

TRACKS

A Publication of the Newport Bay Naturalists & Friends

March-May
2006

A Lobbyist for Nature

Fifty-three years ago, my biology professor at Fullerton Junior College told me I ought to start getting interested in birds if I were going into game management work so he sent me to Back Bay Newport. As one result, I took a few Kodachrome slides which are now among the oldest colored illustrations we have of the bay. In 1969, I took a class at UCI dealing with Orange County environmental problems. Groups of three students were asked to select a problem in the county on which to report. My group chose Back Bay and was told by the professor that it was "a lost cause" so we should choose



An historic photo of the back bay.

another issue, but we persisted and were allowed to investigate. Thus, I went on my first Back Bay Tour and saw that I could help. I went to a Board meeting of Friends of Newport Bay with some ideas. I became a Board member in 1970, and spent a total of thirteen years on the

Board, serving as President for three years beginning in 1973.

With the future of Back Bay being set by Appellate Court decision in early 1973, the various public agencies we had fought suddenly asked, "Okay, you've won, what do you want?" After so many years of saying what we didn't want, it was a challenge to turn that around. About a dozen of us led by Frank and Frances Robinson put in many hours during the summer of 1973, preparing a plan for a park preserve. Since I was an unknown to the politicians and was the new President of the Friends, I was asked to be the spokesperson.

The unveiling of our plan took place at a public meeting of the Recreation Subcommittee of the U.S. Department of the Interior Upper Newport Bay Field Committee. There were about thirty in attendance. Two other presentations were made by the City of Newport Beach and Orange County of about ten minutes each. But when it was the public's turn, I stood up and said, "This might be my only chance and it will take a lot more than ten minutes." I talked

for an hour and a half during which I used numerous illustrations of the plan that had taken a summer to develop. The presentation was so successful, I was asked to do it again for the full Field Committee in San Francisco, did so, and then was invited to become a permanent member of the committee. Finally, the Friends were getting recognized!

I found myself giving a short version of the presentation to the Orange County Board of Supervisors, the South Coast Regional Coastal Commission, and the Newport Beach City Council. With this exposure, I was soon appointed to a city committee considering the design of the bridge over the bay on Coast Highway and was then asked by a councilman if I would be interested in being a Planning Commissioner. I was appointed to that position in August, 1974. In 1975 I was asked to run for an empty City Council seat, did so, and won handily. I served from 1976 to 1980 and was Mayor Pro Tem during the last two years. The 1978-80 Council had an environmental/resident majority for the only time in the city's history and often said "no" to over-development proposals. Developmental interests spent a very large sum of money to set up the public for the 1980 election to unseat that majority and were successful in doing so. But the politics of Back Bay were never to go back. No matter who was in office, the public had been convinced and the bay was to remain protected from development.

Some anecdotes from those days:

- Jim McCormick, Deputy Director of DFG, at a celebration party regarding the establishment of Back Bay as a nature reserve, said that FONB "is unique for two reasons: one, you won; two, you still exist to protect what you've won."
- Harry Rinker, who lived at the north end of the bay right next to the land designated for a six-lane divided highway, asked me, "How long do we have to keep fighting University Drive?" My answer was illustrative of what all environmentalists know, "As long as we keep winning, we have to keep fighting to preserve what we've won."
- The business ethic always seems to be pitted against the environmental ethic. In 1978, I was a guest at a business group meeting in Newport Beach and was asked many questions about environmental issues. Finally, Paul Salata, owner of a sand and gravel operation, in his apparent frustration asked me, "Why is it you environmentalists *continued on page 4*"

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The Evolution of the Naturalist

When the courts established the Upper Newport Bay Ecological Reserve in 1975, 754 acres of wetlands were placed under the management of the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG). In 1989, the County's Department of Harbors, Beaches and Parks (HBP) became owners of 140 acres of uplands habitat known as the UNB Nature Preserve. The remaining property is owned primarily by the City Newport Beach. Against incredible odds, the Robinsons and the Friends of Newport Bay (FONB) had won their long battle and the government agencies became the protectors of the Bay in perpetuity.

In 1989, an agreement between the DFG and HBP resulted in the formation of the Upper Newport Bay Naturalists (UNBN) to support the DFG/HBP public education and restoration work throughout the Bay. Initially, the two agencies worked together in a rustic, but cozy trailer on Shellmaker Island. Nancy Bruland, the HBP Ranger, led the Naturalists with the assistance of the DFG Interpreter, John Scholl. A Coordinating Council co-chaired by Nancy and John was formed to manage all aspects of the joint efforts at the Bay.

In 1990 Lane Koluvek, a member of FONB, was elected President of UNBN and led the effort to become a 501.c.3 nonprofit corporation, form a board of directors and begin fundraising in support of the two agencies. With their permission, UNBN hired a part time Volunteer Coordinator to assist in training new volunteers and promote camaraderie. In 1995 a Policy Liaison Group was formed, consisting of the local supervision of DFG, HBP and UNBN, to address the integrated management of the Bay. This group evolved into the Management Coalition and, at UNBN's suggestion, the City joined the Coalition in 1999.

The year 1999 was a time of great optimism. The HBP Peter and Mary Muth Interpretive Center was finally a reality. A temporary Marine Studies Center was opened on Shellmaker, and there were plans for a more elaborate center in which DFG, the City and the OC Health Care Agency would partner. The Naturalist role was now primarily focused on support of all the government agencies involved in protecting and enhancing the wildlife and habitat of the Bay. These agencies were expected to define an integrated planning, implementation and monitoring effort to

Volunteers are important in maintaining the back bay.



guide the activities of both UNBF and FONB. Since the necessary protection of the Bay was in the hands of the agencies, UNBN and FONB decided to merge and formed the Newport Bay Naturalists and Friends (NBNF) to support the agencies and represent the interests of the public at the Bay.

Unfortunately that optimism was short-lived. The collaborative team spirit at the Bay existed mainly



because of the efforts of Nancy Bruland, who left HBP in the spring of 2000. Nancy's replacement correctly chose not to assume sole responsibility for coordinating the common DFG/HBP activities and DFG was not able to take on the job. The relocation of HBP staff and the NBNF Volunteer Coordinator to the Interpretive Center only exacerbated the situation.

Since NBNF's efforts were severely impacted by the lack of joint leadership, NBNF tried to facilitate a collaborative approach to management. This culminated in hiring (with approval of both DFG and HBP) an Executive Director to assist in facilitating the Management Coalition and managing day-to-day volunteer activities throughout the Bay. The NBNF Board of Directors also moved to strengthen its fundraising efforts to support all of the operations and capital needs at the Bay, as DFG funds were insufficient to provide adequate maintenance within the Reserve.

A key step was made in February 2003 when a comprehensive Cooperative Policy was approved for the UNB Management Coalition.. This called for a collaborative approach to managing the research, restoration, education and enforcement efforts at the Bay using the Natural Communities Conservation Plan (NCCP) format. This format requires resource management planning, monitoring and reporting to ensure consistent progress is being made in achieving common goals. Yet despite this agreement, the collaboration we have sought has not been achieved. For instance, in both 2004 and 2005 there were two separately-organized Cleanup Day efforts at UNB.

For the past few years NBNF has faced a major dilemma. How does it advocate to correct serious management problems without being openly critical of an agency it is trying to support? The NBNF Board rightly chose a low-key approach seeking change from within, and has advocated quietly for a holistic solution. Fortunately, there is now a recognition at the executive levels within the City, County and State of the need to rethink the management of UNB, and the City is proposing to take a leadership role.

Having arrived at this critical stage, NBNF must remember its FONB advocacy roots and work diligently to ensure that any change in the management of UNB is in the best long-term interests of the Bay, its habitat and its wildlife.

*Jack Keating
Past NBNF Board President*



Upper Newport Bay Calendar of Events

March–May 2006

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

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

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

Join a trained naturalist for a guided kayak tour of the Back Bay. Meet at the Newport Dunes Resort. \$20/person. \$10/NBNF members. Parking fee. Reservations (949) 729-1150 or 729-3863. Location code: NDR

Scout Programs—Tuesday through Saturday upon request

Join a naturalist for our 2 hour Brownie or Junior Girl Scout Try-it or badge programs; or join us for Tiger Cub, Bear Cub or Webelo badge programs. Call (949) 923-2269 or email scoutssi@sbcglobal.net. \$7/child includes patch. Location code: BBSC

Monthly Naturalist Meeting—Thursday, Mar. 2, Apr. 6, May 4, 6:30–8:30 p.m.

Join the Naturalists for a presentation related to the Upper Newport Bay. Refreshments are at 6:30 p.m. and presentation is at 7:00 p.m. Free. For information call (949) 923-2269. Location code: MIC

Walking Tour—Saturday, Mar. 4, Mar. 18, Apr. 1, Apr. 15, May 6, May 20, 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

California Indian Festival—Saturday, Mar. 4, 11:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

Join us at the Muth Interpretive Center for a day of Indian music, dance, artists' booths, storytelling, displays, nature walks a silent auction and more. This event presented in cooperation with the California Cultural Resource Preservation Alliance. Admission is free. Food will be available for purchase. For information call (949) 923-2295 or (949) 369-0361. Location code: MIC

Friends of Newport Bay Walking Tour—Saturday, Mar. 11, 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. Information (949) 923-2269. Location code: EB

ROOTS Restoration Teamwork—Saturday, Mar. 25, Apr. 22, May 27, 9:00 a.m.–Noon

Help restore Back Bay habitat by installing and maintaining native plants while learning about wetland ecology. Reservations required for groups of 5 or more. Refreshments, tools provided. (949) 640-0286 for information and location.

Plein Air Painting—Sunday, Mar. 19, May 28, 1:00–4:00 p.m. Friday, Apr. 7, May 12, 9:00 a.m.–Noon

Enjoy a wonderful time painting the Back Bay. Jean Marie will present and demonstrate traditional Plein Air techniques. All materials are provided. \$15/child, 8-18, \$20/adult. Registration (949) 923 2275. Location Code: MIC

Night Hike—Saturday, April 29, 6:00–7:30 p.m.

Join us for a night hike and learn about the wonders nighttime brings to our nature preserve. Dress warmly. This program may be re-scheduled due to bad weather. \$5 per person, ages 5 and up. Registration (949) 923-2275. Location code: MIC

Campfire Program—"Special Inhabitants of the Back Bay" Friday, May 5, 7:30–8:30 p.m.

Join a Park Ranger for an old fashioned camp fire talk about the endangered and other interesting species of the Back Bay. Dress for the weather; this program will take place outdoors. Rain cancels. \$4/person, ages 8 and up. Registration (949) 923-2275. Location code: MIC

Low Tide Bird Watching Hike—Sunday, May 14, 1:00–3:00 p.m.

What better way to spend Mother's Day than enjoying the wonderful birds of the Back Bay. Join avid birder Leigh Johnson and Park Staff for this afternoon of bird watching over the mud flats. Come prepared to hike. Free. No reservations needed. Meet in the community park at the end of Mesa Drive. There are no facilities at this location.

Train for a Day, Become a Volunteer—Saturday, May 20, 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: MIC

Toddler Time

Join a Park Ranger for a parent – child experience with stories, movement and hands-on fun. \$5 per child. Call (949) 923-2275 to register. Location code: MIC

"Hum Hum Hummingbirds"—Wednesday, Mar. 1, 10:30–11:15 a.m. (ages 3–4)

Learn all about those fast flying, beautiful little nectar eaters.

"Let's Go Bird Watching"—Wednesday, Mar. 15, 9:00–9:45 a.m. (ages 2–3) or 10:30–11:15 a.m. (ages 3–4)

Join us for a parent and child bird watching nature hike. One child per adult is recommended.

"Animal Senses"—Wed., Apr. 5, 10:30–11:15 a.m. (ages 3–4)

Learn about amazing animal senses like those who can smell with their tongue or taste with their feet.

"Crazy Coyotes"—Wednesday, Apr. 19, 9:00–9:45 a.m. (ages 2–3) or 10:30–11:15 a.m. (ages 3–4)

Join us for a parent and child playtime with a coyote theme.

"Let's Play Opossum"—Wed., May 3, 10:30–11:15 a.m. (ages 3–4)

Learn about mother opossum and her babies.

"Wet, Wet, Wetlands"—Wed., May 17, 9:00–9:45 a.m. (ages 2–3) or 10:30–11:15 a.m. (ages 3–4)

Join us for a parent and child playtime with a wetlands theme.

Nature After School

Join a Park Ranger for an afternoon nature program designed for children in Kindergarten through third grade. \$5 per child. Call (949) 923-2275 to register. Location code: MIC

"Let's Go Bird Watching"—Wednesday, Mar. 15, 3:00–4:00 p.m.

Join us for an afternoon bird watching hike using maps provided with registration information.

"Crazy Coyotes"—Wednesday, Apr. 19, 3:00–4:00 p.m.

Join us for an afternoon of fun learning about coyotes.

"Wet, Wet, Wetlands"—Wed., May 17, 3:00–4:00 p.m.

Join us for an afternoon of fun learning all about wetlands.

Dr. Sue "The Bug Lady" Programs

Join Dr. Sue and her traveling zoo for a learning experience all about bugs. Activities include a hands-on craft and an edible craft. \$10 per child, ages 5 and up. Call (949) 923-2275 to register. Location code: MIC

"Crafty Camouflage"—Sunday, March 5, 2:00–3:30 p.m.

Learn all about how critters disguise themselves for protection.

"Crazy Crustaceans"—Saturday, April 8, 2:00–3:30 p.m.

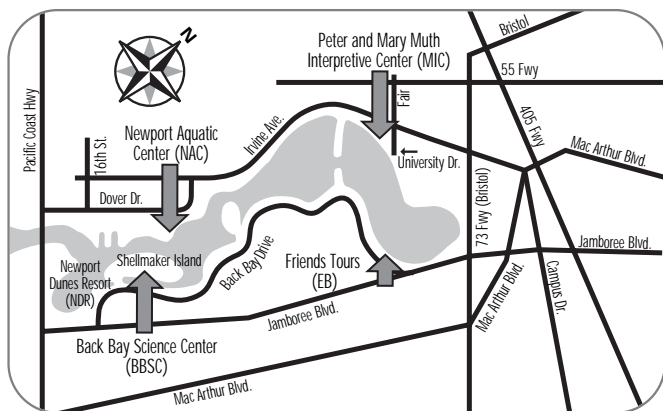
Learn all about crustaceans like crabs and how they are related to insects.

"The Truth About Butterflies and Moths"—Saturday, May 27, 2:00–3:30 p.m.

Meet marvelous moths and beautiful butterflies.

Special notice regarding BBSC programs

As a result of lack of DFG staff at the BBSC and likely commencement of construction of the new BBSC on Shellmaker Island, marine programs such as Marine Discovery as well as electric boat and canoe tours are on hold for the time being. Please call (949) 923-2269 for updated information.



WEB SITES

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

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LOCATION KEY

Peter and Mary Muth
 Interpretive Center (MIC)
 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

Upper Newport Bay 16th Annual Earth Day

“Learning from Nature”



When: Sunday, April 23—11:00 am to 4:00 pm

Where: Peter and Mary Muth Interpretive Center
 2301 University Ave. (at Irvine Ave.)

Scavenger hunt; interpretive programs; children’s activities; tanks with sharks, rays and other marine life; science discovery and craft booths; environmental exhibits; live music, and much more. Refreshments available.

For information: Call (949) 923-2269 or visit newportbay.org

Lobbyist *(continued)*

are always against everything?” I replied, “Because what we’re for already exists and you’re always trying to take it away!”

- In 1968, I met Stanford biology professor Paul Ehrlich, the eloquent spokesman for the environmental movement. When I told him that I, too, was teaching about and working on environmental issues, Paul said that ours is a tough battle. Right or wrong, we will be beheaded. Nobody likes a prophet, and, if wrong, we’ll be the laughing stock for our predictions.
- In 1971, at a conference in San Francisco, at which California Tomorrow unveiled its long-awaited statewide master plan for the future, I had the opportunity of meeting Ray Watson, who was President of The Irvine Company. We met several times and gained a mutual respect. Ray suggested that I was a “lobbyist” for nature. I agreed, saying that nature cannot speak for itself. So we must.

The Upper Newport Bay Ecological Reserve is now thirty years old. What we are presently engaged in is long-term planning to protect a special place. In my mind and heart, long-term is defined as—forever.

*by Ray E. Williams
 Lobbyist for Nature*