



Earth Discovery Institute

2022 Annual Report



Our Mission

To inspire stewardship of San Diego's native biodiversity through environmental education and conservation.

Our Vision

An engaged community, actively supporting the conservation of San Diego's unique biodiversity.



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2022 at a Glance

Volunteers contributed
2,134
hours to conservation
& habitat restoration



EDI delivered
education
programming to
2,163
students



EDI staff, volunteers,
and students
planted
4,574
native plants



Dear Friends and Supporters,

2022 marked a year of both growth and transition for EDI. Under the leadership of our education director, Simon Breen, EDI delivered hands-on environmental education experiences to nearly three times the number of students we did the year before. Additionally, we provided new “education through recreation” opportunities to more than 240 families from San Diego’s east county to participate in sea kayaking, and guided nature hikes; this new program is designed to engage *entire communities* in positive and meaningful experiences with nature.

Under the leadership of our conservation director, Ida Kaller-Vincent, our biodiversity conservation efforts developed from a nascent program that supported only a part-time director in 2021, to a full-fledged department in its own right in 2022. Ida has led community volunteers to contribute more than twice the number of hours they did the year before, to support conservation and restoration projects on protected lands. She oversaw restoration of 15 acres of cactus scrub habitat at El Monte Preserve in Lakeside, a site that was characterized almost entirely by invasive weeds at the start of the project, and is now teeming with native flora and fauna.

To support this work, we increased our revenue during the last fiscal year by 65%. I am proud to say that EDI was awarded 100% of the grants for which we applied in 2022. That is an incredible record. Donors recognize the value of our work, and they elect to support it- repeatedly. But only 2% of our revenue in 2022 came from individual donations.

We cannot ultimately succeed at this work without you- our community. The job of protecting nature for the benefit of future generations, as well as its own inherent value, is ours, collectively. And there has never been a greater urgency to do so. EDI is making real and measurable impact, but we need your help to carry us into the future. Will you join us?

Sarah Maisonneuve,
Executive Director

How to support EDI's mission:



BECOME A MEMBER



VOLUNTEER



Environmental Education

2022 was the first year that EDI was able to resume bringing students on outdoor field trips, full swing. We found that students and teachers were just as eager to get back outdoors as we were to take them there! Not missing a beat, we brought more than 2,000 students from 13 Title I schools on a total of 48 field trips to locations including Crestridge Ecological Reserve, the San Diego Bay Sweetwater Marsh, and the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Sweetwater Interpretive Loop. These students got to experience the outdoors and discover an appreciation for nature on their way to becoming nature stewards, planting 1,256 native plants on nature preserves in the process!



The stakes are even higher now for outdoor education. The pandemic disrupted normal learning and socialization at a formative time for young children. After such a protracted time away, field trips like the ones EDI provides are more vital than ever for helping youth develop physically, mentally, and socially. Recovering from learning loss in an immersive experiential environment, bonding with their fellow students and reconnecting with community, getting fresh air and sunlight—these are just a few of the many benefits bringing children outdoors bestows. And it shows! The students' excitement for nature has been especially palpable this last year. We are in our element when we are outdoors. It feels great to be back and doing our part to build a healthier, more connected, and sustainable post-pandemic world!

In addition to school field trips, 2022 is also the first year that we began implementing a new outdoor equity grant from California State Parks. This grant enables us to provide four years of dynamic after school environmental education programming in El Cajon. Our lessons feature a range of fun and educational activities such as hands-on science experiments, exploring nearby nature, creating nature-inspired arts and crafts, and more. The grant also allows us to bring entire families on a wide range of recreational excursions throughout San Diego County—activities such as whale watching, rock climbing, overnight camping, kayaking, zoo trips, and hikes to places like Torrey Pines State Park, Cabrillo National Monument, and other outdoor wonderlands. Through these programs, we aim to help children and their grown-ups learn about our amazing environment, discover some of the many enchanting natural wonders San Diego County has to offer, and encourage them to continue exploring outdoors beyond our programs—all the while creating a connected community of nature lovers!



“My brain is getting so big!
I'm glad I came to school today.
I never wanna leave!”

- Students from W.D. Hall Elementary

“I'm so impressed with how organized everything was. This group hasn't been on a field trip since before the pandemic, so this is such a wonderful opportunity for them.”

- Jessica Preciado
Teacher from EJE Elementary Academy

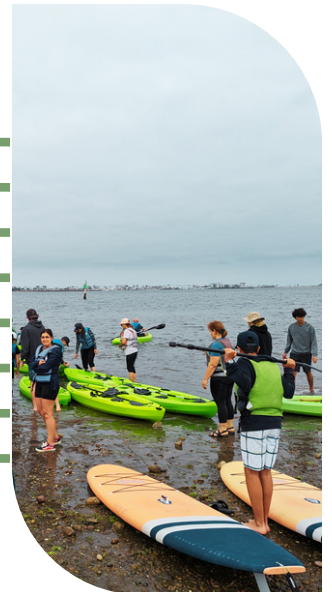
EDI Scholarship

For the second consecutive year, EDI awarded college scholarships to two deserving students from east county San Diego, both pursuing careers in wildlife and sustainability. Meet our scholarship awardees for the 2023 - 2024 school year.



Emily Herriott was compelled to pursue a career to save our planet after her family home was threatened by the 2017 wildfire. Emily majors in sustainability at SDSU, minoring in geography of natural resources and environment. She is a member of the Actions and Communications Committees of the 350 Bay Area Youth Mobilizing Team, has interned at the San Diego River Park Foundation, and in her free time, contributes to iNaturalist, and monarch butterfly and bird counts, and loves learning about hydrology. She hopes to use her knowledge about our environment, economy, and social context to contribute to resource management and conservation.

Valencia Montes loves camping, hiking, learning about the environment, and is studying biology at a community college. She hopes to transfer to a 4-year university to major in wildlife conservation biology. Her goal is to earn her PhD in epidemiology or animal behavior and become a wildlife researcher or wildlife care specialist. While studying and working toward her career aspirations, she volunteers at a local wildlife rescue where she has gained invaluable knowledge about San Diego's native flora and fauna. She hopes to educate others about the natural resources, habitats, and wildlife California has to offer.



Conservation & Habitat Restoration

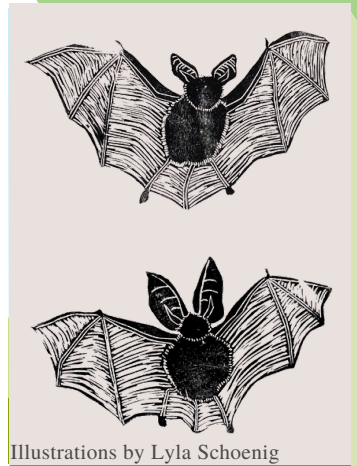
El Monte Preserve

In 2022, EDI began restoring 15-acres of cactus scrub habitat at El Monte Ecological Preserve, which sits between two known coastal cactus wren populations (a California Species of Special Concern). The aim of the project is to provide additional habitat for coastal cactus wren, as well as connectivity between populations. This year, 159 volunteers spent 942 hours planting 2,310 cactus pads and 670 coastal sage scrub species, and performing site maintenance. RECON, an EDI partner and subcontractor, planted an additional 2,649 coastal sage scrub plants in 2022. We are already seeing an incredible transformation in the plant community, with the cactus and native sage scrub species thriving, and the network of animal species they support reappearing. We could not do this important work without the hard work and dedication of our incredible volunteers and partners! Many thanks to the Wildlife Conservation Board and California Department of Fish and Wildlife for funding this work, and to Endangered Habitats Conservancy for holding the El Monte Preserve in perpetuity.



Bat Hotel Project

In 2022, EDI was awarded grant funding from The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) to install a bat hotel at El Monte Ecological Preserve. The aim is to provide a long-term roosting site for locally declining bat species, including Townsend's big-eared bat and pallid bat. El Monte is an ideal site for the project as it contains a pond that holds water year-round, and flat open areas where bats can forage. Our cactus scrub restoration project at the same site will also provide important foraging habitat for the pallid bat, which feeds in cactus scrub habitat. In 2023, De Boer Engineering will build the roosting structure in close coordination with EDI and Drew Stokes, Wildlife Biologist and bat expert at the San Diego Natural History Museum. We hope our bat hotel will serve as a prototype for additional roosting structures to be installed on suitable preserves throughout the county, contributing to the recovery of bats across the landscape.



Illustrations by Lyla Schoenig

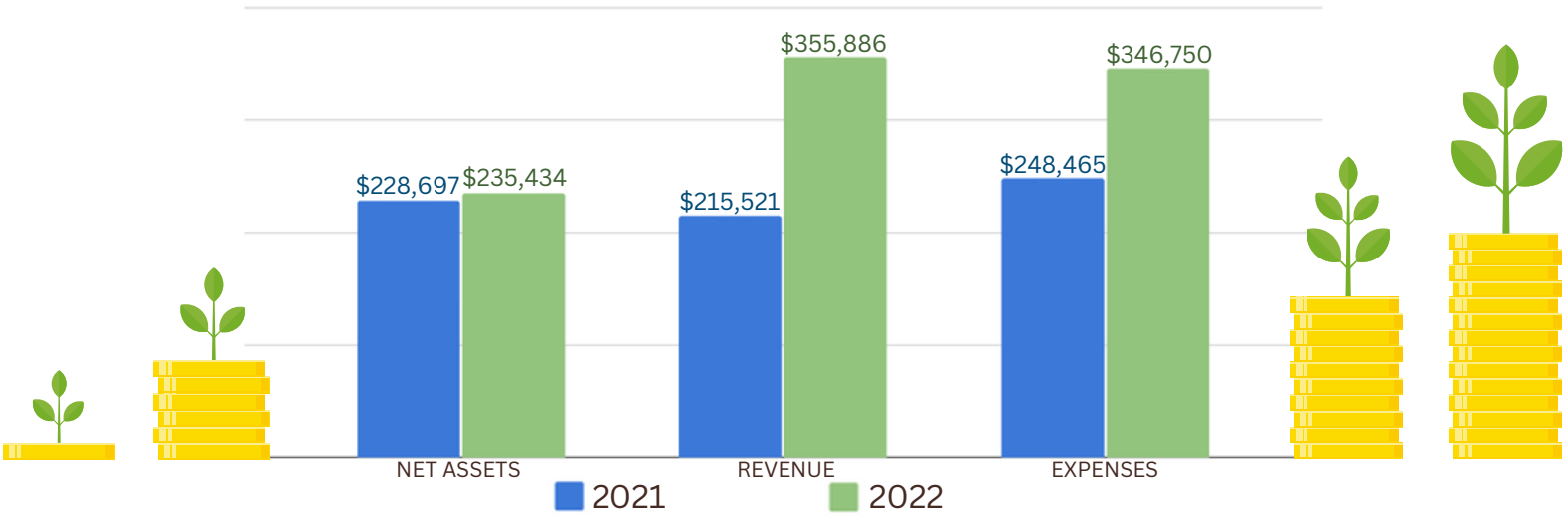
Milkweed Farm

In partnership with the San Diego Pollinator Alliance, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego, EDI established and continues to maintain a native milkweed farm in Lakeside. Milkweed is the host plant for monarch butterflies, and the western monarch butterfly population has declined by more than 90% since the 1980's. The purpose of the project is to support the replacement of exotic varieties of milkweed in San Diego County, which have detrimental effects on monarch butterflies, with the native varieties that are adapted to San Diego's climate. Native narrowleaf milkweed and woollypod milkweed are grown at our farm and made available for restoration projects and home gardeners alike. In 2022, 92 volunteers spent 318 hours helping to build a shade house, potting benches, install irrigation, collect and plant seeds and seedlings, up-pot milkweed seedlings, and help with maintenance on the farm. We planted an additional three rows of milkweed and milkweed plants were given away to the public at our annual plant sale. We also gifted 20 narrowleaf milkweed plants to an Eagle Scout restoration project for the San Diego River Park Foundation. We are proud of the progress made and hope to expand the farm in 2023!

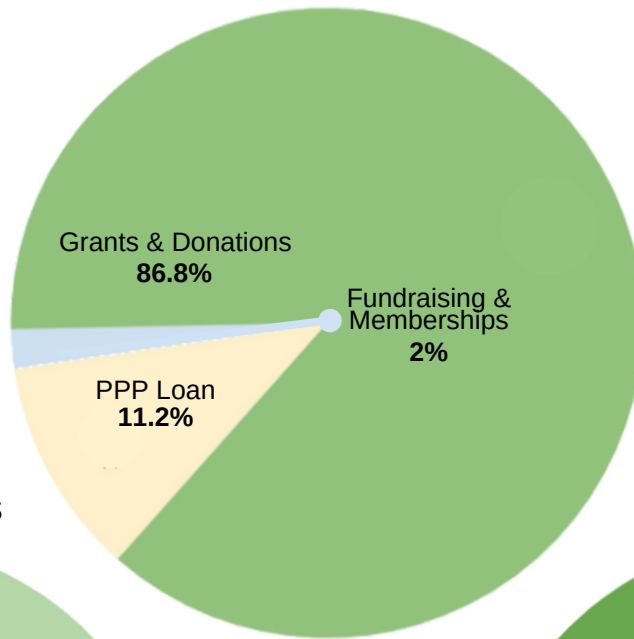


Financial Report

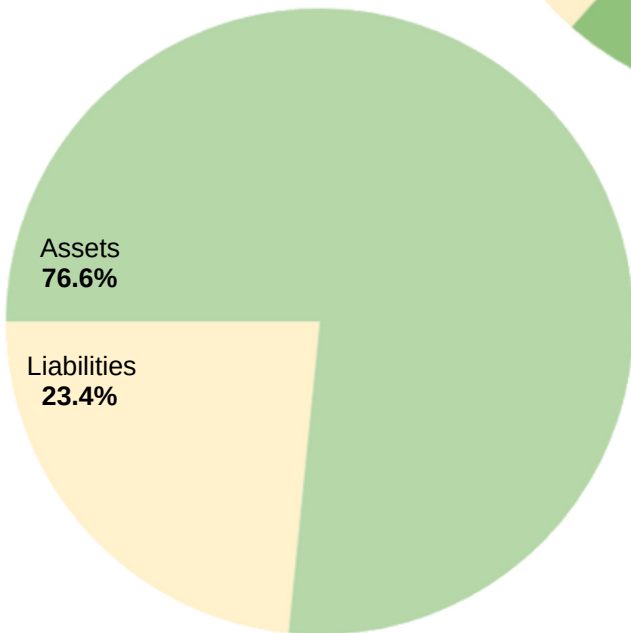
2021 vs 2022



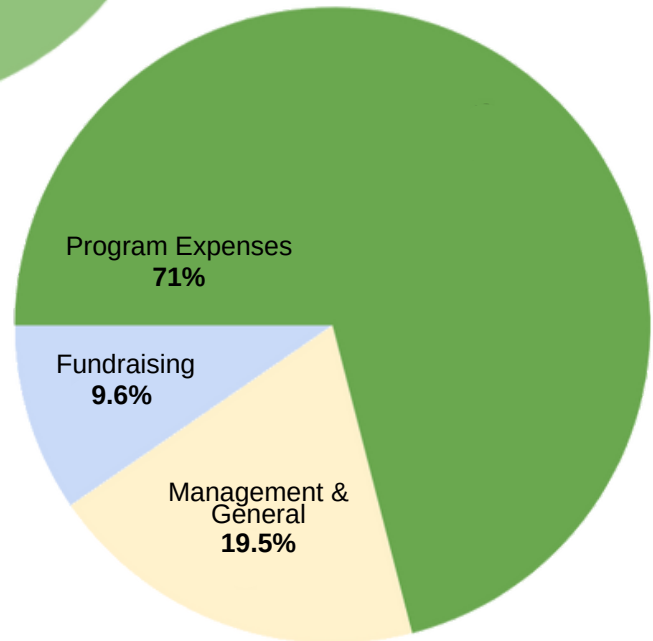
2022 Revenue



2022 Net Assets

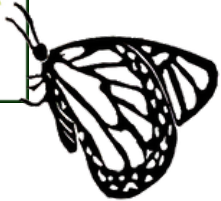


2022 Expenses



We couldn't do this important work without you!



earthdiscovery.org



@EDIExplorers