

# TRACKS

A Publication of the Newport Bay Naturalists & Friends

September–November  
2007

## Common Ground in the Newport Bay Watershed

We are on the cusp of a change in management of water resources and ecological resources from a compartmentalized to an integrated approach. This transformation is something that manufacturing and other branches of private industry went through decades ago in terms of product quality, safety and environmental compliance, and asset effectiveness. Think Total Quality Management (TQM) and other parallel initiatives. In the last several years property owners and developers have begun to embrace the notion of green buildings as exemplified



Upper Newport Bay

by the growing number of new buildings meeting voluntary Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) requirements.

The state of California has been a leader in addressing many environmental issues, and government agencies are starting to recognize the need for integrated, long-term solutions to complex, interconnected problems. Indeed, through the requirement for the development of Integrated Regional Water Management Plans that address both water and watershed, the state Department of Water Resources is signaling the need for a more holistic view of water management in the wider context of natural resource stewardship.

In the last issue of *Tracks* ([newportbay.org/track-wsr.pdf](http://newportbay.org/track-wsr.pdf)), the satellite-controlled irrigation system installed by the Eastbluff Homeowners Association was highlighted as an example of how a simple project could benefit several stakeholders in different ways at the same time. The system saves the property owners money in the long run, helps the water company conserve water, reduces environmentally harmful runoff, and is a source of civic pride. In this case the respective benefits were clear to all stakeholders and there was sufficient impetus to proceed with the project. Conversely, a development project that results in landslides at the edge of a housing tract is just as damaging to the value of the property as it is to the environment, and the property owner is unlikely

to proceed knowingly. So again the positions of the stakeholders are aligned. In both cases the win-win seems obvious. However, many times the mutual benefits or detriments are not so obvious and there is no common ground because each stakeholder is too narrowly focused on its immediate concerns to think about how its long-term goals could be refined to be more in tune with those of other stakeholders.

So how do we achieve common ground? First, it is important for everyone to realize who the various stakeholders are and where their respective interests lie. The following four primary stakeholder groups (constituencies) are suggested:

- Property owners and developers focused on the value of their assets and costs to maintain.
- Water companies focused on providing water reliably and efficiently to acceptable standards.
- Civic leaders and municipal departments focused on providing for the welfare of the community.
- Environmental advocates focused on maintaining functional and sustainable ecosystems.

Unfortunately in many instances it may not even be clear what stakeholder interests are involved. A specific public or private entity (or individual) may be part of more than one stakeholder constituency, or have representatives of more than one constituency within its organization. For instance, a water company or a municipality may also be a landowner. A homeowner may also be a local government official and a member of an environmental group. Flood Control, Vector Control, Parks and Recreation, Planning, etc. are municipal departments with specific missions that may be contradictory in certain instances. The circumstances will typically dictate the hat being worn and the interest being promoted.

There are other constituencies involved too. These include regulatory agencies that define and/or enforce environmental, health and safety standards; funding organizations that award grants to help achieve environmental or community benefits; and scientific researchers that provide objective technical advice to help the decision-making process. Regulatory agencies themselves may also be land owners, grant sources and scientific advisors. Often the interest of the regu-

### 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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# Getting Reacquainted with the Back Bay\*

I recently decided to leave City Hall early and go to the Back Bay to acquaint myself with one of the great recreational and environmental assets of our region. Please allow me to share with you what I discovered.

The Upper Newport Bay Ecological Reserve is a 752-acre resource that contains one of the few remaining Southern California estuaries. This habitat type is characterized by a mixture of fresh and salt water. The plants that have colonized in this environment are called halophytes, which means salt-loving.

During the migration season, as many as 30,000 birds seek temporary refuge in this richly-endowed sanctuary before continuing to fly to their ultimate destination. Throughout the year, birders flock to this unique area and have seen at least 200 species of birds.

## Thanks and Goodbye

The Naturalists and Friends were saddened to hear of the death of Dr. Donald Bauman on July 2, 2007 at the age of 88. Don was a Lifetime Naturalist and avid bird-watcher.



Great Blue Heron  
©Russ Kerr, majestyofbirds.com

The daily conditions, both ephemeral and challenging, create unique moments for the visitor, especially for those who attune both their eyes and ears to the many sounds of the Back Bay. Varied habitats, including freshwater ponds, riparian woodlands, and upland habitats combine with the seasons and tides to produce an ever-changing display of biological diversity.

The astute visitor may notice that most wildlife seek refuge before dusk, when predators, including owls, bats and other nocturnal animals, are on the prowl. Each species, whether common or rare, has a timetable based on the availability of its preferred food. The dynamics that occur between the prey and predator are part of a healthy ecosystem, which further increases the value of the Back Bay.

In order to capture an impression of this unique area, one does not need to be a professional photographer. Each hour of the day offers photographic opportunities that are becoming increasingly rare in today's busy world.

I decide to explore the upper salt marsh, which is dominated by a salt-tolerant plant called pickleweed. This plant provides shelter for diverse animal populations including the endangered Belding's savannah

sparrow. Pickleweed rids itself of salt absorbed via its roots by pumping the salt to small cavities in the leaf cells called vacuoles. As salt accumulates, the leaves (which look like tiny pickles) turn pink and purple.

The mood of this magnificent environment is captured in local plein air paintings.

As I continue to observe the salt marsh by honing up my senses, I hear birds singing and a frog croaking away with its throaty call. Frogs were one of the first land animals to get a voice and their vocal sacs fill with air to amplify the sound. Only the male calls, either to proclaim its territory or to attract a mate.

I am now here at low tide when nature provides a bountiful feast. I notice clusters of horse mussels, which epitomize the expression "stick-in-the-mud". Instead of attaching to an object like most species of mussels, the horse mussel permanently burrows into the mud with its shell partially open for filter feeding. Couch potatoes take comfort—these "stick-in-the-muds" enjoy a longer life span than more adventurous mussels.

The receding tide reveals mud flats that are endowed with a smorgasbord of nutrients. The great blue heron is busy probing the mud flats for food. Note the long bill, which is a very effective tool in extracting organisms that live in the mud.

During mating rituals the long neck of the male quivers, the plume of feathers radiate out to resemble a halo, and the wings stretch to show their full dimension. The male heron is radiant, graceful and very attentive to its mate. He presents sticks to the female who utilizes them in building a nest in which three to five eggs are laid and incubated. The heron is the emblem of the Naturalists.

I love the Back Bay. It provides me with a nostalgic link to my past experiences and I want these memories to live on. Hopefully, this article will inspire readers to explore the Upper Newport Bay Ecological Reserve and Nature Preserve, and urge residents to enthusiastically support the city's efforts to protect this wonderful treasure.

Leslie Daigle  
Newport Beach City Council

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*Leslie Daigle is a Newport Beach City Councilwoman. She was introduced to marine science at an early age by her family, who was interested in natural history. Along with her siblings and cousins, she took summer classes at the Woods Hole Science School in Massachusetts. A portion of the time was spent in an austere New England classroom with straight-back wooden chairs. The school room was embellished with large jars containing solutions that preserved all kinds of marine organisms.*

*Most of the time, though, the class was conducted outside exploring habitats that characterize Woods Hole, a Mecca with some of the finest scientists in the world. Leslie's frequent investigations at an early age helped further her appreciation and understanding of coastal environments.*

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\* Adapted with permission from a recent article in *The Daily Pilot*



# Upper Newport Bay Calendar of Events

September–November 2007

## 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: NDR

## 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, Sep. 1, Oct. 6, Nov. 3, 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

## Marine Life Inventory—Saturday, Sep. 8, Oct. 13, Nov. 10, 8:15–11:30 a.m.

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. Under 18 must be accompanied by an adult. Free. Reservations (949) 640-9956. Location code: BBSC

## Shellmaker Discovery Tour—Saturday, Sep. 8, Oct. 13, Nov. 10, 9:00–10:30 a.m.

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

## 2nd Sundays Restoration Program—Sep. 9, Oct. 14, Nov. 11, 9:00 a.m.–Noon

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

## Monthly Naturalist Meeting—Thursday, Sept. 13, Oct. 4, Nov. 1, 6:30 p.m.–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) 923-2296. Location code: IC

## Twilight Canoe Tour with Barbecue—Saturday, Oct. 13, 4:00 p.m.

Join Naturalists and Sea Scouts for a beautiful tour of the Reserve followed by a cookout at the Newport Aquatic Center. Fee is \$25. Reservations required (949) 642-5031. Location Code: NAC.

## ROOTS Restoration Teamwork—Saturday, Sep. 22, Oct. 27, Nov. 10, 9:00 a.m.–Noon

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

## Friends of Newport Bay Walking Tour—Saturday, Oct. 13, Nov. 10, 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: FT

## Big Canyon Walking Tour—Saturday, Oct. 20, Nov. 17, 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.

## "Boo! Bay"—Saturday, Oct. 27, 6:00–7:30 p.m. (contents for ages 5–10)

Join us for a special night of "no scare" spooky fun! Become a nature detective and take the "spooky" out of critters. \$5 per child. Registration (949) 923-2275. Location code: IC

## Night Hike—Saturday, Nov. 10, 5:30–7:00 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. \$4 per person, ages 8 and up. Directions to meeting site will be sent with registration: (949) 923-2275. Location code: TBD

## Sharkmobile is available for your school

Sharkmobile is an outreach program that will bring sharks, rays, sea stars and other marine animals to your school. Participants will enjoy learning about local marine habitats through hands-on activities. Free. Information and reservations at (949) 640-9956. Location code: BBSC

## Scout Programs—Tuesday through Saturday upon request

Join a naturalist for a 2-hour Brownie or Junior Girl Scout Try-it or badge program; 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

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

## Toddler Time (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.

"What's Neat Beneath Your Feet"—Wednesday, September 5

"Fall Festival"—Wednesday, September 19

"Itsy Bitsy Spiders"—Thursday, September 20

"Garden Gala"—Wednesday, October 17

"Creepy Critters"—Thursday, October 25

"Those Incredible Senses"—Wednesday, November 7

"Brackish Bounty"—Thursday, November 8

"Wetland Waders"—Wednesday, November 21

"Excellent Echinoderms"—Thursday, November 29

## Bayside Buddies (Ages 2–7)

3:30–4:30 p.m. for ages 2–7. Come discover the natural history of the bay through crafts, hands-on activities and nature walks.

"Raptor Rap"—Friday, September 7

"Tongva Traditions"—Friday, September 21

"Backyard Buds"—Friday, September 28

"Spooky, Stinky, Smelly Fun"—Friday, October 19

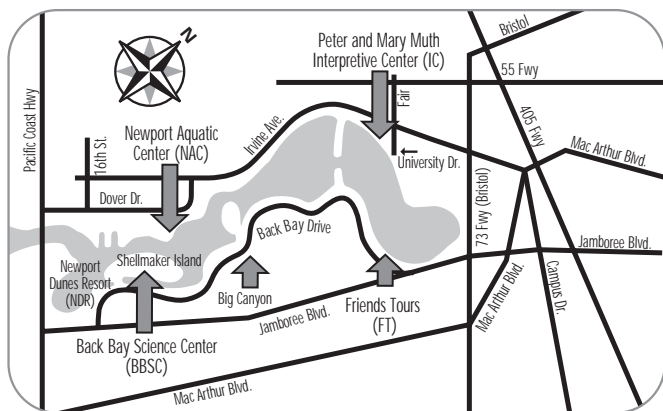
"Delightful Ducks"—Friday, November 2

"Critter Lunch Menu"—Friday, November 16

"Days of the Greys"—Friday, November 30

Wild! Tales—Wednesdays, September 13 & 27, October 18, Thursdays, November 1 & 15

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.



**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)

**TRACKS CREDITS**

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**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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**23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Coastal Cleanup Day  
 at Upper Newport Bay**

**When:** Saturday, Sept. 15 from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.  
**Where:** Peter and Mary Muth Interpretive Center  
 2301 University Drive (at Irvine Ave.)

Organized by Newport Bay Naturalists & Friends; Orange County Harbors, Beaches & Parks; and California Dept. of Fish and Game. This is the one day of the year we are able to enter many sensitive areas of Upper Newport Bay to remove harmful and unsightly trash. Please come and help us.

Free lunch.  
 Families welcome.

General Information:  
 (949) 923-2269 or  
[newportbay.org](http://newportbay.org)

Group (10+) Registration:  
 (949) 923-2295

Water Cleanup Registration:  
 (949) 640-9956



**Common Ground (cont.)**

latory agencies are aligned with the environmental advocates. But this is not always the case. Agencies, too, may have conflicting missions.

Having identified the stakeholder constituencies and their respective interests, a common vision is needed to allow the search to begin for common ground. It would seem that all local constituencies have the following collective vision:

*Public and private lands in the Newport Bay Watershed will be managed holistically to sustain healthy ecosystems, protect critical habitat and species, and allow the community to enjoy and be re-energized by their connection with nature, while at the same time safeguarding the health and welfare of the community, maintaining the long-term reliability of water supplies, and protecting the value of property.*

What that means to each constituency must now be defined so that everyone may see the common ground. Work has already begun in trying to achieve consensus within the environmental community as to what the “Desired Ecological State” should be for the Newport Bay Watershed twenty years or more from now. With specific ecological goals defined, one of the next steps might be to explore ways to increase the public’s interaction with nature in an eco-friendly way such that the public sees the importance of sustaining healthy ecosystems. Progress will be addressed in a future article.

Roger Mallett  
 Executive Director