

Big T Wash Line

April 2012



A Publication of the
County of Los Angeles
Department of Public Works
(LACDPW)



Announcements

●Share the Trails

Please remember to share the trails and be courteous to other trail users. For safety reasons, horses and their riders have the right-of-way. If you are hiking and encounter a horse and rider, please step to the side, stand very still, and talk to the rider while allowing the horse to pass.

●Focused Surveys

The focused surveys for two endangered songbirds (least Bell's vireo and southwestern willow flycatcher) and one toad (arroyo toad) will be conducted between April and July. So keep your eyes out for the biologists who will be wandering through Big T. They would love to answer any questions you may have.



●Brown-headed cowbird trapping

The annual brown-headed cowbird trapping program will be going on from April 1 through June 30. A biologist releases non-target birds on a daily basis so please do not disturb the traps. If you see anyone vandalizing the traps, please immediately contact Grace Yu with LACDPW, (626) 458-6139.



●View Past Newsletters

To view past Mitigation Area newsletters or annual reports, or just to find out more about the Mitigation Area, check out the Big T Website at:
<http://www.ladpw.org/wrd/facilities/>

ABOUT THE BIG TUJUNGA WASH MITIGATION AREA

Big T is a parcel of land located in the City of Los Angeles' Sunland area (see Page 6). Big T covers an area of approximately 210 acres of sensitive habitat. The site was purchased by the LACDPW in 1998 for the purpose of compensating for habitat loss for other LACDPW projects.

The LACDPW implementation of the Master Mitigation Plan for the Big Tujunga Wash Mitigation Area (Big T) has been under way since April 2000.

Big T protects one of the most rapidly diminishing habitat types found in Southern California, willow riparian woodland. Big T is home to several protected species of fish (Santa Ana sucker, Santa Ana speckled dace, arroyo chub) and birds (least Bell's vireo, southwestern willow flycatcher).

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide updates to ongoing programs and to explain upcoming enhancement measures that will be implemented on the site. Newsletters are published on a bi-annual basis (Spring and Fall).

More information can be found at

<http://www.ladpw.org/wrd/facilities>

Water Lettuce Removal Update

In January 2012, LACDPW completed the huge job of removing the non-native water lettuce that was covering the surface of the Tujunga Ponds. Regular follow-up visits will be conducted to make sure this invasive plant does not take over the ponds again. The amazing result of the water lettuce removal is the return of many species of wildlife that have not been seen for a long time. Many species of ducks, coots, grebes, herons, egrets, and even kingfishers have been seen foraging and roosting in or near the ponds. Please remember, never release terrarium, aquarium, or other pets or plants into our native habitats.



Ring-necked Ducks in Tujunga Ponds



Don't Hurt the Yucca Plants!



Chaparral Yuccas
(*Hesperoyucca whipplei*)

Recently, we noticed that flower stalks of the chaparral yuccas (*Hesperoyucca whipplei*) at Big T are being removed, which could endanger the species. Removal of the yucca flower stalks from Big T violates the ordinance that protects the native plants. The chaparral yucca takes five years to grow from seed to maturity. At maturity, the plant grows a tall, showy flower stalk and after flowering, the plant dies. If the flower stalks are removed, the yucca population will be in jeopardy

because new seeds will not be deposited in the soil. The loss of yuccas could also impact wildlife species that depend upon them for protection and food.

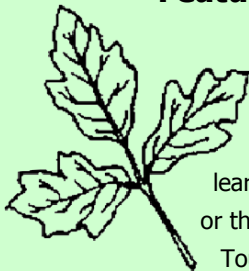
Native Americans used the stalks to make baskets and sandals and the roots to make soap and detergent. They also ate the flowers and immature stalks. Dead and dried yucca stalks were used to fuel fires that hardened clay pottery. Currently, yucca stalks are used in some dietary supplements for joint pain and to promote healthy cartilage. Yucca extracts are used in beverages, such as root beer, to provide the "foamy head". And, yucca stalks are even used to make musical instruments like the didgeridoo, which is a wind instrument developed by the Australians about 1,500 years ago. 🌀

If you see anyone removing yucca flower stalks, contact the Sheriff's Department (1-800-834-0064).



Flower stalk of the chaparral yucca (*Hesperoyucca whipplei*)

Featured plant: Poison Oak



While hiking around Big T, watch out for Poison Oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*)!! Everyone should learn how to identify this plant by sight or they may end up with a nasty rash!

Touching any parts of this plant at any time of the year can cause a rash that usually shows up about 24 hours after contact and it can get worse over the next few days. The rash may appear as a redness, swelling, or even blisters. So, what causes the reaction? A compound called Uroshiol Oil is the culprit! This compound is primarily found in the spaces between plant cells beneath the outer skin of the plant. If the plant tissue is damaged by the person or object that touches it, then Uroshiol Oil is released from the plant. The oil adheres to almost anything it comes in contact with, such as towels, gloves, blankets, clothing, and even your pets! Clothing or other materials that contact the plant and then, before being washed, contact the skin are the most common causes of exposure. The number of working hours lost as a result of exposure from poison oak makes this plant the most hazardous plant in the state of California.

So, how do you identify this pesky plant? Poison oak is a woody shrub or vine that loses its leaves in the winter but, in the early spring, the young leaves are green or sometimes a light red. It produces small, white-green flowers in the spring and then, in late summer, these form small, round whitish-green fruits. In late spring and summer, the foliage is glossy green and later turns attractive shades of orange and red. The most identifying characteristic is that the leaves are almost always in groups of three. Just remember the saying, **"If you see three, let it be!"** 🌀

Right: Poison Oak at base of tree. You can see the variation of colors here

Below: Poison Oak leaves



BE CAREFUL ON THE TRAILS!



Deep hole at creek crossing

LACDPW has an ongoing trails maintenance program designed to address problems or unsafe conditions on the trails. Recently, trail users notified LACDPW about three different problem areas. These include a deep hole at one of the creek crossings, trail erosion along the main Big T wash, and fallen trees that are blocking trails.

The deep hole, which is located northwest of the Cottonwood Avenue area, has resulted from the creek flows undermining the bank on one side of the pool at the crossing. The step down from the trail into the creek is deeper than expected for the horse and rider and should be avoided. Barriers are currently blocking this trail but it will be permanently closed with natural barriers in the near future. A safer crossing is located about 75 feet downstream of the hazardous crossing.

The trail with the erosion problem is located at the western edge of Big T, where the trail turns south from the haul road. Both sides of the terrace above Big T Wash are eroding away. The trails currently run along the edges of the terrace where the erosion is taking place. LACDPW is devising a plan to address the trail safety at this location. In the meantime, avoid using this area.

Large trees have fallen across the trails at several locations at Big T. When the trees are not too large, the maintenance crews can remove the portions blocking the trail. Otherwise, the trail will have to be directed around the fallen tree. If you have to go around a fallen tree, please stay on one trail around the tree and rejoin the existing trail in the shortest distance possible. Making new or multiple trails is damaging to the adjacent habitat.

Here are a few reminders when using the trails at Big T: traveling in single file minimizes impacts to the adjacent natural habitats and causes the least disturbance to wildlife species; paying attention to what is ahead of you on the trail will not only alert you to safety issues up ahead, but you may also be lucky enough to see wildlife on or adjacent to the trails; making new trails or widening trails destroys the habitat and allows for invasion by non-native species of plants. Please enjoy the wonderful outdoor experience that Big T has to offer but if you notice any trail issues, please contact Grace Yu at LACDPW (626) 458-6139. 🌀



Crews talk about how to remove fallen trees from trails

Featured Animal: Least Bell's Vireo



Least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*)

The least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) is a small songbird that winters in South America and returns to California to nest and raise its young. This species is listed as endangered due to loss of habitat and parasitism by the brown-headed cowbird. This species lives in willow scrub habitat where it builds a nest low in the vegetation. Least Bell's vireos are only about 4.5 to 5 inches in length and their feathers are typically light gray on top and whitish on the bottom. Some distinguishing characteristics include a faint white ring around the eye and faint white wing bars. They lay 3 to 4 eggs that hatch in about 14 days and the young leave the nest 10 to 12 days after hatching. These small birds eat a variety of insects including caterpillars, moths, and grasshoppers. The habitat restoration and enhancement program at Big T is helping to preserve and enhance the habitat for this species. 🌀



Trails Maintenance Day November 2011

Big Tujunga Wash Mitigation Area's 7th Annual Trail Maintenance Day was held on November 5, 2011. The focus of the event was trash removal in the upland, riparian, and creek areas. Community volunteers, ECORP's biologists, and LACDPW staff all got together on this cold but sunny Saturday to clean up litter along the designated trails at Big T.

Adam Schroeder and Terrance Wroblewski, aquatic biologists from ECORP, put on waders and focused on removing trash from Haines Canyon Creek. They are both specialists with the Santa Ana Sucker so they were able to remove trash from the creek in a manner that would not harm this threatened species of fish. ECORP's biologists provided guidance and support during

maintenance activities to ensure safety and protection for the sensitive species at Big T. The volunteers were successful in clearing out a lot of



trash from along the trails. Other participants included: Valerie De La Cruz, Grace Yu, Mary Benson, Mari and Mickey Quillman, Maria Lastre, Elders Lambson and Mackay, Jim Wagner, and Randy Oglesby.

Thanks to all that participated in this important effort!



The next annual trail maintenance day will take place in the fall of 2012 to avoid impacts to nesting birds during the bird breeding season. We anticipate it will be sometime in October or November. Please look for the next Trail Maintenance Day event in our Fall 2012 newsletter or on our website:

<http://www.ladpw.org/wrd/facilities>

Hope you can join us and bring your friends and family because everyone is welcome!

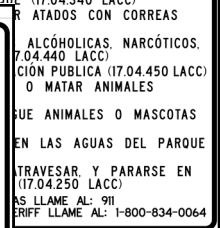
Report Unlawful Activities

Just a reminder, the English and Spanish signs listing unlawful activities are posted at the following entrances and throughout Big T:

- North and South Wheatland Avenue
- Mary Bell Avenue
- Gibson Ranch
- Tujunga Ponds Area

Paintball guns and air rifles are considered weapons or firearms so they should be reported. Also, please report unleashed or aggressive dogs at Big T.

If there is an **emergency, as always, please call 911**. If there is unlawful or suspicious activity occurring, please contact the Sheriff's Department (1-800-834-0064).



COAST HORNED LIZARD

The Coast Horned Lizard is a really cool lizard with a flat, wide body that is covered in horns! They are usually found in hot, dry environments and can avoid extreme heat by burrowing into loose sand and dirt. Their favorite food is ANTS!!!! Horned lizards have several methods of escaping predators that may get too close. They can stay very still and blend into their environment or they can quickly run away to escape a predator. When a predator picks up the horned lizard in its mouth, the horned lizard can either puff up really big or it can squirt blood from a gland near its eyes. When the predator gets squirted in the mouth, it spits out the horned lizard because of the bad taste! Some of the predators that will try to eat horned lizards include snakes, roadrunners, bobcats, and foxes. If you happen to see one of these amazing lizards in the wild, leave them be. They will be much happier left outdoors than taken home as a pet!



The Coast Horned Lizard has lots of horns on its body. The sharp and ridged horns can be found on its head and around its temples. When grabbed by a predator the coast horned lizard may shake its head from side to side in order to jab its predator with the horns.



Big Tujunga 
Word Search

Kid's Corner

We've hidden 22 vocabulary words from the stories in the newsletter. Read the stories and then find the words. **GOOD LUCK ON YOUR SEARCH!**

Word List

- Ants
- Barrier
- Creek
- Didgeridoo
- Endangered
- Erosion
- Flower stalk
- Habitat
- Horned lizard
- Moth
- Nest
- Poison oak
- Predator
- Prey
- Rash
- Safety
- Songbird
- Trails
- Uroshiol oil
- Vireo
- Willow
- Yucca



D	C	A	P	Y	I	L	B	O	K	F	B	Y	L	K	W	P	D	S	H
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Z	J	V	S	U	B	U	F	M	O	R	O	P	W	W	S	E	O	C	O

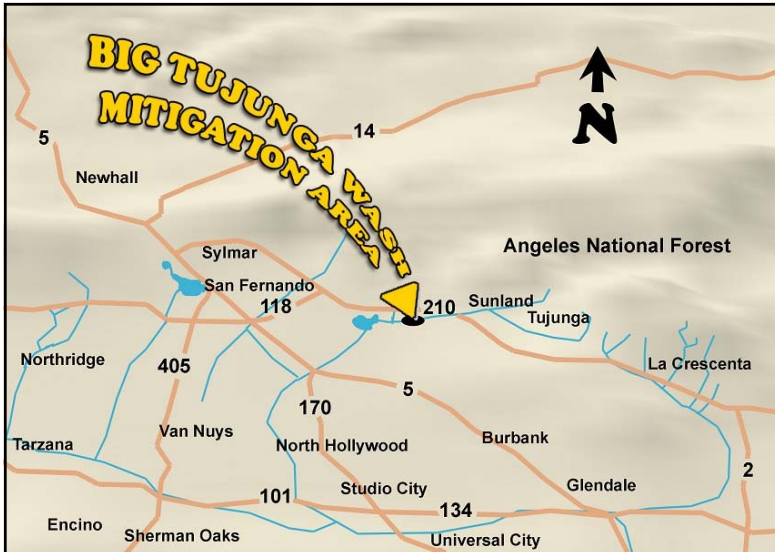


Water Resources Division
County of Los Angeles
Department of Public Works
 900 S. Fremont Avenue
 Alhambra, CA 91803



Where is Big T?

Downstream of Big Tujunga Canyon, right in the heart of Sun Valley, south of the 210 freeway, you'll find a native riparian (water loving plant) natural area filled with cottonwoods, willows, and pools of water that support many native aquatic species. Check out the Big T website for more information at: <http://www.ladpw.org/wrd/facilities/>



Emergencies? Incidents? Questions?

- **CALL 911 TO REPORT ANY EMERGENCY SUCH AS FIRE OR ACCIDENT**
 - Please **DO NOT** use 911 to report minor incidents or regulation infractions. Contact the Sheriff's Department at 1-800-834-0064.
 - In the case of an emergency situation (those where 911 is involved) please make a follow up call to the Department of Public Works as soon as possible at the numbers listed below.
 - Do not attempt to enforce regulations. Contact Sheriff's Department to handle the situation/incident.
- * For emergency follow up or to report minor incidents, obtain information, or get questions answered during weekday work hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday), please contact:

Grace Yu or Cindy Rowlan
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 County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works
 900 S. Fremont Avenue
 Alhambra, CA 91803
 Phone: (626) 458-6139 / (626) 458-6132
 Fax: (626) 979-5436
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