

We publish this newsletter four times a year 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 yet a member of the Endangered Habitats League, please join us in the ongoing effort to preserve and protect the Southern California ecoregion's irreplaceable plants, animals and places.

Environmental documents to be released soon

Riverside Documents "Hit the Street"

For four years, EHL has served on three Advisory Committees for the Riverside County Integrated Project: **Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP)**, **Community and Environmental Transportation Acceptability Process (CETAP)**, and **General Plan**. Environmental documents (EIRs and/or EISs) have been, or will shortly be, released for all three components.

CETAP is proposing new north-south and east-west multi-modal transportation corridors. These do *not* include the controversial route over the **Cleveland National Forest to Orange County**. Staff has recommended two preferred alternatives from among dozens of options. Analysis of the potential effects on wildlife by state and federal agencies is still pending. EHL is closely evaluating the alternatives in terms of biology, growth induction, and ability to serve population centers with transit. The **Riverside County Transportation Commission** will make a final decision in early 2003.

General Plan shaped by EHL and others toward "smart growth"

The General Plan was significantly shaped by EHL and other stakeholders toward "smart growth," including revolutionary—for Riverside County—walkable, mixed use, and transit-supportive Community Centers. We have thus been bitterly disappointed by the erosion of rural landscapes due to recently approved sprawl development—and are now fighting to prevent further loss of rural and agricultural lands as hundreds of landowners seek last minute changes. Yet, if adopted, the plan will finally begin to turn around the old pattern of development, and will also put in place a "Certainty System." Initiated by EHL, this system would prevent piecemeal amendment of the General Plan, as occurs currently.

Community Center adoption uncertain

Due to fear of higher densities, prospects for Community Center adoption are very uncertain, however, despite the support—secured with EHL-led outreach—of the **Greater Riverside Chamber of Commerce** and **Hispanic Chamber of Commerce**. Hearings before the **Board of Supervisors** could begin in December.

The MSHCP would set aside 150,000 acres of new, currently private land, including a veritable "wish list" of conservation priorities. While the plan has shortcomings, failure to adopt it would be catastrophic.

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EHL has endorsed a ballot measure to renew sales tax

EHL has endorsed a ballot measure that would renew a transportation sales tax, cause the region's cities to join the County in implementing the MSHCP, and direct mitigation monies toward the plan.

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The Phainopepla has what is probably the oddest breeding cycle of any of our birds. It often has two broods, which is quite usual in the bird world, but the two nests may be separated by several hundred miles!

Subject: Beasts & Botany

Phainopepla has odd nesting habits

By Jess Morton

One of the pleasures of the world of nature around us lies in the unexpected ways it makes itself noticed. Thus, as I walked out my front door the other morning, I was greeted with a soft rising whistle coming from the purple-blossomed nightshade that takes up a corner of the yard.

In a moment, a sleek black crested bird, roughly the size of a Starling, showed itself. If I had not recognized him by his distinctive call, the plumage of the male Phainopepla made him instantly identifiable. He spread his wings, exposing the great white blaze, which sweeps across the central part of the wing's primary feathers, and flew to the phone line above, where he promptly whistled again.

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Act signed into law by Gov. Davis on September 13th

San Diego River Park Conservancy established

With the signing of a key piece of environmental legislation, the San Diego River has a new conservancy—and a new future. Saying that the creation of the **San Diego River Park Conservancy** would "turn the tide on years of neglect," **Governor Gray Davis**, whose wife hails from Santee, signed the enabling bill on October 13 in San Diego.

The objectives of the conservancy are to provide recreational opportunities, open space, wildlife habitat, species restoration and protection, wetland protection and restoration, and protection and maintenance of the water quality of the San Diego River. Its creation will bring \$12 million in state funds to river protection in San Diego.

The Endangered Habitats League's **Michael Beck**, Chair of the **San Diego River Lakeside Conservancy (SDRLC)**, was instrumental in gathering the many geographically diverse river groups together in 2001 to focus their labors on a comprehensive strategy. Their efforts, combined with the work of key elected officials—**Assemblywoman Chris Kehoe**, **Supervisor Diane Jacobs** and **Mayor Dick Murphy**—made the new conservancy a reality.

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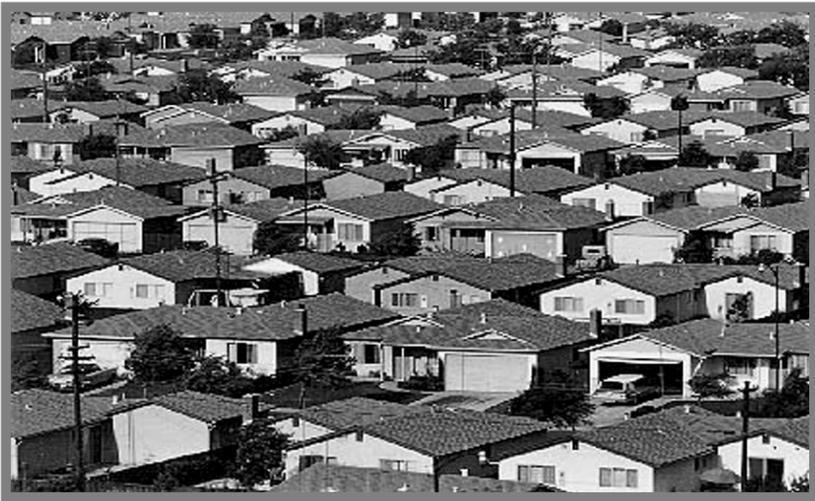
Smart Growth America Report gives Inland Empire the bad news on sprawl

In a report that verified what most Inland Empire residents already know—that sprawl in the region is out of control—a team of academic researchers has identified the **Riverside-San Bernardino** area as having the worst sprawl in the U.S. The report, which embodies three years of research, was written by professors at **Cornell** and **Rutgers** universities and was released October 18 by its sponsor, the **Smart Growth America** environmental coalition. It ranked the Riverside-San Bernardino area as having the worst sprawl of the 83 largest metropolitan areas of the country.

The Riverside-San Bernardino area is followed, in the overall national ranking, by Greensboro–Winston-Salem, NC, Raleigh–Durham, NC, Atlanta GA, Greenville–Spartanburg, SC, West Palm Beach–Boca Raton, Florida, Bridgeport–Stamford, Connecticut, Knoxville, Tennessee, Oxnard–Ventura, California, and Ft. Worth–Arlington, Texas

The areas with the lowest level of sprawl were New York, Jersey City, Providence (RI), San Francisco and Honolulu.

The Smart Growth America study uses four quantified factors to rank sprawl. These are density of development, mix of land



Southern California: Photo by Joe Munroe/Ohio Historical Society

uses, centering of activity, and connectivity of the street network. The Riverside-San Bernardino area scored badly on all four.

Low development density is probably the most familiar aspect of sprawl in the Inland Empire, especially in such Inland areas as the Moreno Valley, where low-density suburban settlement spreads from the 91 freeway literally to the horizon. Mix of land uses is also low in the Riverside-San Bernardino area. Homes are separated from jobs and services, forcing residents to drive long distances to places of major employment. The region has few true civic centers

One bright spot in this grim picture is Riverside County's update of its general plan.

and as sprawl takes the balance of housing farther and farther away from them, they become steadily less relevant to the average resident. Street networks in the region are broken up by cul-de-sacs and haphazardly laid

out as afterthoughts to housing developments. The result is an increasingly bleak and dispiriting landscape with growing traffic, pollution and congestion.

One bright spot in this grim picture is the **Riverside County** update of its general plan, called the **Riverside Integrated Project (RCIP)**. The RCIP is a truly innovative concept: an attempt to address related issues—transportation and public services, wildlife habitat conservation and land use planning—together rather than separately. It envisions a greater concentration of development, with mixed-use community centers connected by public transit and with substantial open space and wildlife habitat. The RCIP has been underway for several years and is nearing implementation – and not a moment too soon: the County's population is expected to double to 3 million by 2020.

Having already achieved several important conservation victories in Riverside County, the **Endangered Habitats League** has been active in the RCIP since its inception. We have convened stakeholder groups to promote key features of the Project and, while we have worked to achieve win-win solutions, we have also taken the position that the RCIP's progressive features must not be watered down or pre-empted by hastily granted building approvals.

Sprawl is not destiny. *We can turn it around!*

Two Acres of Farmland Lost to Sprawl Each Minute, New Study Says

The United States is losing two acres of mostly prime farmland every minute to development, the fastest such decline in the country's history, a new study has found. That loss has been on the edge of the outer suburbs, where some of the country's best fruit farms are being replaced by houses on large lots, linked by new roads, highways and malls, the study by the **American Farmland Trust** said.

Elizabeth Becker / New York Times / October 4, 2002

EHL in the News

Endangered Habitats League Director of Policy and Programs, **Dan Silver**, was quoted in several newspaper articles this Summer and Fall. In the July 31 *Los Angeles Times*, he commented on the importance of a scientifically sound outcome in southern Orange County to the future of the **Natural Community Conservation Planning** program. "This piece of land is a blank canvas where the departments can show what the program will do and what it will not do."

In the September 26, 2002 *Riverside Press Enterprise*, Dan stressed the need for the new **Riverside County Integrated Project** to protect open space and rural areas from developers and landowners seeking speculative upzoning. "If the commission and board of supervisors can't say no, this will become a \$30 million embarrassment."

On October 18, 2002, the *San Bernardino Sun* reported on a nationwide study that showed sprawl in the Inland Empire to be the worst in the entire nation. On a positive note, Dan noted that at least some new developments in Ontario and Chino are bucking the trend and creating higher density, walkable communities. EHL Executive Director **Philip Lohman** was also quoted by the *Los Angeles Times* on the same study.

News from Around Our Southern California Ecoregion

Orange County

Fate of Rancho Mission Viejo Debated The South Subregion Natural Community Conservation Plan includes the remaining 23,000 acres of the historic Rancho Mission Viejo. One of California's premier landscapes, and at the center of a global biodiversity "hotspot," it has been proposed for massive and devastating development of 14,000 houses. Steelhead trout, arroyo toads, gnatcatchers, golden eagle, and mountain lion are all at stake.

On October 23, 2002, **Supervisor Tom Wilson's** South County Outreach and Review Effort (SCORE) delivered a preliminary report. EHL participated in SCORE, and commends this precedent-setting forum for early community input into planning for the Rancho. SCORE is slated to reconvene after receiving more detailed input on reserve design from the state and federal agencies conducting the **Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP)** and associated **Special Area Management Plan (SAMP)** for aquatic resources. Members of the EHL-sponsored **Heart and Soul Coalition**, including San Juan City **Councilman John Gelff** and Laguna Beach **Councilwoman Toni Iseman**, voiced their support for good planning through SCORE.

On October 30, 2002, a public workshop has held in which the agencies presented a dozen reserve alternatives. A huge turnout of more than 400 citizens voiced strong support for protecting the Rancho's great resources, making a major impression. Friends of the **Foothills/Sierra Club** are to be thanked for getting the word out so effectively. EHL testified at the hearing, provided important letters from independent scientists to the wildlife agencies, and will submit additional written comments from biologic and hydrologic experts.

News flash: Two of the nation's largest conservation groups, the **National Wildlife Federation** and **Defenders of Wildlife**, have endorsed *The Heart and Soul Coalition*. We welcome them to our effort to protect the Ranch Mission Viejo through "win-win" solutions.

San Diego County

Countryside the Key Issue in General Plan Update We are pleased to report steady progress on the "2020 Update" on the **San Diego County General Plan**. Most importantly, a new map has been created that reflects input from the **Interest Group advisory committee** on which EHL serves. The new map shows increased protection for the beautiful and defining backcountry landscapes of the county while directing growth to towns. EHL and other environmental representatives spent long hours creating overlays of needed changes. While by no means final, if this map can be a vehicle for reaching consensus with community groups, it will prove very valuable. The Interest Group is also wrestling with a complex set of standards, ranging from steep slopes to floodplains and wetlands. EHL continues to supply

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San Diego Housing Action Network–endorsed project receives Affordable Housing tax credits

The California Tax Credit Allocation Committee has announced that **Metro Villas**, a new affordable housing project in the City Heights neighborhood of **City of San Diego**, will receive an allocation of \$18.8 million in federal and state tax credits. Metro Villas, the housing component of the **Metro Center project**, is the only affordable housing development in San Diego to be awarded tax credits.

The project was endorsed by the **Housing Action Network (HAN)**, co-chaired by the **Endangered Habitats League's Lynne Baker**. HAN is a broad-based coalition that works to foster "smart growth" projects to increase the supply of both market rate and affordable entry level housing. For EHL, such projects are an essential complement to the protection of wildlife habitat because they direct growth inward, to underutilized urban core areas, and link growth areas by public transit rather than by building more freeways.

Metro Center a model redevelopment project

"The Metro Center is a model redevelopment project," said **Councilmember Toni Atkins**, whose Third District includes the site of the proposed project. "This \$44 million project combines quality, affordable family housing located next to a park and transit services, combined with public facilities to help working families improve their lives."

The Metro Center, to be constructed on University Avenue adjacent to and just west of Interstate 15, includes:

- A four-story, 81,000-square-foot office tower, which will be the future home of the Workforce Partnership One-Stop Metro Career Center
- a 5,000-square-foot childcare center
- a community meeting facility
- the Metro Villas housing complex that will include two "tot lots"
- a 489-space parking structure to be shared by the housing and office complex.

Complex will include 120 affordable housing units

The Metro Villas complex will include 120 affordable housing units made up of one-, two-, three- and four-bedroom units. These units will be made available to families and individuals who make less than 65 percent of the area's median income.

"We have a critical need for decent, affordable, dignified family homes for City Heights residents," said Atkins. "This project provides two tot lots, exceeds the open space and parking requirements, and is located within yards of the busiest transit corridors in the city, including the new MTDB bus service, the Premium Express 'jobs routes' to Downtown and UTC."

The **City Heights Community Development Corporation** and **San Diego Interfaith Housing** will be partners in the housing project.

Three organizations added funds to tax credits

In addition to the \$18.8 million in tax credits, funding was provided by the **San Diego Housing Commission**, **Centre City Development Corporation**, and the **City of San Diego Redevelopment Agency**. The Metro Career Center is a partnership of the **San Diego Revitalization Corporation**—the development arm of **Price Charities**—and the City's redevelopment agency. The Metro Career Center is scheduled to open by December 2003, while the housing component should be completed six to eight months after that.

"This project is a perfect example of how redevelopment can be used to create liveable neighborhoods along with public facilities to benefit working families in our older, urban communities," said Atkins.

Grants funded to preserve central section of the Ramona grasslands

A key EHL habitat focus area in the **Ramona grasslands** received funding for acquisition in October. A **U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service** grant of \$660,000 coupled with a \$165,000 grant of the state **Wildlife Conservation board** will help preserve the central section of the 5,000 acre Ramona grasslands. EHL is working to provide further protection for these lands in several arenas.

One of two grants awarded by the federal agency under the year-old Recovery Land Acquisition program, the gift will be used by **The Nature Conservancy (TNC)** as a down payment toward the purchase of the 420-acre **Cagney Ranch** in the grasslands area south of the Ramona airport. The Ramona grasslands are a key site for preservation since they are relatively undisturbed and retain connectivity to area habitat plans and preserves.



San Diego County grasslands/Photo courtesy of Bird Friends of San Diego

Ann Van Leer of TNC said the group hopes to raise the rest of the nearly \$2 million needed to purchase the ranch, which is dotted with vernal pools and pockets of undisturbed native grasses, from private donors and through other grants. **Janet Gilbert**, spokeswoman for a group called **Ramona Grasslands**, said purchase of the Cagney ranch will be a major achievement. Other organizations instrumental to obtaining the grants include the **Wildlife Research Institute** and the **Vernal Pool Association**. The ranch is a key component of the proposed preserve because it is in the heart of the grasslands. The Ramona grasslands represent a picture of San Diego County's past because they look much the same as they did more than a century ago.

Acquisition and management of the Ramona grasslands is key to ensuring the long-term preservation of important habitat for numerous native California plants and animals.

Completion of this purchase will protect creatures such as the federally endangered San Diego fairy shrimp, arroyo toad, Stephen's kangaroo rat and the threatened California gnatcatcher. The area south of the Ramona airport is also home to wintering raptors and serves as a stopover for migratory waterfowl and songbirds. The ultimate goal in the Ramona grasslands is to purchase about 5,000 acres and bordering terrain and join it with the **San Dieguito River Park** and **Multiple Species Conservation Program** lands to the south.

The property was owned by **William J. Cagney**, the brother of movie star **James Cagney**. "I can reiterate that the **Cagney Trust** is very happy that this is going to happen," said their realtor. "They think this is a positive step for Ramona and for their family's legacy."



Arroyo Toad

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Phil Lohman Executive Director

San Diego River Park (continued from page 1)

The Lakeside Conservancy is already working to restore a two-and-a-half mile segment of the river that runs adjacent to Highway 67. This effort will be bolstered by the creation of the new River Park Conservancy, according to SDRLC Executive Director **Deborah Jones**. "We're raising money, and it's going to be facilitated by the signing of the act," Jones said. The SDRLC is currently working on a nature-centered redevelopment project, which will include an educational and recreational facility, inspired by architect **James Hubbell**, that will grace a restored sand and gravel mining site along the river banks. The facility is intended to be a major contribution towards the revitalization of the North shore of this community. The budget for the project is approximately \$50 million.

SD General Plan update (cont'd from page 2)

the Interest Group with ideas for an agreed-upon package of standards. We also commend the **San Diego County Department of Planning and Land Use** for their leadership in this momentous effort to replace the completely broken old General Plan, that has, until now, carved up the countryside into estate lot sprawl.

Riverside documents (cont'd from page 1)

Through the comment and hearing process—slated to continue into 2003—EHL will attempt to fix problems, such as a loophole for the clearing of habitat for agricultural purposes. Meanwhile, state and federal funds are moving toward key acquisitions, even including the Potrero Valley near Beaumont, an intact landscape with prime grassland habitat for the endangered Stephens' kangaroo rat previously proposed for massive development.

House of Representatives passes pipeline safety bill

WASHINGTON/November 18, 2002—The U.S. House of Representatives has passed legislation to strengthen federal safety programs for the 1.6 million miles of pipelines that transport oil, petroleum products and natural gas across the United States. The measure, which had already cleared the Senate, requires more safety inspections of pipelines and... increases, from \$25,000 to \$100,000 per day, the fine against companies that violate the pipeline safety rules. *REUTERS*

A Phainopepla visits (continued from page 1)

Though I could not make out its color in the dull light of the overcast morning, I knew he was watching my every move through striking scarlet eyes. The leaden sky also masked the sheen of the black feathers, so evident in full sunlight.

The Phainopepla is one of the few North American birds that has identical common and scientific names. In this case, the name is most appropriate. It comes from the Greek and means "shining robe," which certainly fits the adult males very well. The female is gray, though, and only shows a light gray, not white, wing patch. If her feathers are more drab than those of the male, she still shares his scarlet enquiring eye.

This species has what is probably the oddest breeding cycle of any of our birds. It often has two broods, which is quite usual in the bird world, but the two nests may be separated by several hundred miles! Not only must the bird adapt to the rigors of breeding in one locality, but must master an entirely different place well enough to raise young there, too.

In the Sonoran Desert region of Eastern California, the Phainopepla is found wherever there is mistletoe in the tops of the palo verde and mesquite. The mistletoe provides food for the adults and shelter for the shallow nest the male makes for the two or three eggs the female lays. After the early spring brood is raised, the adults move north and westward for a second round of nesting. One of the habitats favored for this nesting is the riparian (streamside) willow thickets of Southern California.

Although Phainopeplas do eat berries, such as those in my nightshade bush, their main sustenance comes from the insects they hawk from the air. Indeed, they are most frequently to be observed perched high in trees, waiting to fly out after some passing bug.

The profile of the bird is characteristic. Although there are several crest-ed birds in the United States, the two best known, Northern Cardinal and Blue Jay, are both eastern species. We have one common crested species, the Cedar Waxwing, often seen in flocks of 20 to 150 birds, especially in May and June, just before they migrate northward to their nesting grounds.

While Phainopeplas may be seen in treetop perches, a flock of 50 crested birds can be relied upon to be waxwings.

So the next time you walk outside and hear a pleasant little rising whistle, don't automatically assume it's the guy down the street getting fresh. Take a look around. Perhaps it will be one of nature's unexpected bonuses, a Phainopepla stopping by for a brief visit as it makes its way to some coastal canyon to continue its hectic life cycle.

Covenants of Motion

*Conceiving that motion persists
surprises, like finding
a castle in the forest
pennants flying in the spring breeze
(and night colors with stars)*

*moving in an air
that catches the willow leaf
throws it aside only to see it return
(each leaf to its green point)*

*and the silver willow
stands in its rough skin
(others say how smooth it feels,
though sensations are fleeting)*

*stands at the foot of crenelled ledge
where rainfall tumbles
into the clear pool
(reflects moon through leaves)*

*there the dappled trout
has his deep ways
the water moving
(always water moving)*

*but not the trout
whose tail is like flags or leaves
weaving in the spring breeze
(though the seasons
go slower than stars).*

Jess Morton

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