

# Life After Concrete

By: Dr. Jan Vandersloot

In the past, Orange County's watersheds have been routinely paved over, with its creeks and rivers encased and lined with concrete in the name of providing flood control and public safety. The prevailing concept being that storm waters need to be rushed to the sea as fast as possible. Concrete provided the fastest way to convey these flood waters. Thus, the meandering creeks and rivers lined by lush riparian habitat have been straightened and lined with concrete, with disappearance of the willow riparian habitat needed by endangered species such as a bird called the least Bell's Vireo.

However, there may be "Life After Concrete" in Orange County's watersheds if efforts to secure funding for Integrated Regional and Coastal Watershed Management Plans (IRCWMP) are successful. Funding for these plans, in the neighborhood of \$25 million each, are available through Proposition 84 and other state bond funds. These plans can be viewed by going to the Orange County Watershed website at: [www.ocwatersheds.com](http://www.ocwatersheds.com) and clicking on the watershed of interest.

The Central County IRCWMP involving the Newport Coast and Newport Bay Watershed was recently discussed at the monthly Newport Bay Watershed Stakeholders' Meeting held under the auspices of Orange County's RDMD (Resources Development and Management Department). Bob Stein, staff member from the City of Newport Beach, is trying to get ahead of the curve in applying

for these grants, as they are competitive. Orange County's Carolyn Schaffer of RDMD and Bob Stein recently traveled to Sacramento to discuss the grant opportunities under Prop 84 and are to be commended for being so proactive.

Meanwhile, the Newport Bay Watershed Stakeholders' Meetings have been held monthly. In 2005, under the direction of Anne Dove of the National Park Service developed a vision statement that reads in part:

"In the future, the Newport Bay Watershed is a holistically and sustainably managed ecosystem in which natural resources, flood protection and economic development are balanced. Beneficial uses of surface waters are achieved and the watershed's creeks are restored to function more naturally, supporting native plant and animal species. More open space and park land is available for the Watershed's communities and a trail network connects the whole Watershed."

In addition, the Army Corps of Engineers released its Preliminary Draft of the Upper Newport Bay/San Diego Creek Watershed Feasibility Study, October 23, 2005, identifying 16 sites in the Watershed with restoration opportunities.

*Jan Vandersloot, MD, is an FHBP Advisory Board member, Board member of Bolsa Chica Land Trust, and founder of Ocean Outfall Group.*

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Santa Ana River

Background photo: Melanie Schlotterbeck

# Last Child Left Inside

By: Lori Kiesser and Tina Richards

An awareness is sweeping America in the wake of Richard Louv's bestseller "Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature Deficit Disorder." That awareness is the recognition that we may be raising an entire generation who does not have a direct and personal connection with nature. The implications are ominous. A sedentary and indoor lifestyle is claiming the health of our children. And if these children do not have a relationship with the environment, then who will protect it? This issue has captured attention at the highest levels. Two proposed Congressional bills, S.1981 and H. 3036, both titled the Last Child Left Inside Act, would provide federal grants to fund outdoor education and reverse our children's flight from the outdoors.

Fortunately, Orange County's parks and open space offer great opportunities for children and families to develop a relationship with our natural world. By protecting our remaining natural habitats and growing existing nature education programs, Orange County has what it takes to be a model for the nation. One such program is the Department of Education's Inside the Outdoors® (ITO). Over 125,000

programs offered by ITO are connecting kids to nature.

Another great local opportunity is the Orange County Zoo. Home to animals native to the southwest, the zoo allows visitors to observe and experience mountain lions, black bears, owls, coyotes, bobcats and more. Because the zoo is small, the exhibits are up close and personal. School children arrive by the busloads to learn about the wildlife that lives in our neighboring mountains. Education programs geared to toddlers and grammar school kids teach our next generation the importance of habitat preservation and the role each animal plays in the natural world.

The future of our children and our environment is in our hands. Through outdoor education opportunities like those offered by ITO, the Orange County Zoo, or by taking the family for an outing to one of OC's trails, beaches or parks we can make that future a hopeful one.

*Lori Kiesser is an FHBP Board member and instructor at Inside the Outdoors. Tina Richards is an FHBP Board member and a founder of the Friends of Orange County Zoo.*



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Background photo: Melanie Schlotterbeck

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# Thank You REI

Each year, REI grants support hundreds of community organizations across the nation and we are honored that FHBP's Green Vision Project, saving important remaining natural lands in Orange County, was selected this year for \$5,000 through REI's Conservation and Recreation Grant Program. This grant category focuses on increasing access to and participation in outdoor recreation.

FHBP was nominated by REI employees from the Huntington Beach store, 7777 Edinger Avenue, Huntington Beach. Check it out! And please remember to thank the employees for helping make Orange County a great place to live.



Friends of Harbors, Beaches & Parks Fall 2007



# Outdoors

in Orange County

Corona del Mar

# THE NEXT TEN YEARS

By: Jean Watt

In 1997, ten Orange County environmental volunteers created Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks (FHBP). Their goal was simple: merge ongoing efforts into a stronger voice for parks, water, open space, and environmental education throughout the County.

Since then we have launched many projects. Among them: The Green Vision Project, to save important remaining natural lands, documents public and private conservation lands and seeks opportunities for acquisition. The Orange Coast River Park project facilitates acquisition and restoration of 1000+ acres at the mouth of the Santa Ana River. The Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project works to protect coastal and watershed wetlands.

This year our Board has reinvested itself in visions for the next ten years. Much is changing as water, fire, global warming, health of children, and wildlife suffering from ocean pollution and habitat loss envelop our thoughts. New plans and policies must be sought. In this issue we've turned some of our hard-working Board members loose to express their views about the next ten years.

# Cut the Mud Away When You Have To

By: Melanie Schlotterbeck

One of my best memories of nature was a backpacking trip I went on with my dad when I was about 12 years old. We didn't have to drive far to get to the trailhead. In fact, we only had to drive about two miles.

Telegraph Canyon, where we started our journey, is accessed from Brea and leads to the heart of Chino Hills State Park. The plan was simple, hike eight miles to the park's campground, camp overnight, and then hike out the next day. About half way into our adventure the thunderclouds began to form and the rain started. No big deal we thought; we planned ahead. We confidently pulled out our yellow ponchos and kept going.

There was only one problem we didn't anticipate. The soils in Chino Hills are mostly clay and wet clay is sticky clay. I grew taller and taller as we hiked on -- with the mud adding to my height. Every 100 yards or so my dad had to pull out his knife and cut the mud off my hiking boots. This ritual happened off and on for about an hour. It was always initiated when I could no longer safely lift my leg to take my next step due to the weight of the super adhesive mud on my boots. It was a long eight miles, but boy was it fun.

This memorable trip epitomizes for me why we as humans need natural lands in our lives - we need to be reminded to enjoy it, adapt to the unexpected and move forward. At this point in time, my mom had been volunteering for eight years to create Chino Hills State Park. She had successfully fought off airports, arterial highways, a national cemetery and assorted housing tracts while also fighting for funding to buy the land. On that hike, her fight and why it was so important began to make sense to me. These gently rolling hills offered surprises, fun and beauty and perhaps most importantly to me, a place to bond with my father.

During my high school and college years, when I became too busy to enjoy actually visiting the State Park, just knowing that the hills were there and were

protected was enough to calm me. Knowing that the deer herd I spotted on the hills were still enjoying the lush grasslands; knowing that the owls were still setting up house in that sycamore tree; knowing the creek still ran free, gave me glimpse of timelessness.

With the population of Orange County already over three million residents, our county's natural heritage has been transformed from natural lands to farmlands and orchards, from rural communities to an urban maze. According to the predictions our county's population is expected to add another half million people within 30 years. With the threats of development in every canyon of the county and even on protected parklands - we must remain vigilant. What we fight for is worth fighting for - it is worth spending time on. These lands are not just about fun and games but about providing opportunities for us to reattach to the earth and to each other. And to keep those possibilities open for the future.

Several of the big battles to preserve our natural resources are underway and these potential open spaces could receive grants from multiple funding sources. Here are some of the choices our prized properties face:

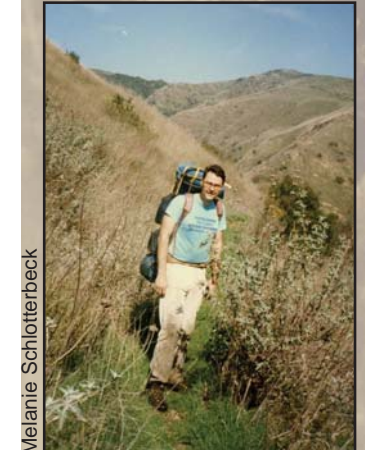
- Holtz Ranch, Silverado Canyon.** The County just approved developing these 320 acres of rural lands into ranchette style houses, OR the land could become a community center piece and gateway to the Cleveland National Forest.
- Coyote Hills, Fullerton.** Chevron has proposed 800 houses on its 500 acres in a part of the county where parks are scarce; OR the land could become a new Regional Park and at the same time protect numerous endangered species.
- Shea Property, Huntington Beach.** Shea Homes has plans to build houses above Bolsa Chica wetlands; OR we could protect the last vestige of upper wetlands and the cultural resource, Cogged Stone, forever.
- Missing Middle, Brea.** Shell-ExxonMobil has plans for 3,600 houses on its land, along the 57 freeway; OR if preserved it will permanently link up an 18,000 acre wildlife corridor that spans four counties.
- Trabuco Canyon.** Over a dozen parcels each with their own set of development proposals would permanently alter the character of this

bucolic canyon; OR we could save these lands connecting them to the National Forest and O'Neill Park.

- Banning Ranch, Newport Beach.** Aera Energy has proposed developing these biologically rich coastal wetlands and bluffs with 1,750 houses; OR we bring the 1000+ acre Orange Coast River Park to reality.

Opportunities for open space preservation abound in Orange County. These natural lands are our common wealth. Their beauty and their ability to renew is the glue that must keep us focused. So, if you have to cut the mud away every so often do it, because we all must keep trudging on. This is a fight we have proven we can win - our children's children are counting on us..

*Melanie Schlotterbeck is an FHBP team leader for the Orange County Green Vision Project.*



Melanie Schlotterbeck

Background photo: Gary Zahm

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# Healthy Bizzness Tips

By: Alice Sorenson

“Whoever said horses are dumb is dumb.”  
Will Rogers

Now, those of you who are not fortunate enough to play with horses on a daily basis can't appreciate how wise these words are. A typical day in the life of my horse, Bizzness, goes something like this. He starts his day being served 8-10 lbs of green leafy alfalfa hay around 6 AM in his stall/“bedroom.” I am lucky if I have time to drive through somewhere to grab a coffee and donut while rushing to the office.



Alice and her horse Bizzness out for a ride.

Around 10 AM Bizzness is served a bucket of goodies containing his vitamins and health supplements along with 3-4 lbs of sweet carrots. My mid-morning snack is non-existent as I rush to the next client meeting.

Sometime during the day, his trainer takes him from his stall/“bedroom” for a bit of exercise. If he behaves himself and does everything that is asked, he will be cooled off and back in his stall in under an hour. If he doesn't do what is asked of him, he will be worked until he does. Bizzness is a

smart horse; he hasn't seen a workout last longer than an hour in years. I typically work a 9-10 hour day.

“Royalty must learn the art of horsemanship early. The reason is a horse is no flatterer. He will throw the prince as quickly as the groom.”

Anonymous

Because I have no desire to be thrown whether I'm a princess or a groom, I ride my horse every chance I get. That riding builds the relationship between us. It creates the balance, strength and focus necessary to build trust in the horse with me; trust that I won't get us in a situation that we can't get out of. I could not do all this riding without the extensive trail systems available in Orange County.

Equestrians in Orange County are fortunate to have a county trail system, several city trail systems, the Cleveland National Forest and the Irvine Ranch Conservancy trails, all of which have been designed to connect with one another. All of this riding keeps Bizzness and me healthy, fit and happy. After all, “If riding were all blue ribbons and bright lights, I would have quit long ago.” George Morris

But speaking of blue ribbons and bright lights, did I remember to tell you that Bizzness gets his “nails” done regularly (every 7 weeks) and the “manicurist” (a.k.a. Ferrier) comes to him (no waiting in line). And not only does Bizzness get a daily “massage” (grooming) but he also gets a monthly visit from his chiropractor (also comes to him - no lines). I should have such attention.

Once Bizzness and I finish our ride we go back to the stable where I wash him down, brush him and feed him another 10-20 lbs. of hay and thank him for his effort. I escort him to his stall so he can rest and sleep for the next 14-16 hours before his routine starts over again.

He's happy and healthy; I'm happy and healthy. So, who really is the dumb one in this picture? Well, maybe neither is. After all, “The outside of a horse is good for the inside of a man.” Winston Churchill

Maybe the only thing dumb here is that Orange County Harbors, Beaches and Parks Department is reporting through the Resource Development and Management Department instead of the Health Department where a more symbiotic match would benefit the community of Orange County.

*Alice Sorenson is VP of FHBP and a Board member of the Equestrian Coalition of OC. She has served 17 years on the OC Trails Advisory Committee and is immediate past president.*



Barham Ranch

Background photo by: Alice Sorenson

# Protecting Our Vital Open Spaces from Sprawl

By: Jack Eidt

## CONDOS AND COYOTES IN CANYONS

Despite remaining hidden behind ranch fences, Orange County's last wild canyons and somnolent sage-scrub covered foothills daily enrich the landscape for the millions who crowd the freeways and malls. Lavish Tuscan-styled condos and big-box retail looking out on cattle intermingling with packs of coyotes along sycamore streambeds create the special magic that draws people from all over to live the “California Promise.”

Then why plan a toll road through San Onofre State Beach and the San Mateo Creek Watershed that would pollute a world class surf break and destroy habitat for eleven species of endangered plants and animals? Why propose to transform the serene backcountry around Irvine Lake and Santiago and Silverado Canyons into an exclusive retreat for the super-wealthy? Wasteful and unsustainable patterns



An urban development in Anaheim.

Melanie Schlotterbeck

of development threaten to consume the last open spaces surrounding OC's sprawling suburban enclaves - and degrade our freedom and quality of life. How can we protect our vital open spaces? We need smarter growth that responds to the needs of stakeholders, local residents, and the wild inhabitants. The community must demand comprehensive environmental planning and design that maximizes the goals of landowners, government, and private industry while maintaining vital green infrastructure.

## IT TAKES A COMMUNITY OF GNATCATCHERS - AND STAKEHOLDERS...

Preservation of vital open space and environmentally sustainable and socially integrated communities could be accomplished through the employment of the following planning, zoning, and design techniques. These would promote clustering of urban-suburban development and create a physical separation between wildfire-sensitive chaparral and human population centers.

**Conservation Subdivision Design** would plan new neighborhoods with the goal of preserving natural and cultural resources including wildlife corridors, wetlands, flood plains, rock formations, historical sites, and archaeological remains. Development would be clustered homes of varying densities and occupancy-types. Trails and neighborhood parks would serve as gathering spots with vegetative buffers and swale drainages along roads. This paradigm would reduce the impact of clearing, grading and infrastructure provision; homebuyers would pay a market premium for the proximity to lands of high resource value. A portion of the land could be reserved in perpetuity as a conservation easement co-signed by a local commission or land trust.

**Urban Village Design** envisions compact neighborhoods with vibrant civic and cultural centers. Homes would be planned around public spaces with roads on the periphery, making a walkable core where commercial uses mix with residential and office. This model would enhance the sense of community and encourage residents to work in nearby businesses. While open spaces would be more active recreational than wilderness, significant public land could be preserved; collective urban parkland in walking proximity would compensate residents for reduced personal space.

**Transit Oriented Development** takes the Urban Village further by designing compact, high density, walkable communities around high quality train systems, getting residents away from the automobile dependency. Collector support transit would also be available here, including trolleys, buses, light rail, and maybe Neighborhood Electrical Vehicle paths and Personal Rapid Transit systems.

**Green Architecture-Green Neighborhoods** would be encouraged through the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND) rating and certification system. Using the combined principles of Green Building and Smart Growth, measures that reduce energy requirements and encourage non-toxic building materials would be integrated into compact neighborhoods with open spaces and parkland.

Growth and development will continue to pressure the viability of our open spaces, but with proper planning and community involvement, more people can live closer together, and enjoy the collective beauty of our wild foothills and beaches.

*Jack Eidt serves as a Board member of FHBP and Director of Planning for Wild Heritage Planners.*

Background photo by: Gloria Sefton

# Water is the Deciding Factor

By: Denny Bean

Everyday we see more development rising up the hillsides destroying our open space and impinging upon the wildlife residing there. No wonder there have been mountain lion sightings near homes and in backyards, including pets being carried off. But more horrific was the death and near death of two park users. One wonders if so much habitat were not lost to these animals, would they not have to travel into developed places to survive.

There appears to be no stopping this growth as The Irvine Company plans are approved to build 2,500 homes on 3,000 acres in Weir Canyon and 4,000 more homes on 6,800 acres east of Orange near Irvine Lake. The Rancho Mission Viejo Company will build 14,000 homes on 23,000 acres of open space in South County, including 5.2 million square feet of retail. The compression of open space is tragic. On the opposite side of the Santa Ana Mountains, the growth in the Temecula Valley has been rapid, continuous and overwhelming. East of Lake Elsinore there are mansions perched on the ridgelines. Soon hikers in the Cleveland National Forest wilderness will have their solitude interrupted by visual eyesores.

The State of California passed a law that developments of 500 dwellings or more require the approval of the city or county in which they are to be built. Here in Orange County we have more than 35 special districts, many of which are water districts. Apparently, many are holdovers from our agricultural days when wells were dug in order to irrigate the orange groves and other crops or to water livestock. Today, many cities rely upon these sources for their household water supply.

The controlling organization for our aquifer is



Santa Ana River - Yorba Linda

Melanie Schlotterbeck

the Orange County Water District. In addition, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MET) is responsible for the distribution of water from the Sacramento River (Bay Delta) and Colorado River. This water is distributed to Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego Counties. This sounds like an unlimited abundant supply that could go on forever without any thought of ever running out. But, there are many overriding factors to consider.

The Colorado River is currently undergoing an eight-year drought and the states along its passage compete for this resource, as does Mexico. The intake at the Delta has come under the control of the Department of Fish and Game due to its pumps destroying a fish called the Delta smelt. There are other considerations that must be met for the steelhead and salmon. Also, the dikes on the Sacramento River are suspect and apt to break; creating our own Katrina-like situation of failing levees.

Here in the southland we are experiencing lack of rain to feed our aquifer. A significant source of its replenishment is the Santa Ana River and its watershed. The Seven Oaks and Prado Dams control the flow of water in the Santa Ana River to allow time for percolation into our aquifer through a series of settling ponds. A system that treats sewer water output to the cleanest possible standards is

nearly completed. This high quality water will be pumped up the Santa Ana River through five foot diameter pipes to the settling ponds.

The pipes/aqueducts that bring our water from the north and east are only so big and their sources are provided by nature, which can be fickle and unpredictable. Many people consider the water derived from the Eastern Sierra and stored in the San Fernando Valley as part of our resources. But that water belongs to the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power.

There needs to be a Czar of Water for the approval of building permits. However, this is a complex issue as the water from the north is supplied by the State and goes to many of the southland counties. The MET has 26 cities or water districts which it oversees, including the Municipal Water District of Orange County. The MWDOC has 29 water retailers and cities under its control, but Anaheim, Santa Ana and Fullerton fall directly under the MET. Water should be the controlling factor for limiting continued development.

*Denny Bean is a Board member of FHBP, Friends of Coyote Hills and Trails4All. He serves on the OC Regional Recreational Trails Advisory Committee and was a member of the OC Grand Jury in 2004-5.*

Background photo by: CanStockPhoto.com

# Coastal California Biodiversity

By: Don and Scott Thomas

The people of Coastal Southern California are a blessed lot! We experience some of the finest weather in the world, employment enough for everyone who wants to work and a host of entertainment venues to choose from. But we are also blessed in a way that few people other than environmentalists ever think about. We live in a wonderland of flora and fauna so unique that it has been designated by Conservation International as a world class biological hotspot. To qualify as a hotspot, a region must meet two strict criteria: it must contain at least 1,500 species of vascular plants as endemics, and it has to have lost at least 70% of its original habitat.

Without exposing the reader to the long list of endemic plants and animals or delineating what has been lost it is easy to see why our neighborhood is on the select list of 25 “hotspots” in the entire world. First, we have the finest, mildest climate we can imagine on this planet. Then there are more endemic species here than any state except Hawaii making Coastal California the only location



Crystal Cove State Park

Melanie Schlotterbeck



Laguna Coast Wilderness Park

Melanie Schlotterbeck

designated as a hotspot in the United States of America.

To understand why we have such a vast diversity of flora and fauna all you have to do is examine a map of the area. The ocean and associated coastal plain, and the quickly rising altitude of the coastal range creates a vast variety of habitats for plants and animals. Varied habitat guarantees the first of the hotspot criteria and rampant development satisfies the more sinister second requirement.

Recognizing we are the stewards of a great treasure entails placement of a huge burden. We, the sole keepers of this fecund region, must save the remnant of a once great ecosystem for we are the only ones that can! Imagine if you will, the way this land would have looked to the Catholic missionaries who were the first Europeans to walk the land and experience its magnificence. Unfortunately, some of the very features that allow the land to support such a variety of life also make it ripe for real estate

development. With a simple bulldozer a developer can scrape the coastal sage scrub floodplain and make the perfect pad for private or commercial buildings. Further inland the rising hills and unstable land have not dissuaded the developer from paving critical habitat and squeezing the last possible dollar from the land, and everyday the general public pays the price of this greed. It is fortunate that a remnant of what once was, still remains! But that fact lays a great responsibility at our feet. The small patches of open space left to wildlife must be saved for our children and their children's children so they may be awed, as we have been, by the beauty that surrounds us.

*Don Thomas is FHBP Treasurer, OC Parks Volunteer Ranger, and nature interpreter. Scott Thomas is Conservation Director for Sea & Sage Audubon.*

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