

TRACKS

A Publication of the Newport Bay Naturalists & Friends

April-June
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Seasonal and Long-Term Changes at the Bay

Spring is returning to the Upper Newport Bay. The bush sunflowers are in full bloom, their yellow disks brightening the slopes and trails. Avocets and ruddy ducks are transitioning into the color phases appropriate for courtship. And seasonal visitors like the endangered least tern are scanning for available nest sites and a top smelt or two. These are just a few of the seasonal changes that remind us of spring's renewal and that are essential to the Bay's diverse, unique ecosystem. But there are other recent changes that, while not seasonal in nature, are of



Big Canyon, a very popular yet extremely degraded site, will be the focus of a long overdue restoration plan.

great significance to the Bay, the Newport Bay Naturalists and Friends and our community.

Among the most positive and important change has been the hard-won acceptance by resource agencies, and city, county and state officials that the Upper Newport Bay is in need of major restoration work. This recognition is exemplified by two new major restoration projects: Big Canyon Creek Restoration Project and the West Bay Trails, Boardwalk and Restoration Project. Mere proposals on paper six months ago, they have recently been awarded funding and are quickly moving into the initial research and planning phases.

The Big Canyon Creek Restoration Project will focus on restoring the entire 58-acre site on the East Bay to its full potential, providing homes for wildlife and a place where families can come to view and learn about nature in a scenic outdoor setting. To achieve this the project will need to address the serious water contamination, flooding and habitat degradation problems associated with Big Canyon. Funded by a grant from California Coastal Conservancy and the City of Newport Beach, this restoration project will be managed by Community Conservancy

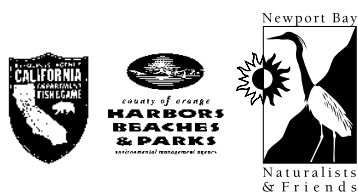
International (CCI). CCI will work with a team of experts to conduct scientific and technical analyses of Big Canyon. After holding public workshops and working with many public agencies, CCI will develop a restoration plan with conceptual designs for a functioning mosaic of wetland and upland habitats and improved public access in Big Canyon. The restoration plan will be completed by spring 2004, with restoration work expected to begin in 2005.

The West Bay Trails, Boardwalk and Restoration Project received its initial planning green light in February when the Newport Beach City Council voted unanimously to approve the project. The West Bay project focuses on developing habitat-sensitive public access along the wetland's edge and between the wetlands and existing bluff-top trails, protecting the habitat of the Light-footed Clapper Rail, Belding's Savannah Sparrow and California Gnatcatcher, and restoring eroding bluffs and drainages. CCI will be managing this project as well the Big Canyon Creek Restoration Project. A similar planning protocol to the one mentioned above—combining scientific analysis, input from public agencies and public workshops—will be used to develop a plan for the West Bay by the end of 2003.

Taken together these two projects represent the best chance we've had to restore significant portions of the Bay's habitat since the Ecological Reserve was established in 1969. These restoration projects will result in physical changes to the Bay's landscape—changes that, while beneficial (continued on page 2)

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Over the years visitors to the West Bay have unknowingly created a system of unauthorized trails that are extremely damaging and dangerous. Developing a plan that provides the public with safe access that won't damage wildlife habitat is an important step in restoring this area.



Tom Parker: A Role Model for All Volunteers

Tom Parker embodied the slogan, “think globally, act locally,” diving into his role as an Upper Newport Bay Naturalist 13 years ago with both hands and eyes wide open. He and his wife Arlene immersed themselves in activities that ensured the success of the fledgling volunteer group. They became part of a core group that rolled up its sleeves, put on its thinking cap and got the job done. Tom was a local hero, whose legacy lives on in the preserve in ways both small and vast.

Tom logged thousands of volunteer hours over the years, but his contribution went far beyond accumulated hours of service. The tasks were often physical: repairing broken equipment, digging out nuisance pampas grass in Big Canyon, building a fence, setting up or breaking down for a special event such as Earth Day, even manning booths and pedaling “Back Bay Bucks.” Tom is undoubtedly in a fair share of the photos snapped throughout the years, but recognition was never his motivation—getting the job done was. The job was, and is, open-ended and full of opportunity. Tom stepped up to the plate without hesitation, over and over again.

There was no Marine Studies Center when Tom first became a naturalist at the Bay, and the Peter and Mary Muth Interpretive Center was just a drawing-board concept. Shellmaker Island held only a cramped trailer and an equally-cramped storage areas stuffed with tools. If the tool for the job was broken, Tom fixed it. If it wasn't there, he brought it from home. Tom was at the core of the re-vegetation committee in the early years, and saw Big Canyon transformed from an area clogged with pampas and Brazilian pepper to a place where native vegetation was planted and thrived. Tom helped fill many a dumpster, working alongside other naturalist diehards, college students and community volunteers. His easy smile, sense of humor and quiet leadership often attracted others and made even a grungy task palatable. Friendships blossomed, and endured. Upper Newport Bay



Proving that good fun and hard work can go together, Tom Parker (far right) and Russ Kerr (far left) lend Jeff Blomstrom (center) a hand drilling post holes along Back Bay Drive.

Naturalists became Newport Bay Naturalists & Friends. The dilapidated trailer, the “Butler” Building and other structures were removed and replaced by newer, more accessible facilities. And there was Tom, battling cancer, still helping when he had the strength to do so.

A number of us gathered in December to say goodbye to Nancy Bruland, the former county ranger who helped establish the naturalist program. Tom was there, looking worn by his ongoing battle, but renewed by the chance to visit with so many friends. It was the last time I saw Tom, who passed away at Hoag Hospital on January 16. Tom will not be forgotten, his spirit permeates our volunteer group and the Bay he worked so hard to restore.

*Amy Litton
Newport Bay Naturalists & Friends*

Seasonal Changes (cont.)

to both wildlife and visitors, have been categorized as unnecessary by some community members. To those who have expressed concern, feeling that adding anything to the Bay might detract from the natural setting or their experience in it, I ask them to keep an open mind. Remember that the “natural setting” of the Bay is one we as a community create and maintain. The Bay is of necessity a managed ecosystem; we collect trash from its shores, we monitor and work to improve its water quality, we dredge silt when necessary, we remove plants that harm our wildlife habitat and we plant new ones to improve it. And yes, we even manage the flow and location of visitors so that people can continue to enjoy the wildlife they've come to see. As our community grows and changes over time, so must our relationship to the Upper

Newport Bay. For these restoration projects to succeed we must work together to integrate the aesthetic, environmental and community values inherent in this much cherished and unique landscape.

A huge note of thanks goes out to our new partner, Community Conservancy International and CCI's President Esther Feldman, as well as the City of Newport Beach, the Orange County Harbors Beaches and Parks Department, and the Department of Fish and Game for working with us to make these changes happen.

Spring has returned to the Bay, and a new era in restoration is beginning to flower.

*Jim Cokas
Newport Bay Naturalists & Friends*



Come Join the Fun!

The Newport Bay Naturalists & Friends, in cooperation with Orange County Harbors, Beaches and Parks and the Department of Fish and Game, is pleased to announce our 14th Annual Earth Day celebration on Sunday, April 27th at Shellmaker Island.

The theme of this year's Earth Day festivities is “Invest in the Earth: It's your Children's Inheritance.” We will be joined by nearly forty exhibitors including Friends of the Sea Lion, Science Alfresco, the California Coastal Commission and Orange County Bird of Prey Center (always a great favorite). Among the environmental and science discovery exhibits will be the popular children's passport booths. Earth Day participants can also take short, naturalist-led water trips of the Bay on our electric boats.

Food will be available for purchase. Festival hours are 10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m. For further information please call (949) 923-2296.



Upper Newport Bay Calendar of Events

April–June 2003

SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES

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

Green thumbs welcome! Encourage the Bay's unique genetics to move in at our restoration sites by collecting seeds and propagating plants. Meet on Shellmaker Island at the exotic hut. Call (949) 640-0286 for reservations. Location Code: MSC

Canoe the Back Bay — Every Saturday, 8:30 a.m.

Join a trained naturalist for a guided two-hour canoe tour of the Back Bay. Fee is \$10 per person. Call (949) 923-2269 for reservations. Location Code: MSC

Kayak Tours — Every Sunday, 10:00 a.m.

Join a trained naturalist for a guided two-hour kayak tour of the Back Bay. Fee is \$20 per person. NBNF members pay \$10. For reservations call (949) 729-1150 (weekends only) or (800) 585-0747. Location Code: NDR

Walking Tour — April 5 & 19; May 3 & 17; June 7 & 21, 9:00 a.m.

Join a trained naturalist for a two-hour walk along the Bay. Bring binoculars and sun protection. For information, call (949) 923-2269. No reservations needed. Free. Location Code: MSC

Tracking Skills — April 7, 9:00 a.m.–12:00 noon

Join tracking expert Dean Schroeder for a fascinating introductory class on tracking for adults. Fee is \$10 per person. For program details and to register, please call (949) 923-2295. Location code: MIC

Electric Boat Tour of the Bay — April 12; May 10; June 21, 11:00 a.m.

Join a naturalist on a two-hour guided tour of the bay on our electric pontoon boat. Fee is \$10 per person. Call (949) 923-2269 for reservations. Location Code: MSC

Toddler Time: "Crazy Coyotes" — April 16, 9:00 a.m. or 10:15 a.m.

Join a Ranger for this 45-minute parent and child playtime with a coyote theme. Fee is \$3 per child. Call (949) 923-2295 for reservations. Location code: MIC

Science at the Bay — April 16; May 14, 7:00–8:30 p.m.

Spend an evening with a marine science researcher. This event is geared towards junior high, high school and college students and teachers. The general public is also welcome. Call (949) 640-9961 for reservations. Free. Location Code: MSC

Marine Life Inventory — April 19; May 17; June 28, 8:15–11:30 a.m.

High school and college students will participate in a variety of marine life-monitoring programs in Newport Bay. Call (949) 640-9961 for reservations. Free. Location Code: MSC

Twilight Canoe Tour with Barbecue — April 19; May 17; June 28, 4:00 p.m.

Join naturalists and the Sea Scouts for a beautiful tour of the Reserve and dinner around the campfire at Shellmaker Island afterwards. Fee is \$12. Call (949) 642-5031 for reservations. Location Code: MSC

Shark Camp at the Bay — April 19; May 17; June 28, 6:00 p.m.

Learn about the lives of sharks and rays while eating dinner around the campfire. Then help catch, tag and release them right off our dock. Fee is \$12. Call (949) 642-5031 for reservations. Location Code: MSC

Evening Marsh Prowl — April 19; May 17; June 28, 7:30 p.m.

Join a naturalist on a guided tour of the Bay at dusk on our electric pontoon boat. Use spotlights and binoculars to search for owls and other night creatures. Fee is \$15. Call (949) 923-2269 for reservations. Location Code: MSC

Restoration Teamwork — April 26; May 24; June 28, 9:00 a.m.

Volunteers are needed to help remove invasive non-native plants and plant coastal sage scrub in order to promote native wildlife. All ages welcome! Call (949) 640-0286 for more information. Location code: MIC

Monthly Naturalist Program — May 1, 6:30–8:30 p.m.

Join the naturalists for an interpretation of the geology of the Bay. Refreshments at 6:30 p.m., presentation at 7:00 p.m. Free. For information call (949) 923-2269. Location Code: MSC

Dr. Sue's Traveling Insect Zoo: Ladybugs & Beetles — May 4, 1:00–2:30 p.m.

Learn about the lovely ladybug and other kinds of beetles. Make and eat a luscious ladybug with chocolate spots and hold live beetles and their larvae! Ages 5 and up. Fee is \$7 per child. Call (949) 923-2295 for reservations. Location code: MIC

SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES

Astronomy Night — May 10, 8:30–10:30 p.m.

Join members of the Orange County Astronomers for an inspirational tour of the night sky. Open to all ages and includes observation with telescopes. Suggested donation of \$2. Call (949) 923-2295 for reservations. Location code: MIC

Nature Detectives — May 17, 10:00–11:30 a.m.

Want to become a nature detective? Learn to read clues left behind by animals of Upper Newport Bay. Ages 5 and up. Fee is \$3 per person. Call (949) 923-2295 for reservations. Location code: MIC

The Games People Played — May 18, 10:00–11:30 a.m.

Join a Ranger as we explore the games Native American children of the Back Bay might have played. Ages 5 and up. Fee is \$3 per person. Call (949) 923-2295 for reservations. Location code: MIC

Toddler Time: "Wet Wet Wetlands" — May 21, 9:00 a.m. or 10:15 a.m.

Join a Ranger for this 45-minute parent and child playtime with a wetlands theme. Fee is \$3 per child. Call (949) 923-2295 for reservations. Location code: MIC

Butterfly Migration — May 24, 1:00–2:30 p.m.

Learn about this fascinating, beautiful insect and the amazing 1,000-mile journey it takes every year. Ages 5 and up. Fee is \$3 per person. Call (949) 923-2295 for reservations. Location code: MIC

Toddler Time: "Ugh! It's a Bug" — May 28, 10:00–10:45 a.m.

Join us for story time, hands-on fun and movement, for this parent and child playtime with a bug theme. Ages 2–4. Fee is \$3 per child. Call (949) 923-2295 for reservations. Location code: MIC

Monthly Naturalist Program — June 5, 6:30–8:30 p.m.

Join the naturalists for a slide presentation on butterflies and insects of the Bay. Refreshments at 6:30 p.m., presentation at 7:00 p.m. Free. For information call (949) 923-2269. Location code: MIC

Train for a Day, Be a Volunteer for the Bay — June 7, 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

Volunteer at Upper Newport Bay and be a part of this dynamic estuary! Call (949) 923-2295 to reserve a spot and find out how you can get involved. Location code: MIC

Toddler Time: "What Animals Live Here?" — June 11, 10:00–10:45 a.m.

Story time and hands-on fun as we learn about what animals live at Upper Newport Bay. Ages 2–4. Fee is \$3 per child. Call (949) 923-2295 for reservations. Location code: MIC

Toddler Time: "Birds" — June 18, 9:00 a.m. or 10:15 a.m.

Join a Park Ranger for this 45-minute parent and child playtime with a bird theme. Fee is \$3 per child. Call (949) 923-2295 for reservations. Location code: MIC

Marine Studies Center Open House — April 2, May 7, June 4, 6:30–8:30 p.m.

Marine Studies Center staff and local science teachers will be available to talk about marine/estuarine science, community service, internships and parental help opportunities. For information call (949) 640-9961. Free. Location Code: MSC

Bay Bottom Trawls — April 11, May 9, June 13, 3:00–5:00 p.m.

Staff and local science teachers will conduct bottom trawls of Newport Bay to explain bay ecology. For high school and college students. Call (949) 640-9961 for reservations. Free. Location Code: MSC

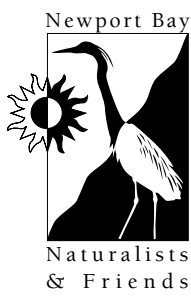
SPECIAL EVENTS

Earth Day 2003 — April 27, 10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.

Join the Newport Bay Naturalists & Friends on Shellmaker Island for a day of family activities, musical entertainment, water tours, shark touch tanks and more. Refreshments will be available. All activities are free. Location Code: MSC

Ocean Discovery Day 2003 — June 14, 10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.

Join the Newport Bay Naturalists & Friends, City of Newport Beach, Orange Coast College and Orange County Sea Base in a day of ocean and wetlands discovery. Activities include touch tanks, water tours, shark and ray exhibit, ocean tidepool exploration and estuary mud discovery. Free. Location Code: MSC



600 Shellmaker
Newport Beach, CA 92660

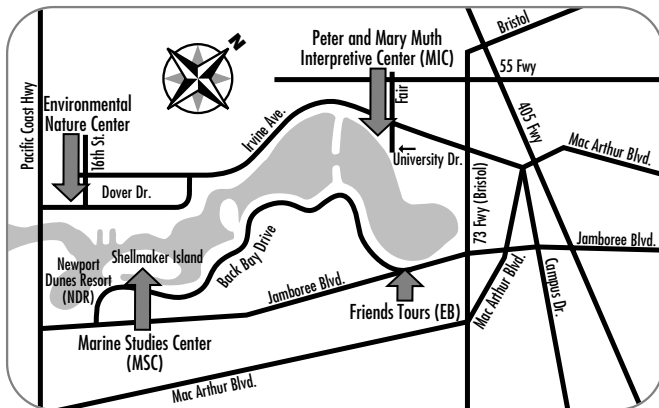
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◀ LOCATION KEY

Interpretive Center (MIC)
Peter and Mary Muth Interpretive Center
2301 University Drive
Newport Beach, CA 92660

Marine Studies Center (MSC)
600 Shellmaker
Newport Beach, CA 92660

WEB SITES

Newport Bay Naturalists & Friends: www.newportbay.org
Peter & Mary Muth Interpretive Center: www.ocparks.com/unbic www.newportbay.org
Department of Fish & Game: www.dfg.ca.gov
Environmental Nature Center (ENC): www.ENCenter.org
County of Orange: www.ocparks.com/uppernewportbay/
California Coastal Commission: www.coastal.ca.gov

Thanks for Your Support!

Your response to our annual membership drive has enabled us to continue our work at the Bay. It is not too late to renew—just send your tax-deductible donation to:

Newport Bay Naturalists & Friends
P. O. Box 10804
Newport Beach, CA 92658

Does your employer provide matching gifts to qualified organizations? Another way you can support our efforts is by doing what member Jim Carr did. Through Jim we received matching funds from the *Los Angeles Times*. Thank you Jim and the *Times*.

Donna Carroll, Treasurer
Newport Bay Naturalists & Friends

TRACKS CREDITS

Guest Editor: Jessica Green
Contributing Writers: Jim Cokas, Kristina Finstad, Amy Litton
Design & Layout: Debora Brown
Event Calendar: Sue McIntire, Candice McIntyre, Grace Yick, Marilyn La Bolita

What is Restoration?

This winter, the Newport Bay Naturalists & Friends helped plant 260 natives with California Coastal Commission's Community-based Restoration Program; more simply called RootS (Restoration Team Stewards). Remember all the weeding RootS did last year? We removed over 19,000 pounds of non-native species that were inhibiting the growth and recovery of coastal sage scrub and marsh habitat. As the growing season passes, we're gearing up to once again tackle highly invasive plants from the Back Bay, such as the prolific Ice Plant (*Carpobrotus edulis*) and Brazillian Pepper Tree (*Schinus terebinthifolia*).

Ecological restoration, like Nature, is always changing and growing. The rules of this young profession aren't always agreed upon—even by people who make their living as restorationists. Realize that this is more than just a scientific or technical challenge. It is also a model for a healthy relationship between nature and ourselves and, beyond that, a way of exploring, defining, and ultimately celebrating the terms of that relationship. Restoration is a humble and often joyful mending of biological ties; it is accepting an abandoned responsibility.

Kristina Finstad
California Coastal Commission

