

Are we a part of the sixth extinction? . . . "every scrap of biological diversity is priceless to be learned and cherished, and never to be surrendered without a struggle." E.O. Wilson, The Diversity of Life

Where help is most urgently needed -

“Wetlands are among the most productive ecosystems on earth—an immense variety of microbes, plants, insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds, fish, and mammals need wetlands for part or all of their lifecycle.



Barn Owl



Heron



Dragonfly



Osprey with Fish



Seasonal Wetlands



Fox Pup

Habitat destruction . . .

. . . and degradation are among our most serious environmental crises, causing species extinction and threatening many wildlife populations.

Habitat destruction . . .



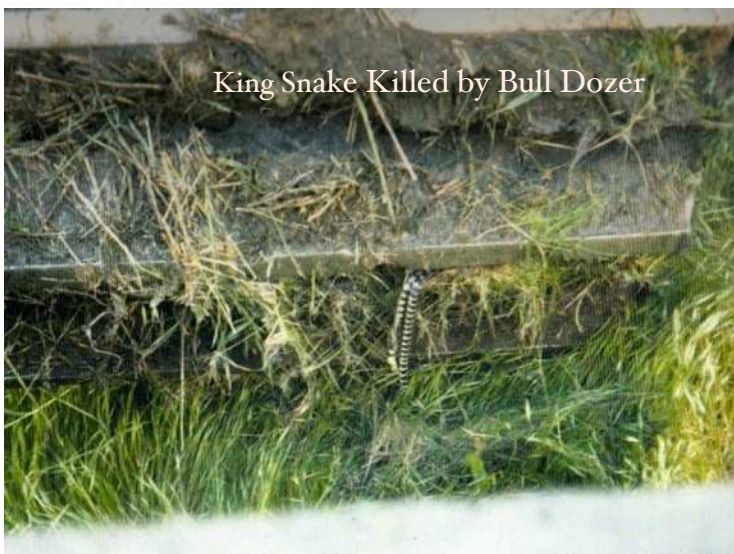
Coyote Struck by Car



California Tree Frog



Bull dozed Phase 2



King Snake Killed by Bull Dozer



King Snake



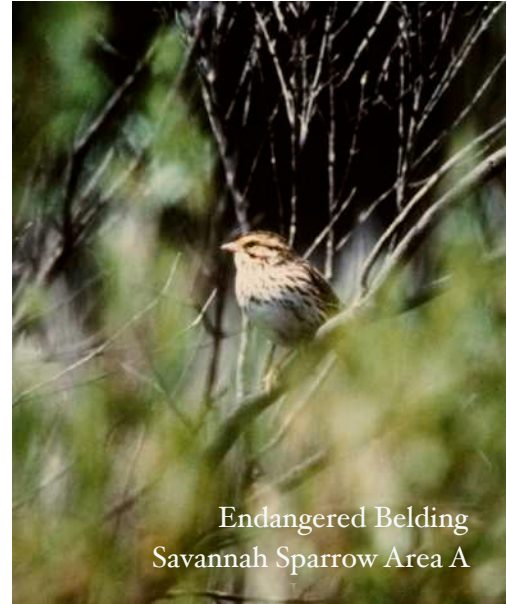
Kingfisher



Phase 2 Prior to Bull Dozers

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency . . .

more than one-third of the United States' threatened and endangered species live only in wetlands, and nearly half use wetlands at some point in their lives. Wetlands benefit both freshwater and marine fisheries by providing spawning and rearing habitats and food supply.



Endangered Belding Savannah Sparrow Area A



Roundtrays - Nursery Area A



Killifish

Waterfowl migrating along the Pacific Flyway depend on California wetlands for critical wintering habitat. Wetlands also serve vital hydrological functions, buffering wave erosion, reducing flooding by storing large volumes of water, and filtering toxic run-off.



In California, population growth and associated coastal development have caused the loss of over 90% of our wetlands.



Seasonal flooding in Area A

Increasing development pressure has collided with the last remaining wetland habitat and deciding what is a wetland and what is not has become a complex problem.

In San Francisco, a state official suggests, 'If the developer across the table has a lawyer sitting next to him, then it's a wetland. Otherwise, he wouldn't have his lawyer with him.' ”



Saltwater Inlet Nursery Area A



Great Blue Herons Area A

Otherwise, he wouldn't have his lawyer with him.' ”

Peter Steinhart
TRACKS IN
THE SKY

Biological diversity . . .

is key for the sustainability of an ecosystem’s survival and wetland ecological survival is dependent upon space...is it large enough to have keystone species that are at or near the top of the food chain? **Wetlands are fragile and depend upon upland support for their sustainability.**



Salamander



Coyote



Black Tailed Jack Rabbit

“The immense diversity of the insects and flowering plants combined is no accident.

So important are insects and other land-dwelling arthropods that if all were to disappear, humanity probably could not last more than a few months. Most of the amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals would crash to extinction about the same time.” E.O. Wilson, *The Diversity of Life*



Nesting Killdeer



Butterfly



Lizard



Fox



Burrowing Owl
Rare in coastal
LA region

Area A



Spiderweb

“The hallmark of life is this: a struggle among an immense variety of organisms weighing next to nothing for a vanishingly small amount of energy. Life operates on only 10 percent of the sun’s energy reaching earth’s surface, that portion fixed by the photosynthesis of green plants. The free energy is then sharply discounted as it passes through the food webs from one organism to the next: very roughly 10 percent passes to the caterpillars and other herbivores that eat the plants and bacteria, 10 percent of that (or 1 percent of the

original) to the spiders and other low-level carnivores that eat the herbivores, 10 percent of the residue to the warblers and other middle-level carnivores that eat the low-level carnivores, and so on upward to the top carnivores, which are consumed by no one except parasites and scavengers. Top carnivores, including eagles, tigers, and great white sharks, are predestined by their perch at the apex of the food



Butterfly on Mustard

web to be big in size and sparse in numbers. They live on such a small portion of life’s available energy as always to skirt the edge of extinction, and they are the first to suffer when the ecosystem around them



Heron holding Vole



Lark



Alligator Lizard

starts to erode.”

The Fundamental Unit,
E.O. Wilson-The Diversity of Life

What action have we taken within the local community and our greater statewide community to foster pride in our natural assets and promote action to protect these delicate ecosystems?

Together we have:

Car struck

- created new protected areas of wetland and adjacent upland support.
- We have reduced illegal and wasteful destruction of habitat- providing larger habitat for those rare species and those on the brink of extinction – providing a safe home for their continued existence and our continued ability to co-exist and LEARN.

“It has been my experience that bringing children out to the wetlands is a very positive experience for them, especially for children that live in the inner city. In the past, I have taken “at risk” youth out there through the California Conservation Corp. to do clean-ups along roads surrounding the wetlands. At first they seemed bored, but when we took a break and I showed them pictures of the birds, reptiles and mammals out there, they got very excited and started pointing out the living plants and birds to me. One child asked for a photo of the burrowing owl so he could write his congressman to save its habitat.”

Mary K. Knight- Social Worker and environmental activist.



Lizard (Whiptail?)



Garter Snake



Avocet



Pacific Rattle Snake



Great Horned Owl

... “ tension
can doom
a
change
effort---
but, if it is
overcome,



Harrier hawk flying over Area A

... change can come quickly.”

Chip & Dan Heath, Made to Stick



Ballona Creek (Concreted Channel)

Historic Ballona Wetlands photo looking east to the Baldwin Hills

Since even before the late 1980's the public has been keenly devoted to the protection and restoration of Ballona Wetlands, here in Los Angeles. Hundreds of visionary volunteers have given up blocks of their lifetimes to work in the most extraordinary David and Goliath battle defending a steadfast goal to protect and preserve for all of America --a vanishing peace and wonderment found in this remnant, endangered [playa](#) ecosystem.

The public's lawsuits have been lost and won. In 2003, **taxpayers** paid out \$139 million to literally buy back from the developer's ongoing destruction of Ballona- a portion of the remaining historic Ballona Wetlands. \$25 million in taxpayer approved bonds were set aside for restoration activities upon Ballona. The **message of preservation from the citizens** of California has always been clear and pure.

Today, we stand at another crossroad in the preservation of Ballona.

When Grassroots Coalition first became involved both in saving Ballona habitat and working towards full disclosure of health and safety issues, 90 per cent of California's wetlands had already been destroyed. Today, as the letters fall upon this page, more is being staged for wipe out--only for the short term financial profit of a few... and it must stop.

“On Friday, March 26 (2010), the Los Angeles City Council sweetened Goldman Sachs' pot—substantially. In a vote of 12 to 2, with Westside council members Bill Rosendahl and Paul Koretz opposed, the council handed the big firm significant additional development rights on 111 acres of property it co-owns at Playa Vista. The vote allows Playa Vista's final build-out phase to dispense with land-use rules that permitted just 100,000 square feet of commercial space---about the size of a single Costco warehouse—to allow about 2.6 million square feet of



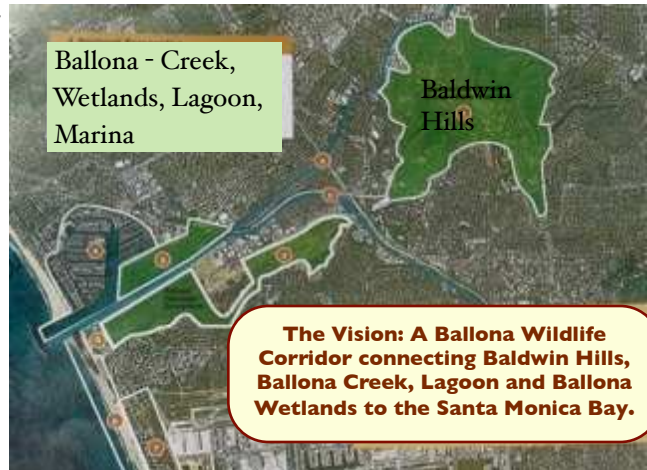
Herons in Area A

luxury housing, a smattering of senior housing and about 341,000 square feet of retail, offices and public buildings—significantly more square footage than is contained in Chicago’s 92- story Trump International Hotel and Tower.” Tibby Rottman LA Weekly.

This massive giveaway provides for land -- financially valued at about \$5 million, to jump to \$150 million or more with the new development rights. At \$5 million - with a willing seller, and a little time - the land could instead be publicly acquired and added to the length of Ballona to help connect this wildlife corridor to the Baldwin Hills- just to the east.



Historic Photo: Ballona Wetlands pre-Marina



The Vision: A Ballona Wildlife Corridor connecting Baldwin Hills, Ballona Creek, Lagoon and Ballona Wetlands to the Santa Monica Bay.

“Before the vote, Koretz asked about mitigation being undertaken to deal with the property’s methane seepage issues, and wanted to know whether simple extra measures could be taken to protect the area’s extensive wildlife from being harmed by Playa Vista traffic. ‘I couldn’t get a straightforward, thoughtful answer,’ he says, ‘because it was so much of a done deal. They knew they had the votes.’” Tibby Rottman LA Weekly.



Playa Vista’s “wildlife crossing” under Lincoln Boulevard . . .



. . . part of the riparian corridor

WHAT IS A DONE DEAL? Wall Street, Union Bosses, Corporate Lobbying and Gaming with a staggering and never ending cash flow from campaign contributions, behests and favors to politicians (both parties), corporations and unscrupulous individuals.

What can a done deal provide? Lax to non-existent regulatory oversight, lack of transparency, no accountability, no disclosure and no follow through or implementation of required mitigation resulting in extreme danger. The BIG DODGE -- taxpayers aren’t just getting the short end of the stick, they simply don’t have any part of the stick.

The world is suffering...

As oil is classified by the Environmental “Protection” Agencies as “non hazardous” -- BP laborers in the new catastrophic Gulf oil spew are garbed in white, head to toe in hazardous materials suits.

HOW TO UNDO A POLITICAL “DONE DEAL”.
The public continues to fight for full disclosure, accountability and adherence to the law . . .

Since the Playa Vista Phase II lawsuit was won in Appellate Court, and the City was ordered to redo the Environmental Impact Report-- the decisions made by the Los Angeles City Council both approving the Phase II EIR for Playa Vista and approving the up-zoning, will now go back to the Superior Court for its determination as to compliance. The City and Playa Capital LLC will be challenged on that compliance by the various grassroots organizations that are party to the lawsuit and should environmental plaintiffs fail at the Superior Court level, they will, in all likelihood take the challenge back to the higher courts.



Kite (hawk) Hovering



Snowy Egret

The Playa Vista Phase I California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) lawsuit is already in process again at the Appellate Court level after having been won in 2005 and now has been refiled to challenge the City's failure to adhere to the 2005 court orders.



Finches

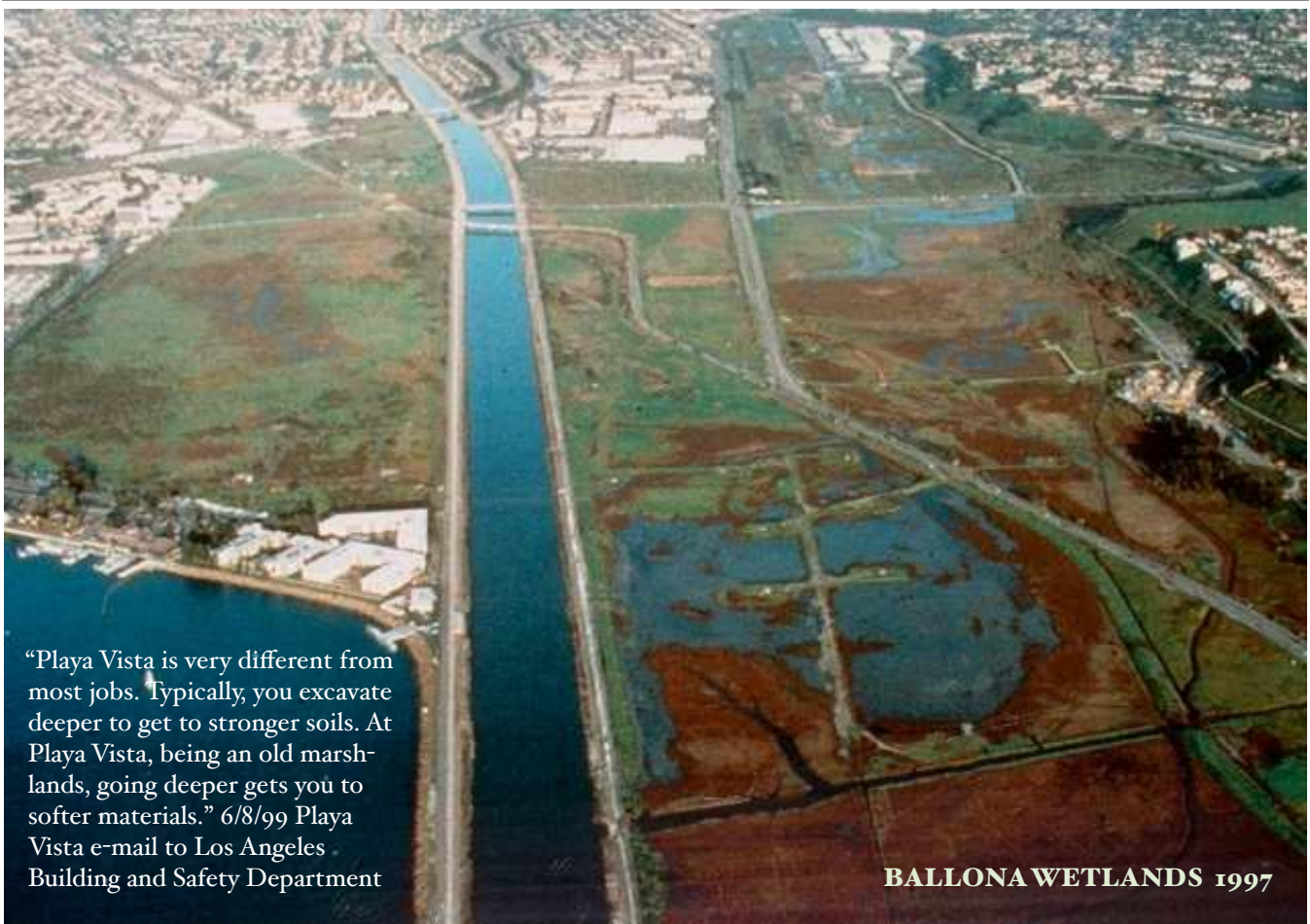
Meanwhile, Playa Vista's neighbor, The Southern California Gas Company (SEMPRA owned), is party to a Proposition 65 lawsuit for its alleged contamination of the groundwater due to oil wells acting as conduits for gas migration. (Proposition 65 chemicals are chemicals that can cause cancer and/ or birth defects.)

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has oversight of the SOCALGAS operations. A November 2004 CPUC Safety Branch Report, the result of another litigation by the public, warns that the gases migrating throughout Playa Vista may be caused by the SOCALGAS operations. A recent Settlement Agreement that resulted in SOCALGAS having to perform testing for gas migration problems and disclosure to the public has yet to be employed.



Pickle weed

Pollywogs



In 2003, taxpayers shelled out \$139 million to buy back a portion of Ballona. Assemblyman Nakano's AB 859-Prop. 12 set aside an additional \$25 million taxpayer dollars for restoration of Ballona.

Financier Gary Winnick, who rose to fame as CEO of Global Crossing- a global fiber optics company- during its several year enormous rise and fall to bankruptcy, helped orchestrate Playa Capital LLC, the Wall Street team of Playa Vista investors -Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley as well as the Union Pension Funds (ULLICO) investors of Playa Vista at Ballona Wetlands, when the previous development team -Maguire Thomas- was in financial crisis. In 1999-2000, Winnick was lunching regularly with Gov. Gray Davis- as cited in the New Times (newtimesla.com) article by Jill Stewart, "...*setting off speculation that Winnick was trying to persuade Davis that the California state employee pension fund should invest in Global Crossing. Others believed the two had gotten cozy because Winnick wanted Davis to give the Playa Vista development plenty of regulatory slack to be built.*"

[Link](#)

Master of Disaster by Jill Stewart

According to Stewart, "...*during 1999 and 2000, \$145,000 from Global Crossing executives materialized in Davis' campaign coffers. In 1999 Global cochair Lod Cook gave \$45,000 to two committees related to Gray Davis. Corporate giving included a \$100,000 contribution to two big bond issues supported by Davis, to protect the environment and the state's drinking water, both of which were approved by voters.*" What may Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley and ULLICO have contributed to Gray Davis's campaign and the campaign to foster the taxpayers into voting for the water & coastal protection bond money (Prop. 50) which were indeed voted into existence? From this fund came the taxpayer money handed over to Playa Capital LLC as the \$139 million price tag for a portion of Ballona acquired.



Was the price tag fair . . .

considering that during this time frame, LA City's oilfield gas consultant- Exploration Technologies Inc. (ETI) had written a final report that stated no development should occur over the SOCALGAS (SEMPRA) oilfield gas storage operations that are known as Areas A and B of the Ballona -Playa Vista properties. This property cost the public \$139 million. What was the true value of this land that the City's consultant acknowledged as being too dangerous to develop - directly over gas storage operations and, the same land that the City appeared to have capitulated in that thinking-as new City mapping occurred of the Ballona region. The mapping included the gassy zones and added buffer zones similar to mapping for landfills that are also not used for residential and most commercial development.

ETI's final report "Still Workin On It" was withheld by the City, (as cited 3/8/10 Grassroots Coalition, Playa Vista Phase II Environmental Impact Report response to the LA City Council & Phase I lawsuit) when the City stated in response to a Public Record Act (PRA) request, that no such report existed. During this time frame, the City also requested the State Lands Commission (SLC) not give the report to the public after a PRA to SLC had occurred. The SLC later honored its Public Record Request and the ETI Report "Still Workin On It" finally became part of the public record.

(The SLC was engaged in the deal making for yet another Playa Vista parcel known as Area C- a parcel on which the Howard Hughes estate owed inheritance taxes. Under Gray Davis, a swap of the land as parkland to the public occurred for Area C in lieu of the taxes.)

Was it not a reckless use of taxpayer money—to artificially raise the price tag of Areas A and B in order to favor the developers' interests—a give away ? The Prop 50 money could have been used to also acquire Ballona upland support habitat - known as the West Bluffs, for sale by the Catellus Corp. For years, the public had aggressively pursued ownership of the West Bluffs. Unfortunately, that acquisition never came to pass. The bluff top land was destroyed to make way for housing. The bluff face still remains part of Ballona.

Certainly, one thing is sure...the public has worked long and hard to acquire the precious Ballona ecosystem and is still pursuing that goal.



2009
Baby Gray Whale layover
in Marina del Rey

Historically, whales
calved in Ballona's
Lagoons

The Wildlife Corridor. . .

Ballona is the heart of the wildlife corridor that stretches from the inland Baldwin Hills winding along Ballona Creek into the Ballona Wetlands and merging with Ballona Lagoon Marine Preserve and the Santa Monica Bay. The beaches that include the endangered Least Tern sanctuary stretch south to the Palos Verdes peninsula and north to the Santa Monica Mountains parkland. All of these acquired areas exist due to the persistence of like-minded, hard working people who know that we have a responsibility to the earth and the survival of other species. By setting aside these areas we not only provide for human well being but, also provide for economic growth via ecotourism, wetland restoration jobs and educational opportunities.

What will your legacy mean to the Ballona Wetlands?

We need your support . . . to finalize the preservation of this imperiled habitat-- Ballona Wetlands. We need everyone to take a fresh look at what is taking place. This is now a final chance to help the Ballona Wetlands Ecosystem! **Together, we do make a difference.**

Contact Grassroots Coalition, Los Angeles, CA

or visit us for more information and to make a contribution at: GrassrootsCoalition.org

Jeanette Vosburg, Outreach Coordinator, 310-721-3512

Photos of Ballona Wetlands & Wildlife courtesy--

Jonathan Coffin, John Davis, James Garrett, Rob Kinslow, Patricia McPherson

Watch the Peabody Award winning KNBC-TV news broadcasts that can be found on KNBC-TV's website as BURNING QUESTIONS & POWER POLITICS.