

Big T Wash Line

September 2014



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



Announcements



Report suspicious activity occurring in the Mitigation Area! If you see something occurring in the Mitigation Area that shouldn't be, call LA Sheriff's Department dispatch immediately to report it. LACDPW cannot respond to emergencies; however, please notify BTWMA@dpw.lacounty.gov of any incidents reported to law enforcement and we will gladly follow up. **LA Sheriff's Department Dispatch: 1-800-834-0064**

It's trimming time! You've waited patiently through the spring and summer and now it's finally time to trim your trees and shrubs! The breeding bird season is officially over and you can safely start pruning without fear of disturbing birds nesting in your yard. Most bird species are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, a federal law that was established to protect birds, their nests, and their habitat. Violation of this law can lead to fines or even jail time, so get your trimming needs taken care of this fall!

Fall CAC meeting deferred. Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings have been consolidated to convene on an annual basis in the spring. We will no longer hold fall meetings. The next CAC meeting is scheduled for April 30, 2015.

Big T has its own email! Feel free to contact BTWMA@dpw.lacounty.gov with any questions or concerns about Big T or any of the activities occurring within it.

Not native? Not welcome!

We sure have been busy this year! ECORP Consulting has conducted two exotic plant and two exotic wildlife removal efforts in 2014. Giant reed, castor bean, and other exotic plant species were removed during the two efforts and weeds were removed as part of the general upkeep of the existing trails system. The exotic wildlife removal efforts have been very successful! A total of 8 carp, 43 green sunfish, 17 bluegill, 421 largemouth bass, 1 Mozambique tilapia, 3 goldfish, 5 bullfrogs, 2 red-eared sliders, 1 southern painted turtle, and 358 crayfish have been removed from the Tujunga Ponds and Haines Canyon Creek since April! As you know, the native fish species thrive from the removal of these exotic fish species.

We've still got some more work to do before the end of the year, so be sure to keep an eye out for the crews!

A parasitic what?

You heard right, a parasitic bird species occupies Big T. Brown-headed cowbirds are nest parasites, meaning they do not build their own nests to lay their eggs. Instead, they lay eggs in nests of other unsuspecting, native bird species so they don't have to raise their own young. Trapping to remove these pesky birds is conducted each year to help our native bird species thrive. In 2014, a total of 75 brown-headed cowbirds were captured and removed from Big T!



Councilmember Fuentes Takes a Hike at Big T

On May 31st, 2014, the public was given the opportunity to hike the trails of Big T with Los Angeles City Councilmember Felipe Fuentes (District 7) and members of his staff. It was a bit of a surprise turnout with over 60 members of the public in attendance!

The adventure began at the Cottonwood entrance early Saturday morning, where hikers were given maps and handouts explaining the history of Big T, its current uses, and much more. Hikers explored the ponds and riparian areas of Big T, and were given the opportunity to ask questions and discuss their concerns with Councilmember Fuentes and members of the event's support staff. The event had a great turnout and we hope more events like this will help to increase the public's awareness and appreciation of Big T.



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 4). Big T covers an area of approximately 210 acres of sensitive habitat. The site was purchased by LACDPW in 1998 for the purpose of compensating for habitat loss for other LACDPW projects.

LACDPW's implementation of the Master Mitigation Plan for the Big Tujunga Wash Mitigation Area (Big T) has been underway 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 contains habitat for sensitive bird species (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 semi-annual basis (spring and fall).

More information can be found at

www.dpw.lacounty.gov/wrd/projects/BTWMA

Two-striped Garter Snake
photo credit: Chris Brown



Who You Gonna Call? Vector Control!

You may or may not know, but LACDPW works closely with the Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District (Vector Control) to manage vector issues at Big T. Vectors are any organism that can transmit disease or cause human discomfort. They can be anything from fleas that carry plague to mosquitoes that carry malaria. Vector Control seeks to eliminate threats to human and animal health by getting rid of disease carrying pests and other pests that cause extreme human discomfort.



Mosquito- photo credit: Bob Dusek

Mosquitoes, ticks, and black flies are common pests found at Big T. Mosquitoes have the potential to carry deadly diseases such as West Nile virus, western equine encephalomyelitis, St. Louis encephalitis, malaria, dengue fever, and even canine heartworm. Ticks can potentially carry Lyme disease, relapsing fever, and tularemia. Black flies are considered nuisance insects

and are not known to carry any diseases in this area. Midges are also found at Big T. They form swarms that are mostly harmless, but can cause alarm if they are mistaken for mosquitoes. Vector Control will generally focus treatment on mosquitoes at Big T, but will also address concerns with black fly infestations.

When and where might you come across these pests?

Mosquito season is generally between the months of May and October when they are most active. Mosquitoes tend to lay their eggs in stagnant water habitats, which makes Big T an attractive location to breed. During mosquito season, Vector Control conducts regular mosquito inspection and treatment once every 2 to 3 weeks at Big T. They focus their efforts on pooled areas along Haines Canyon Creek, the Tujunga Ponds, and areas around the Ponds. During the off season (November through April), Vector Control does not conduct regular treatments for mosquitoes unless they receive a call from residents reporting a problem. Regular treatments for black flies, occurring once every 10 days during the black fly season (typically March through November), are also conducted at Big T.

What's the worst that can happen?

Because of Vector Control's efforts, risk of disease is severely decreased, but there are still some diseases of which you should be aware including West Nile virus, western equine encephalomyelitis, St. Louis encephalitis, and canine heartworm. All of these diseases can be transmitted to humans, horses, and other animals through mosquito bites. West Nile virus symptoms in humans usually mimic those of the flu and can potentially lead to death. West Nile symptoms in horses include fever,

weakness, paralysis, and seizures. Fortunately, no West Nile virus activity has been reported in the Sunland-Tujunga area this year. Both western equine encephalomyelitis and St. Louis encephalitis attack the brain and can result in brain damage or death. Symptoms may include headache, nausea, and fever or can be as severe as swelling of the brain causing disorientation, delirium, and even coma. Western equine encephalomyelitis can also affect horses. Regionally available equine vaccinations for both West Nile virus and western equine encephalomyelitis exist, and you should inquire about them with your veterinarian. Lastly, canine heartworm can be transmitted to your dog or cat through mosquito bites. Illness is caused by heartworms in your pet's heart and lungs and can cause organ failure if left untreated. Preventative medications and treatments for this disease are also available from your veterinarian.



Deer Tick- photo credit: Soundwaves U.S.G.S

What You Can Do to Protect Yourself

To deter mosquitoes, black flies, and ticks from biting when you are out and about, wear long-sleeved shirts and pants and use an insect repellant that contains DEET, Picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus between dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are active. Mosquito larvae can be found in areas in your own backyard, such as in buckets, old tires full of standing rainwater, or even in your horse trough. To prevent breeding mosquitoes at home, make sure to regularly empty any uncovered water sources and properly maintain ponds, swimming pools, and spas. Replace the water in your horse's trough at least weekly. Also check that all of the screens on your doors and windows are tight fitting and don't have any holes that allow mosquitoes to get through.



Mosquitoes are usually found near standing water. This ponded area at Big T is a good example of standing water.

Want to know more about vectors and vector control in LA County? Check out the Vector Control website at www.glacvcd.org/.

Getting mosquito bites at Big T? Contact Vector Control at www.glacvcd.org/Contact/Service-Request.aspx. Want to know when the next treatment is planned or which neighborhoods have reported West Nile virus activity? Sign up for the Vector Control newsletters and email alerts at www.glacvcd.org/Contact/Newsletter.aspx. 

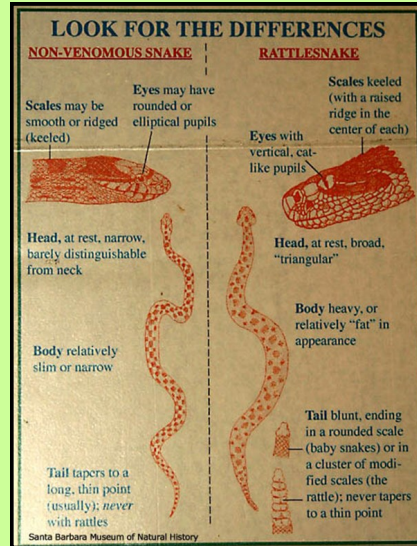
Species Highlight: Sneaky Snakes



Do you know how to tell the difference between a venomous snake and a non-venomous snake? If you plan on doing any hiking this fall, it might be a good time to learn so you can keep yourself, and others around you, safe. Did you know that there are seven species of rattlesnakes in California? Or that rattlesnakes are the only type of venomous snake in the state? There's only one species of rattlesnake that can be found out at Big T, the Southern Pacific rattlesnake. Some characteristics of rattlesnakes include bulky, triangular heads, thick or stocky bodies, eyes with slit pupils (much like a cat), and, of course...a rattle! Venomous snakes have obviously triangular-shaped (also described as heart-shaped) heads because they have venom glands located just behind their eyes that create an extra "lump" on either side of their head.

Species of non-venomous snakes that can be found at Big T include gopher snakes, California kingsnake, racers, and garter snakes. Characteristics of non-venomous snakes include narrow heads, thin bodies, eyes with rounded pupils, and tails that taper to a point.

Regardless of whether or not you think a snake is venomous, it's always a good idea to keep a safe distance. Some snakes have toxins in their saliva that are deadly to prey and can cause an unpleasant reaction in humans, but are not deadly. It is also important to never kill a snake just because you are afraid



of it or think it might be venomous. Trying to kill a rattlesnake could increase the risk of being bitten, so its best to leave them alone whenever possible. All snakes (venomous and non-venomous) play a vital role in ecosystems by keeping rodent and other small animal populations in check and removing them

from an area can negatively impact the balance of the ecosystem. Furthermore, native snake species (and other wildlife species) are protected under the California Fish and Game Code.

Whenever hiking through areas where rattlesnakes could potentially occur, be cautious! Stay on the trails and watch where you, your dog, or your horse step, especially when stepping over rocks or fallen logs. If you happen to be bitten by a rattlesnake, try to remain calm and seek medical attention immediately.

Upper Left-Gopher Snake, Lower Left-Southern Pacific rattlesnake. Photo Credit: Photo by Chris Brown/U.S. Geological Survey. Right- MyNaturePlace.org

The Land Before Big T



Aggregate mine. Photo Credit: LA Public Library

Do you know what Big T was before it was a Mitigation Area?

Much of the land within the Big Tujunga Wash Watershed was mined for aggregates, such as sand and gravel (see the April 2014 newsletter for more information on the watershed). Aggregates are a key component of concrete and are the most mined material in the world! Mining in the area around Big T Wash began as far back as 1900 and continues today in limited areas.

Many of the old mining pits in the area have been converted into artificial ponds, including the nearby Hansen Lake and our own Tujunga Ponds! You can also see evidence of a mining facility near the Cottonwood Gate off of Wentworth Street. The foundations of several buildings are still present as well as an old track for mining carts that leads to the edge of a pit where

aggregates were hauled up. The track is located in the northwestern corner of the concrete area, where one of the brown-headed cowbird traps is normally set up. Stop by and check it out sometime!

LACDPW acquired the Big T Mitigation Area in the late 1990s and has since conducted activities to restore and enhance habitat impacted by past mining activities.

Want to see what Big T looked like as far back as 1954? Check out www.historicaerials.com. Be sure to put in the latitude and longitude coordinates for Big T as: 34.2656202291735, -118.34553057309.



View of one of the Tujunga Ponds as it looks today. These artificial ponds started as mining pits.

Big Tujunga Word Scramble



Kid's Corner

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

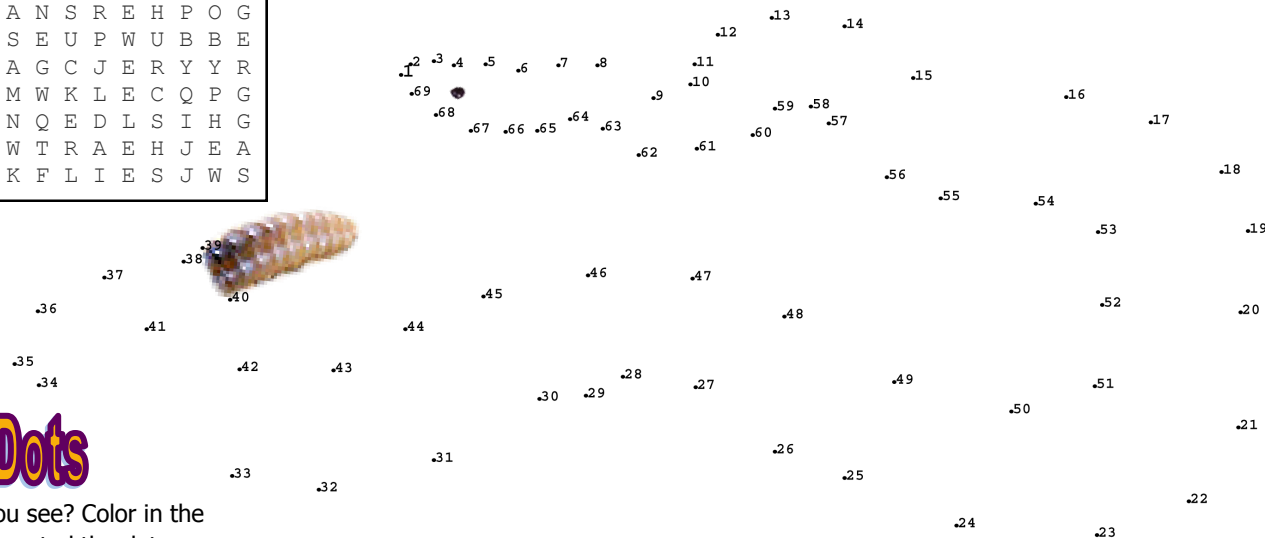
Search for these words used throughout the newsletter in the box to the left

AGGREGATES
BIG TUJUNGA
BLACK FLIES

GOPHER SNAKE
GRAVEL
HABITAT

HEARTWORM
INVASIVE SPECIES
LYME DISEASE

BONUS: SANTA ANA SUCKER



Connect the Dots

What kind of animal do you see? Color in the animal after you have connected the dots.

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: www.dpw.lacounty.gov/wrd/projects/BTWMA.



Emergencies? Incidents? Questions?

- **CALL 911 TO REPORT ANY EMERGENCY SUCH AS FIRE OR ACCIDENT**
- To report minor incidents or regulation infractions contact the Sheriff's Department at 1-800-834-0064. (Please **DO NOT** use 911.)
- Do not attempt to enforce regulations yourself; please allow law enforcement 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:

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