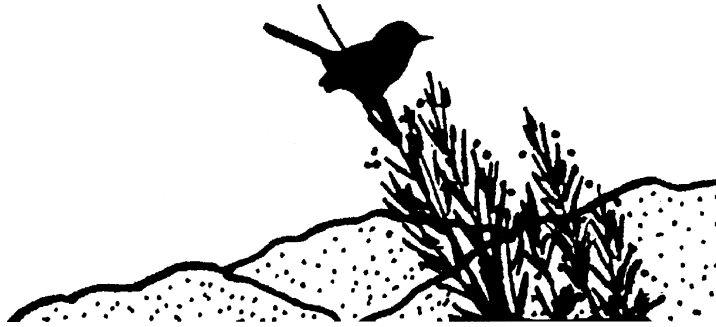


This newsletter is published quarterly to inform the generous supporters and other friends of the Endangered Habitats League about our activities in the ecoregion.



ENDANGERED HABITATS LEAGUE NEWSLETTER

If you are not a member of the Endangered Habitats League, please join us in the ongoing effort to preserve and protect Southern California's irreplaceable plants, animals and places.

New EHL Project to Save a Hidden Gem

Endangered Habitats League (EHL) has initiated a project to protect one of Southern California's least known but important landscapes. EHL's *Canyons Project* encompasses untrammeled and often isolated lands in western Riverside County—in the foothills of the San Jacinto Mountains. In these scenic canyon lands, the interface of coastal and desert climatic zones has created great biodiversity with many endemic species—species found nowhere else, like the Vail Lake *Ceanothus*.

Roughly, the *Canyons Project* lies south of Hemet and northeast of Temecula, and forms an eastern edge to the rapidly urbanizing Perris Plain. One already protected area is the Shipley Reserve south of the Diamond Valley Reservoir, which was part of the mitigation for that project. Dominant vegetation is rearsidian coastal sage scrub (often with gnatcatchers) and chaparral.

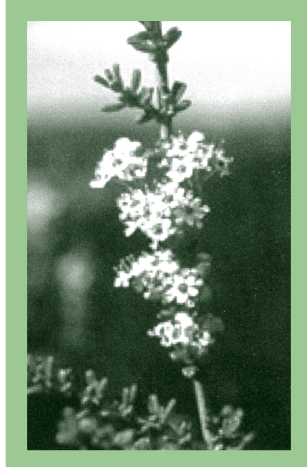
Cottonwood riparian areas along Wilson Creek are reminiscent of the Sonoran Desert. Wilson Creek also ties together the San Jacinto and Palomar mountains, and thus is a critical landscape linkage for large predators between the San Bernardino and Cleveland National Forests.

Agricultural land in Cactus Valley, just south of Hemet, would probably support the endangered Stephens' kangaroo rat if acquisition and restoration were to occur. The lush habitat of Temecula Creek along Highway 79 borders scenic areas in San Diego County to the south. The area around Vail Lake forms the upper watershed for the Santa Margarita River, one of our premier natural resources.

Almost all the area is privately owned. With some exceptions, like an old sub-division called "Lake Riverside" and the community of Anza farther to the east, it is sparsely settled. There are quaint "villages" like Aguana—basically just a country store. The area lacks infrastructure, and rural residential sprawl has not destroyed the ambience in most places—at least not yet. Unfortunately, the new Riverside

County Integrated Plan will not change the current zoning, which calls for 5- and 10-acre lots—a prescription for rural residential sprawl advancing east from Temecula. Also, one Indian casino already operates in the area.

The good news is that the Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) seeks to create large core reserve areas in the Canyons region. Land is not expensive and the opportunity exists to capture reserve areas encompassing tens of thousands of acres. As an ancillary measure, the new Integrated Plan may contain an incentive system to rural landowners for development rights to be transferred to growing urban centers.



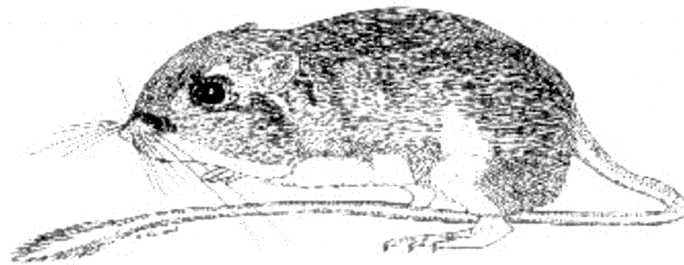
Vail Lake Ceanothus
This unique, small-leaved shrub from a distance bears a superficial similarity to Chamise.

The good news is that the Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) seeks to create large core reserve areas in the Canyons region.



EHL's new *Canyons Project* encompasses untrammeled, often isolated lands in western Riverside County—in the foothills of the San Jacinto Mountains.

As is common in conservation, time is of the essence. Protection of this largely intact ecosystem needs to start right away.



The Stephens' Kangaroo Rat
Illustration by Dr. Dan Holland

Thus, Endangered Habitats League has asked the Riverside Land Conservancy, which is having great success in its San Timoteo State Park project to the north, to house this new EHL sponsored Canyons Project, and they have accepted.

This story continues on page 2

EHL Project Manager for San Diego Helps Establish Housing Action Network to Promote "Smart Growth"

If our scenic landscapes are to be protected, new development must be directed "in rather than out." Such "smart growth" must also meet high standards of community design. Endangered Habitats League (represented by San Diego Project Manager Lynne Baker) has become a founding member of the new San Diego Housing Action Network (HAN).

HAN is a coalition of business, environmental, affordable housing, and planning advocates. The group has developed consensus around ten project criteria to guide endorsement of smart growth projects. The Network is modeled on a similar coalition in Silicon Valley that has helped address concerns over added density in already developed areas. The ten criteria include habitat conservation plan support, storm-water filtration, jobs/housing balance, and walkable, transit-oriented communities. (See chart on page 3.) The result should be the creation of affordable housing that spares rural and habitat lands and is also acceptable to surrounding communities.

Two projects in the City of San Diego have earned the HAN endorsement. The first project will create a "mixed use" village with 137 new units of market rate apartment housing integrated above an existing retail complex in the Clairemont district. Three-bedroom units are incorporated into the project, meeting a rarely provided need for large family-size apartment housing. The endorsement calls upon the owner and city to look into further set-asides for Section 8 workforce housing programs. The second project will rehabilitate and reuse an historic 13,000-square foot building on Park Boulevard to create a 90-unit

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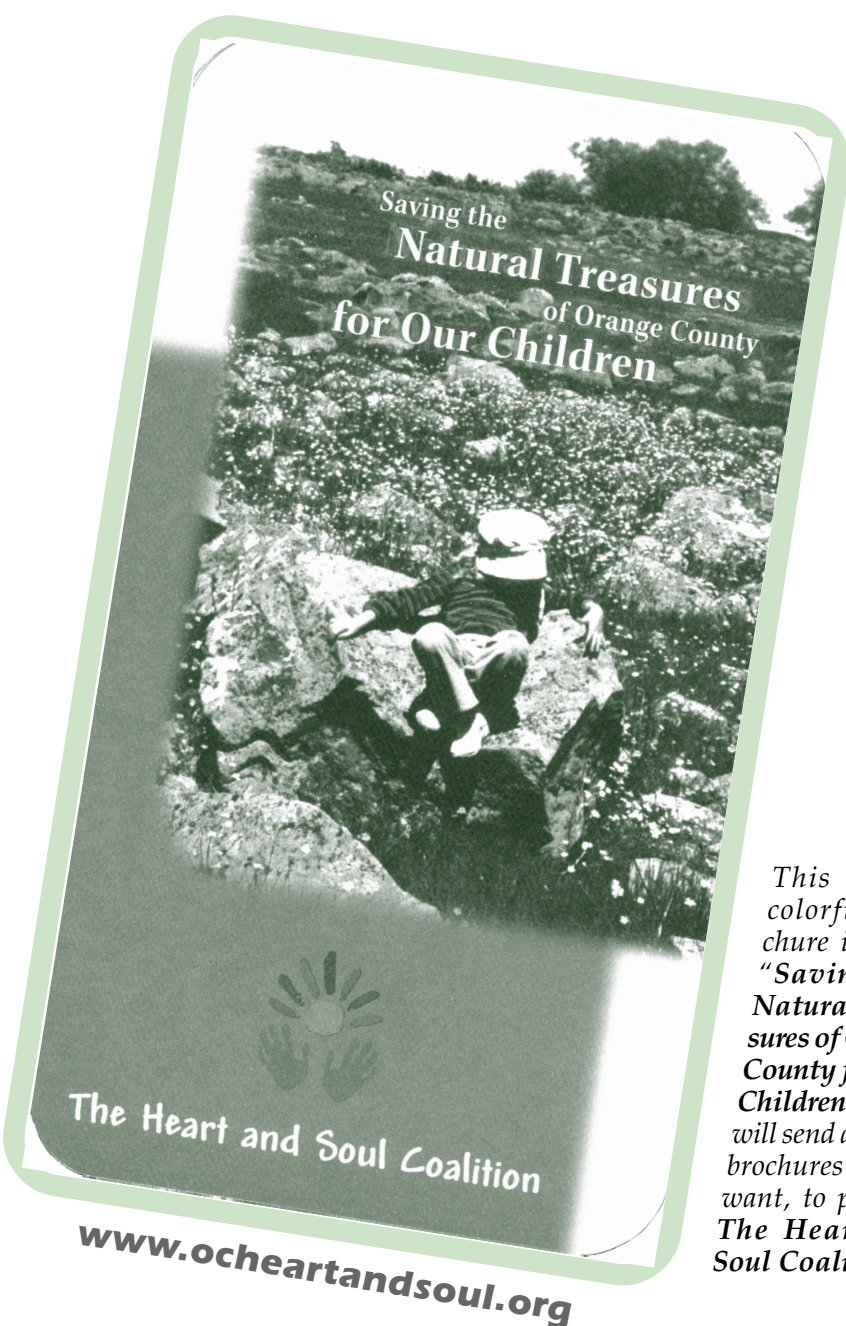
News from Around Our Southern California Ecoregion

Orange County

The South Subregion Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP) incorporates the 23,000 acres that remain of the historic Rancho Mission Viejo (RMV), now proposed by the landowners and their investors for massive development. However, Supervisor Tom Wilson decided to take a longer view, and has convened a broad-based Land Use Advisory Committee under his South County Outreach and Review Effort (SCORE). EHL sits on this committee, which already has set precedents for community involvement. Thus far, we have been given presentations of biology, land use planning, transportation, and urban services.

The Land Use Committee expects potential development footprints to be forwarded from the simultaneous NCCP process sometime in May. In order to make progress in the potentially contentious NCCP, The Nature Conservancy has retained a facilitator to convene stakeholders on an informal, *ad hoc* basis. Progress is being made; a range of reserve designs will be drawn up and given to the wildlife agencies for their review in April. Initial discussions have been constructive, and EHL will continue to try to find common ground around an alternative that protects the key core landscapes in an ecologically sound manner.

Please check out the beautiful and informative web page of "The Heart and Soul Coalition" that EHL and others have formed to advance land protection. It is found at: www.ocheartandsoul.org.



This small, colorful brochure is titled "Saving the Natural Treasures of Orange County for Our Children." EHL will send as many brochures as you want, to promote The Heart and Soul Coalition.

San Diego County

The County's General Plan 2020 Update has made slow progress, with goals and policies undergoing scrutiny and a new land use map almost ready for review. For the Multiple Habitat Conservation Program (MHCP), which covers the North County cities, Endangered Habitats League has submitted written comments. EHL also has submitted comments on traffic modeling to the San Diego Association of Governments, so that an innovative transit system under development gets a "fair shake" compared to automotive travel. An update on EHL's "Smart Growth" work in San Diego is found on page 1 of this newsletter.

Riverside County

A preliminary draft of the Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) was released to Advisory Committee members. Endangered Habitats League submitted comments detailing the shortcomings of the proposal, such as an over-allowance of new agricultural clearing, but feels that the potential conservation benefits are large. Very importantly, the County is succeeding in enlisting the participation of the various cities in the MSHCP, and we commend them for this crucial effort. EHL is also working to make early habitat acquisition funds available to the program.

County staff, developing the General Plan and transportation components of the comprehensive Riverside County Integrated Plan, will release draft documents in the coming weeks. EHL will concentrate on ensuring that critical features of the plan, such as transit-supporting community centers, don't get lost as the process advances. Litigation on the French Valley and Domenigoni-Barton development projects is advancing toward hearing dates.

San Bernardino County

In order to implement our settlement agreement with the City of Ontario (see Winter 2002 *Newsletter*), the City, EHL, and Sierra Club have formed an Advisory Committee to choose a land trust to receive mitigation funds. We are pleased that a respected community leader has agreed to serve as the "neutral party" on the committee. Elsewhere in San Bernardino County, litigation against the Lytle Creek North project, a totally misconceived project impacting alluvial fan habitat and negating the possibility of a successful multiple species plan, has been filed by EHL.

Federal and State Actions Affecting Our Southern California Ecoregion

Federal

Bush administration targets wetland protections. Regulations have been issued that step back from the historic "no net loss" standard. For example, upland buffers could now be considered as compensation.

State of California

Proposition 40 passes. Giving our conservation efforts a major boost, voters passed the park bond, with greater than a two-thirds majority. The park bond addresses multiple state needs, from active recreation to wildlife habitat.

Department of Fish and Game review of environmental impact reports in jeopardy. In response to State budget cutbacks, the Department of Fish and Game has proposed the virtual elimination of staff review of EIRs prepared under CEQA. Conservationists, including EHL, are trying to restore this vital Department of Fish and Game function.

Holly Springs Ranch acquisition funded. The State of California's Department of Fish and Game's land acquisition arm, the Wildlife Conservation Board, approved funding to purchase this important component of the North County Multiple Habitat Conservation Plan. EHL furnished a letter of support.

San Diego River Park Established

Over the past two years, EHL initiated the establishment of the San Diego River Park-Lakeside Conservancy and also formed the San Diego River Park Foundation to assist with funding support.

With the active involvement of environmental colleagues, wildlife agencies and elected officials, EHL has made significant progress with this "model" river conservation project. EHL's success has resulted in the consideration of a State of California chartered conservancy for this important riparian and community resource.

Canyons Project (from page 1)

Using funds solicited from interested donors by Endangered Habitats League, the respected and highly experienced parkland consulting firm of Dangermond and Associates will staff the project, and match willing-seller landowners with state, federal and local funding sources. We will keep you informed as EHL's *Canyons Project* progresses.

"Smart Growth" the aim of SD Housing Action Network
(continued from page 1)

market rate single room occupancy project in North Park. Market rates will average an affordable \$500 per month.

The San Diego HAN criteria are:

1. Support projects that build at efficient density and scale (at least 12 units per acre).
2. Promote communities that encourage transit use.
3. Encourage housing affordability.
4. Promote efficient use of city services and provide adequate infrastructure.
5. Promote quality design that engenders community character and a sense of place.
6. Promote pedestrian activity in the local community.
7. Support economic development and sustainability.
8. Support regional habitat and open space plans.
9. Promote mixed uses within neighborhoods.
10. Promote clean beaches and bays and preserve the region's environmental character.

EHL looks forward to working with our partners on more such endorsements, and on facilitating their approval by local governments.

Member Support Makes Progress Possible

Your annual, generous, tax-deductible support has allowed EHL to make significant environmental progress during the past year in our Southern California ecoregion.

In 2001 your donations helped EHL to:

- ✓ Create the **Heart and Soul Coalition** to help save critical lands and habitats in Orange County (www.heartandsoul.org).
- ✓ Advance conservation goals by issuing a detailed scientific report titled: *On the Global and Regional Ecological Significance of Southern Orange County: Conservation Priorities for a Biodiversity Hotspot* in October of last year. The report, published by the Conservation Biology Institute, with assistance from GreenInfo Network, calls for "...large, intact, and unfragmented watershed units (to) be conserved within this area, connected by landscape linkages, and where necessary, healed with ecological restoration."
- ✓ Initiate a River Park along the upper San Diego River. We also helped to establish a State of California-chartered conservancy to preserve this outstanding riparian and community resource.
- ✓ Serve as advocates for "Smart Growth" in the draft Riverside County Integrated Plan, which will focus growth in existing centers and direct growth away from pristine rural areas.

Your ongoing support will help EHL continue its work: preserving our Southern California ecoregion and helping to promote comprehensive "Smart Growth" planning.

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MUTTS By Patrick McDonnell



The Endangered Habitats League is a non-profit organization. All contributions are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

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Jess Morton

Director, Riverside County
Director, Orange County
Director, Los Angeles County and EHL Treasurer

Gifts That Honor or Thank a Friend or Loved One

Endangered Habitats League is pleased to receive gifts that:

- ⇒ Honor someone on a special occasion such as a birthday, anniversary or graduation
- ⇒ Memorialize someone who died
- ⇒ Just say "Thank you!" to a friend or loved one.

Following your instructions, EHL will send a beautiful acknowledgement card to the person honored or to the family of the deceased.

Please fill out the form below and mail it with your donation. Please print.

I/we are enclosing a special gift in the amount of

\$ _____

In Honor of _____

In Memory of _____

To celebrate her/his/their _____

To Thank _____

Send the acknowledgement card to _____

Address 1 _____

Address 2 _____

City/State/Zip _____

Indicate on the acknowledgement card that this gift is being made by:

Your Name (s) _____

Address 1 _____

Address 2 _____

City/State/Zip _____

Home phone _____ Fax _____

Office phone _____ Fax _____

E-mail _____

Endangered Habitats League

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Sea & Sage Audubon Conservation

published a profile of EHL in the fall of 2001. Some accomplishments were listed:

- ✓ Working tirelessly to create a 172,000 acre preserve in coastal San Diego County
- ✓ Co-founding the California Futures Network, to reform State land use planning
- ✓ Filing a precedent-setting lawsuit in San Bernardino County to protect the Dairy Preserve
- ✓ Repeatedly defending two beleaguered species...from poorly planned development in the Inland Empire

EHL in the News

On April 7, 2002, the *Los Angeles Times* reported on the status of the highly endangered Pacific pocket mouse, which survives in just three locations in northern San Diego and southern Orange County. Two locations are on the Camp Pendleton Marine Base. The third is on the Dana Point Headlands.

The *Times* said, *Environmentalists argue for the species to recover it's necessary to save as much of their habitat as possible. "They've been there for a long time and they've survived a lot of neglect," said Dan Silver, coordinator of the Endangered Habitats League. "Hopefully, with proper management, they will rebound. We look upon it as vital. There are so few of these animals left that you have to keep every one of these places going."*

Efforts by EHL and others to protect the population on the Headlands yielded a "qualified" success. Here is the background: In 1996, in a failing of the NCCP program, the Orange County Central-Coastal NCCP provided no permanent protection for the Dana Point population. However, due to enormous citizen effort, the housing development that would displace the mice was overturned by a ballot measure. A new planning effort ensued, in which EHL and local groups jointly proposed a "Nature Park" on the site, to protect the pocket mouse, California gnatcatchers, and rare plants.



Pacific Pocket Mouse
Photo: Shana Dodd

Ultimately, following litigation by the developer, the City of Dana Point approved a compromise plan. While EHL argued for expansion of the proposed mouse conservation area in its testimony, the new plan's permanent protection is a major improvement and has excellent management built-in. It now goes before the Coastal Commission for review.

The *Times* article noted that surveys have shown declining mouse populations on the Headlands. Over the years, EHL had repeatedly pointed out that any one of the populations could "blink out" or suffer a natural or man-made disaster, making each population essential as a *refugium*. Transplantation, according to scientists, would only be defensible in the case of excess individuals.

Tell a Friend about EHL

Endangered Habitat League's regional environmental perspective allows us to focus on those battles that are critically important to the ecosystem we all cherish!

We truly need your assistance to continue this work. Please help us spread the word about EHL's activities by telling a friend about our work or by sharing this newsletter with an acquaintance. Your ideas and efforts to help EHL expand its support base are always welcome.

Member Support Makes Progress Possible

(continued from page 3)

In 2002, with your help, EHL will:

- ✓ Continue our work on the San Diego County General plan and save the San Diego "backcountry" from sprawl.
- ✓ Expand the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge near Jamul.
- ✓ Ensure a sound Natural Community Conservation Plan for South Orange County's globally import natural resource "hot spots."
- ✓ Promote "Smart Growth," throughout the ecoregion, by cooperating on model community development projects that are environmentally friendly alternatives to sprawl.
- ✓ Move ahead with the "Canyons Project," to save foothills in Riverside County that link two National Forests.

Giant Petrel

Ocean running beneath us,
the southern seas surge onward,
immense ultramarine waters
strapped to the roaring wind
that strips foaming tatters
out of our milky wake.

Scudding clouds heap gray upon gray,
and under them a pale form has risen
out of the bristling foam
to swing over the frigid sea,
a bird moving without wingbeat
across our turbulent wake.

Ceaselessly, the giant petrel hangs,
crossing behind, and crossing behind,
letting its rigid wings slide down
the endless Antarctic wind
then, on end, turning, turning, turning
upon the huge leash of our headlong wake.

And when the lion rolls on his back,
and the Milky Way glides up out of darkness,
there, pivoting on the sinking moon's
silver hinge of light,
the silhouette of that somber cross
still cleaves to our glittering wake.

—Jess Morton

Endangered Habitats League

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