



FRIENDS OF
BALLONA
WETLANDS

Ballona Bulletin

December 2021

Volunteer of the Year!

***Big or small,
this volunteer
helps with it all!
Announcing
our 2021
Volunteer of the
Year...***



JIM BURTON

It is with great appreciation and respect that we announce the Friends of Ballona Wetlands Volunteer of the Year for 2021, **Jim Burton!** This honor is long overdue, and in summarizing why, Patrick Tyrrell, Manager of Restoration and Upper Education shared, "Working with Jim and his team at EcoKai is a pleasure and a privilege. He is always willing to drop everything and lend his expertise to brainstorm about a problem I'm having and come up with a brilliant solution. Whether it's as simple as fixing a broken field office door or as complicated as redesigning a drain that's eroding away our trail, Jim always comes through. He's an indispensable part of the Friends of Ballona Wetlands team and a true Friend of the Friends."

Jim grew up along the coast of Southern California and from a young age his family helped instill him with a deep love and respect for the ocean. He reflects,

"I was extremely fortunate to have had the opportunity to travel to wonderful places around the world where my parents would teach my sister and I the importance of respecting the environment and taking personal responsibility for the earth and its fragile ecosystem."

This love and sense of responsibility for nature led him to his career in environmental engineering where he eventually founded EcoKai Environmental, Inc.

Through his work with Dr. Edith Read (a Friends Board Member) during the development of the Ballona Freshwater Marsh, Jim learned about Friends of Ballona Wetlands efforts to protect and restore the wetlands. This resonated with him and for more than a decade, he has volunteered his time, resources, professional knowledge, and skills. "It is with honor that I lend my time and resources and those of EcoKai Environmental to assist the Friends of Ballona Wetland to accomplish their vision of restoration."

The legacy of Jim Burton's generous spirit is seen every day at Ballona Wetlands: in the expertly constructed storage shed at Ballona Discovery Park, the safer trails in the wetlands and the ready smile he gives to all.

We at Friends of Ballona Wetlands are honored to have Jim Burton as our colleague, friend, and this year's Volunteer of the Year.

Teamwork makes the dream work



Gateway to the Wetlands after restoration

With our programs re-opening this year, we could not have accomplished as much as we have without the help of our all-star volunteers! From gardening events, to creek clean ups, to restoration, our volunteers are always the driving force in creating positive change at Ballona Wetlands. The "Gateway to the Wetlands" project, conducted in recent years, is a monumental representation of the hard work our volunteers have put in to our restoration efforts.



Gateway to the Wetlands before restoration



Gateway to the Wetlands during restoration

The area near the western entrance to the Wetlands was dominated by invasive non-native weeds - some reaching up to 6ft tall. Some intensive restoration work was needed. The Gateway restoration project utilized 1,800 volunteers during 40 volunteer events. Together, we removed 5,433 lbs of invasive plant species, and planted 1,100 native plants!

Now, the first thing visitors see when they enter the wetlands, is a beautiful pathway with native flora and fauna that highlights the natural beauty that makes up the Ballona Wetlands. We continue to work on this area today and have have extended the project east along Culver Blvd. Since October we've removed more than 6 tons of invasive iceplant.

This success story could not have been done without the help of our volunteers. As we continue to open up our programming more and more, you too can get involved with the Friends.



Check out ways you can get involved!

Volunteer Opportunities

Our Year Wrapped Up!

***Take a quick look at what we've accomplished
within our programs this year!***



Education

50%

of our field trips programs
were in-person this year.
The other 50% were done
virtually.

Restoration

60 tons

of non-native invasive
plant species were
removed between Jan-
March 2021.

*Including this L.A.
Conservation Corp
restoration project, we are
at 89 tons for the year!
That is mostly non-native
plants but also includes
trash from the creek.*



Wildlife Monitoring

2

successful Least Bittern
nests documented during
this year's bird surveying.

*As a Bird Species of
Special Concern, it is
extra exciting to see it*

Longest distanced virtual field trip? Grade 5 students in Calgary, Canada!



50%
of students this year were
from Title 1 schools

*Even with a year full of
various COVID
restrictions, we were able
to serve 2,067 students.*



This year, staff and interns
grew, planted, and
maintained more than

**700
plants!**



*successfully breeding at
the Ballona Freshwater
Marsh.*



We have
x3
the number of docents
this year who reliably help
and educate the public at
our community events.

December Community Events

Tis' the Season!

Check out all of our community events for the month of December.
Click the button below to learn more and register!