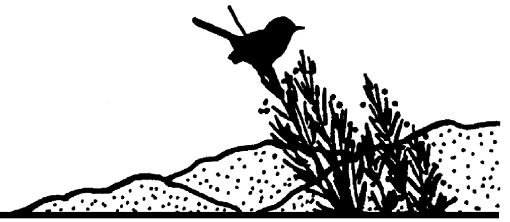


ENDANGERED HABITATS LEAGUE

Dedicated to Ecosystem Protection and Improved Land Use Planning

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River Park Adopted for Upper San Diego River

The San Diego River begins in the Cuyamaca Mountains and empties into the Pacific at Ocean Beach. Although dammed at El Capitan and San Vicente reservoirs, many outstanding natural values remain, particularly in the upper stretch of the river in the community of Lakeside. For the last thirty years, however, these values have been degraded by sand extraction and industrial uses. Such uses have also taken a toll on the surrounding community. Recent action by the San Diego County Planning Commission and Board

of Supervisors puts in place a new and excellent land use plan for the Upper San Diego River, ending many years of contentious debate.

The new land use plan and zoning sets in motion a multi-use concept fitting this "urban stream." A river park will be created, which will include over a hundred acres of acquisition and riparian restoration. An environmentally friendly recreational complex, a nature and cultural center, an assisted care facility, and trail system will provide a sustainable interaction between the river and surrounding developed areas. A comprehensive water quality plan is intended as a model for pollution control and water quality monitoring. Long-term objectives are to expand the river park along the entire length of the river.

With the complex zoning issues resolved, EHL has begun the long process of working with landowners and the community on the creation of the river park. Significant progress has already occurred. Hanson Aggregates has generously agreed to donate 31 acres of land (presently a concrete batch plant) which will be the site of the nature and cultural center. San Diego Soccers is in negotiation with a landowner to acquire 30 acres of land for the ballfield complex, and CalMat Properties has agreed to negotiate for the sale of a key 100 acres of land that will be targeted for habitat restoration. Without the land use plan, all of these properties were slated for polluting uses.

A river is being reclaimed. We congratulate the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors for a difficult job well done.

Drawing by Ernie Goertzen from Desire for the Land, a collection of poems by Richard Bear.



Outreach Program Initiated

Inner city communities are not often exposed to wildlife conservation issues. Furthermore, these communities must become part of the debate on sprawl, which drives investment away from older parts of town. For these reasons, the Endangered Habitats League has begun an outreach program targeted to these constituencies.

EHL Treasurer Jess Morton has assembled a slide show and written a moving script showing the connections between habitat loss, endangered species, sprawl, and the plight of older communities. Solutions, such as more efficient land use, affordable housing in "livable communities," and permanent open space, are offered. We hope that these outreach presentations will also increase the membership base of EHL.

After interviewing several candidates, EHL has retained Zhetonía Piluso as Outreach Assistant. Zhetonía brings bilingual skills and excellent experience to EHL. If you know of minority or inner city groups that might be interested in a presentation, please contact us.

Economic Report Released on Tollroad Finances

Commissioned by EHL, Laguna Greenbelt, and the Sierra Club, an economic analysis of the proposed Foothill tollroad shows that its financial footing is shaky. This road is proposed to run through southern Orange County wilderness lands and through San Onofre State Beach, a major recreational resource at the northern edge of Camp Pendleton.

The analysis, performed by Dr. Jun Onaka, an urban economist and planner in San Diego, used studies provided by the road's sponsor, the Transportation Corridor Agency (TCA). The analysis showed that the Foothill tollroad cannot pay its own way, and must be subsidized by the Eastern tollroad. If built, it would reduce the margin of safety for meeting bondholder requirements by more than 50%. If ridership projections fail to fully materialize, the entire Foothill-Eastern system will be highly susceptible to the same financial woes now besetting the San Joaquin Hills tollroad. Decision-makers should take heed.

In addition, EHL and other groups have retained a traffic engineer to investigate the assumptions underlying the TCA's rosy ridership projections and to help formulate alternatives to this enormously destructive project. A letter questioning the travel forecasts and recommending the development of additional information has been submitted to the Federal Highway Administration, lead agency for the environmental review of the proposed road.

Orange County Environmental Summit Convenes

On August 26, 2000 over 30 Orange County conservation leaders, representing 20 different groups, met to discuss the opportunities and challenges in southern Orange County. Convened by EHL, the summit demonstrated a high degree of unification as to goals, and an agreement to move forward together.

The Summit opened with an overview of biological issues presented by local scientists. Key findings were the enormous ecological value of the complex of intact lands roughly inland of San Juan Capistrano and adjacent to Camp Pendleton, and the unique nature of the pristine watershed of San Mateo Creek. These high quality wilderness lands harbor seven federally listed species, and, as part of the "biodiversity hotspot" of the California floristic province, are of global environmental significance. Their preservation is imperative.

One challenge to conservation is the Foothill tollroad, proposed to run through this area. The other major challenge is that about 12,000 acres — the heart of the landscape — are in private ownership on the Rancho Mission Viejo, and with development proposals likely. The Southern Subregion Natural Community Conservation Plan, or NCCP, was supposed to address the future of these lands, but that process has been moribund for several years. Despite a failure to make progress, numerous developers have taken advantage of the NCCP to obtain expedited California gnatcatcher take authorizations. While the County of Orange is technically the lead agency, it has thus far deferred to private interests.

Summit participants agreed that the NCCP process could not be relied upon. A committee was formed to investigate other options. We will keep you informed.

Visit EHL's website at:
<http://exo.com/~dsilver/>

ENDANGERED HABITATS LEAGUE

The Endangered Habitats League is a non-profit organization.
All contributions are tax-deductible.

Dan Silver Coordinator and Newsletter Editor

Jack Bath Director-San Bernardino County/EHL Secretary

Michael Beck Director-San Diego County

Jane Block Director-Riverside County

Pete DeSimone Director-Orange County

Jess Morton Director-Los Angeles County/EHL Treasurer

Beasts and Botany of the Coastal Sage: The More Things Change . . .

Wherever we humans go, we change the environment to suit our needs. In southern California, we create cities and farms where sage scrub and chaparral existed before. We channel rivers for flood control or irrigation. Then we import a version of *Homo sapiens'* first home, the savannah, to grace our neighborhoods. All of these changes are intentional.

In the process, though, we precipitate other changes. Sometimes, as with the manmade deserts of North Africa and the Near East, they are so slow as to be unnoticeable. At other times, though rapid and radical, they still pass unremarked. Take, for example, horned lizards. All of us are familiar with these native reptiles, but I suspect few are aware of their disappearance. Once abundant, they are victims of one radical, but little-noted change in our environment — the introduction of Argentine ants.

A century ago, this tiny South American showed up in the U. S., probably imported with coffee shipped to New Orleans. You've seen them. Small and black, they invade our homes, especially when the rains begin. Perhaps, if these ants stung, we would have found a way to eliminate them. But they are more of an annoyance than threat. However, these ants compete aggressively against other



ants, even those with a formidable sting. And when it has come down to one species or the other, the invaders have usually carried the day. Harvester ants are a case in point. You may remember them from your childhood, but try finding them now. Which brings us back to horned lizards, for harvester ants are their primary food. Argentine ants will not do. Thus, as the newcomers have spread, they have literally starved the lizards out of house and home.

Change is not limited to these three species, though. The harvester ants play other roles in the local environment. Through seed dispersal they influence the spread of many plants and, indirectly, the populations of many mammals. Although harvester ants consume the bulk of what they gather and drag into their nest, some seeds survive. Planted and well protected, these seeds sprout to carry on with their appointed task of making more seeds. Without harvester ants, these same seeds remain on the surface to become food for harvest mice. For some plants, like tree poppies, the result has been a catastrophic decline. At the same time, seed consuming species of rodents, no longer faced with competition from ants, thrive. And that changes the predator makeup. And so on . . .

—Jess Morton

Ballot for EHL Board of Directors

In the absence of nominations from our members (requested in the Summer *Newsletter*), and due to the good performance of the existing Board, the Nominations Committee proposes the following candidates for EHL Board of Directors. An election for two year terms will occur at EHL's Annual Membership Meeting in December. Nominations from the floor will also be considered at that time.

Dan Silver	At large
Michael Beck	San Diego
Jane Block	Riverside
Pete DeSimone	Orange
Jess Morton	Los Angeles
Jack Bath	San Bernardino

Endangered Habitats League Annual Meeting — Save the Date

Please join us at Starr Ranch Audubon Sanctuary for our Annual Membership Meeting, celebrating 9 1/2 years of EHL activism. As usual, we will update you on conservation and land use priorities throughout the ecoregion. Also, a Board of Directors will be elected to 2-year terms. This is a great opportunity to enjoy the beauty of Starr Ranch, a sanctuary not usually open to the public. Please bring a brown bag lunch.

Date: Saturday, December 9, 2000
Time: 10 A.M. to 12 noon (picnic lunch to follow)
Place: Starr Ranch Audubon Sanctuary

Directions

Take 5 Freeway to Alicia Parkway exit. Head east, and continue approximately 5 miles. Right on Santa Margarita Parkway to Plano Trabuco Road. Right on Plano Trabuco Road to Dove Canyon Drive. Left on Dove Canyon Drive to Security Gate. Present this Newsletter and continue on Dove Canyon Drive. Left on Grey Rock Road. Proceed 100 yards to Starr Ranch access road on right. Proceed cautiously and follow signs. Call Starr Ranch at (949) 858-0309 if you need help finding your way.



This is the only meeting notice you will receive. This notice is also your entrance pass for the Dove Canyon security gate. Don't forget to bring it with you!

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First Class