

# Marsh Mailing

Madrona Marsh Preserve and Nature Center

## Calls in the Night

The day had been long and its last light was quickly fading into night. Tired, I drove to the Maple Sepulveda Sump—I needed to check the water level after a day of pumping water up to the Preserve. In the half-light of the evening, walking along the uneven gravel road my feet kicked up pebbles. I watched them scatter ahead of me. Actually the pebbles seemed to hop on ahead of me—just like frogs. I began wondering about the frogs—had the last two years of drought caused them to die off? Would there be any this year? I had only heard a few to date—the chorus I had heard a few days earlier seemed quiet and far away. And I had found so many dead ones over the past six-months that a real amount of worry had built up in me.

The water level was fine. I shut down the pump for the night, and headed back along the road toward my car. All of a sudden, an overwhelming number of calls

flooded my ears! The frog songs had begun and they were so loud I could no longer hear the cars driving along Sepulveda! Overcome with joy, I started using my cell phone to call people. I just had to share the momentous occasion! With the speakerphone turned to full volume, I yelled, “Hey, can you hear that? They’re back – they have survived!” —T.D.



*Our Pacific Tree Frog*  
Photo by Jack Ludwick.

## The Programs of January and February

I have received a few calls asking why there has not been a “Month in Review” for several months. To make



*Into the Wetlands.* Photo by Andre, Age 13.

a long story short, four of the seven Madrona Marsh Staff have suffered a loss or serious illness in their families over the last five months. Nonetheless, showing tremendous strength of character and dedication to the Preserve, we have run all programs scheduled over those months. Many of them were given by us—the remainder by the Friends of Madrona Marsh. In many ways the support of a few of the Friends has carried us during this very difficult time. I cannot think of words to express my sincere gratitude to my staff and to the Friends for their selfless assistance and encouragement. Please know you are greatly appreciated....

The programs at Madrona over the past few months have been amazing! The beauty of the spring, the magnificence of the water in the lush green wetlands and the Preserve’s growing popularity all have combined to cause a surge in both visitors to the Marsh and attendance in programs.

—Tracy Drake  
Manager/Naturalist

# New "Ask Us" Feature

— Bill Arrowsmith

Visitors to Madrona Marsh ask many interesting questions, and we'd like to share some of the better ones, and their answers, with the readers of **Marsh Mailing**. Starting with this issue we have begun a new feature called "Ask Us" (with apologies to the **Daily Breeze**, whom we blatantly copy). If you have a question about the preserve or the Nature Center, please send it to us at: **P.O. Box 5078, Torrance, CA 90510**, or drop it off at the Nature Center.

**Question:** I was recently on the preserve and noticed a chicken coop, with a half dozen chickens, right in the center, next to some storage sheds. **Why is there a chicken coop on the Marsh?**

**Answer:** Good question, but first a few background facts:

**Fact 1:** As you may know, Madrona Marsh typically is covered with anywhere from 5 to 20 acres of water in the winter and spring, after the winter rains. This water comes entirely from rainfall, and slowly evaporates and percolates into the ground until it completely disappears, usually by mid summer. To summarize, the Marsh has standing water at least 4 or 5 months every year.

**Fact 2:** Any place you have stagnant water, you run the risk of having mosquitoes breed. And some mosquitoes carry dangerous diseases, such as West Nile Virus or several forms of encephalitis.

So we have a potentially dangerous situation, every year, unless something is done to control these mosquitoes. Here we get help from an agency called Los Angeles County Vector Control. Vectors are any animals, like mosquitoes, which carry contagious dis-

eases. Vector Control could spray chemicals to control the mosquitoes, but the preferred method is a more natural, and less dangerous, one. As soon as we have pools of standing water on the Marsh, Vector Control stocks the pools with a tiny fish, about the size of a guppy, called gambusia (*gambusia affinis*), or mosquitofish. The mosquitofish love to eat the larvae of the mosquito, as fast as the larvae hatch from eggs; they can eat 100 a day!

**That's great, but what does it have to do with the chickens?** This is where it gets interesting.

**Fact 3:** Mosquitoes like to bite some birds as much as (or more than) they like to bite us humans, and chickens are birds that they love to bite.

But before you feel too sorry for the chickens, consider:

**Fact 4:** Chickens do not become ill from encephalitis or West Nile Virus, because they are able to form antibodies which protect them from the disease. The chickens in the coop on the Marsh are called "Sentinel Chickens", and they are put there and cared for by the LA Vector Control District personnel, who use the Sentinels (lookouts) to be sure the mosquitofish are doing their job and that we don't have any bad, disease-bearing mosquitoes in Madrona Marsh.

Once a week personnel come to the Marsh and extract a small amount of blood from the chickens, then take the blood to a laboratory and examine it under a microscope to see if it contains any antibodies. If so, they know that we have disease-bearing mosquitoes on the Marsh and they need to take further action: either additional gambusia or possibly chemical spraying. Fortunately, at Madrona Marsh, we have rarely had to take such action; the mosquitofish have done their job well!

As a footnote: the LA County Vector Control district stocks areas of standing water with mosquitofish all over the county, not just at Madrona Marsh. In fact, if you have a problem of stagnant water at your home, they will supply mosquitofish free of charge. We are quite fortunate to be protected by this agency, their tiny fish, and the Sentinel Chickens!

*The Marsh Mailing* is a quarterly newsletter designed to provide information about activities and upcoming events at or relating to the Madrona Marsh Preserve. Contributions are welcome and may be e-mailed to Diane Gonsalves at [gonwild2@yahoo.com](mailto:gonwild2@yahoo.com) or Bill Arrowsmith, [TheArrowsmiths@sbcglobal.net](mailto:TheArrowsmiths@sbcglobal.net) or dropped off or mailed to the Nature Center.

# from the president

—Bill Arrowsmith

Our wonderful Nature Center, now seven years old, is an integral part of almost every program and activity at the Marsh, from classes and presentations in the classroom or laboratory to research projects in the curation lab. It houses a fabulous Gift Shop run by the Friends of Madrona Marsh, with all profits used for Marsh programs. And the Director and Naturalist for the Preserve, Ms. Tracy Drake, has her office and staff here.

But there is one more important area of the center, one that many visitors overlook. And that's a shame, because the Exhibit Hall is the very essence of the Nature Center, as it provides a basic understanding of what Madrona Marsh is, how it formed and what habitats it contains. You can visit the Hall first, so you'll know what you're about to see, or stop in after a walk on the Preserve to better understand something you encountered.

The Friends of Madrona Marsh, led by Presidents Venora Lee and Bart Tendick and working with naturalist Walt Wright, were instrumental in helping the City of Torrance plan this excellent interpretive facility.

The Exhibit Hall has always been one of the jewels of the Center—and it just got even better. The Friends have completed a project that took over a year to plan, design and implement. We now have five new display cases for our taxidermy, each with a diorama modeling a different habitat area and/or season, and we have many new animals and birds in our taxidermy display. As an added feature, many of the taxidermy animals can be exchanged for others, allowing us to refresh the exhibit and add new animals as they become available.



*Display Case Installation: Carlyn Iverson, left, (Split Rock Studios artist,) and Fran Arrowsmith, work on Case 4.*

We are having a Grand Opening to present the new display cases and taxidermy to you all on Friday, April 11 at 6:30 p.m. I hope you all can stop by, either that night or soon after.

I would like to thank all the people who helped to make this project a great success: Fran Arrowsmith, who ran the project for the Friends and coordinated with our design and fabrication company, Split Rock Studios, and also with our taxidermist and with the Board; Connie Vadheim, who supplied the excellent photographs which were enlarged to make backgrounds for the cases; Igor Carogodin, our prize-winning taxidermist; Split Rock artist Carlyn Iverson, whose dioramas are magnificent; Ron Libbrecht, who extended his beautiful mural to accommodate our display case; Tracy Drake, who was supportive and helpful with every phase of this project; the City of Torrance, who paid for our new taxidermy; and my Board of Directors, who have been very patient and supportive through a project that was much larger than any of us realized. Thank you all!

If you have not visited Madrona Marsh since the winter rains, please make plans to do so. It is absolutely spectacular, with our showy seasonal visitors: Snowy and Great Egrets, Northern Shoveler ducks, American Wigeons, Cinnamon Teal, Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal, Bufflehead ducks—you get the idea. And those are just the water birds.



*Pair of Snowy Egrets*

But do stop by soon. Our water disappears at a rate of almost 2 vertical inches per week. Take advantage of this beautiful year—we never know when we're about to enter another long dry spell!

## **The FOMM Board of Directors**

- Bill Arrowsmith, President
- Connie Vadheim, Vice President
- Ellen Peterson, Treasurer
- Carol Roelen, Recording Secretary
- Venora Lee, Corresponding Secretary
- Jeanne Bellemin
- Bill Forrest
- Bobbie Snyder
- Sarah Noddings
- Eric Carson
- Archie Phillips
- Mary Garrity

## **Ex-officio:**

- Jack Knapp
- Maxine Trevethen
- Shirley Turner

# Pelicans Helped to Save Madrona Marsh

—Bill Arowmith

In February I read that the Interior Department has proposed removing the brown pelican from the endangered species list. The claim is that this beautiful bird, which was on the very brink of extinction 40 years ago, has staged a remarkable comeback and the California populations now rival, or exceed, historic levels. According to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Director H. Dale Hall, these long-lived birds are “no longer threatened with extinction, either in the foreseeable future or in the long term.”

“How wonderful,” I thought, my mind immediately playing back highlights of my favorite ocean shorebird: soaring silvery brown squadrons search for prey, then one by one they plunge with startling speed into the surf to fill their enormous beaks with the small fish that were almost their undoing. Can it really be 40 years ago?



That’s when I realized that not only had it been that long, but that in a very special way these gorgeous birds helped to save Madrona Marsh—though I doubt there has ever been one here.

You probably know the story of the brown pelican: it is high on the food chain along the coast, and feeds on hundreds of small fish much closer to the bottom of the chain. In the 1960’s those small fish were swimming and eating in a bay laced with DDT, for the Montrose Chemical Company, which produced the pesticide, dumped tons of toxic waste into county sewers which empty off the Palos Verdes Peninsula. When the pelicans ate these fish, they got an even more concentrated dose of DDT—enough to cause the shells of their eggs to be so thin that they broke before the chicks hatched.

How do you fix a problem like that? (and what does all this have to do with Madrona Marsh?) Well, first we had to stop the dumping of DDT. To do that, we would have to educate the public as to the nature and severity of the problem. “We” in this case were environmentally concerned citizens from many organizations—Sierra Club, Audubon Society, Friends of the Earth, AAUW, LWV and more—who had read about or attended meetings about the pelican’s plight. But we were a small fraction of the population. Many of us met

each other for the first time in a community effort to spread the word that the DDT pollution of Santa Monica Bay required immediate action. We were ultimately successful in getting the dumping stopped, but could only hope that the pelican would survive and the bay one day be restored. Now, 40 years later, it appears that we can stop holding our collective breath: the brown pelican is back in force!

What I also realized as I heard that happy news was that many of those early conservationists who bonded together to stop the dumping of DDT were also in a group which met a few years later, in September 1972, at a public meeting held by the City of Torrance Park and Recreation Department to

see if there was interest in forming a citizens’ group to save a wetlands area known locally as “Madrone Marsh.” That group included Grace Lear (later to be known as the “Mother of the Marsh”) Sam Suitt of the Sierra Club (and first president of FOMM) Ruth Vogel of LWV, Virginia Hilker, Venora Lee, and many more I can’t remember. This was a highly motivated group of environmentally aware citizens, who had just recently worked together quite successfully to help save the brown pelican. Maybe they could do it again.

*Note: The brown pelican was named a national endangered species in 1970, three years before the enactment of the Endangered Species Act. Madrona Marsh Preserve became part of the City of Torrance’s Park System in 1986.*

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## Greening of the Center

The atrium in the center of the Center—the Madrona Marsh Nature Center that is—is much more attractive these days, thanks to a generous donation of seven mature ficus trees by Ellen Peterson and Bill Newell; followed by another generous donation of seven brand new plant containers by front desk volunteer Clarence Catherman. Thank you all for beautifying our Center!

You're Invited to a

## Garden Party and Tea

*"The colors of wildflowers, the hint of sage – it's spring again in the native plant gardens." – Connie Vadheim*

Come and visit our own native plant gardens at Madrona Marsh. Experience strolling the paths, garden tours, native plants for sale, and native teas, plus light refreshments.

WHEN: Saturday, April 12, 2008 – noon to 3 p.m.

WHERE: Madrona Marsh Nature Center  
3201 Plaza del Amo, Torrance

Native plant tours by Tony Baker, Tracy Drake and others. Call: 310-782-3989 for more information. FREE.

—Carol Roelen

## Howard Medina— Double Donor

We got a very generous late December donation from a family that has donated more than money to the Marsh. Lois Medina called to say that her family's trust is making a donation of \$1000 in the name of her son, Howard Medina, who was an active volunteer at the Marsh. We still have and use a pre-restoration insect collection Howard put together.

Howard went on to become a biology teacher in Santa Ana and is currently serving as a Captain in the National Guard. Lois (a former teacher herself) asked that a portion of the donation be used to refurbish and enhance the display of insect collections at the Nature Center, including Howard's. We look forward to doing just that!

We are grateful to the Medina family for their generous donations of time, talent, and now money to help make Madrona Marsh an educational success. We thank Howard also for his service to his country and wish him a safe and productive tour of duty.

## Marsh Visit Reprised on KCET

On Friday night, April 18 at 7:30 p.m. Huell Howser will show a reprise of his last visit to Madrona Marsh (2003). Be sure to tune in to KCET to see our contribution to his "Golden Parks" series. (Note: videos of this visit are also available in the Nature Center Gift Shop.)

## Madrona Marsh Foundation Report

—Jack Ludwick, President

The foundation held its first fundraiser on Wednesday, February 6th at the Comedy and Magic Club in Hermosa Beach. It was a resounding success! Mike Lacey, the owner of the Club, lined up outstanding comedians and variety acts. A definite good time was had by all (see page 11) and the Club was almost sold out. We also sold some art work and were able to raise just under \$4,000.

The Foundation Board members continue to work diligently on more fund raising events. Fund raising in today's economy is a significant challenge. If any of you have ideas that you feel would be helpful, please let us know. No matter whether we are a Torrance City employee, Friend of the Marsh, Foundation member or donor, our common goal is to sustain the beauty of the Marsh. Stay tuned to these pages for the next Foundation event.

## Recent Donations—

### \$100 or more

The Friends of Madrona Marsh would like to say a special 'Thank You' to the donors below, all of whom gave us \$100 or more in the first quarter of 2008.

January 2008	Earle Caster	\$100.00
January 2008	Paul's Photo	\$100.00
February 2008	Lois Duncan	\$100.00
February 2008	Norman and Suzanne George	\$150.00
February 2008	Joan Roach	\$100.00
March 2008	Kathleen and Edward Lehey	\$100.00

—Ellen Peterson  
Treasurer

## Archie Phillips Named to Airport Commission

Congratulations to FOMM director Archie Phillips on his recent appointment to the Airport Commission. Archie has been interested in aviation for many years and has served as a docent for the Western Museum of Flight, which recently relocated to Zamperini Field in Torrance. Archie has also agreed to continue serving on the Board of Directors for the Friends. Welcome back, Archie! It's nice to have friends in "high" places!

# Madrona Marsh Preserve and Nature Center

## Schedule of Events

April-July 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		8:30 a.m.-Tour de' 1 Torrance 10 a.m.-12 noon. Habitat Restoration	10 a.m.-12 noon-Habitat 2 Restoration-Weeders	10 a.m. 3 Tyke Hike	4	9 a.m. - 12 noon. 5 Habitat Restoration 10 a.m.-12 noon- "A Garden of Gourmet Delights"/Dr. Connie Vadheim
10 a.m.-3 p.m.- 6 Painting Outdoors- Plein Air Workshop- fee	7 <b>CLOSED</b>	9 a.m.-Mornings on 8 the Marsh 10 a.m.-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders 6:30-8:30 p.m. "...Gourmet Delights" /Dr.Connie Vadheim	8 a.m. 9 Bird Walk/Bob Shanman 10 a.m.-12 noon-Habitat Restoration-Weeders 7:15 - 9 p.m. FOMM Board Meeting	10	11 6:30-8:30 p.m.- Grand Opening, Ex.Hall Display	9 a.m.-12 n.- 12 Habitat Restoration 12-3 p.m.-Garden Party, Plant Sale and Open House 7:30-9:30 p.m.- Star Party
2 -4 p.m. 13 Second Sunday Science- Spring Migration/Bob Shanman	14 <b>CLOSED</b>	8:30 a.m.-Tour de' 15 Torrance-Bird Walk 10 a.m.-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders 7 p.m.-Audubon Mtg.	10 a.m.-12 noon-Habitat 16 Restoration-Weeders MMF Board Mtg.5:30-6:30	17	18	9 a.m.-12 noon 19 Habitat Restoration 9 a.m.-12 noon Earth Day Planting 10-11 a.m.- Bugs, Birds & Animals Action Show
20	21 <b>CLOSED</b>	22 10 a.m.-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	23 10 a.m.-12 noon-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	24	25	10 a.m-1 p.m.-Turtles . . . 26 9 a.m.- 12 noon- Habitat Restoration 10 a.m.- Nature Walk 2-4 p.m.-Building Ponds for Dragonflies-fee
10 a.m- 27 Nature Walk	28 <b>CLOSED</b>	8:30 a.m.-Tour 29 de' Torrance 10 a.m.-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	10 a.m.-12 noon-Habitat 30 Restoration-Weeders			

**APRIL**

(For the very latest on events visit [www.friendsofmadronamarsh.com](http://www.friendsofmadronamarsh.com);  
Also, see *Artists' Corner*, page 8.)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 10 a.m.-Tyke Hike	2	9 a.m. - 12 noon. 3 Habitat Restoration 9 a.m.-12 n.- SHAREFEST 2008 10 a.m.-12 n.-"Postage Stamp Gardens"/Vadheim/Drake
4	5 <b>CLOSED</b>	8:30 a.m.-Tour de' 6 Torrance 10 a.m.-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders 6:30-8:30 pm- "Postage Stamp Gardens"/ Vadheim/Drake	10 a.m.-12 noon-Habitat 7 Restoration-Weeders	8	9	9 a.m.-12 noon 10 Habitat Restoration 12 noon to 4 p.m. R.B. Art Group Art Fair
2 -4 p.m. 11 Second Sunday Science- "Sunsations"	12 <b>CLOSED</b>	9 a.m.- Mornings 13 on the Marsh 10 a.m.-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	8 a.m. 14 Bird Walk/Bob Shanman 10 a.m.-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders 7:15 - 9 p.m. FOMM Board Meeting	15	16	9 a.m.-12 noon 17 Habitat Restoration 6:30-8:30 p.m.- Night Hike
18	19 <b>CLOSED</b>	"A Celebration of 20 Trees"Photo Exhibit 8:30 a.m.- Tour de'Torrance 10 a.m.-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders 7 p.m.- Audubon Mtg.	10 a.m.-12 noon-Habitat 21 Restoration-Weeders MMF Board Mtg.5:30-6:30	22	23	9 a.m.- 12 noon- 24 Habitat Restoration 10 a.m.-12 noon- Nature Walk
10 a.m.-12 noon. 25 Nature Walk	26 <b>CLOSED</b>	10 a.m.-12 n.-Habitat 27 Restoration-Weeders	10 a.m.-12 n.-Habitat 28 Restoration-Weeders	29	30	9 a.m.-12 noon- 31 Habitat Restoration

**MAY**

**Nature Center (310) 782-3989**  
**Gift Shop (310) 320-8255**

**Brought to you by**  
**Friends of Madrona Marsh**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b> CLOSED	<b>3</b> 8:30 a.m.-Tour de' Torrance 10-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	<b>4</b> 10-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	<b>5</b> 10 a.m. Tyke Hike	<b>6</b> 6:30-8:30 p.m. Artists Reception, Tree Photo Finalists	<b>7</b> 9 a.m. - 12 noon. Habitat Restoration 10 a.m.-12 noon-"Container Gardening"/Dr. Connie Vadheim/Tracy Drake
<b>8</b> 10 a.m.-3 p.m.-Painting Outdoors-Plein Air Workshop-9 a.m.-12 noon-SHAREFEST 2-4 p.m.Second Sunday Science-Wildlife Rescue	<b>9</b> CLOSED	<b>10</b> 9 a.m.-Mornings on the Marsh 10-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders 6:30-7:30p.m.-"Container Gardening"/Dr. Connie Vadheim/Tracy Drake	<b>11</b> 8 a.m. Bird Walk/Bob Shanman 10-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders 7:15 - 9 p.m. FOMM Board Meeting	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> 9 a.m.-12 noon Habitat Restoration
<b>15</b>	<b>16</b> CLOSED	<b>17</b> 10-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders 8:30 a.m.- Tour de' Torrance 7 p.m.- Audubon Get-together	<b>18</b> 10-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders 5:30-6:30 p.m.-MMF- Board Mtg.	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> 9 a.m.-12 noon Habitat Restoration
<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> CLOSED	<b>24</b> 10-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	<b>25</b> 10-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> 9 a.m.- 12 noon-Habitat Restoration 10 a.m.- Nature Walk
<b>29</b> 10 a.m.-Nature Walk	<b>30</b> CLOSED					

**JUNE**

(For the very latest on events visit [www.friendsofmadronamarsh.com](http://www.friendsofmadronamarsh.com)  
 Also, see Artists' Corner, page 8.)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		<b>1</b> 8:30 a.m.- Tour de'Torrance 10-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	<b>2</b> 10-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	<b>3</b> 10 a.m.- Tyke Hike	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> 9 a.m. - 12 noon Habitat Restoration 10 a.m. - 12 noon-"Butterfly Gardens"/Dr. Connie Vadheim/ Tracy Drake
<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> CLOSED	<b>8</b> 9-11 a.m.-Mornings on the Marsh 10-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	<b>9</b> 8 a.m. Bird Walk /Bob Shanman 10-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders 7:15-9 p.m.-FOMM Board Meeting	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b> 9 a.m. - 12 noon Habitat Restoration
<b>13</b> 2 - 4 p.m.-Second Sunday Science-	<b>14</b> CLOSED	<b>15</b> 8:30 a.m.- Tour de'Torrance- 10-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders 7 p.m. Audubon Get-together	<b>16</b> 10-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders MMF Mtg.-5:30-6:30	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b> 9 a.m. - 12 noon Habitat Restoration
<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> CLOSED	<b>22</b> 10-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	<b>23</b> 10-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b> 9 a.m. - 12 noon Habitat Restoration 10 a.m.-12 noon-Nature Walk
<b>27</b> 10 a.m.-12 noon-Nature Walk	<b>28</b> CLOSED	<b>29</b> 10-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	<b>30</b> 10-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	<b>31</b>		

**JULY**

# More Wetlands for Torrance?

—Bill Arrowsmith

Wouldn't it be nice if we had mini-Madrona Marshes all over Torrance? At its March 18 meeting, the Torrance City Council was introduced to a promising new program called the Stormwater Basin (Sump) Enhancement Program. In a nutshell, this program would address a serious problem—high levels of pollutants in winter storm water runoff to the ocean—and save money, BIG money, at the same time. And if “win-win” isn't good enough for you, how about adding: improvement of wetland habitats and addition of recreation opportunities such as walking trails and even some soccer fields in the larger sumps. And the cost is estimated at \$4.5 million, versus \$134 million (plus cost of additional land) if a single water treatment plant were constructed near the coast.

This exciting new idea was presented to Council by John Jones, Director of Community Services, and John Dettle, Public Works Director. It would enhance existing sumps, or stormwater basins, to improve their capacity to treat stormwater before it is released into the ocean. The initial three sumps targeted for the program are all in West Torrance: Amie, Henrietta, and Entradero Storm Basins. All three flow into the Herondo Storm Drain, in which winter runoff pollutant levels recently exceeded levels allowed by the LA Regional Water Quality Board. Two other sumps, Bishop Mont-

gomery (a large basin near B.M. High School) and Ocean Basin near Sepulveda Blvd. may also be improved for better treatment of stormwater and addition of recreational amenities.

Mayor Scotto and several members of the Council voiced enthusiasm for the new project, and directed Jones and Dettle to proceed with it. Please join me in letting your mayor and councilpersons know how excited we all are about the great potential of this program! It is perhaps the best environmental news in Torrance since the City took ownership of Madrona Marsh in 1986!

P.S. A special word of thanks is in order to Marshan Dale Lincoln, who has worked for years to make the residents of Torrance aware of the great expanse of native habitat that is “hidden” in our drainage basins. This one is definitely for you, Dale!

## Thank You, Riviera Elementary!

We'd like to send a special thank you to the six classes of second graders and their teachers from Riviera Elementary School who were given docent-led tours of the Marsh in March.

First, because they prepared for their (first!) trip to Madrona Marsh by talking about and studying the habitat, plants and animals they were likely to see (thanks, teachers!), which always makes the visit more enjoyable for everyone.

Secondly, because they were very attentive and well-behaved, which makes it a pleasure to take them on a nature walk.

And finally, because they collected money to show their appreciation for the “free” tours given by FOMM docents: \$201!

## Super Girl Scout Project

Isabella Mistry and Michelle Wong from Girl Scout Troop 684 raised some \$90 recycling bottles and cans. With their hard-earned money in hand, they thought of Madrona Marsh and the possibility of planting trees.

Two elderberry trees were purchased and the girls planted them on the peninsula near the southwest corner of the Marsh on February 2nd. Thanks for thinking of us, girls!

— Shirley Turner

### In Memoriam

We are sorry to report that long-time Wednesday Weeder Suzie Jakosh has lost her battle with lung cancer. We are grateful for many years of her cheerful company and wonderful restoration work. Remember her as you gaze at the beautiful purple bush lupine and bright yellow sunflowers at the entrance to the Preserve.

## Artists' Corner

Works of local artists and photographers inspired by the beauty of the Madrona Marsh are regularly on display at the Nature Center. Everyone is invited to attend each artist's reception where the artist talks about his/her work or gives a demonstration. Snacks and beverages are included.

**Redondo Beach Art Group**, Various Artists- Exhibit runs through-May 17. Art Fair, Saturday, May 10, 12 noon to 4 p.m.

Tree Photo Finalists Reception, June 6, 6:30-8:30 p.m.



# Birds, Butterflies and Dragonflies of the Preserve

March 2008

This list was compiled by David Moody, Tracy Drake, and Ron Melin.

## Birds

American Wigeon	<b>Killdeer</b>	Common Raven	Chipping Sparrow
Gadwall	Black-necked Stilt	Tree Swallow	Lark Sparrow
Mallard	<i>Lesser Yellowlegs</i>	Violet-green Swallow	Savannah Sparrow
Blue-winged Teal	<i>Western Sandpiper</i>	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	Fox Sparrow
Cinnamon Teal	Long-billed Dowitcher	Cliff Swallow	Lincoln's Sparrow
Green-winged Teal	Wilson's Snipe	Barn Swallow	White-crowned Sparrow
Northern Shoveler	Ring-billed Gull	Bushtit	Red-winged Blackbird
<i>Ring-necked Duck</i>	California Gull	House Wren	Tri-colored Blackbird
<i>Bufflehead</i>	Western Gull	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Western Meadowlark
Ruddy Duck	Rock Pigeon	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Brewer's Blackbird
Pied-billed Grebe	Mourning Dove	Hermit Thrush	Great-tailed Grackle
Great Egret	White-throated Swift	Northern Mockingbird	Brown-headed Cowbird
Great Blue Heron	<b>Anna's Hummingbird</b>	European Starling	Bullock's Oriole
Snowy Egret	Rufous Hummingbird	Cedar Waxwing	House Finch
Green Heron	<b>Allen's Hummingbird</b>	Orange-crowned Warbler	Lesser Goldfinch
Black-crowned Night-Heron	Downy Woodpecker	Yellow-rumped Warbler	American Goldfinch
Cooper's Hawk	Northern Flicker	Black-throated Gray Warbler	House Sparrow
Red-shouldered Hawk	Black Phoebe	Townsend's Warbler	Orange Bishop
Red-tailed Hawk	<b>Say's Phoebe</b>	Common Yellowthroat	
American Kestrel	Western Kingbird	Wilson's Warbler	<b>BOLD = Breeding</b>
<b>American Coot</b>	Western Scrub-Jay	Spotted Towhee	<i>Italics = rare species to Madrona</i>
<i>Black-bellied Plover</i>	American Crow	California Towhee	

## Butterflies

Monarch	Western Tiger Swallowtail	Umber Skipper
Mourning Cloak	Funereal Duskywing	Gray Hairstreak
Gulf Fritillary	Red Admiral	Pygmy Blue
Cabbage White	Fiery Skipper	

## Dragonflies and Damselflies

Common Green-eyed Darner
Variegated Meadowhawk
Pacific Forktail



# South Bay Native Plant Corner

—Dr. Connie Vadheim, CSUDH



## Wild Hyacinth

*Dichelostemma capitatum ssp. capitatum*

Spring is a wonderful season on the Preserve and in our gardens. The winter rains have stimulated seeds to germinate and dormant shrubs to re-leaf. Native bulbs and corms, dormant for many months, send up their leaves and flower stalks. No wonder South Bay residents have always welcomed spring as a time of beauty and renewal!

The Southern California coastal areas were once home to coastal prairies and shrublands. These communities featured plant species limited to our area, as well as grasses and bulbs with more widespread distributions. Our local prairies featured a unique combination of grasses, shrubs, bulbs/corms and annual wildflowers. After a good winter, the coastal prairie produced flowers of every hue—from delicate yellows to vibrant pinks and purples. Some of the most charming flowers—like Wild Hyacinth—come from bulbs or corms.

Bulbs and corms are underground storage and reproductive organs. Plants like Wild Hyacinth grow and bloom in the spring, storing food in their bulbs/corms and setting seeds. They disappear completely in the dry summer months, only to reappear next spring.

Wild Hyacinth produces clusters of small, blue-purple bell-shaped flowers in early spring. The flowers are a favorite of Skipper butterflies. The flowers, as well as the corms, are edible and were an important food source for Native Californians. The corms are eaten raw or baked—and baked corms can be ground to produce a sweet ‘flour’.

Native bulbs and corms are easy to grow from seed or bulb/corm (it will take about three years for plants from seed to flower). Plants need adequate water during winter and early spring. When leaves stop growing you should begin watering less, which will stimulate flowering. Once flowering is over, water only occasionally. Bulbs and corms need very dry summer soils or they will become diseased.



Native bulbs/corms take little space and can be planted around native grasses, shrubs and perennials—and also in pots. If you have gophers/squirrels you may need to plant bulbs/corms in baskets made of chickenwire. Bulbs and corms should be dug up every two to three years. You can replant the larger bulbs—or give them away to other grateful gardeners.

*Learn more about local native plants at our “Out of the Wilds and into Your Garden” series on the first Saturday of each month (see below). Plant Information Sheets and Plant Lists are also available at the Nature Center.*

## Gardening with Native Plants

Learn how to include native plants in your garden. Our popular series, “**Out of the Wilds and into Your Garden,**” features the wonderful plants native to the South Bay area.

Connie Vadheim (CSU Dominguez Hills) and Tracy Drake teach you how to select, plant and manage your native plants. Talks are on the first Saturday of each month (10 a.m. to noon) and repeat the following Tuesday (6:30-8 p.m.). When possible, talks include a walk in the native plant gardens.

### **Spring/Summer schedule and topics:**

- |            |                                      |
|------------|--------------------------------------|
| 5/3 & 5/6  | Postage-stamp Gardens (small spaces) |
| 6/7 & 6/10 | Container Gardening                  |
| 7/5 & 7/8  | Butterfly Gardens                    |



*The Comedy and Magic Club in Hermosa Beach was the scene of “Laughter for the Environment,” a presentation to benefit the Madrona Marsh Foundation. One hundred percent of the ticket price was donated to the Foundation—and, everyone had a very good time!*



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Had By**

**All . . .**



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