

Big T Wash Line

April 2014



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



Announcements

The Big T 2013 Annual Report is now available!

LACDPW implements several environmental programs to protect the unique plants and animals that call Big T home. The environmental programs conducted at Big T from January to December 2013 are summarized in the 2013 Annual Report which is now available on our website at:



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

Brown-headed Cowbird Trapping

The annual brown-headed cowbird trapping program will be going on from April 1 through June 30. A biologist checks the traps daily and releases any native birds back into the Mitigation Area, so don't worry about the birds and let the traps be. If you see anyone vandalizing the traps, please immediately contact LACDPW at (626) 458-6139.



Someone's Swimming In The Ponds!

Don't be alarmed if you see some of our aquatic biologists in the waterways at Big T. They are working to remove many of the exotic aquatic species that make their way into Big T, such as largemouth bass, green sunfish, common carp, and red-eared slider. As you know, the native fish species thrive from the removal of these exotic fish species.

For the birds...



The breeding season for most birds has begun so make sure to save all of your tree trimming activities for the fall!

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 do that hummingbird in your hibiscus a favor and wait until September or later.

Be Sure To Stop And Say ¡Hola! To Our Bilingual Biologists This Summer!

Bilingual biologists will be visiting Big T on weekends to talk with people about all things related to Big T. They'll be going over important topics including the special habitats and wildlife present at Big T as well as the approved and prohibited recreational activities at the site. The biologists are happy to talk with you and answer any biology questions you may have about the area.



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



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.

Are You Thirsty? Because Big T Sure Is!



As the drought in California continues you may ask: What about Big T? What will happen to our friendly neighborhood recreation area?

Many plant species, particularly those found in arid areas, are referred to as "drought

tolerant", meaning they are adapted to periods of very little or no water. There are many of these plants in the upland habitat located in the northern part of Big T. Other plants, however, are not as well adapted and will not do well in the coming months if we don't get more rainfall. In order for plants to convert sunlight into energy, in the process called photosynthesis, they need water. If plants don't get enough water they can't grow very much, some might not produce flowers or seeds, and many plants could die. Some annuals (plants which die each year after producing seeds) might not grow at all due to the lack of water. Invasive and non-native plant species take advantage of the fact that there are fewer native plants to compete with and can overrun Big T and other natural areas.

With fewer or less dense vegetation for animals to hide their nests or young in, many can be preyed upon by animals such as coyotes, hawks, and snakes. Animals that rely on the native plants at Big T for food will have a hard time finding enough food to keep themselves healthy and will give birth to fewer young or might not even have babies at all in years of intense

drought. Also be aware that animals might start entering more urban areas, like your neighborhood, in search of food and water because they aren't finding enough in their natural habitats. If you see an animal in your backyard that doesn't belong there, like a bear, don't panic! Go inside and call your local animal control center.

The last thing to be aware of during this drought is that the increased levels of dead or dried plants and low levels of water in the soil could be just the right recipe for a wildfire to run rampant. For more information on wildfires check out the September 2013 edition of the Big T Wash Line.

What can you do? Help out at home by reducing water usage – water your lawn less and plant drought-tolerant native plants instead of water-guzzling, non-native plants. To ensure that you and your home are safe from wildfires, be sure to clear any dry fire-inducing vegetation around your home. Help out at Big T by staying on designated trails so all of the plants at Big T get a chance to grow. Also, make sure to report any wildfires or campfires within Big T. Call 911 in an emergency or, for minor infractions, call the LA County Sheriff's Department at 1-800-834-0064. 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.

Big T might look a bit different this year and in the years to come. But don't worry! This is only temporary and as soon as we see some rain Big T will come back looking as good as new!



From Snow To The City, Where Does The Water Come From?

Do you know where the water at Big T comes from? Sure, it comes from the Big Tujunga Wash, Haines Canyon Creek, and the Tujunga Ponds, but where does it really come from before getting to Big T?

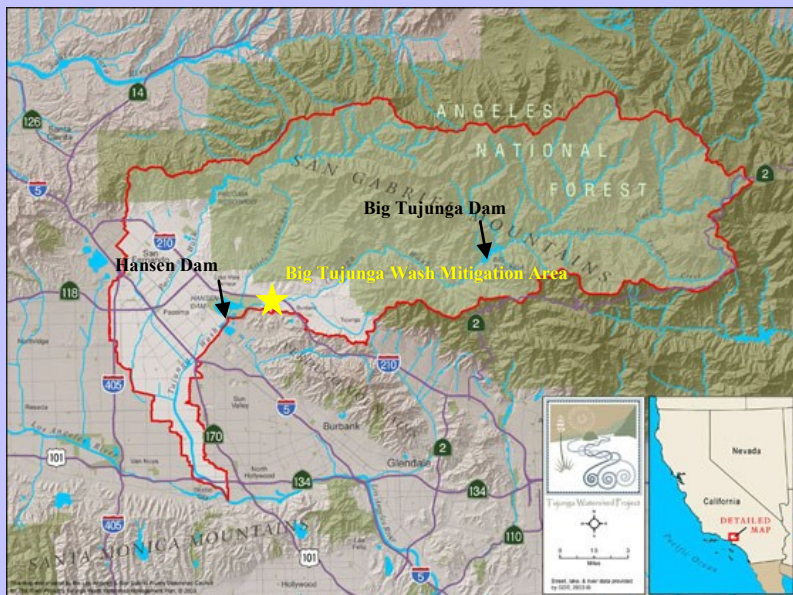
The Big Tujunga Wash begins as rainfall runoff and snowmelt in the San Gabriel Mountains and collects into Big Tujunga

Creek. From there, it flows through the Big Tujunga Dam, into the San Gabriel Valley, and into Big T!

Below the dam, Big Tujunga Creek changes its name to Big Tujunga Wash. It is called a "wash" because it is normally dry or at very low levels most of the year and only carries large amounts of water after heavy rains. The City of LA owns 100% of the water that flows down the Big Tujunga Creek and uses it for drinking water. In order to maximize water conservation, the Big Tujunga Dam regulates the amount of water released to Big T. Big T also gets water from Haines Canyon Creek and the Tujunga Ponds which are fueled by groundwater and runoff from neighboring areas.

After leaving Big T the Big Tujunga Wash meets up with Little Tujunga Wash and Haines Canyon Creek. The wash then flows into Hansen Dam and eventually ends up in the Los Angeles River.

This interconnected system of flowing water in a specific area is called a watershed. Now, when you see water anywhere at Big T, you can imagine its origin and the long trip it made to get to the site! But don't forget, this water will later be used as drinking water so be sure to keep the waterways clean and free of pollutants!



Species Highlight: Dragonflies



Male Red Rock Skimmer

Dragonflies are beautiful insects generally characterized by their very large eyes, elongated bodies, and flat transparent wings. They are commonly found around lakes, ponds, streams, wetlands, and even backyard pools. Dragonflies are usually found around bodies of water because most of them lay their eggs in fresh water, or in the plants found near fresh water. These eggs then hatch into larvae, known as nymphs, and continue to live and molt several times underwater. During their final stage as nymphs, dragonflies wait in shallow water until they can emerge onto dry land to morph into flies.

Dragonflies are carnivorous and normally eat other small insects. They are very important because they can control pesky and harmful insect species such as mosquitos. There are many different types and species of dragonflies. Some are easy to identify while others need to be caught and thoroughly analyzed in order to identify them. Different types of dragonflies have specific habitat needs and flight periods.

The Red Rock Skimmer is a fairly common dragonfly that can be found in rocky streambeds such as Haines Canyon Creek at Big T. The Red Rock Skimmer's flight period ranges from April to September. The males have a rusty orange color body with the same orange color found on the

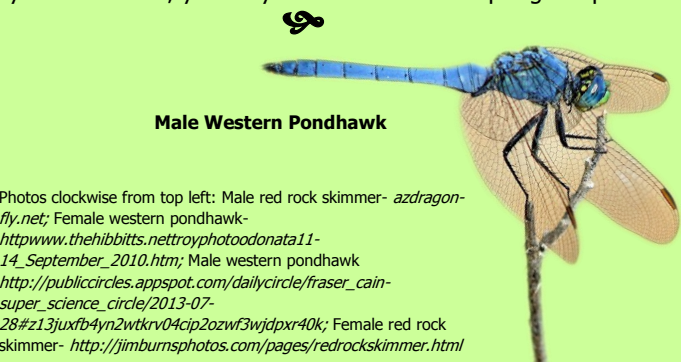


Female Red Rock Skimmer

inner wings. The females have grey/brown bodies with intricate designs and no color on their wings. They are about 2 inches in size, with a wingspan of about 3.5 inches.

You may come across a Western Pondhawk at the Tujunga Ponds. These dragonflies usually perch low on the ground or on floating vegetation near ponds or pools in creeks. A male Western Pondhawk is bright blue in color with a green face. The female is an emerald green color, with a thin dark line down the center of her body. Both the male and female have transparent wings. These dragonflies are about 1.5 inches in length, and have a wingspan of about 2.5 inches.

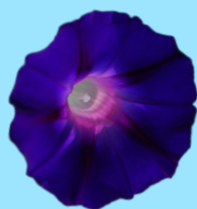
Keep an eye out for these beautiful insects while enjoying the nature at Big T. Their large compound eyes make it so that dragonflies can see in many different directions at once, which make them very sensitive to movement. If you are observing a dragonfly, try to be very still and approach it from behind. If you are careful, you may even be able to snap a great photo!



Male Western Pondhawk

Photos clockwise from top left: Male red rock skimmer- [azdragonfly.net/](http://www.azdragonfly.net/); Female western pondhawk- http://www.thehibbits.net/troyphoto/odonata11-14_September_2010.htm; Male western pondhawk http://publiccircles.appspot.com/dailycircle/fraser_cain-super_science_circle/2013-07-28#z13juxfb4yn2wtkrv04cip2ozwf3wjdp40k; Female red rock skimmer- <http://jimburnsphotos.com/pages/redrockskimmer.html>

Mosey On Over...And Use The New Equestrian Crossings!



If you frequent Big T, you might have noticed the new equestrian crossing signs and flashing lights at Wheatland Avenue, Mary Bell, and Christy Drive. What a great improvement for equestrian safety! However, the installation of these lights can possibly provide a false sense of security. These signs were put up for your protection but please don't forget to continue to be vigilant and pay attention when you use the crossings! Motorists can't always see the lights and some don't stop even if they can see the lights. Don't assume they will stop just because of the signs and flashing lights! The lights were put up by Equestrian



Trails, Inc. (one of the local equestrian groups) and aren't enforceable by law enforcement. Always be sure to look before crossing (even if the lights are flashing). Also, when traveling in a group, make sure multiple people press the "walk" button to keep the lights going. The last person in the group should always press the button before they cross. If you see that the signs or lights have become blocked by overgrown vegetation on the Big T side of the street, please call or email LACDPW so we can keep the lights clear for your safety.



Big Tujunga Crossword

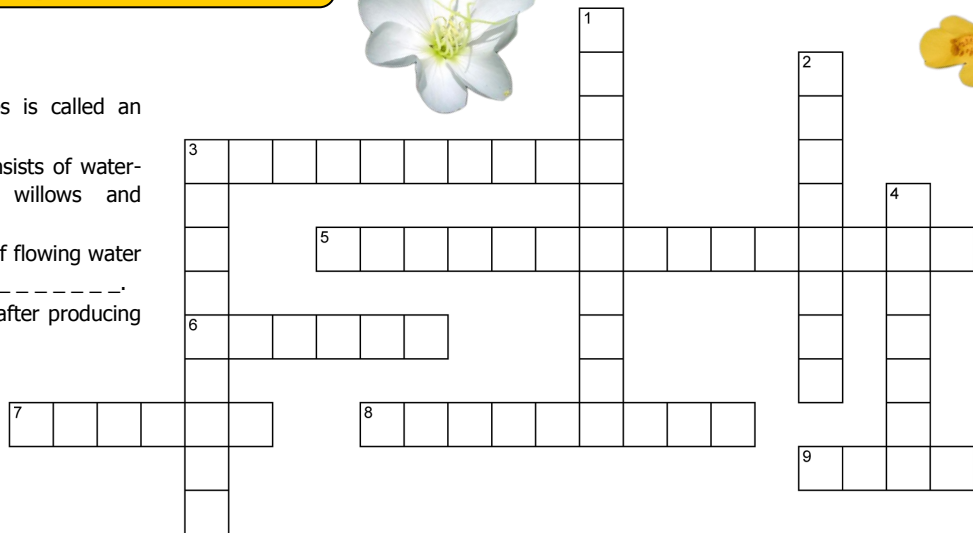


Kid's Corner



DOWN

- 1) A person who rides horses is called an _____.
- 2) _____ habitat consists of water-loving vegetation such as willows and cottonwoods.
- 3) The interconnected system of flowing water in a specific area is called a _____.
- 4) Plants which die each year after producing seeds are called _____.



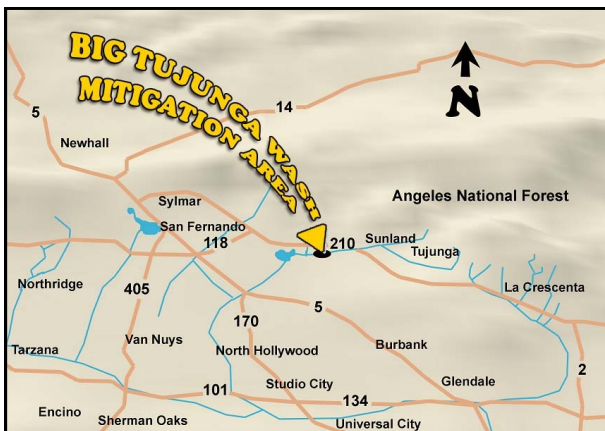
ACROSS

- 3) _____ can be reduced by watering your lawn less and planting drought resistant native plants instead of water-guzzling non-native plants.
- 5) _____ plants are plants that have adapted to periods of very little to no water.
- 6) The Big Tujunga Wash begins as _____ from snow and rain in the San Gabriel Mountains.
- 7) Dragonfly larvae is also known as _____.
- 8) This is an insect with very large eyes, elongated bodies, and flat transparent wings.
- 9) A _____ is normally dry or at very low levels most of the year and only carries large amounts of water after heavy rains.



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:

Grace Yu, Water Resources Division
County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works
900 S. Fremont Avenue
Alhambra, CA 91803
Email: BTWMA@dpw.lacounty.gov
Phone: (626) 458-6139



Answers to crossword: (1) equestrian; (2) watershed; (3) water usage; (4) dragonfly; (5) nymphs; (6) wash; (7) runoff; (8) dragonfly; (9) annuals

Answers to crossword: