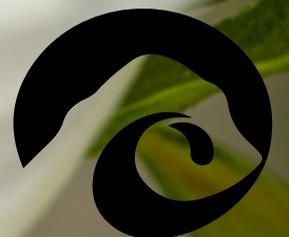


# *nature notes*

VOLUME 14 • WINTER 2023



CENTRAL COAST STATE PARKS ASSOCIATION



**'Adopt the pace of nature.  
Her secret is patience.'**

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

How is it that another winter and a new year is upon us already? I am simply astonished and grateful when I reflect on what the Central Coast State Parks Association accomplished in 2022. Despite the challenges that our economy, work force and supply and demand faced, we managed to stay steady in our path of growth while keeping employees and fulfilling our mission. In the spirit of showing gratitude I am both humbled and excited to announce a few successes for CCSPA.



CCSPA team in front of their new van.

We are thrilled to share that we received a generous grant from PG&E to fund school group transportation, allowing us to fully support transportation for over 100 field trips for underserved students to our parks!

We have a van! Yay! We worked with managers at McCarthy's to acquire a van to support our retail and events operations. This has been a multi-year goal that allows us to reduce employee personal vehicle use and liability and increase productivity and operations.

Our third annual Butterfly Ball was delightful! The well-attended event focused on healthy habitats for the western monarch. We were honored to present four awards to deserving recipients that have contributed much to conservation and the western monarch.

The Western Monarch Trail will grow by seven sites this year thanks to grant funding through the SLO County Tourism Improvement District and Xerces Society!

As I think about the coming year and what lies ahead, I remain hopeful that we will continue to see progressive movement in our own community and beyond towards ecoliteracy and conservation. I hope to see each of us making small changes to be more sustainable that help grow the movement. I hope to see many more students, their families, life long learners and leaders making positive changes in how we live together with our home, the earth. It may be a dream but I know many of you share the same dream. Collectively we can make a difference!

Here's to making dreams come true!

CCSPA is an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit. We are one of 85 similar cooperating associations across the state who work in partnership with State Parks. Tax ID #: 51-0198869.

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Newsletter design by Brady Teufel

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### **Danielle Bronson**

State Park Interpreter III  
Oceano Dunes District

### **Robyn Chase**

State Park Interpreter III  
San Luis Obispo Coast District

## QUICK FACT

# 35%

Increase of migrating monarch butterflies in  
2021-22 over the previous year

# CCSPA'S YEAR-END APPEAL: SUPPORT THE "FACES OF WONDER"

wonder  
[wʌndər] adjective

a feeling of surprise mingled with admiration, caused by something beautiful, unexpected, unfamiliar, or inexplicable



This fall, we kicked off our annual year-end campaign, "Faces of Wonder." Thanks to a generous donor, any gifts will be doubled and will support ongoing access

to educational programming in our State Parks.

With over 1 million annual Central Coast State Park visitors, we are fully committed to preserving and supporting our local State Parks and need your help.

Your contributions will support rotating exhibits at the Morro Bay Museum of Natural History and Spooner Ranch House, informative panels along trails, school group transportation, guided tours and hikes, and many more programs that foster existing and future environmental stewards.

um of Natural History and Spooner Ranch House, informative panels along trails, school group transportation, guided tours and hikes, and many more programs that foster existing and future environmental stewards.

With your generous support, wondering children and visitors in our Central Coast Parks will stay engaged, feel welcomed, and find themselves amazed, curious, and surprised each and every time they visit. Double your gift today! Please consider donating \$50, \$150, or even \$500.

You can donate to this fundraising effort by using your phone's camera to scan the QR code on the left. Or, mail a check to the address on the back of your Nature Notes newsletter and write "Year end fundraiser" in the memo line.

We encourage you to visit our parks, museums, and visitor centers with family and friends. Enjoy them, learn from them, and never stop wondering. Our deepest thanks for your continued support!



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Team!

We're  
looking for  
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and board  
members!

Use your skills  
and passions  
to help make a  
difference in  
your local  
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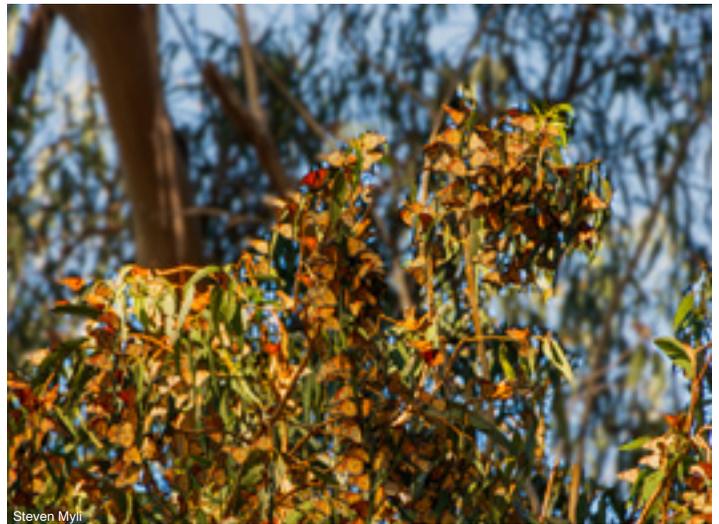
Photo by Mike Baird

# Return of the monarchs

**T**he monarchs are back! As of November 15, the population of western monarchs at the Pismo State Beach Monarch Grove is over 24,000 (and counting)! In total as of November 22, there have been over 105,000 monarchs reported to The Xerces Society's Western Monarch Count project across over 70 overwintering sites.



Jim Barry



Thank you to all sponsors, donors, volunteers,  
entertainers, staff, and attendees of the 2022  
*Butterfly Ball!*  
View photos and recipients of our inaugural awards ceremony at  
[www.centralcoastparks.org/butterfly-ball](http://www.centralcoastparks.org/butterfly-ball)



The official Thanksgiving Count will run from November 12 through December 4, and the New Year's Count will run from December 24 through January 8, 2023.

Below are some standout numbers reported by monitors along the California coast:

- Natural Bridges: 7,500 as of 11/15/22
- Lighthouse Field: 2,000 as of 11/15/22
- Pacific Grove: 12,328 as of 11/18/22
- Pismo Beach: 24,058 as of 11/15/22

Other mid-season highlights include the confirmation of four additional overwintering sites (two in San Luis Obispo County and two in Alameda County) and greater monarch presence in and around Sonoma, Marin, and Bay Area counties. Both Marin County and Alameda County are reported to have over 2,000 butterflies each - the most overwintering monarchs recorded in these regions since 2017-2018.

Though monarch numbers may be up from recent years, they are still at a drastic decline compared to that of the 90s and earlier. A combination of factors may have contributed to their loss, including climate change, disease, and loss of habitat. CCSPA's Butterfly Ball gala in September raised funds to support the Western Monarch Trail project and the restoration of native nectar habitat in our State Parks which sustain overwintering monarchs. We are excited to see these actions take place.

The monarchs will be in overwintering sites along the coast of California through at least mid February before they head east to feed on nectar and lay their eggs. Make your way to the Pismo Monarch Grove or another coastal overwintering site to catch the monarch magic. Here are some tips for viewing:

- Bring binoculars! They can blend right into the trees when they cluster.
- Know when to go! To see the monarchs fluttering, go later in the day during warmer temperatures. To see them cluster in the trees, visit in the morning when it's colder.
- Watch where you step! When monarchs mate, they fall to the ground. Give them space to do their thing.
- Bring your phone! There are QR codes posted throughout the grove linked to informative videos about the monarchs that may answer any of your questions.
- Visit the Monarch Mercantile Trailer (run by us at CCSPA) for any butterfly souvenirs! You support State Park education with every purchase.
- Preserving and protecting the western monarch is a task for us all! To learn more about western monarchs and how to protect them, please visit [westernmonarchtrail.com](http://westernmonarchtrail.com)

Tag us in your photos and videos. We'd love to see them and maybe even share a few!

- Isis Howard, Xerces Society's Western Monarch Count Program and Monica Rutherford



## EXPERIENCE YOUR LOCAL STATE PARKS IN VIRTUAL REALITY

This fall and winter, step into the future at the Morro Bay Museum of Natural History at Morro Bay State Park! California State Parks' only natural history museum has just received a high-tech upgrade. A synchronized group virtual reality (VR) experience is now being piloted through select open house dates to the public.

Using cutting edge VR technology, museum visitors can now virtually visit the San Luis Obispo Coast State Parks in 360° video immersion, accessing areas which could otherwise be challenging for some Parks guests to experience in person. This group experience is synchronized across multiple VR headsets, so whole families can join in on the same "hike" together! Between uses, the VR headsets are sanitized with ultraviolet CleanBox technology. With the goal of increasing Parks accessibility for all, Parks staff are working to record and edit new 360° video content which spotlights various favorite trails and habitats which our local Parks help to preserve.

The pilot program for this VR experience is now open to the

public. The current VR offering dovetails nicely with the ongoing WWII exhibit currently showcased at the Spooner Ranch House, formerly at the Museum. In this 360° immersion video, visitors virtually travel to the Morro Bay sand spit via a short kayak journey and a brief hike to the crest of the dunes. Here they meet State Parks Interpreter Libbie, who provides an introduction and poses a thought-provoking question about the sand spit's role during the WWII naval era.



Excitingly, this sand spit experience is just the first in an upcoming series of VR immersion videos. Park interpreters, district specialists and ranger staff are currently working on developing new videos, broadening the offerings to include many amazing locales within the San Luis Obispo Coast District State Parks!

On December 23rd and 30th from 1 pm to 3 pm, State Park staff are offering an open house to enjoy this VR experience for free with museum admission. Follow us on social media for updates on new virtual reality content and open house events! - State Parks Interpretive Specialist Derek Schultz

# OCEANO DUNES VISITOR CENTER BRINGS HISTORY TO LIFE

**H**ave you ever been to the Oceano Dunes Visitor Center? The exhibits highlight the District's natural and cultural resources as well as our diverse recreational activities. Visitors will learn about the Northern Chumash way of life, the famous Pismo clams, dune habitat, shorebirds, the history of off-highway vehicles and the Dunites. Children and adults alike will enjoy the engaging displays about the park and local area.

Located at 555 Pier Avenue, it is an easily accessible location for any visitors to the area. Whether you are camping at the adjacent Oceano Campground, visiting the nearby beach or butterfly grove, or just driving along Highway 1, this is an excellent place to stop and learn something new!

Bring your friends and family or take a solo trip to learn all about the fascinating natural and cultural history of this region of the Central Coast. State Park staff are there to answer any questions you may have. Plus, any gift shop purchases support State Park programming and events! After your stop at the Visitor Center, enjoy a leisurely stroll along the Guiton Trail to explore the Oceano Lagoon.

The Visitor Center's winter hours are Monday-Saturday from 12-4. Call 805-474-2664 for information about exhibits, upcoming activities or to check on hours of operation.



## ADVENTURES WITH NATURE

Adventures with Nature Programs are guided walks and talks facilitated by California State Park Staff and Volunteers. All ages are welcome and encouraged to attend. These fun, free programs are exploratory in nature, revolving around cultural and natural resources in the coastal California State Parks in San Luis Obispo County.

*To view upcoming outings, please visit  
[www.centralcoastparks.org/awn](http://www.centralcoastparks.org/awn)*





## SPOTLIGHT ON PARK STAFF: KATARINA KORODINI, SENIOR PARK AIDE FOR THE SLO COAST DISTRICT

Katarina, or 'Kat', Korodini was born in Burbank, California but she considers herself a Central Coast local.

### **What brought you to California State Parks and how long have you been working for parks?**

My family and I moved to Los Osos in the early 90s and I began working for State Parks almost 15 years ago. I started at Pismo State Beach working at the two campgrounds, along with Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area. Because I was living in Los Osos, I put in a transfer to work at Morro Bay State Park around 2008 and have been working in this district ever since. I'm a Senior Park Aide and help lead campground operations at Morro Bay State Park, Morro Strand State Beach, and Montaña de Oro State Park. What attracted me to work with State Parks is the beautiful scenery each park has to offer.

### **Describe your typical day at work.**

Typical work days for me are checking in with our three campgrounds (Morro Bay State Park, Morro Strand State Beach, and Montaña de Oro). I help where needed by registering our campers, collecting any park fees, making sure our campgrounds are running smoothly and are well stocked and supplied with brochures, along with talking to our park visitors whether they are camping or visiting.

### **What is your favorite aspect of the job?**

My favorite part of the job is knowing that every day is going to be different. The variation is anywhere from being able to see the wildlife that visits and lives in our parks to talking with visitors from all over the world. You never know who or what you might see.

### **If you had one message for visitors to our state parks what would it be?**

One message I would like to tell our visitors is to get out and explore our parks. We are so fortunate to be in an area that offers great hikes, beaches, birding, surfing, fishing, Junior Ranger programs, camping and many more activities for all ages. All the more reason to take the opportunity and explore what the Central Coast has to offer.

### **Which park location is your favorite? What's your favorite way to spend time in our nearby state parks?**

I would have to say my favorite park is Montaña de Oro. The campground is very quaint and charming. Spooner's Cove is a phenomenal sight to see. I enjoy hiking the trails and looking at scat (I know it sounds odd) when I come across it.

- Interview by Monica Rutherford

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Grab a gift for the park lover in your life just in time for the holidays!

Take 20% off an online order with code

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One coupon per customer. Valid online only through January 7.



ccspa-store.square.site

## Check out our event calendar!

The calendar is regularly updated and features CCSPA and State Park events, activities, fundraisers, and programs around the Central Coast!



Scan the QR code with your phone camera

[www.centralcoastparks.org/calendar](http://www.centralcoastparks.org/calendar)

# ELECTRIC MONARCH TATTOO PARTNERSHIP YIELDS NEW ART



The Pismo State Beach Monarch Grove is one of the most frequently visited State Parks here on the Central Coast, attracting thousands of people per day during butterfly season. CCSPA operates the Monarch Mercantile Trailer there, and this year we wanted to look for ways to appeal to a wider demographic of visitors. When trying to think of different art styles that more people would enjoy wearing, I thought about the apparel I have from our local tattoo shops. Tattoo artists have a unique talent when it comes to creating art that is eye-catching, and they have a skill set which allows them to take an array of concepts from those they work with and fine-tune them into something unique, stunning, and easy to love. It is extremely important to us here at CCSPA to work with local artists and businesses whenever possible. When thinking of who we could collaborate locally with to create this piece, tattoo artist Josh Rodriguez was an easy choice.

Josh works with Skylar Grove and a few other wonderful artists at Electric Monarch Tattoo Shop, which Skylar opened in 2020 in San Luis Obispo. I've been lucky enough to have work done by Josh more than once. I knew he would be able to make a monarch graphic for a shirt that would be bold, bright, beautiful and unique to anything we have delivered before. Creating something special is always a collaborative effort here at CCSPA, and Retail Operations Manager Julie Lewis was able to provide insight that would

lead to a piece that was not only eye-catching, but also accurately represented our beautiful monarchs and local flora.

Josh and I met up at Electric Monarch to review the specifications. While we were talking, catching up and going over the details, he sketched an idea on his tablet. It always impresses and amazes me how quickly tattoo artists create something in front of your eyes; it's like magic. The mockup was just as incredible as I thought it would be. Over the next few weeks, he came up with the graphic for our "Electric Monarch Tee Shirt" (youth tees and adult crewnecks are in the works).

Anyone from your bisabuela to your toddler will want to wear these. They can be purchased at the Monarch Grove off Highway 1 in Pismo Beach. If you visit now through mid-February, you'll see our beautiful black and orange friends during their annual migration. The shirt can also be found on our website – scan the QR code to shop now! The best part is: any purchase you make at the grove (or any of our State Park nature stores) go back into State Park education, which can directly benefit monarchs!

You can find Electric Monarch Tattoo and Josh Rodriguez on Instagram at @electric-monarch and @joshrodriguez\_emt.

- Retail Operations Coordinator Angelena Masicampo





## ‘SEEDS: NATURE’S ARTFUL ENGINEERING’ EXHIBIT

**A** brand new traveling exhibit is on display at the Morro Bay Museum of Natural History! *Seeds: Nature’s Artful Engineering* showcases the incredible diversity, ingenuity and beauty of seed dispersal mechanisms of plants native to California. Sponsored by CCSPA, the exhibit includes over 25 detailed photographs of seeds in wild and garden settings, as well as over 30 seed specimens for viewing up-close and under microscope.

The exhibit highlights different kinds of seeds, various seed dispersal modes, parts of a seed and function of each, life cycle of a seed: from fertilization to germination, ecological roles of seeds, and cultural roles of seeds. The goal of the exhibit is to increase awareness and appreciation of seeds and their incredibly valuable role in California’s ecological systems.

*Seeds: Nature’s Artful Engineering* was developed by naturalists Jennifer Jewell and John Whittlesey, and traveling

through Exhibit Envoy. Exhibit Envoy provides traveling exhibitions and professional services to museums throughout California. For more information, visit [www.exhibitenvoy.org](http://www.exhibitenvoy.org).

California State Park staff and CCSPA hosted an exhibit launch event in October, where Cal Poly Herbarium Curator Katie Pearson gave a fascinating presentation on seeds and seed diversity.

The exhibit will run through February 26, 2023. Give it a visit this winter! The museum is open daily from 10 am to 5 pm and is closed on federal holidays.

CCSPA supports traveling exhibits at the Morro Bay Museum of Natural History and Spooner Ranch House in Montaña de Oro State Park. We wouldn’t be able to do this without our donors and constituents! Thank you for your support.





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# BECOME A FRIEND OF CCSPA

Become a Friend of the Central Coast State Parks Association when you make a **donation of \$35** or more!  
 When you become a Friend of CCSPA, you support interpretation and education in the California State Parks in San Luis Obispo County.

Starting at \$35, benefits include:

- Personalized **CCSPA Friend card** to present at stores for discounts
- 15 % discount at all **CCSPA nature stores**
- Free admission for two adults to the **Mind Walks Lecture Series**
- Subscription to our quarterly newsletter, **Nature Notes**
- Discounts on tickets to **CCSPA events**
- CCSPA Friend **sticker**
- 25% **holiday discount** at CCSPA nature stores
- Discounts at participating **Public Lands Alliance stores**
- **Weekly emails** about State Park events, volunteer opportunities, nature store sales, educational programs, and more

## Choose your donation level:

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**Donations are fully tax-deductible** and donations over \$35 will go directly to a specific cause or program in our local State Parks. Donate \$400 or more to a program to join the **Stewardship Society** and receive extra perks. **Donating over \$35? Choose a program to support:**

*Donations \$35 or less will go the area of CCSPA's greatest need by default.*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> School Group Transportation                | <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural and Living History                        |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Western Monarch Butterfly Outreach         | <input type="checkbox"/> Continuing education for interpreters & volunteers |
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