



COMMUNITY ACCESS REPORT 2025



The Nature Reserve at Rancho Mission Viejo (TNR) is a growing habitat reserve located in south Orange County. Over time TNR will grow to include over 20,000 acres of Rancho Mission Viejo lands, inclusive of The Richard & Donna O’Neill Conservancy. Visitation and exploration of The Nature Reserve is managed by The Reserve Connection. The Reserve Connection is a public 501(c) (3) non-profit, that serves to provide opportunities to the community to **Connect, Explore, and Preserve** Nature Reserve lands.

SCHOOL PROGRAMS

In the 2024-2025 academic year, The Reserve Connection provided 90 school programs consisting of 54 in-person field trips and 35 virtual pre-field trip assemblies, and 1 in-class presentation. Attending these field trips were 3,067 students. Themes for the school programs align with California Science and Social Science Academic Content Standards, Common Core, and Next Generation Science Standards.

Programs include Nature Explorers (K), Wildlife Investigators (Grade 1), Earth Science (Grade 2), Adaptations (Grade 3), Native American (Grade 4), and EcosySTEM Studies (Grade 5), Small Group Field Trips (K-6), Environmental Science (Middle School/High School) Adult Special Day Class Field Trips, and Community College Field Trips (College).



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

In order to connect with our surrounding communities, TNR participated in 11 community outreach events and shared information with over 3,500 people in 2025. We co-hosted two large scale events in Rancho Mission Viejo. In partnership with RanchLife, for the third year, we cohosted the *Earth Day Festival* and for the 9th year *Turkey Trot on The Ranch*, which supports TNR School Programs.

At The Nature House we hosted *Trail Mixers*. These were informal gatherings where folks get to know more about TNR by asking questions, hearing a short presentation, and speaking personally with staff and volunteers.



COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

In the 2025 reporting period, The Reserve Connection provided 121 public programs, compared to 85 during the 2024 reporting period. Sample programs include interpretive walks about the natural history of the Habitat Reserve. These topics included: Orange County birds of prey, Indigenous traditions, fungi, lunar cycles and eclipses, Rancho to Reserve history, and arachnids. Many of these lectures were combined with thematic food and beverages choices, as well as interpretive displays pertaining to the topic.

In addition, night hikes, full moon walks, astronomy nights, and moon viewings were also offered. Recreation/fitness hikes and walks were offered throughout the year, as were trail clearing and weeding events for volunteers. To continue to grow volunteerism on the Habitat Reserve, volunteer orientation and training opportunities were offered monthly. Forest Bathing, Yoga in Nature, and Nature Journaling programs were offered in late winter.



VOLUNTEER AND LAND STEWARDSHIP PROGRAMS

TNR is responsible for the maintenance of trails in certain areas of the habitat reserve. These include the nearly 8 miles of trail on the Richard and Donna O'Neill Conservancy. In addition to trail maintenance, TNR staff and volunteers remove invasive species such as artichoke thistle, milk thistle, and black mustard.

In 2025, volunteers and staff spent 900 hours on trail maintenance and invasive species removal. Nature Reserve volunteers also donated 684 hours in support of our School, Community, and Outreach Programs.

