

Big T Wash Line

April 2017



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



Announcements

Report Any Emergencies! If you see something suspicious occurring in the Mitigation Area, call the LA Sheriff's Department dispatch immediately to report it. **LA Sheriff's Department Dispatch: 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.

Wait 'Till Fall to Trim Those Trees! — The bird breeding season has begun so make sure to save all of your tree trimming activities for the fall! Most bird species are protected under 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 to trim your trees and shrubs.



Brown-headed cowbirds — The trapping program for cowbirds has begun again. The cowbirds lay their eggs in nests of native birds but never provide care in raising young. In order to eliminate cowbird nest parasitism, traps will be placed in and around Big T again in 2017. These traps contain food, water, and shade. Don't worry about the other species that might get in because a biologist checks the traps daily and releases the non-target birds! Traps will be in Big T from April

to June. Remember to let the traps be!

Biting Bugs! — Getting mosquito bites at Big T? Report mosquito infestations to Vector Control at www.glacvcd.org/Contact/Service-Request.aspx. Mosquitoes can carry deadly diseases such as West Nile Virus. 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.



Fires at Big T — As you know, fire danger is a serious concern. Remember, fires of any kind, including campfires and BBQs, are not permitted within Big T. **If you ever see a fire call 911.** Please also email us at BTWMA@dpw.lacounty.gov.

Swimming Not Allowed at Big T — Many water recreationists have been seen at Big T. As you know, Big T is a wildlife sanctuary and home to native wildlife that can be harmed by swimmers! In order to preserve the sensitive wildlife and habitats, swimming and wading in the ponds and Haines Creek is prohibited. Local swimming options are available less than 10 miles from Big T:



Hansen Dam Aquatic Center at 11798 Foothill Blvd. Lake View Terrace, CA 91342. Call: (818) 899-3779

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



The Importance of Pollinators

The flowers are blooming and they are gorgeous this year! With all the rain that California experienced this year, super-blooms are popping up all over the state! While you smell the roses, keep an eye out for all the pollinators who are also taking advantage of the flowers! What is a pollinator you ask? A pollinator is any animal or insect that assists a plant with reproduction. Plants reproduce when the pollen from one flower is transferred to another flower.



Skipper moth visiting a thistle flower at Big T

The plant then turns the mixed pollen into a seed that will eventually fall to the ground, and grow into a new plant. Flowers encourage pollinators to visit them by producing nectar. When an animal or insect enters the flower to drink the nectar, they end up rubbing against the flower and picking up pollen on their bodies. Then, when they visit another flower, some of that pollen falls off, and new pollen gets picked up.



Cabbage white butterfly visiting a black sage flower at Big T



You already know that bees and butterflies are great

pollinators, but other insects, birds, and even bats can also act as pollinators. You might be surprised to learn that ants can be pollinators too! Hummingbirds are famous for drinking nectar from flowers, and will even visit backyard nectar feeders. There are some flowers that open only at night, which are pollinated by bats, moths and beetles.



Bumblebee visiting a native lilac shrub at Big T

So why are pollinators important? Without pollinators to help move pollen from plant to plant, plants would have a really difficult time reproducing. All your favorite fruits and vegetables, not to mention the beautiful flowers themselves, can only exist if critters like bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, bats and other pollinators help them out! A lot of pollinators seem to be having a difficult time these days due to pesticides, herbicides, and other types of environmental stressors. You can help them out by planting native flowers in your yard to give them some good natural food sources. Find out what plants are native to your area by going to the California Native Plant Society website below. And don't forget to thank a pollinator the next time you enjoy a juicy strawberry, or stop to enjoy those beautiful flowers on the hillside!

<http://www.cnps.org/cnps/grownative/lists.php>



2016 Trail Cleanup Day

The 10th Annual Big Tujunga Wash Mitigation Area Trail Cleanup Day was held on October 15, 2016 and had a great turnout! Twenty-four volunteers donated their time on a Saturday morning to help clean up Big T. Local community volunteers, ECORP's biologists, and LACDPW staff enjoyed beautiful weather as they removed trash from the scenic Mitigation Area.



ECORP biologist Taylor Dee removing trash from Haines Canyon Creek

The focus of the event was trash removal in the riparian, creek, and pond areas which typically see the highest volume of recreational users at Big T. ECORP's biologists attended the event to provide guidance on the sensitive habitats, to help out with cleanup activities,

and to ensure the safety and protection of the sensitive species at Big T. A large volume of trash was removed from deeper parts of Haines Creek thanks to ECORP's Taylor Dee who threw on her waders and ventured fearlessly into the creek. Nearly 20 large trash bags of garbage were removed from Big T. Many large items were also removed from along the trails, including a shopping cart, a suitcase, and part of a picket fence! A huge

thank you goes out to our hard-working volunteers – it's your dedication and love for Big T that help to keep it a beautiful place for all. The 2016 Trail Cleanup Day was a huge success and left Big T clean and safe for recreational visitors and wildlife alike!

Thanks to all that participated in this important effort!



2016 Trail Clean-Up Crew standing proudly by their haul!

The next Annual Trail Cleanup Day will take place in the fall of 2017. We anticipate it will be scheduled in October. Please look for the next Trail Cleanup

Day event announcement in the Fall 2017 newsletter or on our website: <http://www.ladpw.org/wrd/facilities>.

Hope you can join us in 2017! Please bring your friends and family because everyone is welcome! Help us keep Big T beautiful!

Big T Night Life – Who Comes Out after Dark?

While the sun is up and many animals are active, others are waiting for night to fall before venturing out! The animals that are most active at night are called nocturnal. Many types of animals are considered nocturnal including most spiders and many amphibians, reptiles, and mammals. While we humans are biologically programmed to be active during the day, nocturnal animals find advantages to being active at night! Being nocturnal allows critters to be out and about when temperatures are cooler and nocturnal prey are active, and the low light conditions allow these wildlife species to travel under the cover of darkness to help them hunt and forage undetected.



Millipede crawling across the trail at Big T

Without sunlight to guide the way, navigating through the environment, avoiding predators, and finding food can be challenging! But nocturnal critters have got it figured out with some special adaptations to help them move through their sunless world. Nocturnal animals often have one or more of the following adaptations: modified vision to help see in the dark, enhanced hearing to help locate prey, super senses of smell used for foraging and finding mates, and some



Spider at Big T repairing its web for a night of hunting

nocturnal mammals, like bats, use echolocation to hunt and maneuver their way around.

There are lots of nocturnal critters that can be found roaming through Big T after dark. These include various invertebrates such as beetles, millipedes, and spiders. Nocturnal creepy-crawlers can benefit from the cooler temperatures and the absence of many daytime predators like various birds and reptiles. Additionally, the spiders at Big T can take advantage of the evening calm to repair



Western toad found at Big T

webs that may have been damaged during the day and can find nocturnal hunting more successful as insect prey are more active and struggle to see the spiders' webs at night.

Other nocturnal animals found at Big T include many amphibian species like the western toad and Baja California tree frog. Being nocturnal is advantageous for amphibians because it allows them to avoid the risk of drying out their delicate moist skin during the day when the sun is out and temperatures are typically hotter. Being nocturnal also gives frogs and toads the

opportunity to hunt the numerous flying invertebrates that come out at night!



Large ears and long snout of the coyote. Photo: USFWS

opossums, bobcats, woodrats, and bats are all known to call Big T home.

Even some birds are nocturnal! Nocturnal bird predators such as the Great Horned Owl hunt at night and prey on nocturnal small mammals and amphibians like mice and frogs. Great Horned Owls are amazing examples of well-adapted nighttime predators because their big eyes and large pupils provide them with exceptional vision in the dark. These owls also have excellent hearing which allows them to pinpoint scurrying prey with startling accuracy, another advantage in a dark environment! The hooting calls of the Great Horned Owl are often heard as the sun begins to set on Big T!



Large eyes of the Great Horned Owl. Photo: Alan Schmierer

While the full moon may be beautiful and make it easier for humans to see and move around in the dark at night, it actually can present a disadvantage to nocturnal animals! The bright light given off by the full moon makes both predators and prey easier to see at night. This can result in prey animals skipping their daily meals and avoid foraging for the night so they can hide out from prowling predators!

Nocturnal animals are rarely spotted during the day and can even be hard to find at night! But you can sometimes find evidence of their presence through the tracks they leave behind. Many of these creatures of the night leave behind tracks as they walk or evidence of their evening meals. Keep your eyes open when crossing trails throughout Big T, you may see a coyote's paw print or an owl pellet from dinner the night before!



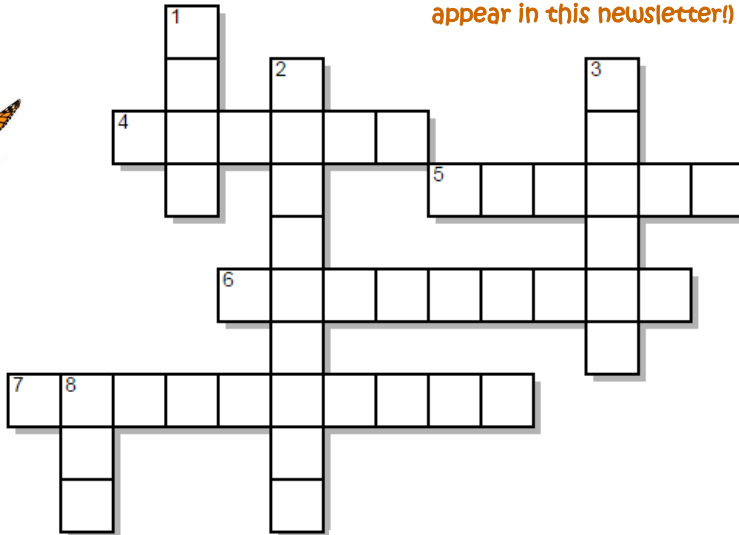
Big Tujunga Word Search & Maze



Kid's Corner!

Can you solve the crossword? (Hint: all the words appear in this newsletter!)

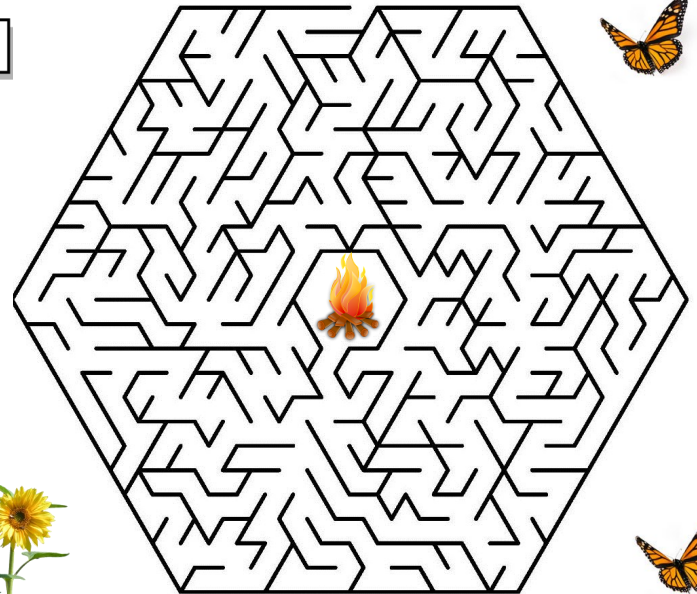
Find your way through the maze and put out the fire danger!



DOWN

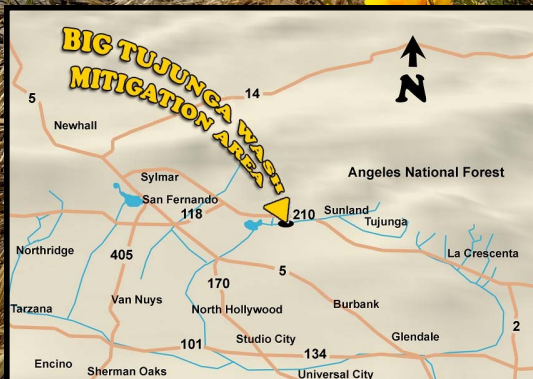
ACROSS

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 Object that lights up the night | 4 Nocturnal canine |
| 2 Active at night | 5 Paths through Big T |
| 3 Nocturnal web builder | 6 Pollinator that buzzes |
| 8 Nocturnal hunting bird | 7 Animal that helps plants reproduce |



Where is the Big T Mitigation Area?

Downstream of Big Tujunga Canyon, right in Lake View Terrace and 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:

Sara Samaan, Water Resources Division
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 Alhambra, CA 91803
 Email: BTWMA@dpw.lacounty.gov
 Phone: (626) 458-6327