



Newsletter No. 1

Hills for Everyone

Friends of the Wildlife Corridor

November 1999

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Friends of the Wildlife Corridor

The formation of the Wildlife Corridor Conservation Authority (WCCA) in 1994 brought a new focus to the unique resource that borders the cities of Whittier, La Habra Heights, Hacienda Heights, Diamond Bar, Brea, Rowland Heights, Chino Hills, Yorba Linda, and Anaheim. This wildlife corridor, which extends for over 30 miles from the Whittier Narrows area to the Cleveland National Park in Orange County, provides a

hopefully may be purchased in the near future. But much is still to be decided and the future existence of the Corridor is still in doubt. One bad development could still sever the tenuous connections.

In order to educate the public as to the importance of the Wildlife Corridor, and to promote efforts to purchase the remaining key parcels, a number of activists have joined together to start a publication focused on the Corridor. We have drawn on members of many organizations interested in the preservation of the Wildlife Corridor; Hills

held next year to establish a permanent organization. We plan to publish a newsletter that will discuss the good, the bad and the hopeful in the Corridor. The newsletter will be issued about 4 times per year. We also plan on having a web site up in the near future to allow public input and to expand on stories and scientific data regarding the Corridor.

This group's purpose is not to compete with any of the grass roots organizations but rather to aid them in publicizing the Wildlife Corridor. Besides saving the land itself, a huge amount of work waits to be done. Restoration of native plants damaged by oil production and cattle grazing will take years. Development of trails for hiking and horseback riding will take planning and hard work. Programs to bring children and adults into the wilderness will allow for a greater appreciation of the beauty of our hills.

We intend to bring you articles about progress on land purchases, explain revegetation projects, tell stories about our historical use of the area, show you great hikes, and reveal plans for trails. If you would like to be a volunteer and build trails, plant trees, lead docent groups, speak to community groups, etc; we'll bring you articles about how to do that as well.

If you like what we are doing and would like to be kept informed about the Wildlife Corridor please send in the attached subscription. In order to reach the greatest possible audience, we are keeping our subscription price to just \$5 per year. Tell your friends and members of groups that you belong to about us and get them to subscribe too.

Together we can save the last large wildlife corridor in the urban setting of Los Angeles and Orange Counties.

* * * * *



The Wildlife Corridor runs from the Whittier Narrows area along the Puente/Chino Hills for over 30 miles to connect to the Cleveland National Forest in Orange County.

vital linkage that permits native plants and animals to survive and prosper in our local hills.

Much has been accomplished to preserve this "river of life" for future generations. Chino Hills State Park with its over 12,000 acres, the City of Whittier with over 1,600 and the Puente Hills Landfill Native Habitat Preservation Authority (Habitat Authority) with over 1,000 acres, have saved important habitat and linkages. Another 4,000 acres are currently in active negotiation and

For Everyone, Friends of the Whittier Hills, Audubon, Friends of La Habra Heights, Committee to Save the General Plan, Sierra Club, Hacienda Heights Improvement Association, Residents Voice - Whittier, Equestrian Trails, Whittier Conservancy, and many others. All members have been involved in local fights to preserve wilderness areas in their own communities.

A steering committee has been formed to start the organization and elections will be

Revegetation Effort

by Dr. Cheryl Swift of the Biology Dept.
of Whittier College

In May of this past spring, the Biology department of Whittier College together with a number of the members of Friends of La Habra Heights began work on a project to restore native vegetation on the 25 acre Diaz Property. The Diaz property had been purchased earlier this year by the Native Habi-

and Larry Johnson a native plants landscaper, sampled the vegetated areas immediately to the north of the property boundary in order to establish a list of native species to be used in the revegetation effort. As a result, approximately five acres of the north facing slope was planted with 400 coast live oaks, 400 toyon, and 100 walnuts in early June.

While it is too early in the project to gauge

monitoring the progress of their growth throughout this first year. Deer, coyote and several species of hawks are already using the site.

The next phase of restoration has begun on about 3 acres on the south facing slope of the property. Plots have been set out to test other methods of weed control including mulching, application of a commercial herbicide, and the use of plastic to literally "bake" the seeds of weeds to "death." These plots will be monitored for weed growth in the late fall and early winter, and hopefully will be planted early in the spring of 2000. Whittier College students have been collecting seed of walnuts, coast live oaks, purple sage, white sage, toyon, lemonadeberry, and fuchsia flowered gooseberry as well as a number of other species in Powder Canyon, in order to establish an on-site nursery for plant material from the immediate vicinity. We hope to use this nursery to supply plant material for future restoration efforts.

The students who have worked on the project, Mike Rahe, Talula Wiater, Catie Profeta, and Gilbert Sanchez are looking forward to seeing a mixed oak-walnut forest where there was once mustard and wild radish, when they return for their 10 year class reunions at Whittier College. As for me, I look forward to sitting in the cool shade provided by the trees we planted, as gray squirrels, scrub jays and acorn woodpeckers argue over walnuts and acorns.

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Whittier College Biology students and volunteers from La Habra Heights get ready to plant Oaks, Walnuts and Tyons on the Diaz Ranch early on a cool June morning.

tat Preservation Authority in order to preserve the integrity of the existing wildlife corridor across Harbor Boulevard. The property encompasses north and south facing slopes; once a working avocado ranch, much of the property has been left to weeds.

The first problems that the restoration effort must address are weed control and the establishment of vegetation in the large expanse of cultivated ground on the north facing slope. In an effort to determine the most cost effective way to control the non-native weedy species that had dominated the slope, six plots were established and divided into subplots which would each receive a different treatment. The various treatments include combinations of mulching, weeding, and seeding. The County Sanitation District donated about 15 tons of green waste for the mulch treatments, and the mulch was spread by a number of individuals including the La Serna High School football team, and a landscape crew donated by Kalaid Javaid, the owner of a neighboring property. Several Whittier College students together with citizens of La Habra Heights

success, to date about 80% of the 900 individuals planted have survived and are producing new growth. Whittier College students have marked individuals and will be



Members of the La Serna High School Football Team (Whittier), take a well deserved break under an avocado tree. Team members help plant some 900 plants in the first phase of a revegetation project being managed by Dr. Cheryl Swift of Whittier College.

Walking in the Hills

By: Jeff Yann (Environmental Chair, Hacienda Heights Improvement Association; Chair, Technical Advisory Committee, Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor Conservation Authority)

The trails through the Puente-Chino Hills system are wonderful places in the spring-time. Wildflowers are abundant, even in dry years like this one, and the parade of migratory birds slowly working their way back to their breeding grounds brings a steady stream of old friends in front of my binoculars. In May, these treasures not withstanding, I always take to the narrow lanes in Hacienda Heights to enjoy an unusual flower display - one that occurs nowhere else in these hills to my knowledge.

Two shaded side canyons off Oak Canyon, an area of widely spaced homes situated among hillsides covered with many native plants, contain a vast grove of California buckeyes, *Aesculus californica*. This small tree, common in the foothill zones of most of the California mountain ranges, is only documented in the Tehachapi Mountains in Los Angeles County. Yet this large grove, containing up to 80 trees and covering an entire hillside, do not seem to recognize they are not supposed to be here. Each spring, they burst forward with their showy display of flowers, looking very comfortable in these surroundings. Whether they are the result of a few wild seeds someone planted on these slopes, or a remnant population left over from cooler, wetter times, they seem not to care. At least one other plant exists at



Seeds of the Buckeye tree reach maturity.

the top of Turnbull Canyon, and a few others grow at the head of Oak Canyon, far above the grove. Since their seeds are larger than an inch in diameter, it is not likely they were distributed by birds or other animals.

Barren more than half the year, each tree puts out its leaves in mid-March. As May approaches, long spikes of flower buds begin to form at the end of each branch. When these burst into bloom they cover the entire crown of the thirty foot diameter tree with candle-like spikes of white flowers, each spike about eight inches long. Inconspicuous throughout most of the year, the trees fill these two side canyons with unexpected grandeur during these few weeks. Suddenly, buckeyes seem to be everywhere.

This year, because of the cool weather, the bloom was later than usual. This fact, coupled with a dry winter, puts these trees in an unusual situation. They are losing their

leaves while some of the flower spikes remain fresh. Even in a normal year, the leaves turn brown and drop off in July or early August, whenever ground water sinks below the trees' root systems. It seems hard to believe that this brief season of nourishment is enough to give the tree sufficient energy to go on with its life. Although bare and apparently lifeless, they will continue to produce a large, pear-like seed pod at the location of each flower spike. In September, large green balls adorn the leafless branches. Finally, in October, the pods split open to produce a large brown bitter nut. If you have ever seen the mascot of the Ohio State Buckeyes football team, you will recognize this seed immediately. Falling to the ground, winter rains wash hundreds of these seeds to the canyon bottom, where some have propagated. Two years ago, County workers pushed up a large berm of soil that had washed across Tamarix Drive at the bottom of Oak Canyon. By spring, forty or so young buckeyes were happily growing from this mound. Further grading this winter took out most of these seedlings, but 5-10 continue to thrive.

The best viewing of the grove is from Edgeridge Drive in the vicinity of Horticultural Drive. Edgeridge is reached from Turnbull Canyon Road by driving east on Skyline Drive at the top of the hills. The Buckeye grove extends downslope in two side canyons separated by a homesite sitting in a dense grove of eucalyptus. Unfortunately, with no protection, and surrounded

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I care about what happens to the wildlife in the hills near my home. Please add my name to the mailing list of Hills for Everyone - Friends of the Wildlife Corridor.

(Please print clearly)

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Update on Negotiations

In what has to be one of the more unusual ways to save land, the Habitat Authority and Rose Hills Memorial Park have reached an agreement to trade eight acres owned by the Authority to Rose Hills for use as a **pet cemetery**, in exchange about 100 acres of important habitat. The land which is now within the permitted cemetery grounds, will be protected by a conservation easement controlled by the Authority. Known as **Dark Canyon**, the property contains spectacular oak wood lands. The pet cemetery will be on Workman Mill Road, just immediately South of Rose Hills. The agreement also calls for the construction of a trail head and parking area to allow access to Sycamore and Dark Canyons, as well as a house for the local ranger.

Land purchases in the Habitat Authority area (i.e., Whittier Narrows to Harbor Blvd.) continue. The Corridor through **La Habra Heights** is nearing preservation through acquisition. Recent purchases of the **Diaz, Roberts, Pellkofer**, and **Lim** properties have added about 93 acres in one of the narrowest segments of the Corridor. Another approximately 15 acres are in escrow and expected to close around the first of the year.

Mean while, negotiations with the **Rose Hills Foundation** on the purchase of 951 acres, (**Turnbull** and **Worsham Canyons**), are not proceeding well. The latest move by the Foundation has been to try to sell the property to the **L.A. Archdiocese** for use as a cemetery. A Town Hall meeting in Whittier, organized by the **Whittier Conservancy, Hacienda Heights Improvement Assoc., Friends of the Whittier Hills, Equestrian Trails, Sierra Club, Residents Voice - Whittier**, and **Audubon**, drew almost 600 people. Three representatives of the Archdiocese came to listen to public input. They stressed that the escrow is contingent upon their findings. Dozens of Whittier and Hacienda Heights citizens had questions and urged that the Archdiocese not continue with their plans. City representatives made it clear that no access over Hadley Street (the key access point) would be permitted. How the property could be used for the intended purpose is not at all clear. The Diocese gave no time table for their decision.

Talks with the Boys Scouts over the sale of

a portion of the **Firestone Reservation** (near Diamond Bar), which have been going on for more than three years, have taken an new twist. The **Wildlands Conservancy**, has reached an agreement with WCCA to use \$10,000,000 that WCCA received from the 1996 Prop. "A" bond measure, together with their own funds to try to purchase about 2,000 acres. Word is that the City of Industry Urban Redevelopment Agency is also bidding on the property! The next few weeks will be critical.

On a much more positive note, great progress has been made toward the most vital of the Corridor linkages at **Coal Canyon** (near 91 Freeway, Yorba Linda-Anaheim). This critical property is the last remaining linkage between the Cleveland National Forest and the Chino Hills State Park. The property is considered the highest priority environmental acquisition in Southern California and consists of the Mancha (32 acres) and Coal Canyon (652 acres) properties.

Claire Schlotterbeck, who has been working for years with State and National legislators and private donors, announced that it appears that funding has been completed for the purchase of the **Mancha property** and we are nearing the amount necessary to acquire at least most of **Coal Canyon** itself. Most recently \$6,000,000 from CALTRANS and \$2,000,000 of State mon-

pected soon on that effort.

State Parks held a public hearing on acquiring Coal Canyon and annexing it to the Chino Hills State Park. The hearing was held on Sept. 30 at the Brea City Hall. Public testimony was unanimously in favor of the addition to the State Park. The owner of Coal Canyon, the **St. Clair Company**, testified

Native Peoples

by Jeanette A. McKenna, M.A.

Editors note: The history of the native peoples and their lives in what is now California, is a fascinating story. Jeanette McKenna, a well known local archeologist, gives us a brief look at some aspects of that history.

The Native Americans of the Los Angeles/Orange County areas (Gabrielino-Tongva-, Juaneno, and Luiseno) consider the Puente Hills-Chino Hills to be spiritually sensitive. Further, there is ample documentation to cite the presence of significant archaeological resources throughout the area. In fact, in 1996, I was involved in the testing of a site in Tonner Canyon that yielded both significant prehistoric archaeological resources and resulted in the identification of a petrified forest locale (Cypress trees), proving that the Puente Hills-Chino Hills are also highly sensitive for paleontological remains.

The La Habra/Yorba Linda areas of the Puente Hills-Chino Hills Corridor are cited throughout Father Boscana's volume on "*Chinigchinich*", presenting the religious background for the Southern California Natives. Not only is the wildlife corridor spiritually significant to the Native Americans, the same resources permitted the establishment of village sites and more localized special activity areas associated with the exploitation of the resources. For example, northern Orange County is considered to be associated with the California black sage, a plant highly prized by the Gabrielino/Juaneno/Luiseno. The black sage provided both medicinal and religious services.

Village sites are located along the Corridor, including the La Habra/Yorba Linda areas, including Sehat (near Los Nietos/Whittier), Ahwiinga (La Puente), Pimokangna (near



ies, from a special Members' Request (by our legislative friends **Fred Aguire, Martha Escutia, Bob Pacheco** and **Hilda Solis**), have been added to the war chest. Congresswoman **Grace Napolitano** has been working on a grant from the Forestry Service for an additional \$6,000,000 and word is ex-

Native Peoples cont.

Pomona), Hutukngna (near La Habra/Yorba Linda), and Pamajam (near Corona) ... along with others. Smaller limited/specialized activity areas are found throughout the areas between these known villages sites and for the area (see Johnston 1962). Thousands of sites have been recorded for both Los Angeles and Orange County ... many identified within the Puente Hills-Chino Hills Corridor.

In a recent volume on the Gabrielino, McCawley (1996) emphasizes the sensitivity of the Puente Hills-Chino Hills Corridor in his interpretations of Native American terms. Ahwiinga (La Puente) is the "bridge" in Spanish, inferring the bridge between the coastal plain and the inland valleys, providing a pass for travelers. The Native American name means "burned brush", a reference to the Native American practice of controlled burns. Hutukngna (La Habra/Yorba Linda) is the "night" or "the dark Place", "the place of the devil".

The presence of Native American populations can also be attributed, in part, to the presence of natural fresh water springs throughout the Puente Hills-Chino Hills Corridor. These springs, located at elevations well above the valley floors, drew populations into the hills and provided an array of resources for exploitation. A similar pattern of springs and habitation sites can be documented for the Cajon Pass, also in Gabrielino territory. The presence of the springs is attributed to the seismic activity of Southern California and the development of subsurface catchment basins for fresh water. Sycamore Canyon in Whittier still yields surface water, as do areas in the Puente Hills Landfill and Tonner Canyon.

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A family of raccoons uses a animal friendly culvert as a safe crossing under a busy road.

Kids' Korner:

"Great Horn, the Owl"

*by Sona Ericson - La Habra Heights
(Editors note: Sona lives in La Habra Heights and regularly leads children on hikes in Powder Canyon)*

The Great Horn owl is the most common type of owl in the Heights. His white throat and feathered "ear" tufts distinguish him from the common barn owl, who appears to have no ears at all.

Owls are easy to recognize from other birds. They have rings of short, flattened feathers that form a "face" with large, staring eyes. Their hooked beak is like a nose. People long ago thought that owls were spirits with magical powers. The ancient Greeks made the owl the symbol of wisdom. We know that the ancients worshiped them because owl figures often decorate weapons and tools that we see in museums.

My favorite game is to walk slowly in front of "Little Big Horn," the owl who lives near my house. I like to watch him turn his head as he follows me. If I walk in a big circle around him, he appears to turn his head completely around without moving his body!

Most birds can see in front of them by moving their eyes or turning their heads. But an owl cannot move its eyes, it can only turn its head. Although it seems to have no neck at all, it actually has a much more complicated neck than people do. We have about seven bones in our neck. An owl has fourteen neck bones. This allows him to turn his head all the way around on his shoulders and look completely backwards! He is also able to snap his head back into a forward-looking position so quickly that it almost looks like his head is turning in a complete circle. Watch him do this sometime when you are out walking in the Heights.

Owls deserve our protection because they do a wonderful job of saving our gardens from damage caused by small rodents. Scientists once studied two owls who were raising a family in a barn. The little owls lived in their nest for one whole month. During this time, the parents went out every night to find food for their young ones. These parents made at least 20 trips out at night, and sometimes went out as many as 70 times

looking for food. They would catch insects, small birds, mice, and rats. During one month, the parent owls brought back 750 mice and rats to feed to the little owls.

So the next time you see or hear Big Horn, give a hoot! Remember how important our friend is to us. Maybe one of his children will soon be living in your neighborhood and you can give him your own special name.

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The Corridor provides recreational opportunities for hikers, bikers, and equestrians.

Walking cont.

by homesites which are landscaped with exotic species, the canyons are also filled with many potential invaders. An infestation of cape ivy is now taking over one of the canyons and spreading to the other. Although loss of this spectacular grove would be a shame in any case, it would be truly tragic if they remain as the last remnant of a wild forest that once covered the canyon slopes in our hills.

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Website

We are in the process of setting up a website. Steve Blagdon and Judi Henderson are coordinating the effort. We hope to have our site up and running in the near future at hillsforeveryone.org. Watch for it, and be sure to let us have your ideas on ways to improve our efforts.

Hiking Skyline Trail

Scout master David Dickerson recently led approximately 100 Boy Scouts along the Skyline Trail. In addition to his own Troop 666, several other troops from the Rio Hondo Council participated. The hike is part of a program to increase awareness of the Wildlife Corridor and the opportunities available for hiking. In this latest outing, Scouts hiked from Rio Hondo College in Whittier to Harbor Blvd. in La Habra Heights a distance of about 7 miles.

Dickerson said that the dream of his troop is to eventually walk the entire length of the Corridor. The biggest obstacle right now is the Aera property (formally Shell Oil). This property stretches from Harbor Blvd to the

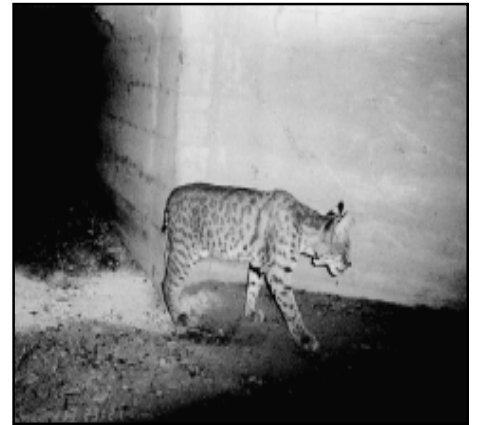
57 Freeway and is presently closed to public access as Aera accesses possibilities for development. Aera project manager George Basey has assured WCCA that any development would accommodate the Corridor. If so, Troop 666 dream may still come true.

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Steering Committee

The following are serving as a steering committee for Hills for Everyone until elections can be held.

Bob Henderson, Steve Feld, Claire Schlotterbeck, Stephen Blagden, Judi Henderson, Mary Hanson, Helen McKenna-Rahder, Mike Cole, Roland vom Dorp, Ray Williams, Evelyn Stafford, Alan Beoge, Jean Beaton, David Fretz, Chuck Hanson, Glenn Parker, Jeff Yann, and Charles Claver.



A bobcat uses this concrete tunnel to avoid the traffic tie ups on the 71 Freeway. More of these under-road by passes could save hundreds of animals per year. With out these passages, smaller animals such as snakes and frogs are offen cut off entirely. Efforts to retro-fit some important crossings are under study.

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Want to Help?

We are looking for people who would like to contribute to making this organization a success. We need:

Articles on the Hills and the Corridor
Leaders for Nature Hikes

Volunteers for Revegetation efforts

Volunteers to build trails

Historical articles about the area and its peoples

Artists, caroonists, and writers

Clerical help to manage our database, subscriptions

and much more.

To volunteer contact the editor, Dr. Judi Henderson, at P.O. Box 9835 Brea, CA



Hills for Everyone
Friends of the Wildlife Corridor
P.O Box 9835 Brea, CA 92822-1835

Save the Wildlife Corridor