



Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project

Advancing ecosystem health. Connecting communities with nature.

September 2013

www.ballonarestoration.org



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rabbott@santamonicaab.org

Save The Date! September 28th - National Estuary Day!

"Toast the Coast!"

On Saturday, September 28th, take a minute and reflect on the critical functions estuarine habitats serve: a haven for migratory species, home for a rich variety of plants and animals, coastal erosion prevention, and recreational and tourist enjoyment. Their long-term protection and monitoring "are critical for our future and the health of the oceans."

Raise a glass, make a toast, and renew your commitment to improve and protect an estuary near you! *Cheers!*

For more information visit **Estuary Education** at www.estuaries.noaa.gov



What's New on the Wetlands!?

Summer Monitoring Off to a Smashing Success!

Summer monitoring began in full force in August for the tidally influenced portion of the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve. With the nesting season for the Belding's Savannah Sparrow over, the fourth year of long-term data collection for vegetation and invertebrates throughout the site continued. The summer also saw the return of the El Segundo Blue Butterfly (see page 4), identified on surveys with the Friends of Ballona Wetlands. Additionally, geospatial data collection is in the works! Georeferenced vegetation mapping will help build a site-wide map of plant alliances and associations that will provide an enormous database of information to the EIR team. This project will build on previous habitat mapping and wetland delineation efforts.

In exciting regional monitoring news, data collection at other wetlands in the Southern California Bight also began. These data will provide comparable quantitative analyses so that we will be able to compare the ecology of Ballona to other Southern California wetlands.

What's New in the Watershed!?

Kelp Restoration Project in the LA Times!

Full Article Here: <http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-kelp-urchins-20130812,0,3695283.story>



Below the gently rolling waves off the Palos Verdes Peninsula, a spiny purple menace is ravaging what should be a thriving kelp forest.

Millions of sea urchins — scrawny, diseased and desperate for food — have overrun a band of the shallow seafloor, devouring kelp and crowding out most all other life at a time the giant green foliage is making a comeback elsewhere along the California coast.

In an effort to remedy the situation, scientists and divers will spend the next five years culling the urchins from more than 152 acres of coastal waters degraded years ago by pollution. Once the purple, golf ball-size creatures are under control, young kelp should be able to take hold on the rocky seafloor and grow into the undulating canopies that sustain hundreds of species of marine life.

"Trillions of kelp spores are out there, falling on the seafloor," said Tom Ford, director of marine programs for the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Foundation, the nonprofit leading the project in conjunction with environmental groups, aquariums, fishermen and research institutions. "They just can't get established because they're getting mowed down."

SMBRC Hosts GOOD Exchange Fellows at Malibu Lagoon!

On August 21st 2013 the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission (SMBRC) gave a tour of the restored Malibu Lagoon to five fellows selected from a worldwide competition to participate in the GOOD Exchange Global Citizenship Project. The participants who are high-achieving international innovators working for social change in their home countries of South Africa, Ghana, Brazil, Mexico and New Zealand, were in Los Angeles for a weeklong exchange of ideas with prominent local community activists.

The GOOD Exchange Global Citizenship Project, which is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, contacted SMBRC to have the Lagoon project presented to the fellows. The project's goal is to have those involved brainstorm if the ideas that work in southern California can be adapted to their respective locations and issues.



“One of the purposes of our fellowship is to ... underscore just how universal many of our problems are, and how productive it can be to share ideas about solutions,” said Casey Caplowe, Co-Founder and Chief Creative Officer. “We want the best of what is going on in Los Angeles to inform projects half a world away, and vice versa. Our hope is that we can help entrepreneurial community leaders to take what they do and expand it on a global scale.”

“We’re honored to have this group of innovators come and learn about the lagoon restoration project,” states Dr. Shelley Luce, SMBRC Executive Director. “Restoration projects are vibrant examples of all the things that each of these innovators will probably need to deal with at some point on own projects—from working with stakeholders to looking at fresh options and the science that leads the way. If our tour helps provide guidance that can be translated locally, I’m thrilled.” Malibu Lagoon restoration project managers Mark Abramson, Sr. Watershed Advisor for SMBRC, and Suzanne Goode, Sr. Environmental Scientist for California Department of Parks and Recreation, led the tour.

7th Annual Butterfly Count a HUGE Success!

We've long suspected that the El Segundo Blue butterfly—a federally-designated endangered species—might be in the Ballona Wetlands, since reports of its presence date back to the early 1980s. But this year, during our seventh annual butterfly survey at Ballona, we were ecstatic to count over 70 El Segundo Blues in the Ballona dunes! These butterflies, unlike Monarchs which migrate thousands of miles from Mexico to Northern California, live their entire lives within 200 feet of their host plants, Coast buckwheat (*Eriogonum parvifolium*). Their presence represents a remarkable increase over the handful we have observed in two previous surveys, and it validates the work we have done to replace invasive plant species with native plants such as Coast buckwheat.

For over 25 years, the Friends have conducted state-permitted monthly habitat restoration projects in the Ballona Wetlands' salt marsh and dunes. More than 75,000 volunteers have pulled non-native weeds and iceplant, watered baby native plants, and monitored restoration areas. At the same time, we have brought thousands of school children to the Wetlands to learn about Los Angeles County's unique coastal ecosystems.



Photo Credit: The Friends of Ballona Wetlands

As she has every year since we started doing our butterfly counts, Tracy Drake, Expert Naturalist and Manager of the Madrona Marsh Nature Preserve, guided our survey efforts again this year, and Friends' staff, docents and interns joined her in the salt marsh to start the count. Charlie Piechowski and Ivan Medel from the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission also participated in the count, and ecologist Dan Cooper offered to conduct the survey in the freshwater marsh's riparian corridor.



Photo Credit: The Friends of Ballona Wetlands

Guided Tours of the Salt Marsh and Dunes:

second Sunday of each month, 1:00-3:00 pm

An informative nature tour of the salt marsh and dunes. Learn about our coastal ecosystem and explore the wonders of nature right in the middle of urban Los Angeles.

Self-guided tours at the Salt Marsh and Dunes:

Second Saturday of each month, 2:00-4:00pm

A self-guided tour of the salt marsh and dunes where visitors are free to walk on trails unescorted, with docents at various stations to explain sights and answer questions.

Habitat Restoration Volunteer Days:

Come help the Friends restore one of the last coastal wetland habitat in Los Angeles County. Volunteers get hands-on experience while learning about wetland ecology. The Friends provide gloves and tools. Children under 15 must be accompanied by an adult.

Where to Meet:

DFW's Parking Lot behind Gordon's Market at 303 Culver Blvd., Playa del Rey

To see more awesomeness
by the friends please check out
their website and blog here:
www.ballonafriends.org

Coastal Clean-up Day Kayak Clean Up!



The Santa Monica Bay Restoration Foundation (SMBRF) will host its 9th Annual Marina del Rey Kayak Cleanup Day Event as part of the greater annual Coastal Cleanup Day (CCD) which draws over 14,000 volunteers from across Los Angeles County to hundreds of events. Last year, the SMBRF kayak event drew 160 volunteers in the water and collected 158 pounds of trash and 33 pounds of recyclables. The goal of SMBRF's involvement in CCD is to help change people's behavior and habits so that they are encouraged to recycle, consume less plastic (i.e. zero waste lunches, packaging, etc.), and never litter... all of which relate directly to SMBRF's mission of protecting Santa Monica Bay's benefits and values and improving water quality!

Field Trip to the Sea Turtles of Los Cerritos Wetlands!

When summer is coming to an end, it's time to get out and enjoy the outdoors. Join us and our partners, biologists and environmental educators Taylor Parker and Eric Zahn on a wonderful hike at Los Cerritos Wetlands on Saturday, September 7th. Eric and Taylor will be leading us on a tour that will take us to the spot along the San Gabriel River where the sea turtles love to hang out.

For part of our tour we will view and discuss the Zedler marsh eco-system while keeping an eye out for local wildlife. And much of our walk will take us through the Signal Hill Petroleum oil operations where we will talk about the history of oil extraction and its impact on the wetlands.

We will wrap up by hiking along Calloway marsh, taking the PCH bridge over to the western levee and walking past city owned wetlands and on past the Pumpkin Patch property



Share Your Photos of the Ballona Wetlands

We're always in search of fantastic photographs of the wetlands and its plants and animals to be used on the Ballona Wetlands Restoration



Project's website and in our materials. If you have photos, we'd love to see them! To view past photo winners, visit the "Get Involved"

link at our home page www.ballonarestoration.org. To learn how you can help inform and inspire the public through the beauty of your photos contact Karina Johnston (kjohnston@santamonicabay.org)

Help Educate the Public about the Ballona Wetlands



Interested in learning more about the Ballona Wetlands and helping to inform the public about

this valuable ecosystem? Contact the California Department of Fish and Game's Volunteer Program for how to get involved (<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/volunteer/>).

Also, visit the Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project's partner page at <http://www.ballonarestoration.org/> for a list of additional organizations and agencies working on related issues.



Governing Board Meetings

All Governing Board meetings are held on the 3rd Thursday of even-numbered months at 9:30 a.m. at the Del Rey Yacht Club in Marina del Rey.

Dates for the rest of 2013: October 17 and December 19

If you would like information about the meetings, agendas, staff reports, or other related items, we encourage you to first visit our website at www.smbrc.ca.gov. Otherwise, please contact Scott Valor at svalor@santamonicabay.org for information.

America Rivers - Making Moves Daylighting Streams!



Buried stream, Molendinar Burn, Glasgow, Scotland - Ben Cooper

Preserving and protecting small streams is the best approach to ensure environmental and community benefits such as clean water and flood reduction. In highly urbanized areas, however, where small, headwater streams are often buried, hidden, and forgotten, protecting headwater streams is not possible. Stream daylighting is a relatively new approach that brings these buried waterways back to life by physically uncovering and restoring them. Daylighting is an applicable technique to assist communities in reducing polluted runoff, addressing flash flooding concerns, and improving the livability of the built environment.

See more here! <http://www.americanrivers.org/>

Estuary Education
National Estuarine Research Reserve System

Take the Estuary Quiz @
www.estuaries.noaa/Student/Quiz.aspx



Thank you Santa Monica College for coming to check out Ballona!

Tampa Bay Watch Celebrates 20th Anniversary

Peter Clark founded Tampa Bay Watch in a spare bedroom of his home twenty years ago and it has emerged as a celebrated community-based habitat restoration organization that has made a significant impact on improving the health of Tampa Bay. More than 10,000 youth and adult volunteers are involved each year in a variety of hands-on habitat restoration projects such as oyster dome and reef construction, salt marsh plantings and coastal cleanups to help the bay recover from its devastating environmental problems.

Oyster communities in Tampa Bay have been heavily impacted by construction activities and overfishing. Tampa Bay Watch's Community Oyster Reef Enhancement program accomplishes two types of oyster restoration programs, oyster domes and oyster shell bars, to create natural oyster communities similar to those found along the shoreline of Tampa Bay. Oyster domes and shell bars are placed along seawalls and shorelines to restore hard bottom habitat, improve water quality and reduce shoreline erosion. Tampa Bay Watch builds and installs 1,000 oyster domes annually with the help of community volunteers. Over the last twelve years, the oyster shell program has successfully created approximately 9,000 feet of new oyster habitat with 700 tons of fossilized shell and 3,000 volunteers.

Please visit the Tampa Bay Watch website to find out how you can become involved with the organization.

Internship and Volunteer Opportunities:

Assist with Scientific Monitoring and improve watershed health with the SMBRC

The Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission and its partners has many programs and projects happening at any one time so there is always something great to participate in!



Interested in becoming an intern or volunteer?

Email Rod Abbott at:

rabbott@santamonicabay.org

Report the Wildlife You Observe!



Help inform the monitoring program and submit a report about what plants and animals you

observe when visiting the Ballona Wetlands. Please download the Plant and Wildlife Observation Form (www.ballonarestoration.org, under the Get Involved tab) for more information and then submit it electronically to Karina Johnston at kjohnston@santamonicabay.org or mail it to: Karina Johnston, 1 LMU Drive, Pereira Annex MS:8160, Los Angeles, CA 90045.



WHAT IS THE BALLONA WETLANDS RESTORATION PROJECT?



Stretching from Playa del Rey to Venice, the Ballona Wetlands once occupied a 2,000-acre expanse of critical coastal habitat. Currently covering an area of 600 acres, the Ballona Wetlands

Ecological Reserve is the largest and most promising opportunity for coastal wetland restoration in Los Angeles County.

The Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project is a long-term, science-based plan to return the Ballona Wetlands into a thriving ecological reserve. By healing this highly degraded site, the restoration project will create a diverse, resilient and dynamic ecosystem while providing a unique opportunity for the community to reconnect with southern California's natural heritage.



Stay Connected!



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Tickled with Twitter?

Join the Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr to stay informed and up-to-date on the exciting phases of the Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project.

