Now (Thea Merritt) for establishing Eco Now stores that offer refills for cleaning and personal hygiene products as well as non-plastic and reusable items. They give much needed options to customers who want to adopt zero-waste consumerism.</p>
2022	<p>Congressman Alan Lowenthal for his role, during many years of service to the people of his district and the nation, in protecting birds and other natural resources, including the introduction of the Migratory Bird Protection Act, the Albatross and Petrel Conservation Act and legislation to ban further oil drilling in federal waters off the coast of California.</p>
2021	<p>Peggy Chase for protecting raptors as educator and volunteer coordinator and through work to achieve new location for the Orange County Bird of Prey Center</p> <p>Christine Tischer for sustained time, effort, and energy over 20 years to provide a program that has ensured a successful breeding Tree Swallow population in OC</p>
2020	<p>Frank and Joann Randall for their support to save Banning Ranch and their pledge of \$50 million for its acquisition</p>
2019	<p>Lana Nguyen for protection of local coastal resources, including threatened species. We commend Lana, as a California State Park Environmental Scientist, for balancing the duty to protect sensitive birds while respecting the rights of the beach goer. Her guidance to protect two Western Snowy Plover nests this summer resulted in the first Snowy Plovers in decades to fledge from Huntington State Beach near the Santa Ana River.</p> <p>Audubon California, in appreciation of their efforts and advances relating to Federal environmental cutbacks; funding for the Salton Sea; protection of marine fisheries; promotion and assistance with chapter advocacy; and Tri-colored Blackbird listing</p>
2018	<p>Hills for Everyone for their efforts to preserve the natural resources of the Puente -- Chino Hills region and recent successful opposition to two proposed housing developments that would be adjacent to Chino Hills State Park and would build houses in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones with limited access</p>
2017	<p>Steve Lopez, columnist for the LA Times, for investigating and reporting on coastal issues, including a series on the threats to natural habitats</p>

	<p>up and down the coast of California and the work of the California Coastal Commission</p> <p>Joel Weintraub and Bob Allen for their contributions to conservation through their thoughtful management and shaping of the OrangeCountyBirding listserv, a service which fosters interest in birds and keeps interested birders informed. We commend Joel and Bob for including processes in the system to protect the location of sensitive birds and sensitive nests. Joel and Bob created the listserv in 2000 and maintained it until 2016.</p>
2016	The Emergent Invasive Plant Management Committee of the Orange County Chapter of the California Native Plant Society
2015	<p>Penny Ellia for her efforts and dedication to protecting Orange County's natural coastal resources</p> <p>Garry George</p> <p>Gillian Martin for her contributions to the protection of cavity nesting birds through the Cavity Conservation Initiative</p>
2014	Gloria Sefton and Rich Gomez of Saddleback Canyons Conservancy and Ray Chandos of Rural Canyons Conservation Fund
2013	<p>Kristen Bender for her work with Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy and 25 years of commitment. She has been instrumental in the native plants garden where plants are grown for restoration in the marshes.</p> <p>Lena Hayashi for her enthusiasm and effectiveness as an ambassador for conservation, birds, wildlife and the acquisition and protection of natural resources. She has served on the Board of several groups, including the Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy, Shipley Nature Center, Sea and Sage and Orange Coast River Park.</p>
2012	
2011	Diane Bonnano for her dedication and leadership in efforts to preserve West Coyote Hills
2010	
2009	Scott Ferguson with Conservation Fund, Erin Wilson with California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), and Ken Corey with US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for their work to reach an important conservation agreement to purchase 300 acres of critical wildlife habitat in Trabuco Canyon
2008	<p>Richard J. O'Neill for the decades of contributions he and his late wife Donna O'Neill have made to help the environment in California and conservation in Orange County</p> <p>Spence Porter for years of generosity contributing electronic and tracking equipment for raptor research programs and education and communication equipment at Starr Ranch Sanctuary</p>
2007	<p>Dave Pryor, State Parks, and the cast of volunteers, commended for protection of California Least Terns in Huntington Beach</p> <p>Cheryl Egger, commended for her personal contribution as volunteer coordinator at the Huntington Beach Least Tern Preserve</p>

	Loren Hays , commended for his personal contribution to the protection of Least Terns, Western Snowy Plovers and shorebirds
2006	Gloria Sefton for conservation and preservation of wildlife and their habitats in Orange County, especially in Trabuco Canyon Michael Fitts for his dedication and the Endangered Habitats League's contributions to the conservation and preservation of wildlife and their habitats in Orange County Ray Chandos for conservation and preservation of wildlife and their habitats in Orange County, especially in Trabuco Canyon William (Bill) Frey for his dedication and the Vedanta Society's contributions to the conservation and preservation of wildlife and their habitats in Orange County
2005	Dave Bontrager for his many accomplishments in the field of conservation
2004	Stephanie Pacheco Margaret Henke & Sherri Loveland Audubon California & the Natural Resource Defense Council
2003	Diane Bonanno and fellow Friends of Coyote Hills volunteers Denny Bean, Angela Lindstrom, Connie Spenger, Kathleen Shanfield, Susan Montgomery, & Dennis Borgogno for their efforts to save from proposed development the Chevron Coyote Hills property, the largest parcel of natural coastal sage scrub habitat in the Fullerton area John Quigley whose heroic effort to save one special old oak tree brought to the public's attention the importance of oaks to our western heritage and our natural communities Ray Chandos of Rural Canyons Conservation League for his long-term dedication to preserve Trabuco Canyon and surrounding areas
2002	Gail Prothero for her work in trying to stop the golf course at Arroyo Trabuco
2001	Connie Spenger for her lifelong dedication to conservation and her role in helping to make Coal Canyon a wildlife corridor. In 1986, Connie received the chapter's Conservation Award for her role in saving the Tecate Cypress. Connie has continued to work on the preservation of rare plants and wildlife corridors and she played an important role in the recent acquisition and dedication of Coal Canyon as a state park and the extension of the wildlife corridor. Pat Brennan , Environmental Reporter for the Orange County Register, for his balanced reporting on environmental matters. The chapter appreciates Pat's work to present the facts and his efforts to show more than one side of the issue.
2000	Marilyn Ganahl for preserving Barham Ranch as open space Theresa Sears for preserving Barham Ranch as open space
1999	
1998	Dan Silver for his continued leadership in Orange County, specifically the Dana Point Headlands Donna Krucki for the excellent design and presentation of the Nature Center at O'Neill Regional Park

	<p>Sara Grigand</p> <p>Mike Reeder for his outstanding leadership in organizing the collection of data and analyzing the potential impacts of fishing in Peter's Canyon Reservoir on the flora and fauna</p> <p>Ginny McVickar for the excellent leadership and management of Wagon Wheel Regional Park</p> <p>Claire Schlotterbeck</p> <p>Jean Watt for her perseverance in protecting natural open space in the Irvine Coast area</p> <p>Pacific Wildlife Center</p>
1997	<p>Robb Hamilton with Doug Willick, for their new book entitled <u>The Birds of Orange County, California: Status and Distribution</u></p> <p>Doug Willick with Robb Hamilton, for their new book entitled <u>The Birds of Orange County, California: Status and Distribution</u></p> <p>Peter Douglas, California Coastal Commission for upholding the spirit and intent of the California Coastal Act</p> <p>Carolyn Honer</p> <p>Noel Davis</p> <p>Dick Purvis</p> <p>Tim Miller for his dedication to protecting birds and wildlife in parks</p>
1996	<p>Deborah Clark, Environmental Nature Center for her ongoing commitment to the education of the youth of OC concerning their natural environment</p> <p>Peter DeSimone, Starr Ranch Sanctuary for his ongoing commitment in protecting the environment and work on the ongoing NCCP process</p> <p>Dan Silver, Endangered Habitats League for his ongoing commitment in protecting the environment and work on the ongoing NCCP process</p> <p>Jeanne Carter, Director, El Modena Xeriscape Garden / Nature Center for her on-going dedication in the education of the youth of OC concerning the ecology of our native habitats</p> <p>Terry Watt, Friends of Irvine Coast, for his ongoing commitment in protecting the environment and work on the ongoing NCCP process</p> <p>Kathryn Swiss for her commitment in protecting the environment as well as your unique understanding of developers and their financial arrangements</p>
1995	<p>Todd Berens for his work for Mono Lake over the years</p> <p>Joel Reynolds, NRDC, for his hard work, energy, and commitment to the environment, especially in continuing legal efforts to stop habitat fragmentation and destruction by the tollroads</p> <p>Bill and Betty Milan, O.C. Bird of Prey Center, for their dedication and energy in rehabilitating raptors and their efforts in educating the public about them</p> <p>Bill Bretz, PhD, UCI Natural Reserves, for protecting the wetlands of Upper Newport Bay Ecological Reserve and the San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary</p> <p>Peter Bowler, PhD, UCI Ecology & Evolutionary Biology, for protecting the wetlands of Upper Newport Bay Ecological Reserve and the San Joaquin Marsh</p>

	<p>Scott Weldy, DVM, for his dedication, enthusiasm, and personal effort in rehabilitating raptors, including the generosity of your time and monetary costs related to the care of these birds</p>
1994	<p>Larry Sweet for his dedication in managing the new Laguna Coast Wilderness Park</p> <p>Howard DeCruyenaere, Santiago Creek Greenway Alliance, and Gordon Ruser for giving unselfishly of their time during the gathering of signatures for CALPAW, the California Parks & Wildlife Initiative</p> <p>Michael Phillips, Laguna Canyon Conservancy for his dedication and enthusiasm shown over the years in the fight to preserve the Laguna Beach greenbelt</p> <p>Joel Reynolds, NRDC, for his dedication in protecting the environment and its endangered inhabitants</p> <p>Michael Fitts, NRDC, for the successful fight involving UCI's open space reserve</p> <p>Lezlie Robinson for her extremely successful CALPAW signature-gathering campaign (California Parks & Wildlife Initiative)</p> <p>Susan Durbin for the successful fight involving UCI's open space reserve</p>
1993	<p>Tim Miller, O.C. Dept. of Parks & Recreation, for his continuing efforts in the restoration and expansion of native plant habitats in the regional parks (Yorba Regional Park)</p> <p>John Renna for setting up the Rare Bird Alert</p> <p>M. Stephan Koontz, Roland Bye, Paul Jordan, and Michael Winsten for pro bono legal support and legal advice on the Las Flores lawsuit</p> <p>Ray Chandos for his assistance with the Las Flores lawsuit</p> <p>Marc Ries for coordinating the Letter-of-the-Month Club for the Armchair Activist Program</p>
1992	<p>John Scholl (CA Dept of Fish & Game) and Nancy Bruland (OC Dept. of Beaches & Parks) for the docent program at the Upper Newport Bay Ecological Reserve</p> <p>Richard Zemball, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for the preservation of the clapper rail populations at Upper Newport Bay Ecological Reserve and Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge</p> <p>Randy Adams, Mark Clark, Tod Gudger, Dana Johnson, Mike Kietz, and Dan Pearson (Sr. Biologist, Southern California Edison), & Bill Riviera (SCE) for volunteering their time and expertise in placing 18 new nesting platforms at the heron rookery on the Santa Ana River</p>
1991	
1990	<p>Rick Derevan for legal advice given to the chapter and to Starr Ranch Sanctuary</p> <p>Rick VanderKnyff for his high standard of environmental reporting for the L.A. Times</p> <p>Lida Lenney, Laguna Canyon Conservancy, for the preservation of Laguna Canyon</p> <p>Tom Larson for the "Guide for Environmental Restoration in Orange County"</p>

	<p>Harry Huggins for the preservation of native wildlands in O.C., Laguna Canyon Walk</p> <p>Shirley Detloff in recognition of her working for nearly 20 years toward protecting the Bolsa Chica wetlands</p>
1989	<p>Alden Kelly, Consulting Arborist, for comments to the O.C. Planning Commission regarding the Resource Management Plan for the Foothill Planned Community (coast live oaks, native vegetation, ancient trees)</p> <p>Sherry Meddick, Rural Canyon Residents Association, for preserving the rural character of the Santa Ana Mountain foothill communities</p> <p>Charlotte Clarke, President, Orange County Fund for Environmental Defense, for the establishment of the Fund</p> <p>Tim Miller, Director, O.C. Dept. of Parks & Recreation for support for the revegetation project at Irvine Park</p> <p>Shirley Dettloff for her dedication to the Bolsa Chica wetlands</p> <p>Erik Katzmaier, designer of Huntington Beach Central Park, for the use of native plants</p>
1988	<p>Walton W. Wright for his incomparable knowledge of the plant communities of Orange County and Southern California, sharing of expertise, a "friend, mentor and inspiration"</p> <p>Ray Chandos and Bruce Conn, Editors, Rural Canyons Conservation Fund Newsletter, for their timely and informative newsletter for residents of the Santa Ana Mountain foothills</p> <p>Allan Beek for achievements in preserving and enhancing the environmental values of O.C., as Newport Beach Planning Commissioner, Trustee for the O.C. Foundation for Preservation of Public Property, and supporter of the Upper Newport Bay Ecological Reserve</p> <p>Virginia Chester for her dedication and persistence in monitoring the health of the oak trees at Irvine Regional Park</p> <p>Howard Smith, Manager, Green River Golf Club, for habitat enhancement for the Western Bluebird</p> <p>Mark Carlson, Manager, Irvine Regional Park for the 1988 native plant revegetation program at Irvine Regional Park</p> <p>Susan Sheakley for her leadership in the 1988 Irvine Regional Park revegetation program</p> <p>Allan Barron, Marine Mile Shipyard for his concern for the mother duck and her nest full of eggs on the dock in Newport Beach</p>
1987	<p>Hal Krizan, Director EMA Parks and Recreation for his leadership in two innovative programs, the Orange County Heritage Tree Program and the Irvine Park Revegetation Project</p>
1986	<p>Steve Jones, DK Donuts, for the donation of donuts August 14, 1985 (related to efforts to save Bolsa Chica)</p> <p>Robert Roubian for his dedication to saving the oceans and his generous donation toward the preservation of the Bolsa Chica</p> <p>James R. Talevich for his superb effort in drafting a proposed county ordinance to encourage the preservation of our native oak trees</p>

	<p>Anita and Bob Bennyhoff for the outstanding reporting of events in their newspaper, Common Talk (especially the Eastern Transportation Corridor planning process)</p>
1985	<p>Alliance for Survival / North Orange County Regional Occupation Program for their efforts in saving the stranded herons in August of 1984</p> <p>Ken Maas and Mel Lewis for their outstanding work at the Anaheim wetlands, which would have been destroyed without their efforts</p> <p>REI Coop for their generous donation of materials used to make the beautiful bird book bags that benefit the Education Committee of Sea and Sage Audubon Society</p>
1984	
1983	<p>Pete Jenny, Park Ranger, Santiago Oaks Regional Park, and his staff (Kevin Daverin, Ron Broadbelt) for their courage in protecting the Nature Center at Santiago Oaks Regional Park from destruction during the Gypsum Canyon Fire on 10/9/82</p> <p>Tony Moiso, Rancho Mission Viejo, for significant land dedications by the Rancho Mission Viejo Company to Caspers Regional Park and O'Neill Regional Park</p> <p>Richard F. Boultinghouse, President, Cota de Caza, for the dedication of Wagon Wheel Canyon to the Orange County Regional Park system</p> <p>Chuck Smythe, Smythe Companies, for the beautiful, bluff-top Lantern Bay Park, a county park on the Lantern Bay Development in Dana Point</p> <p>Ed Smythe, Smythe Companies, for the beautiful, bluff-top Lantern Bay Park, a county park on the Lantern Bay Development in Dana Point</p>
1982	<p>Ruth Saadi for her outstanding contribution to county planning, land use and transportation, and for her outstanding service on the 1980/81 Grand Jury</p> <p>Orange County Historical Commission for its efforts to save the oaks in Irvine Park</p> <p>The Irvine Company for allowing Sea and Sage Christmas Count participants onto its property for the 1981 Christmas Bird Count</p> <p>Supervisor Bruce Nestande, his staff and EMA staff for their leadership in oak preservation in the Irvine Park Redevelopment Plan</p>
1981	<p>Curtis Keyes, Marine Risks Incorporated, for his refusal to insure a Japanese whaling vessel</p> <p>Charles Rock, Ramakrishna Monastery & Vedanta Society for their efforts on behalf of the environment and the public (donation of 234 acres to O'Neill Park, construction of a nature trail on their property)</p> <p>Gordon Grant, L.A. Times for the L.A. Times articles on the environment, nature & conservation in Orange County</p> <p>Fern Pirkle, President, Friends of the Irvine Coast, for her efforts to preserve Orange County's only remaining coastal open space</p>
1980	<p>Mark Parratt for teaching courses in Environmental Problems at Fullerton College and for instituting the Environmental Internship Teaching Program (reaching 30,000 elementary school children)</p> <p>Smith Tool Company for their efforts for the benefit of the burrowing owls who live on their property</p>

	<p>Trent Pulliam, Mission Viejo Company, for saving, storing, and making available a rare collection of marine fossils</p> <p>Dr. Joel Pasco for his work with injured and sick wildlife</p> <p>Shirley Kirkpatrick, Save-The-Tree Committee, for efforts that established, at the county level, a tree preservation program</p>
1979	<p>Mr. Jim Neil for the inspiration, environmental improvement and his hard work during the fifteen years he has been teaching at Marina High School in Huntington Beach, including the teaching of Crisis in the American Environment classes</p> <p>All the Individuals, public and private (Gregg Gatewood, Paul Kelly, Dr. Robert Levis, State of CA Controller Kenneth Cory & State Lands Commission, Trantweing Brothers, Balboa Island Ferry Co., Pacific Telephone Co.) for their outstanding cooperation in the relocation of the Osprey nest in Newport Harbor</p>
1978	<p>Assemblyman Dennis Mangers for his dedication to the preservation of the Bolsa Chica marshlands</p> <p>Jon S. Brand, Mayor of Laguna Beach, for the establishment of the Laguna Recycling Center</p> <p>Robert House for the creation of the Environmental Nature Center adjoining Newport Harbor High School</p> <p>James Rich, DVM for his dedication to the rescue of wildlife</p>
1977	<p>Orange Coast College for their continuing and expanding recycling efforts</p> <p>City of Huntington Beach for Curbside Newspaper Recycling</p> <p>City of Newport Beach for Curbside Newspaper Recycling</p> <p>City of Fullerton for Curbside Newspaper Recycling</p> <p>City of San Juan Capistrano for planning for open space and agricultural land preservation</p> <p>Jack Berger for his untiring efforts as OC Greenbelt Coordinator and for the magnificent Greenbelt Implementation Plan</p> <p>Huntington Beach Company for their unique and imaginative combinations of art and education for the Seacliff Shopping Center</p> <p>Edward & Barbara Beale, the architect and artist, for their creativity in designing Seacliff Village with its pelagic motif</p> <p>Dale Featherling, reporter for the LA Times, in recognition of his outstanding journalistic contributions in many conservation areas</p>
1976	
1975	
1974	<p>La Solana Corporation for cooperation well in excess of strict compliance of conditions of approval for the permit to construct the houses in Huntington Harbor (in support of California Least Terns)</p>