

Earthroots Field School
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Thank you for being a part of Earthroots Field School! 2015 has been full of transformative classes, workshops, and camps for people of all ages. In this 2015 Mid-Year Report, we are excited to share a glimpse of those programs with you. We will also give you a look into what we have planned for the rest of 2015 and into 2016. Come, take a walk with us through the first half of adventures this year.

2015 Mid-Year Report

Mission and Vision

Earthroots is a non-profit 501(c)3 education organization dedicated to cultivating a sense of care and connection between people and the natural world.

Earthroots vision is to create a world where people of all ages, abilities, cultures and affiliations understand how our actions influence the world around us and with this understanding are inspired to make choices that improve the health of the earth, themselves, and each other.



Bringing ancient skills to life by lashing split feathers onto a hand-made arrow. Photo by Lindsay Kliewer

Overview: January – July 2015

Since its founding in 2005, Earthroots has grown both programmatically and structurally to enable the organization to serve an ever broadening range of local residents including school children, families, universities, and businesses. This growth and organizational stability has further allowed Earthroots to purchase and conserve a beautiful 39-acre property in Orange County, known as Big Oak Canyon.

In the first half of this year, program participants have logged a total of over 9,700 hours in nature. The Children and Nature Network talks about the “nature deficit” crisis that many children experience today; Earthroots provides opportunities to increase time spent in nature and reduce or eliminate this deficit. Participants include local residents of Aliso Viejo, Costa Mesa, Huntington Beach, Irvine, Laguna Beach, Mission Viejo, San Clemente, Santa Ana and other local cities. Additionally, participants travel from Riverside, San Diego, Los Angeles and Santa Clara counties.

	January through July 2015
Days of programming	130 days
Individuals served	685 people
Ages of participants	0-86 years old
Hours of participation in field trips to wilderness parks, beaches, organic farms & gardens	8670 hours in nature
Hours of participation in on-campus, outdoor field trips	1144 student hours in nature, on campus

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Eco-Literacy on Campus is a weekly program for grades 2-8 held at a local elementary school. Now in its 5th year, the school has become a true demonstration site for sustainable living practices. Teachers, students, volunteers and administrators actively engage in growing fruit and vegetables, harvesting rainwater, composting lunch waste, recycling, minimizing single use containers and restoring native habitat. Earthroots instructors teach our unique grade appropriate Eco-Literacy curriculum to 75-100 students each week during the school year.

Forest Kindergarten and **Homeschool Field Programs** participants meet for 5 hours one day a week exploring wilderness parks, organic gardens and beaches. Each student has spent up to 80 hours of outdoor program time so far this year, mentored by Earthroots instructors. These children, ages 3 -12, often along with their parents, gain confidence in nature, physical strength, camaraderie with their peers and build a true community of families connected with nature. 38 children and 20 parents were served.

Service Learning Projects at Big Oak canyon have expanded to now include youth groups. Over 120 school-aged children, parents and teachers, and 50 corporate volunteers experienced ecological restoration through hands-on service work at Big Oak Canyon during the first half of this year. Projects have included harvesting white sage seeds for our seed bank which will later be used for habitat restoration, removing non-native grasses, vines and trees, spreading mulch, building a shade structure and installing a hand washing sink. The transformations are incredible, thank you for your efforts!



*First grade students from the Journey School are exploring Earthroots' 39-acre property, Big Oak Canyon. Highlights of this field trip included participating in ecological restoration by making and tossing seed balls, learning about Earthroots 200-year plan to conserve onsite resources for 7 generations and hiking up the hills.
Photo by
Jodi Levine-Wright*

Summer Camps now include programs stretching from the foothills of the Santa Ana Mountains to the waves of the Pacific Ocean. *Cooking in Nature Camps* brought nutrition to the forefront for 25 students ages 3-14. Participants learned to prepare new meals using local, organic ingredients while cooking in a sun oven, camping stove and over a camp fire. *Surfing and Nature Skills Camps* gave 20 students ages 8-15 confidence in the ocean learning a new adventure sport while bringing awareness to our connection with the health of the sea.

High Sierra Expedition Trip is our newest adventure program, serving graduates of our Family Backpacking Training and those with previous backpacking experience. Three families adventured to the John Muir Wilderness this summer for a 5-day backpacking trip, led by Earthroots instructors.

Instructor Training is one of the little known specialties of Earthroots. Each year, we facilitate deep nature connection practices for adults who become leaders both in our children's programs and in the broader community. Training is guided through weekly mentorship by seasoned staff and involves inner personal development, group management and outdoor skills education. In the first half of this year, Earthroots trained 2 instructors.

Gratitude Day was the first event of its kind held at Big Oak Canyon, honoring Earthroots' growing community of donors. Attendees toured the property to see the land and hear the vision for what is to come. Special guest and ecological designer, Art Ludwig, presented how Earthroots' design and stewardship of Big Oak Canyon is impacting the region beyond the visible "education programs", pushing the edges of what it means to be truly sustainable in our time, from food to buildings, water and waste. There were 40 attendees at this year's Gratitude Day. We hope to see you there next year!



Restoration Manager, Daniel Francis describes the newly installed rock creek bed at Big Oak Canyon to Gratitude Day attendees. Photo by Rebecca Primm

GOALS FOR 2015-2016

As we look forward to the remainder of 2015 and into 2016, we are excited to host the first of many public workshops at Big Oak Canyon. Mark your calendars, as we have a full-day event on November 7, 2015 entitled: *Wilderness Awareness Workshops*. This event will bring together experts on ecology and ancestral survival arts to teach hands-on workshops with participants of all ages.

With the help of volunteers and staff, we aim to complete the habitat restoration project funded by the Earth Island Institute, which began in 2013. This project has brought together hundreds of volunteers to transform a once degraded area of Big Oak Canyon into a vibrant native ecosystem. This Fall, we welcome you to experience this beautiful transformation by joining in on the efforts October 25 and November 5, 2015. Activities will include watershed restoration, saving native plant seeds, making seed balls and planting native shrubs along the newly installed stone creek bed.

We know from personal experience, as well as from case studies on the subject, that time in nature supports social, intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical development, creativity and problem solving skills, enhances concentration and lessens Attention Deficit Disorder behaviors. In addition to our regular programs, we look forward to launching a new program at Big Oak Canyon in 2016 for 15 underserved youth to include multiple field trips focusing on ecological awareness, empowerment and ancestral survival arts.



Forest Kindergarten instructor and students still themselves to enjoy a family of deer moving through their outdoor classroom. Photo by Sarah Beck

Thank you for being a part of Earthroots!

Jodi Levine-Wright, Executive Director