

# TRACKS

A Publication of the Newport Bay Naturalists & Friends

December-February  
2008-2009

## A Time For Giving Thanks

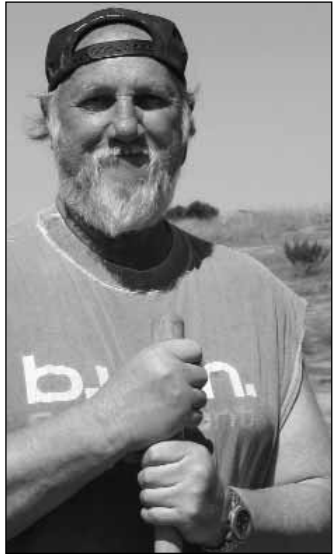
Looking back over 2008, it is clear we have plenty for which to be thankful.

In February Huell Howser was our guest to film an episode of *California's Gold*. We could not have picked a better day—the weather was gorgeous and the views of the snow-capped San Bernardino Mountains in the background were spectacular. Huell and his team did a marvelous job of conveying both the beauty and the ecological importance of Upper Newport Bay (UNB), and the essence of the preservation, restoration and education performed by the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG), California Coastal Commission (CCC), Orange County Parks (OC Parks) and the Newport Bay Naturalists and Friends (NBNF). Thank you, Huell and your team.

NBNF is a volunteer-driven organization. Our Naturalists routinely contribute over 10,000 documented hours of volunteer service a year at UNB. In March we said au revoir, but hopefully not goodbye, to Naturalist Tom Fox as he prepared to embark on a

road trip across the USA to spread his can-do attitude to grass-roots conservation and restoration. Tom, who received the OC Wild Lifetime Award in 2007, epitomizes the spirit of volunteerism. He is admired by all the many agency staff and other volunteers with whom he has interacted. His enthusiastic, positive approach inspires those around him. Tom is a graduate of the Naturalist Class of 1992. Since then Tom accumulated over 5,000 volunteer hours here at UNB. Although this contribution is in itself remarkable, what makes it even more remarkable is that Tom lived and worked in San Bernardino County. Thank you, Tom. And thank you to all of our many other dedicated volunteers.

In May the opening ceremony was held for the Back Bay Science Center (BBSC)—a 13,000 square foot state-of-the-art facility built through a partnership of DFG, the City of Newport Beach, the Orange County Health Care Agency (HCA), and the University of California Irvine (continued on page 2)



Naturalist Tom Fox

### NBNF Mission:

- To *preserve and restore* the ecosystems of Upper Newport Bay.
- To *educate* the public about the ecological value of the Bay and its watershed and help ensure compatible public use.

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The new Back Bay Science Center opened in May.

## Giving Thanks (continued)

(UCI). Its mission is to provide a hands-on facility where students and the public can study and enjoy the estuarine ecology of UNB—the largest remaining natural estuary in southern California—and the marine ecology of the ocean; and to promote natural resource conservation and stewardship throughout the watershed. The facility includes the HCA water quality lab responsible for bacterial analysis of water samples collected at the local beaches, and a teaching lab equipped for research-based science education. Here junior and senior high school students will be able to work side-by-side with some of the region's top scientists. We are proud to be a major partner in the BBSC. Thank you to Miocean, State Coastal Conservancy, Pacific Life Foundation and The Irvine Company for providing the financial support that enabled construction to be completed during a time of dramatic worldwide escalation in the cost of concrete, steel and other building materials.

Over the years UNB has been a magnificent source of inspiration for artists of the Southern California Plein Air Painters Association (SOCALPAPA), and its members wanted to give something back to the Bay. This led them to organize in 2003 the first annual "Paint Back Bay" Fine Art Exhibition and Sale to benefit NBNF, with 30% of all sales going to support the restoration and education programs we conduct at UNB. This year the event moved from October to July and the paintings by more than 60 artists on display at the Peter and Mary Muth Interpretive Center highlighted the Bay in its spring and summer colors.

### New Program Coordinator

Earlier this year we made the strategic decision to move from a part-time to a full-time Program Coordinator to expand and enhance delivery of our education programs, tours, events, and outreach. We are thrilled to welcome Patrick McCaffrey, who joined us in this position at the start of October. Patrick has a BA from UCI in Social Ecology with an emphasis on environmental studies, and previously worked for the California Department of Parks and Recreation at Crystal Cove State Park. He is passionate about teaching and motivating students of all ages, and enthusiastic about engaging our many Naturalists in the activities that they are passionate about. Patrick was born in Newport Beach. He is a nature lover and avid water person. He and his wife Melanie have been married for six years and are thinking about starting a family soon. They live in Laguna Beach.



Greg LaRock's award-winning painting, "Shadowed Bluffs".



Students help with Marine Life Inventory.

Additionally this year, there was a separate competition to select a plein air painting to be recreated at mural size as part of a stunning new exhibit at the entrance to the Interpretive Center that will introduce visitors to the concept of an estuary. Nearly 40 SOCALPAPA artists submitted entries. The winner of the \$5,000 purchase award was local artist Greg LaRock. We look forward to working with the OC Parks staff to transform the Interpretive Center in 2009. Thank you SOCALPAPA, and all who bought paintings at the event.

In September our 19th Annual Coastal Cleanup Day was held at UNB. This event showcased a great partnership between DFG, OC Parks, CCC, the City of Newport Beach, the Newport Sea Base, the Newport Aquatic Center, the Rotary Club of Newport Balboa and other local Rotary Clubs, NBNF and other organizations. Thank you to all of the event organizers, sponsors and the over 1,000 members of the public who helped us collect more than 20,000 pounds of trash and recyclables from around UNB.

In October we held a donor cultivation event at the new Back Bay Bistro in the Newport Dunes Resort to seek funding to complete the outfitting of the BBSC teaching lab and allow it to reach its full potential. Middle and high school teachers throughout Orange County and beyond eagerly await the opportunity to bring their classes to the BBSC. Nearly 200 science teachers responded to a comprehensive survey seeking input on 30 lab and/or field activities that may be offered here. Once fully equipped we will be able to show high-school students from under-served areas how easy it is to become real researchers engaged in rigorous scientific inquiry in an important and inspiring context, and provide opportunities for higher level students to perform world class research. Thank you to those whose attended the event and/or have made a donation.

In November we commemorated 40 years of "Friends Tours" at UNB with *(continued on page 4)*



# Upper Newport Bay Calendar of Events

December 2008–February 2009

## Steward Days—Every Wednesday, 9:00–11:00 a.m.

Support the Bay's unique genetics at our restoration sites by collecting seeds & propagating plants. Learn how to grow natives in your backyard, attract wildlife and conserve water. For information call (949) 640-0286. Location code: BBSC

## Kayak Tours—Every Saturday, 10:00 a.m.–noon at the Dunes

Join a trained naturalist for a guided kayak tour of the Back Bay. Meet at the Newport Dunes Resort. \$15/person, 8 & up. \$10/NBNF members. Be prepared to get wet. Reservations (949) 923-2269. Location code: Dunes

## Kayak Tours—Every Sunday, 10:00 a.m.–noon at the NAC

Join a trained naturalist for a guided kayak tour of the Back Bay. Meet at the Newport Aquatic Center. \$15/person, 8 and up. \$10/NBNF members. Be prepared to get wet. Reservations (949) 923-2269. Location code: NAC

## Walking Tour—Saturday, Dec. 6, Jan. 3, Feb. 7, 9:00 a.m.

Join a trained Naturalist for a 2 hour walk along the bay. Bring binoculars and sun protection. Free. No reservations needed. For information call (949) 923-2269. Location code: BBSC

## Friends of Newport Bay Walking Tour—Saturday, Dec. 13, Jan. 10, Feb. 14, 9:00, 9:15, 9:30, 10:00, 10:15 a.m.

Walk along the Back Bay listening to Naturalists and visiting Interpretive Stations featuring natural history specialists. Free. No reservations required. For information call (949) 923-2269. Location code: VP

## Marine Life Inventory—Saturday, Dec. 13, Jan. 24, Feb. 28, 8:30–noon

Marine biology students ages 8 and up are invited to participate in a variety of hands-on marine life monitoring programs in Newport Bay with the Dept. of Fish and Game. Children under 18 must be accompanied by an adult. Free. Reservations (949) 640-9956. Location code: BBSC

## Shellmaker Discovery Tour—Saturday, Dec. 13, Jan. 24, Feb. 28, 9:00–10:30 a.m.

Join a Naturalist to learn about Shellmaker Island's rich history; the future of the Back Bay Science Center; and discover unusual and endangered plants, birds and crab habitats. No reservations required. No latecomers. Free. For information call (949) 640-9956. Location code: BBSC

## ROOTS Restoration Teamwork—Saturday, Dec. 13, Jan. 24, Feb. 26, 9:00 a.m.–noon

Help restore Back Bay habitat by installing and maintaining native plants while learning about wetland ecology. Reservations required. Refreshments, tools provided. Call (949) 640-0286 for information, reservations and location.

## 2nd Sundays Restoration Program—Dec. 14, Jan. 11, Feb. 8, 9:00 a.m.–noon

Join the staff at the IC to enhance the Nature Preserve habitat with non-native plant removal, native plantings and Butterfly Garden maintenance. Reservations (949) 923-2297. Location code: IC

## Big Canyon Walking Tour—Saturday, Dec. 20, Jan. 17, Feb. 21, 9:00 a.m.

Join a trained Naturalist for a 2 hour walk along Big Canyon Trail and the Bay. Bring binoculars and sun protection. Free. No reservations needed. For information call (949) 923-2269. Location code: Big Canyon parking lot.

## Family Fun Walk—Sunday, Dec. 28, Jan. 25, Feb. 22, 10:30–11:30 a.m.

Join park staff for a guided nature walk through the Bay. Explore the beauty of the bay and discuss its rich natural history. Programs take place on various trails. All ages. Registration required. Free. Rain cancels. Phone (949) 923-2275 or email [unbic@ocparks.com](mailto:unbic@ocparks.com). Location code: IC

## Train for a Day, Volunteer at the Bay!—Saturday, Jan. 17, 9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.

Become a part of this dynamic estuary! Learn about the habitats and wildlife of the Bay. Participate in habitat restoration and special events. Assist with tours. Greet and educate visitors. Registration (949) 923-2275. Location code: IC

## Conservation Club (Ages 5–10)

3:30–4:30 p.m. for ages 5–10. Come work with park staff to help establish a habitat for UNB wildlife. Learn about the importance of native plants and water conservation. Be prepared to get down and dirty. Free. Location code: IC

## Tuesday afternoon—Dec. 9, Dec. 23, Jan. 6, Jan. 20, Feb. 3, Feb. 17

For all of the following, call (949) 923-2275 to register or email [unbic@ocparks.com](mailto:unbic@ocparks.com). \$5 per child. Location code: IC

## Tidelands Tots (Ages 2–5)

10:30–11:15 a.m. for ages 2–5 years. Join park staff for a parent-child experience with stories, movement and hands-on fun.

"Muddy Living"—Wednesday, Dec. 3

"Let's Fly Away"—Wednesday, Dec. 17

"Wintry Wonders"—Wednesday, Dec. 24

"New Year's Babies"—Wednesday, Dec. 31

"How do Animals Keep Warm?"—Wednesday, Jan. 7

"Wacky Weather"—Wednesday, Jan. 14

"Cool Coats"—Wednesday, Jan. 21

"Sea Stars"—Wednesday, Jan. 28

"Sweethearts in the Bay?"—Wednesday, Feb. 4

"Love Bugs!"—Wednesday, Feb. 11

"Fox Friends"—Wednesday, Feb. 18

"Songs of the Bay"—Wednesday, Feb. 25

## Bayside Buddies (Ages 5–7)

3:30–4:30 p.m. for ages 5–7. Come discover the natural history of the Bay through crafts, hands-on activities and nature walks.

"Fossiliferous Formations"—Tuesday, Dec. 2

"Frigid Fun"—Tuesday, Dec. 16

"Southern Bound"—Tuesday, Dec. 30

"Amazing Octopi"—Tuesday, Jan. 13

"Stories from the Ancients"—Tuesday, Jan. 27

"Heart"Y" Habitat"—Tuesday, Feb. 10

"Carnivorous Critters"—Tuesday, Feb. 24

## Wild! Tales (Ages 2–7)

10:30–11:15 a.m. Come visit the park staff for story-telling fun. Learn more about the natural history of the Bay through crafts, hands-on activities and nature walks.

"Don't Laugh Joe"—Tuesday, Dec. 2

"Little Owl"—Tuesday, Dec. 9

"A Log's Life"—Tuesday, Dec. 16

"When Winter Comes"—Tuesday, Dec. 23

"Why Do Animals Sleep Through Winter?"—Tuesday, Dec. 30

"Who Lives in the Snow?"—Tuesday, Jan. 6

"Frigid's Freedom"—Tuesday, Jan. 13

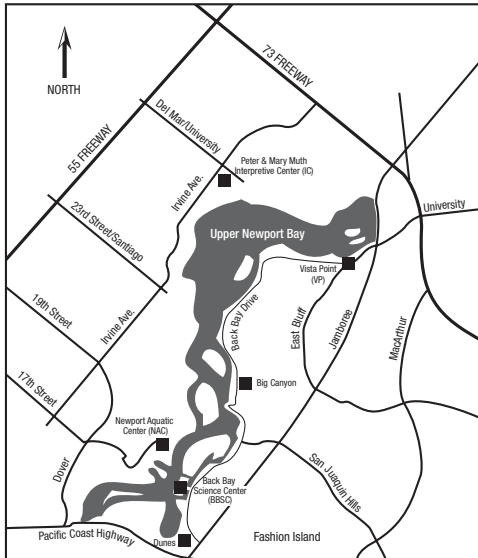
"Ten Friendly Fish"—Tuesday, Jan. 20

"Ugh a Bug"—Tuesday, Jan. 27

"Why Does it Thunder and Lightning?"—Tuesday, Feb. 3

"A House for Hermit Crab"—Tuesday, Feb. 10

"Animal Babies"—Tuesday, Feb. 17



**WEB SITES**

Newport Bay Naturalists & Friends: [www.newportbay.org](http://www.newportbay.org)  
 Peter & Mary Muth Interpretive Center: [www.ocparks.com/unbic](http://www.ocparks.com/unbic)  
 Back Bay Science Center: [www.backbaysciencecenter.org](http://www.backbaysciencecenter.org)  
 California Coastal Commission: [www.coastal.ca.gov](http://www.coastal.ca.gov)

**LOCATION KEY**

Peter and Mary Muth Interpretive Center (IC) 2301 University Drive Newport Beach, CA 92660	Back Bay Science Center (BBSC) 600 Shellmaker Newport Beach, CA 92660	Newport Aquatic Center (NAC) 1 Whitecliffs Drive Newport Beach, CA 92660
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**TRACKS CREDITS**

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**Giving Thanks (continued)**

the official opening of Vista Point and the unveiling of a lasting tribute to Frank and Frances Robinson, who were instrumental in the creation of the UNB Ecological Reserve in 1975. The old "Friends Lookout" site at the corner of Eastbluff Drive and Back Bay Drive has been completely re-landscaped, terraced bench seating has been installed, and a Robinson memorial plaque, spotting scope and interpretive panels erected. Thank you to the many Friends who contributed in one way or another to the preservation of UNB. And thank you to all those whose financial and other support has allowed this important project to be completed.

As we approach the end of 2008, we wish to say a special thank-you to Congressman Ed Royce for championing the allocation of \$12.2 million in the fiscal 2010 federal Continuing Resolution budget bill to fund completion of the UNB Ecosystem Restoration Project. Though Upper Newport Bay is not within his congressional district, he appreciates its significance as an educational, recreational, ecological and commercial resource of regional and national importance and has spent time to ensure

that it gets the priority it deserves. Thank you Congressman Royce and all those who have worked to obtain federal and local funding of this vital undertaking.

As a non-profit organization, NBNF operates with the generous financial and in-kind support of individuals and families, corporations, foundations and partnering organizations. We thank you all.

If you are already a Friend, we hope that you will continue that support by renewing your individual or family membership for 2009. If you are not yet a Friend, please take this opportunity to join us by completing and returning the enclosed form. Perhaps you know someone who would be interested in becoming a member. Pass on the form or take out membership in their name as a holiday gift.

For more information on our Friends and Corporate Membership programs and other giving opportunities, please call (949) 640-1751 or visit us at [www.newportbay.org](http://www.newportbay.org).

*Roger Mallett, Executive Director  
 Newport Bay Naturalists & Friends*



*A Lasting Tribute to Frank and Frances Robinson at Vista Point.*