



The Pickleweed

The Newsletter of the Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy, Inc. (A Nonprofit Corporation)

21900 Pacific Coast Highway (PCH at Newland) Huntington Beach, California

Phone: 714-536-0141 Email: info@hbwc.org Website: www.hbwc.org

A Message From Our Chairperson

These are exciting times at the Wetlands Conservancy. We just finished our new building which will house our office, the Wetlands and Wildlife Care Center, and a world class wetlands and wildlife interpretive center. We have entered into an agreement with the Acorn Group, a highly recognized interpretive center master planning firm, to develop a plan for our center. Once the master plan is developed, we hope to secure funding to



finalize design development and begin construction of the interpretive center, where young and old can come to learn and enjoy both the wetlands and the wildlife care center.

We plan to begin construction September 2008 to enhance the Talbert Marsh as well as the full restoration of the Brookhurst Marsh. We are presently finalizing the securing of the necessary permits from all the resource agencies as well as Orange County and the City of Huntington Beach.

Some of our other recent accomplishments include: with Orange Coast River Park, we've opened a native plant nursery on our property at Newland Street and PCH; we've expanded our monthly Restoration Saturday to include docent guided walks and tours; we've developed a Five Year Strategic Plan; we are weeks away from closing escrow on the purchase of 17 acres of degraded wetlands at the corner of Brookhurst and PCH, which will be the final property acquisition to complete the Conservancy's ownership of all property between the Santa Ana River and Newland Street along PCH.

I hope you find our newsletter informative, and invite you to join us in these exciting times.

Jack Kirkorn

How We Got To Where We Are Today

Ages ago the Santa Ana riverbed ran parallel to and just inland of Pacific Coast Highway in what is now southeast Huntington Beach. Where the river flowed, tidal wetlands evolved.

In 1985 a diverse group of local residents and environmental activists formed the Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy to preserve about 195 acres of degraded wetlands from future development. The intent was to restore these wetlands so they could be fully productive as a biological and educational resource for future generations. These degraded wetlands in the ancient riverbed finally received protective zoning in 1996.

On February 7, 1990 the American Trader spilled approximately 400,000 gallons of crude oil just off the coast. By then the Conservancy owned, and had just recently (1989) restored, Talbert Marsh between the mouth of the Santa Ana River and Brookhurst Street. Conservancy volunteers took immediate action to protect the newly restored marsh from the encroaching oil and setup facilities to clean and restore to the numerous wild birds and mammals fouled by the oil.

This and other major oil spills inspired the California Legislature to enact legislation in 1990 known as the Lempert-Keene-Seastrand Oil Spill Prevention and Response Act. Further legislation in 1996 (AB748) created the Oiled Wildlife Care Network (OWCN). The Wetlands Conservancy, responded to the 1990 spill and was one of the original 8 organizations to join OWCN. The Wetlands and Wildlife Care Center (created by the Wetlands Conservancy as a separate non-profit organization in 2002) is now one of only 12 primary wildlife care facilities in California. Since joining OWCN, these dedicated wildlife care givers have responded to 16 oil spills in Southern California and sent staff and volunteers to other spills as far away as the San Francisco Bay spill in 2007.

The Wetlands Conservancy continues to plan and complete wetlands restoration and maintenance activities both here and throughout Orange County. Current projects include restoration of Conservancy owned wetlands between Brookhurst and Newland Streets in Huntington Beach, maintenance dredging of the Talbert Marsh, clearing of non-native plants from wetland areas, and propagating native plant species to be used during restoration projects.

Huntington Beach Wetlands Bird Surveys

The Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy has conducted four bird surveys since January of 2007. A pre- and post-restoration monitoring schedule was adopted to assess the



avian species in the Huntington Beach wetlands before, during and after restoration is completed. The protocol for monitoring was developed by Merkel and Associates, Inc.

The method used is referred to as a "Saturation Survey." This requires a large number of surveyors, at least 20 experienced birders, to make one sweep of the wetlands during a two hour time frame and count all the species and their numbers seen and/or heard. The wetlands are

divided into zones and teams of birders are assigned various zones. A sophisticated field data entry sheet and survey protocol are used, and all volunteers require training beforehand in order to conduct the survey properly. The data is then processed and after that charts and graphs can be developed to show species variation, fluctuations in number, and, in the future, trends of population and species growth or decline.

The usefulness and validity of the surveys are largely dependent upon the skills and number of birders volunteering each quarter. Repeat volunteers greatly enhance the accuracy of the field data entry sheets and help to standardize the protocol.

The Conservancy greatly appreciates the enthusiastic and dedicated birders who have volunteered for the last four surveys. These birders generously give up a weekend morning and come out before sunrise to participate in the bird count in order to further the study to benefit the wild birds of the Huntington Beach wetlands.

The remaining surveys for 2008 are scheduled for Saturdays on April 5, July 26, and October 4. If you are not on the bird surveyors' email list and would like to participate, please contact Lena Hayashi at lenahayashi@socal.rr.com.

The New Native Plant Nursery Takes Shape

Part of the mission statement of the Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy is restoration. To that end, the



Conservancy, as part of its involvement in the Orange Coast River Park (OCRP), hosts the OCRP native plant nursery. The nursery, located within the

Conservancy's site at PCH and Newland, is a new project that

will be instrumental in helping restore the wetlands including those within the River Park. It has been established specifically to propagate plants to be used for restoration projects in Huntington Beach, Newport Beach and Costa Mesa.

While the properties in question cover many plant communities, wetland species will be the initial focus of propagation efforts. Having a local nursery that focuses on wetland species is significant since it will minimize the cost of plant stock needed for restoration projects, provide a stable and reliable source of plant stock, and insure that the plants used for these restorations have come from locally native seeds and cuttings. Also, the nursery is a volunteer-based project, which provides a unique opportunity for members of the community to be involved in impacting the habitat of local coastal areas. All these things will help ensure the success of future wetlands restorations. For information on volunteering at the native plant nursery, please contact the Nursery Coordinator, Emily Beck at beck.ec@gmail.com.

Magnolia Marsh Dunes Along PCH Are Cleared

Under contract to the Wetlands Conservancy, the California Conservation Corps (CCC) office in Norwalk provided crews and equipment to eliminate the non-native plant species in the sand dunes of the Magnolia Marsh inland of Pacific Coast Highway between Magnolia and Newland Streets. The crews worked for over three weeks cutting and clearing brush in the initial efforts directed toward return of the dunes to native plant growth.

Following completion of their efforts, and with assistance from California State Parks, sand mixed with native seeds was collected from the Least Tern area near the mouth of the Santa Ana River and spread along the cleared dunes.

It is expected that the combination of clearing and seed replenishment will help greatly in restoration of native plant species to this historic dune area.

WE CAN'T RESTORE THESE VITAL WETLANDS WITHOUT YOUR CONTINUING SUPPORT

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