

TRACKS

A Publication of the Newport Bay Naturalists & Friends

June–August
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Well Done, Team!

Thank you to everyone who helped make our back-to-back Special Events at Upper Newport Bay on May 1st a success. This was truly a team effort involving well over a hundred volunteers and staff from the various organizations here at the Bay.



The day began before 5:00 a.m. for the staff of Orange County Harbors, Beaches and Parks, setting up the Great Earth Walk registration booths at the Interpretive Center and at each end of Back Bay Drive, and making ready for the Walk to begin at 8:00 a.m. During the morning, Naturalists led guided nature walks from the Interpretive Center along the West Bay and Bayview trails.

Throughout the day, Naturalists and the Restoration Education Coordinator for the California Coastal Commission staffed an Education Station at Big Canyon to tell walkers about the natural history of the Bay. County Ranger Reserves provided uniformed patrol at the Interpretive Center and along Back Bay Drive. Department of Fish and Game Senior Volunteers did the same on Shellmaker Island where final setup was being done for Estuary Awareness Day, which started at 11:00 a.m.

Estuary Awareness Day featured environmental exhibit booths, craft booths and education booths. Here, young and old alike could learn about the importance of Upper Newport Bay as the largest remaining natural estuary in Southern California, and gain understanding of how estuaries link the land and the ocean. Children took great delight in touching sharks and rays and looking at mud critters under the microscope. Additionally, four different 20-minute Life Science programs were presented in the amphitheater teaching about sharks and rays,

bird adaptations, plants and food webs, and how Native Americans lived at the Bay. The programs provided a sampling of the hands-on school and scout programs offered by the Department of Fish and Game; Harbors, Beaches and Parks; Naturalists; and Coastal Commission at Upper Newport Bay.

Newport Beach Mayor Tod Ridgeway gave an official welcome to Estuary Awareness Day from the main stage. Other announcements included poster contest awards presented by the Newport Beach Arts Commission, and OC Wild awards. Music was provided by Common Ground throughout the day. Free boat tours of the Upper Bay were given twice an hour. They provided great close-up views of birds and jumping fish with commentary from a Naturalist discussing the ecology of the Bay. Adults and children got to find out how easy and fun kayaking and canoeing can be by practicing basic paddling strokes on dry land at the Water Tours booth. Hands-on classes showing how to remove non-native exotic plants and how to grow native ones were given at the Native Plant Nursery.

The sun shone brightly for the Great Earth Walk and Estuary Awareness Day, highlighting the sterling efforts of those who organized and staffed the events and/or walked, and the generous support provided by walk donations as well as in-kind contributions of many items from food to offsite parking facilities.

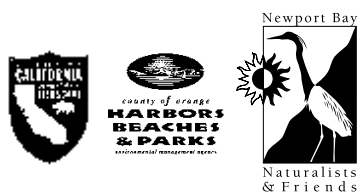
Thank you again,
Roger Mallett, NBNF Interim Executive Director

Shark-mobile is available for your school

Shark-mobile is an outreach program that will bring sharks, rays, sea stars and other marine animals to you. Participants will enjoy learning about local marine habitats through hands-on activities. For more information or to reserve the Shark-mobile please call 949-640-9956.

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Project Update: Upper Newport Bay Ecosystem Restoration Project

The long awaited “dredging” of the Bay is about to begin—but the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Project provides a lot more benefit than silt removal. The Upper Newport Bay Ecosystem Restoration Project has been in the works for several years. Following a feasibility study and a Chief of Engineers report, the Corps’ Los Angeles District is currently in the pre-construction, engineering and design phase of the project. The actual construction of the Project is scheduled to begin late this year—provided the Federal Government authorizes the necessary funding. Upper Newport Bay is one of the last remaining wetlands in Southern California that continues to play an important role in providing critical habitat for a variety of migratory waterfowl, shorebirds and endangered

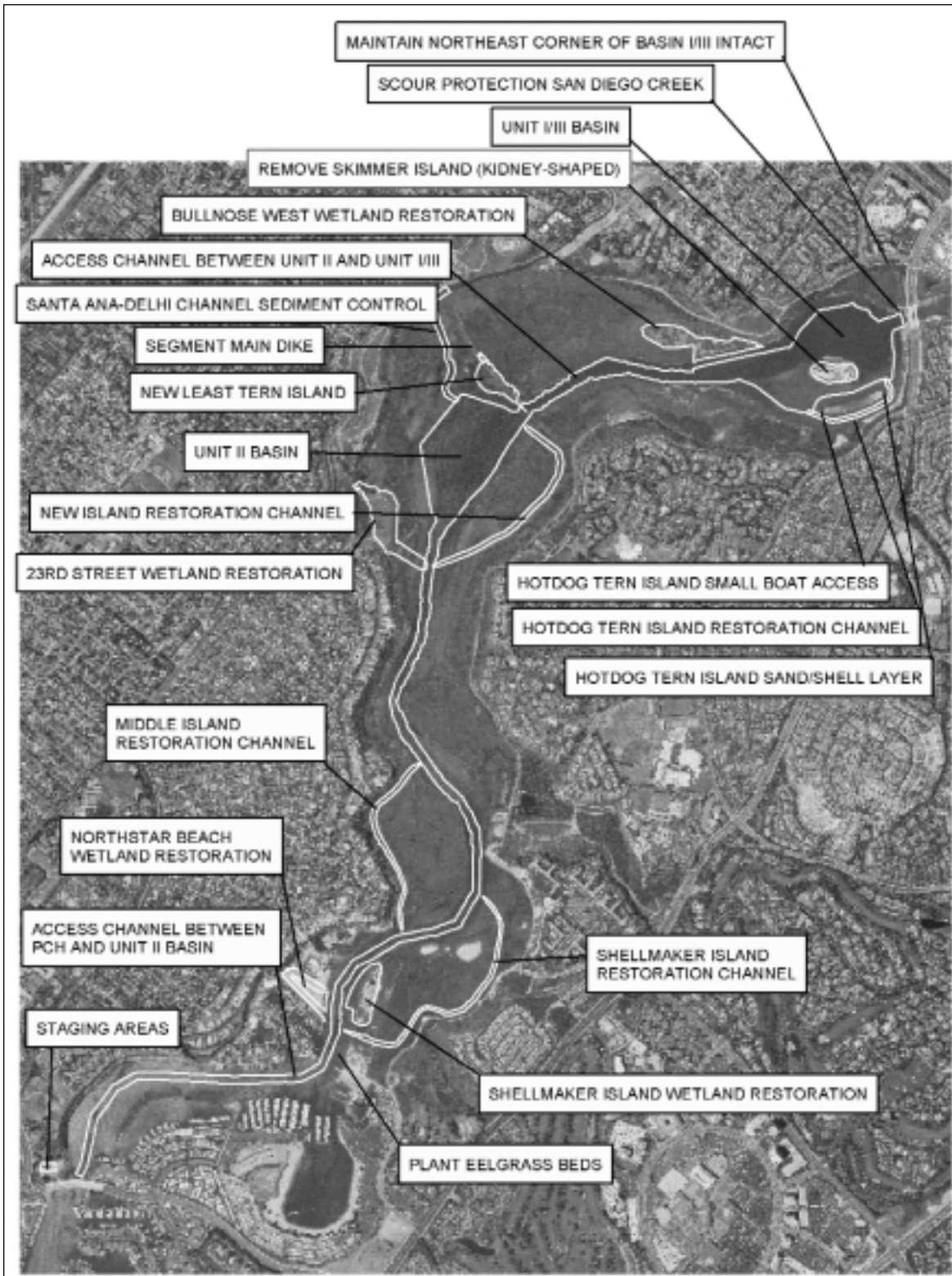
species of birds and plants. The Corps project authorizes deepening and expanding the size of the sediment basins of the Upper Bay. This, in turn, would provide restoration measures to the already degraded habitat and lessen the chances of more widespread degradation of the habitat in the future.

The project consists of:

- Dredging 2.1 million cubic yards of material from the Upper Bay to deepen and expand two in-Bay basins;
- Relocating Skimmer Island from the upper basin to the lower basin;
- Wetlands creation/restoration along Northstar Beach, Shellmaker Island, and a section of the northwestern edge of the upper basin (Bullnose);
- Restoring side channels around Tern Island in the upper basin, New Island, Middle Island, and Shellmaker Island.

The majority of the material is fine-grained silt that will be disposed of offshore in the LA-3 disposal site, located approximately four miles southwest of the Newport Bay harbor entrance. As much as it is technically feasible, dredge spoils will be used on-site, such as in constructing the base of the new tern island. The good quality sand and coarser grained material will be placed on the beach at Newport Beach and used to build the cap of the tern island.

Initial construction will take approximately two years to complete. Since the overall goal of the project is to control the deposition of sediments in the ecological reserve, and maintain a balance of open water, mudflat and marsh areas, it was important to design a project to limit the frequency of maintenance dredging before deposition would lead to changes in habitat types, such as open water to mudflat. Several combinations of sediment basins were studied using numerical models, average storm inflows and varying storm flows to compare the performance. Some of the initial design measures were rejected or changed because of detrimental impacts to existing habitat areas. Other alternative designs lessened habitat impacts and maintained similar sediment trapping characteristics. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was particularly concerned about the potential loss of intertidal mudflat when expanding basin open water areas and other restoration measures, such as restoration of full tidal action around islands. The resulting





Upper Newport Bay Calendar of Events

June–August 2004

SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES

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

Summer is the time to start plants from seed in the nursery so they are ready to be planted by fall. Learn how to grow natives in your backyard, attract wildlife and conserve water. For information call (949) 640-0286. Location Code: BBSC

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

Join a trained Naturalist for a guided 2-hour canoe tour of the Back Bay. Fee is \$10 per person. For reservations call (949) 923-2269. Location Code: BBSC

Kayak Tours—Every Saturday and 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. Fee is \$20 per person. NBNF members pay \$10. For reservations call (949) 729-1150 or (800) 585-0747. Location Code: NDR

Toddler Time “Ugh! It’s a Bug!”—Wed., June 2, 10:30–11:15 a.m.

Join us for story time, hands-on fun and movement, for this parent and child playtime with a bug theme. \$5.00 per child ages 3 & 4. Call (949) 923-2275 to register. Location code: MIC

Walking Tour—Sat., June 5 & 19; July 3 & 17; Aug. 7 & 21, 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

Bat Walk—June 13; July 5 & 30; Aug. 28 at dusk

Join bat expert Stephanie Remington and learn about these beautiful creatures of the night. Take an evening stroll in search of the Back Bay’s bats as we learn more about their habits and needs. There may even be an opportunity to meet a live bat! \$7.00 per person ages 8 & up. Call (949) 923-2275 to register. Location code: MIC

Toddler Time “Sneaky Snakes”—Wed., June 16, 9:00 a.m. or 10:30 a.m.

Join a Park Ranger for this parent and child playtime with a snake theme. Enjoy stories, movement and hands on fun for 2 to 4 year old junior naturalists. \$5.00 per child ages 2-4. Call (949) 923-2275 to register. Location code: MIC

Electric Boat Tour of the Bay—Sat., June 19; July 17; Aug. 21, 11:30 a.m.

Join a Naturalist on a 2 hour guided tour of the bay on our comfortable electric pontoon boat. Fee is \$10 per person. For reservations call (949) 923-2269. Location Code: BBSC

Silkworms—Fri., June 25, 10:00–11:30 a.m.

Learn all about the lifecycle of the fabulous silkworm. Make your own lifecycle diorama and a lifecycle model out of real food. Learn to tell the story of this very special moth species before you eat all four stages. \$10.00 per child ages 5 & up. Call (949) 923-2275 to register. Location code: MIC

Marine Discovery—Sat., June 19; July 17; Aug. 21, 8:30–11:30 a.m.

Marine biology students ages 8 and up are invited to participate in a variety of marine life monitoring programs in Newport Bay. Anyone under 16 must be accompanied by an adult. Fee is \$10. For reservations call (949) 642-5031. Location Code: BBSC

Evening Marsh Prowl—Sat., June 19; July 17; Aug. 21, 7:30 p.m.

Join a naturalist on a guided tour of the bay at dusk on our Back Bay Science Center boat. Use spotlights and binoculars to search for owls and other night creatures. Fee is \$15. Reservations (949) 923-2269. Location Code: BBSC.

Roots Restoration Teamwork—Sat., June 26; July 24; Aug. 28, 9:00 a.m.–Noon

Help maintain our restoration sites by weeding and watering natives. Get hands-on experience removing invasive vegetation and identifying plants. Learn about wetland ecology. Reservations required for 5 or more. Refreshments and tools provided. Call (949) 640-0286 for more information. Location code: MIC

Toddler Time “All About Hawks”—Wed., July 7, 10:30–11:15 a.m.

Join us for story time and hands-on fun in this parent-child learning experience all about hawks. \$5.00 per child ages 3 & 4. Call (949) 923-2275 to register. Space is limited; confirmation number may be required. Location code: MIC

At Home in the Sea—Fri., July 16, 10:00–11:00 a.m.

Join us and the Cabrillo Marine Aquarium for a general overview of what lives in the sea. Extensive class interaction makes this class especially interesting for little

SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES

ones. Tidepool animals, whales, and sea turtles are just some of the subjects explored. \$7.00 per child ages 4-6. Call (949) 923-2275 to register. Location code: MIC

Train for a Day, Be a Volunteer—Sat., July 17, 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

Be a part of this dynamic estuary—Volunteer at Upper Newport Bay! Learn about the habitats and wildlife of the bay. Participate in habitat restoration. Assist with canoe, kayak, walking, and school tours. Help greet and educate visitors. Call (949) 923-2295 to reserve a space. Location code: MIC

Toddler Time “Butterflies”—July 21; July 25, 9:00 a.m. or 10:30 a.m.

Join a Park Ranger for this parent and child playtime with a butterfly theme. Enjoy stories, movement and hands on fun for 2 to 4 year old junior naturalists. \$5.00 per child ages 2-4. Call (949) 923-2275 to register. Location code: MIC

Intermediate Plein Air Painting—Sat., July 24; Aug. 14, 9:00 a.m.–Noon

Join us for this outdoor painting class. All materials are provided. Fee is \$20 per person ages 8 and up. Dress comfortably in layered, painting appropriate clothing. Bring a sun hat and drinking water. Call (949) 923-2275 to register. Location code: MIC

Ladybugs & Beetles—Sat., July 31, 1:00–2:30 p.m.

Learn about the lovely ladybug and other kinds of beetles from “Dr. Sue”. Make and take your own ladybug. Make and eat a luscious ladybug with chocolate spots and even hold real live beetles and their larvae! \$10.00 per child ages 5 & up. Call (949) 923-2275 to register. Location code: MIC

Astronomy Night—Sat., July (Call for date and time)

Join members of the Orange County Astronomers for an inspirational tour of the night sky. This program is open to all ages and will include a presentation and observation with telescopes. There is no fee for this program, only a suggested donation of \$2.00 per participant. Call (949) 923-2275 to register. Location code: MIC

Plein Air Painting for Kids—Aug. 2, 3, 7, & 10 (Call for ages and times)

Students will learn the joy of painting from nature under the instruction of artists and educators from the Southern California Plein Air Painters Assoc. No experience necessary. All materials will be supplied. \$5.00 per child. Call (949) 923-2275 to register. Paintings will be displayed at SoCalPapa Art Show October 2–3. Space is limited; confirmation number may be required. Location code: MIC

Toddler Time “What Animals Live Here?”—Wed., Aug. 4, 10:30–11:15 a.m.

Join us for story time and hands-on fun in this parent-child learning experience about the animals that live here in the Upper Newport Bay Nature Preserve. \$5.00 per child ages 3 & 4. Call (949) 923-2275 to register. Location code: MIC

Toddler Time “Mud & Muck!”—Wed., Aug. 18, 9:00 a.m. or 10:30 a.m.

Join a Park Ranger for this parent and child educational playtime with a mud theme. Enjoy stories, movement and hands on fun for 2 to 4 year old junior naturalists. DON'T wear good clothes—dress for a mess! \$5.00 per child ages 2–4. Call (949) 923-2275 to register. Location code: MIC

Tigers of the Sky—Sat., Aug. 21, 1:00–2:30 p.m.

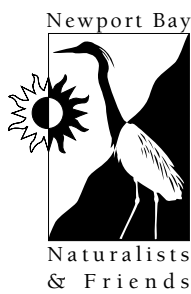
Learn about some of the top predators of the sky and about their amazing adaptations for capturing their prey. You will meet owls from the Orange County Birds of Prey Center and do an owl pellet dissection to see what these magnificent birds eat. Suggested ages 5 and up. Fee for this family program is \$5.00 per participant. For reservations call 949-923-2275. Location code: MIC

Adventures of C. Weed & His Friends—Thurs., Aug. 26, 10:30–11:15 a.m.

Join us and the Cabrillo Marine Aquarium as we learn about various ocean animals and their strange ways using puppets and an assortment of hands-on specimens including a touch tank. \$7.00 per child ages 3–5. Call (949) 923-2275 to register. Space is limited; confirmation number may be required. Location code: MIC

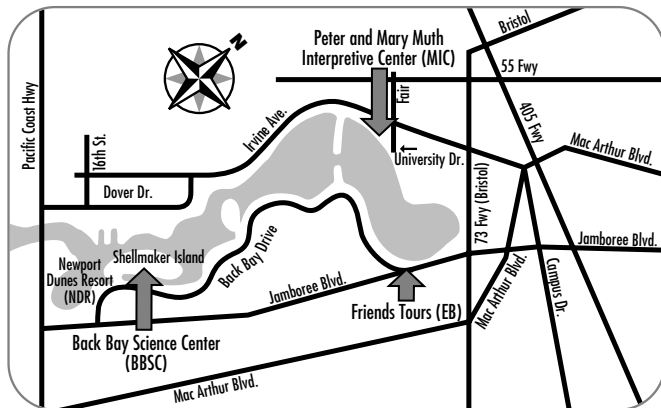
Basic Bugs—Sun., Aug., 2:00–3:30 p.m.

Let “Dr. Sue, The Bug Lady” share part of her zoo with you! See and touch different kinds of live insects, study their bodies and learn how they do different jobs that help them survive. Make your own artistic insect and edible insect snack! \$10.00 per child ages 5 & up. Call (949) 923-2275 to register. Location code: MIC



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Newport Beach, CA 92660

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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

WEB SITES

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

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Special Events— Save these Dates!

Wild at Heart Art Show

May 15–June 20, 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

View an exhibition of works exploring the natural wonders of the Back Bay by photographer Kent Treptow. Artwork is available for sale. For information call (949) 923-2269.

Cleanup Day

Sat., Sept. 18, 8:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Join Newport Bay Naturalists & Friends and other local volunteers to help clean trash from the Back Bay. Meet at the Interpretive Center. Transportation provided to other sites around the bay. Donated refreshments provided to all participants. For information call (949) 923-2295.

SOCALPAPA Paints Back Bay

Sat. & Sun., Oct. 2 & 3, 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

An art show and sale will feature works by Southern California artists participating in a Paint Out around the Bay. Hands-on art activities for children of all ages will be available as part of a Nature Festival. For information call (949) 923-2269.

Restoration Project (continued)

project objective is to minimize the loss of any habitat type to a 10% change from existing conditions, and no net loss of salt marsh habitat. Basins were also designed to address the State Water Quality Control Board's sediment deposition objective of less frequent maintenance dredging of the basins. Maintenance dredging is expected to occur once every 21 years, on average.

The feasibility report estimated the intertidal mudflat habitat at 217.2 acres; the estimated loss as a result of the project is 39 acres, or about 18%. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service prefers the loss be limited to 10%, or about 22 acres. The L.A. District is currently studying project layouts to reduce the loss and regain as much as possible any potentially lost mudflat acreage. An area called the 23rd Street site is proving to be the most favorable location with a gain of approximately 5 acres of restored mudflat habitat.

Dredging within an ecological reserve that supports a number of endangered species requires special consideration of potential environmental impacts. All of the required measures have been closely coordinated with resource agency representatives. Special considerations related to dredging include the seasonal and daily dredging operations and restrictions, turbidity control and species and habitat monitoring require-

ments. A monitoring plan will be developed prior to project implementation.

The current cost estimate is \$38.4 million, with the federal share being \$24,960,000 (65%) and the non-federal share being \$13,440,000 (35%). The project sponsors, the County of Orange and the State of California Department of Fish and Game, are willing and able to provide the non-federal share for the project. The County of Orange received a grant through Proposition 12 funds for \$13 million to cover the local cost share that is being administered by the State Coastal Conservancy. The local sponsors will be responsible for maintenance dredging.

In order for the Project to remain on schedule, \$13 million in federal funds are required for Fiscal Year 2005. Unfortunately, there are currently no funds allocated to this project in the President's budget. We have begun a letter writing campaign urging our local U.S. Representatives and Senators to add funding in the appropriations bill. In addition, the message will be used to educate as many members of the Appropriations Committee as possible. We are also trying to bring Congressional members to the Bay to leave with them a lasting impression of the beauty of the Bay and its vital ecological role in protecting our wildlife.

Susan M. Brodeur, P.E., Senior Coastal Engineer
County of Orange, RDMD/Watershed and Coastal Resources Division