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SUCCESSFUL SWALLOWS VOCALIZATION PROJECT RESUMES

SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO, Calif. (Jan. 23, 2014) -- Mission San Juan Capistrano is preparing to welcome some important guests back to the birthplace of Orange County.

Cliff swallows are now embarking on their annual migration from Argentina to San Juan Capistrano, and when they arrive, they will be lured to the Mission to nest as they have for 200 years.

Of course, urbanization has caused a reduction of swallows at the Mission in recent years, but they are beginning to return -- and build nests -- thanks to the Swallows Vocalization Project that began in 2012.

The vocalization project, now in its third year, will commence on February 1st when speakers playing swallows courtship calls and songs will be erected behind the Father Serra statue on the Mission grounds.

The idea came from swallows expert Dr. Charles Brown, who was summoned to the Mission in 2012 from the University of Tulsa, where he is a professor of biological sciences.

Dr. Brown's idea to lure the swallows using recorded courtship calls and songs has worked. Swallows that flew overhead and might not have explored the Mission and considered it as a place to nest are now descending to the Mission grounds and building nests.

"The recording is of courtship songs that males use to attract females. And males would be attracted too because they are very social birds," Dr. Brown said. "It's a matter of attracting them in; we know they are overhead and in the area."

The project involves a systematic program of playing the courtship calls and songs a few times a day, when the weather is good and during the times the swallows would be foraging.

Dr. Brown will be at Mission San Juan Capistrano to give a lecture on March 19 during the St. Joseph's Day and the Return of the Swallows celebration.

About Mission San Juan Capistrano:

Known as the "Jewel of the Missions," Mission San Juan Capistrano is a historic landmark and museum that boasts of quality permanent exhibits featuring original artifacts as well as traveling and temporary exhibits on a wide variety of topics.

The site itself serves as a living outdoor museum with original buildings constructed by Native Americans in the 18th century including the Serra Chapel, Great Stone Church, and the original padres' quarters of the South Wing.

The Mission was founded on November 1, 1776 by Padre Junipero Serra as the seventh in the chain of the twenty-one California missions established by Spain, and is Orange County's only mission. Every year, over 50,000 students visit the Mission and engage in an inspirational learning experience via the Mission Matters programming, as part of their State required California history studies.

Mission San Juan Capistrano is owned by the Diocese of Orange and is supported by the Mission Preservation Foundation, which is comprised of business and community leaders committed to ensuring the long term preservation and viability of Orange County's only Mission. The Mission receives no funding from either the Church or the State of California and charges admission funds as a means of providing public access.

Mission San Juan Capistrano is located at 26801 Ortega Highway, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675. Open Daily 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Good Friday afternoon. Admission is \$9 adults; \$8 seniors (60 years or over); \$6 children (ages 4 to 11); and children ages 3 and under are admitted free. Free audio guide with senior and adult admission. For more information, call (949) 234-1300 or visit www.missionsjc.com.