



# Earth Discovery Institute

## 2021 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.



# Table of Contents

Letter from Executive Director..... 1

Education Programming..... 2

EDI Scholarship Recipients..... 3

Conservation Programming..... 4

Financial Report..... 5

Credit for photography goes to:  
Tim Stahl, Jerel Reeves, Sarah Maisonneuve, Christine Beck, Victoria Bonnett,  
and other EDI staff and volunteers



# 2021 at a Glance



Dear Friends and Supporters,

Many of you know that San Diego is considered a “biodiversity hotspot,” and contains greater diversity of life than any other county in the U.S. As someone still relatively new to San Diego, I feel incredibly fortunate to live in a place with so much natural beauty and species diversity. I love learning about each new “species of the week” from our Conservation Director, Christine Beck, when she features them on our social media pages. And it’s even more fun to discover and identify new species (and landscapes!) when I am hiking around natural spaces on my own.

With this incredible privilege comes the responsibility of stewardship, and it is indeed EDI’s mission to “inspire stewardship of San Diego’s native biodiversity through environmental education, and conservation.” EDI’s board and staff developed this new mission statement together at the beginning of my tenure in 2020, during our strategic planning process, and it perfectly encapsulates our work.

We achieve our mission in two ways: 1. through direct species conservation and restoration of native habitats, and 2. by providing hands-on education and recreation opportunities to students and families from low-income communities in San Diego’s east county. I am so proud of the incredible work that our small but mighty team of staff and volunteers accomplished in 2021. Our future is bright, and I invite you to join us in the important work of protecting our natural world for the well-being of all.

Sarah Maisonneuve  
Executive Director

How you can support EDI's mission:





# Education Programming

## Nature at Home Science Kits



During the first half of 2021, EDI was still largely unable to deliver our field-based environmental education programming. Since we could not bring students into nature, we brought nature home to them through our Nature at Home Science Kits. EDI's Education Director, Vicky Bonnett, produced and hand-delivered 373 Nature at Home Science Kits to teachers and students from six elementary schools in Cajon Valley Union and La Mesa Spring Valley School Districts. Each kit was designed to meet Next Generation Science Standards for grade levels 3rd- 6th. Kits included nature journaling supplies, soil and native seeds to plant at home, magnifying lenses, and loads of science lessons and activities designed to encourage nature exploration from home.

## Student Field Trips Return!

During the latter half of 2021, we were thrilled to once again offer in-person field trips to our students. In total, we engaged 514 students from 8 different schools in San Diego's east county. Our unique education model integrates student learning with habitat restoration, and students installed a total of 187 native plants at Crestridge Ecological Reserve and San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge!

“ I have been bringing my students on [these field trips] for years. Most of my students are refugees and immigrants. Many of them live in apartments and have few opportunities to be in nature. My class was SO excited to be here today!

- Ms. Malone of Lexington Elementary ”

“ This was a very fun fieldtrip. We got to explore and learn new things.

“ Today was really fun. We got to learn about skulls and saw a coyote and bunnies!

“ Today was SO fun. Best field trip ever.

“ - Natalia, Amanda, & Salvador,  
4th Grade Students of  
Lexington Elementary ”

## Storybook Hike

As we looked for creative ways to continue safely engaging people in nature during the pandemic, we landed on the idea of a Storybook Hike. We posted our first story at Crestridge Ecological Reserve in 2020 and it was such a success, that we posted a rotating series of stories, translated into both Spanish and Arabic, through 2021. This self-guided hike encourages families (and often, single adults!) to follow the short trail at Crestridge that skirts the enchanting “oak grove,” stopping along the way to explore pages of a nature-themed storybook. The hike was so popular in 2021, it was even featured in the San Diego Union Tribune!



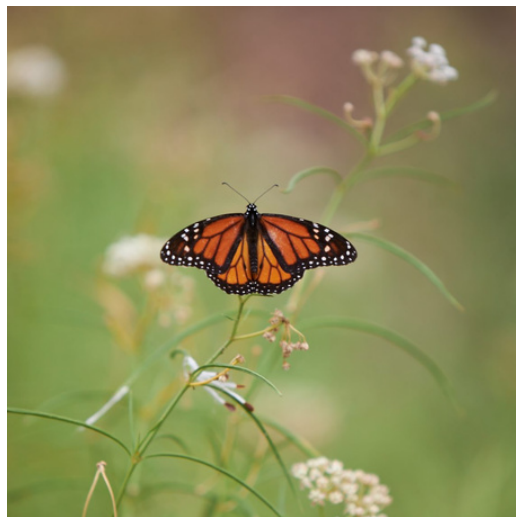
# EDI Scholarship

New in 2021, EDI was proud to award college scholarships for the 2022-2023 school year to two deserving students from east county San Diego, pursuing careers in conservation.



Mackenzie Karl attends Grossmont/Cuyamaca College and plans to transfer to San Diego State University in the fall, majoring in Sustainability. Growing up in an environmentally conscious household, her passion for sustainability grew with her! From president of her high school's Environmental Club, to working with American Conservation Experience (ACE), she is determined to pursue a career that improves quality of life and the preservation of resources, and hopes to help the next generation inherit a viable planet. Mackenzie plans to use the EDI scholarship funds to help pay for her tuition at San Diego State University!

Laura Olivas is currently studying Environmental Geography at Normandale Community College and plans to attend the University of Minnesota this fall. She finds herself most passionate about land management, including habitat restoration, invasive species management, and management of both game and non-game species. Her desire to enter the field of natural resources comes from exploring the outdoors with her family on vacations, and from various biology, ecology, geography, and natural resource management courses in school. Laura plans to use the EDI scholarship funds toward her educational goals!





# Conservation Programming

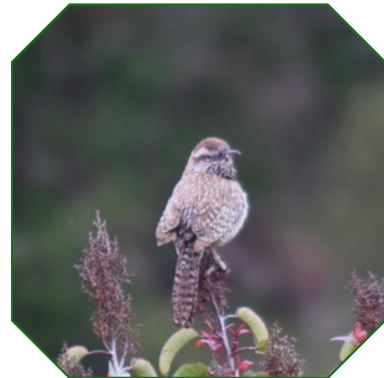


## El Monte Restoration Project

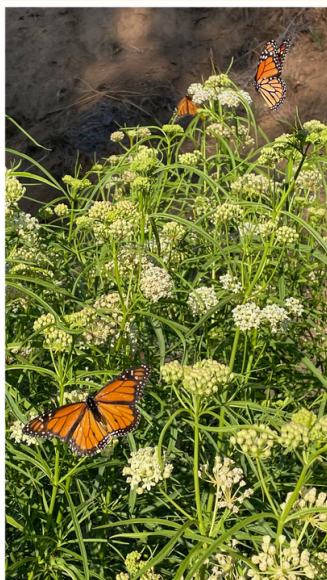
Since the 1990s, the coastal cactus wren has declined throughout its range due to habitat loss from urbanization, habitat degradation, and wild fires. In 2008, it was designated a California Species of Special Concern by the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

In November 2021, Earth Discovery Institute was awarded grant funding from the Wildlife Conservation Board to complete 15 acres of cactus scrub restoration on the El Monte Preserve in Lakeside, California. The 142-acre El Monte Preserve was purchased in 2016 by the Endangered Habitats Conservancy, a land conservancy with which EDI often partners for both education and conservation projects.

Cactus scrub is a form of coastal sage scrub, the second most abundant plant community in San Diego County. It provides habitat not only for the coastal cactus wren, but also for the federal threatened California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*), numerous other bird species, and whole suites of other native species, including lizards, bees, butterflies, and bats. We look forward to sharing progress updates about this three-year restoration project on our website and social media, as well as quarterly newsletters and subsequent annual reports.



## South County Native Milkweed Farm



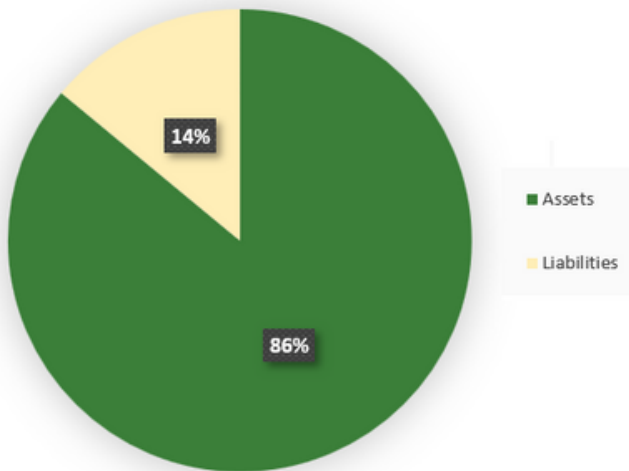
Southern California provides important habitat and overwintering sites for western monarch butterfly populations, which have declined by 95% since the 1980's. This is in part because milkweed, the plant upon which all monarchs depend on during the early stages of their lifecycle, is also declining. While there is broad consensus that native milkweed species should preferentially be planted over the tropical variety, native milkweed is in very short supply in San Diego County and largely unavailable to home growers and conservation practitioners alike. In response, Earth Discovery Institute partnered with the Pollinator Alliance of San Diego in 2020 to establish a native milkweed farm. In 2021, EDI staff and volunteers tripled the size of our milkweed farm to include narrowleaf milkweed (*Asclepias eriocarpa*) and woollypod milkweed (*Asclepias fascicularis*). We collected and cleaned our 27.7 grams of milkweed seed from the farm, and planted 60 native pollinator plants provided by Xerces Society to provide a nectar source for monarchs. EDI volunteer, Jeff Saar, single-handedly constructed a shade house at the farm to support milkweed propagation. This project is still in its infancy, but we are very excited about its potential to support the conservation of western monarch butterflies in San Diego County.



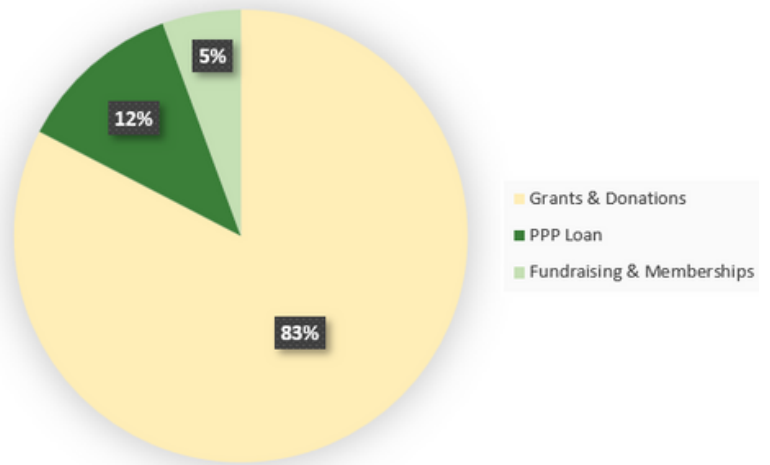
# Financial Report



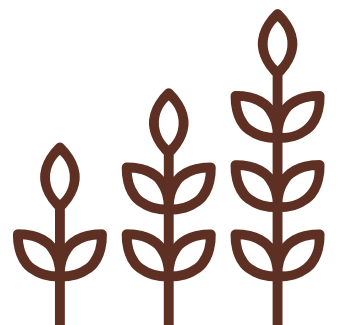
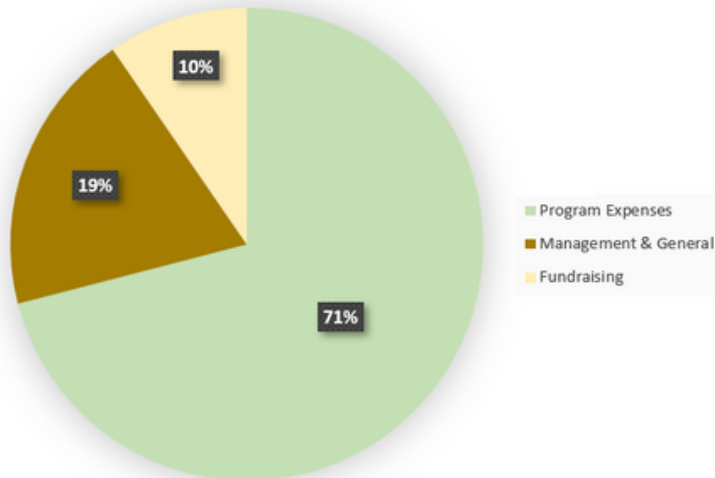
Net Assets



Revenue



Expenses



In 2021, EDI conducted a financial review, which is available upon request.



# Earth Discovery Institute

## THANK YOU

to all our partners and supporters.



We couldn't do this without you!




[earthdiscovery.org](http://earthdiscovery.org)



@EDIExplorers



facebook.com/EDIExplorers



@EDIExplorers