



## Happy Earth Day!

On behalf of the Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project Team, we would like to wish you and yours a very happy Earth Day 2011. Each year Earth Day, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, recognizes the birth of the modern environmental movement. The first Earth Day in 1970 achieved a rare political alignment, and led to the creation of the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the passage of the Clean Air, Clean Water, and Endangered Species Acts. Forty years later, citizens who value a clean environment continue to fight to make that happen and raise political awareness through participation in Earth Day service events. We encourage all of you to do what you can for the earth by participating in one of the numerous service events taking place on and leading up to Earth Day. Scroll down to our Upcoming Events & Activities section to find local service events near you!

## What's New on the Wetlands

### Creature Feature

#### **Belding's Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis beldingi*)**

It's nesting season again for the Belding's savannah sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis beldingi*)! This small, brown songbird is restricted to coastal saltmarsh and adjacent habitats in the southern California region. One of the few year-round resident bird species of southern California saltmarshes, it has been protected as a State-Endangered species in California since 1974. In Los Angeles County, the two populations can be found at the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve (BWER) and the Los Cerritos Wetlands in Long Beach (Zemba et al. 2006).



*Belding's Savannah Sparrow enjoying a pickleweed perch (photo: Dan Cooper, 2010).*

The results of the breeding survey for Belding's Savannah Sparrows at the BWER in May - July 2010 found approximately 20 nesting territories. Territories were defined by breeding behavior conducted by pairs across multiple survey dates. The southeastern portion of Area B, which had no breeding suspected during previous surveys, contained up to eight individual birds including several singing males! Previous reports conducted by Los Angeles City since 1994 have found between 10-22 territories annually (Keane 2009).

## Scientific Monitoring Update

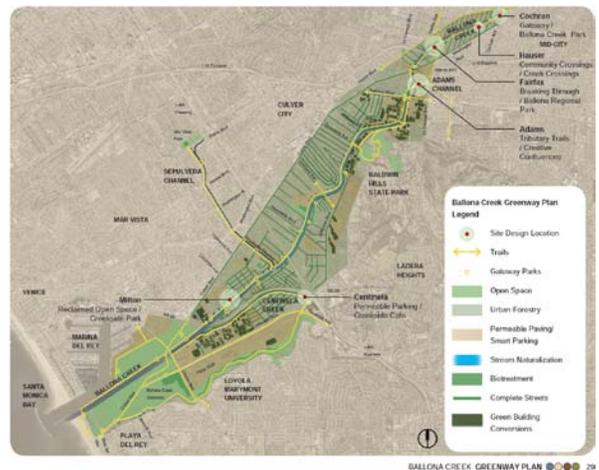
The draft version of the first year Baseline Assessment Report for the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve (BWER) has been completed and submitted for review! The final version has an estimated release date of May, 2011 and will be available electronically on our website: [www.ballonarestoration.org](http://www.ballonarestoration.org). The second year of baseline sampling continues with the addition of several new protocols to evaluate biological, chemical, and physical data throughout the BWER.

## What's New in the Watershed

### Ballona Creek Greenway Plan

The Ballona Creek Greenway Plan is the result of collaboration between the Ballona Creek Watershed Task Force and the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission. The group sought to build upon the 2004 Ballona Creek Watershed Management Plan (which has many exciting ideas for improving the health of the watershed and channel), and produced the Greenway Plan as a follow-up document. In addition to the Ballona Creek Greenway Plan, the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission developed three different types of projects included in the Greenway Plan. These projects were chosen to include a variety of projects that may be implemented as part of the Greenway Plan and include, creekside parks, linear walking and bikeway improvements and naturalization of the creek channel.

These three initial project plans are provided not only to inspire the implementation of the Greenway Plan, but to demonstrate the feasibility of these projects. Check out the Greenway Plan and projects at <http://www.santamonicabay.org/>



### Ballona Creek Watershed Task Force Update

On Tuesday, March 15, 2011, the Ballona Creek Watershed Task Force held its regular bi-monthly meeting to discuss current programs, projects and activities throughout the Ballona Creek Watershed and Wetlands. During the meeting a number of presentations were made, including:

- Rainwater Harvesting in CA – Laws, Regulations & Guidelines – Neal Shapiro; City of Santa Monica
- Responding to Illicit Discharges – Robert Gresham & Billy Self; Co. of LA, DPW
- Ballona Watershed Projects Map – Sean Bergquist; Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission

Our wetlands team will continue to attend task force meetings to provide updates on the monitoring program and restoration planning. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 17 from 1:30-3:30pm in the Dan Patacchia Room, Culver City Hall. If you have questions regarding the task force or wish to be added to the aemail list for future meetings and agendas, please contact Diana Hurlbert ([dhurlbert@santamonicabay.org](mailto:dhurlbert@santamonicabay.org)).

### Restore America's Estuaries to Lead Effort to Introduce Coastal Wetlands Restoration onto International Carbon Markets:

WASHINGTON (April 6, 2011) --Restore America's Estuaries (RAE) announced today that it will lead a landmark initiative to help coastal wetlands restoration and protection projects issue carbon credits on the international voluntary carbon market for the first time.

RAE, a national advocacy organization dedicated to coastal and estuarine habitat restoration, will lead a technical working group that will develop requirements for quantifying and crediting the greenhouse gas benefits of several new types of wetlands conservation projects under the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) Program.

The working group, funded in part by New Orleans-based Entergy Corporation and KBR, will be led by RAE in partnership with ESA PWA, one of the nation's foremost wetland restoration consulting firms headquartered in San Francisco, and Silvestrum, a Dutch-based firm that assists in the creation of carbon assets in land-use projects for compliance and voluntary markets worldwide. Leading wetlands scientists will contribute their expertise in core areas.



"Coastal wetlands hold vast, untapped potential to trap atmospheric carbon, particularly carbon dioxide, one of the chief culprits behind global warming and climate change," said Steve Emmett-Mattox, who will oversee the project as RAE's Senior Director of Strategic Planning and Programs. "New studies indicate that wetland soils sequester carbon at rates 10 to 50 times greater than terrestrial forests," says Emmett-Mattox. "Unfortunately, this is a good news-bad news situation. We have discovered a huge resource in the fight against global warming and sea level rise at a time when our coasts and their wetlands are at a crisis point," he says. While the global extent of coastal wetland systems, including mangroves, salt marsh, and freshwater tidal marsh, is not fully known, estimates are that they are declining at rates four times faster than terrestrial ecosystems.

In addition to obvious environmental benefits, bringing wetlands projects on to the international carbon markets may help save or even expand their global range by making restoration projects attractive to investors and developers because of the co-benefits derived from them, notes Emmett-Mattox. "The ability to gain carbon offsets for coastal protection and restoration projects will provide a new incentive and tool for corporate social responsibility and could ignite significant private investment in critically-needed coastal projects."

Nationally, the potential for tidal wetlands restoration exceeds several million acres, and the primary limiting factor for additional coastal habitat restoration, including wetland projects, is funding. The coastal wetland restoration community is now beginning to seek carbon finance as a means to undertake additional projects.

#### **For more information:**

Steve Emmett-Mattox/Restore America's Estuaries: 720-300-3139; [sem@estuaries.org](mailto:sem@estuaries.org)

Dr. Stephen Crooks/Philip Williams & Associates, Ltd.: 415-262-2358; [scrooks@esaassoc.com](mailto:scrooks@esaassoc.com)

For more information on the VCS Program and requirements, please see [www.v-c-s.org](http://www.v-c-s.org)

## Upcoming Events & Activities

### Community Open House Events

**3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of every month, 9:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.**

**Fiji Gateway**

13720 Fiji Way  
Marina del Rey, CA 90292  
(Across from Fisherman's Village)

Guided tours will depart from the trailhead at 10:00am, 11:00am, and 12:00am.

### Farmers' Markets

- Playa Vista Farmers' Market: 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of every month
- Westchester Farmers' Market: varies (check social media)
- Mar Vista Farmers' Market: varies (check social media)



For further information on events, volunteer opportunities, or docent training sessions email Elena Tuttle at [etuttle@santamonicabay.org](mailto:etuttle@santamonicabay.org) or call (310) 417-3962.

### Local Earth Day Service Events

Friends of Ballona Wetlands and Ballona Creek Renaissance: Habitat Restoration & Creek Clean-up  
Saturday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 9:30am – 12:30pm at DFG parking lot behind Gordon's Market in Playa del Rey. For more info or to RSVP [info@ballonafriends.org](mailto:info@ballonafriends.org) or call 310-306-5994.

Heal the Bay: Nothin' But Sand "Earth Month" Beach Clean-up  
Saturday, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 10:00am – Noon, Torrance County Beach at Miramar Park & Will Rogers State Beach, Pacific Palisades. For more info or to RSVP <http://www.healthebay.org/event/nothin-sand-earth-month-beach-cleanup-0> or call 1-800-HEALBAY ext. 148.

L.A. Works: Earth Day of Service – Community Gardens  
Saturday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 9:00am – 12:30pm, Los Angeles. For more information visit [www.laworks.com](http://www.laworks.com)

California State Parks Foundation: Earth Day Clean-up Projects  
Saturday, April 16<sup>th</sup>, Various locations at local State Parks. For more information on specific locations and times visit <http://www.calparks.org/programs/earth-day/earth-day-2011-locations.html> for specific location, times & activities.

## Get Involved

### Take Me Out to the Wetlands...

The Ballona Wetlands Outreach Team has been as busy as a Belding's in spring! (See Creature Feature, above). We have continued to improve and expand our monthly tours of the wetlands and have seen an excellent turnout. A big thank you to everyone who has come by to learn, observe, and participate in our program. It has been really terrific meeting all of the enthusiastic and interested members of our community. We have had great success trying out our new craft projects and activities, including pouring plaster molds of animal tracks! Next we will be painting rain-barrels and doing charcoal rubbings. If you haven't gotten a chance to come by, we will be continuing the tours through November (weather permitting). If you have already visited: check it out again! The wetlands are constantly changing with the seasons and you never know what flowers might be blooming or what birds might be out and about. In fact, at the last Open House, we were excited to see the Great Blue Herons preparing their nests!



We are also proud to announce the release of our new Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project stickers and t-shirts which will be available at local Farmers' Markets. So if you need some local organic produce, come visit us and lend your support to the Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project! Check out our facebook or twitter to get updated locations and times for all of our upcoming outreach events.

...And be on the lookout for the exciting signs of spring at your local wetland!

### 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! Contact Karina Johnston ([kjohnston@santamonicabay.org](mailto:kjohnston@santamonicabay.org)) to learn how you can help inform and inspire the public through the beauty of your photos. To view past photo winners, visit the "Get Involved" link at our homepage [www.ballonarestoration.org](http://www.ballonarestoration.org).

*Photo by Bruria Finkel at the boy scout platform.  
The old wooden railroad trestle is visible during low tide.*

### 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 (<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/volunteer/>) for how to get involved. 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.

## Stay Connected

Fanatical about Facebook? 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.

Follow the Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project on:



## 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.

