

LOS CERRITOS WETLANDS STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM REPORT MAY 2023- AUGUST 2023

Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority

Nature Walks

Raptor Ramble, Heron Hike, Turtle Trek

Each month the LCWLT hosts a land tour that rotates through the Raptor Ramble, Heron Hike, or Turtle Trek. These tours immerse visitors in the unique habitats of Los Cerritos Wetlands and allows them to gain new perspectives on the purpose and functions of these rare environments. Each walk begins at the northeast corner of 1st Street and Pacific Coast Highway in Seal Beach at 8:00 A.M. on the first Saturday of every month. Members of the public are encouraged to attend all three different tours to experience diverse wildlife encounters in the Los Cerritos Wetlands. For more information and to RSVP for land tours/nature walks, please contact Elizabeth Lambe at elizabeth@lcwlandtrust.org

Since April, we have had four of our monthly nature walks. In May, we hosted our Heron Hike; a two-mile hike to an artificial freshwater wetland we like to call Market Place Marsh. Market Place Marsh is surrounded by historical salt marshes that are no longer tidally connected to the San Gabriel River but still host a salt marsh plant community. Due to a remarkably wet winter, the nearby historical salt marshes were filled with water in April. An array of shore birds such as black-necked stilts, marbled godwits, killdeers, and plovers enjoyed these rain-filled, typically dry wetlands. It was a rare treat for our guests to experience a degraded portion of the Los Cerritos Wetlands that is typically dry to be filled with water and therefore look closer to what it may once have been.

The Raptor Ramble was hosted in June and is a great opportunity to explore the Hellman Ranch properties which is the location of the Southern Los Cerritos Wetlands restoration project. This is an informative hike of not only the upcoming restoration project of the area, but also the historical and cultural significance of this southern portion of the Los Cerritos Wetlands. This specific hike had to be rerouted due to safety concerns along a trail that was degraded from the heavy amount of recent rain. In this hike, there is a high chance to see raptors soaring in the sky such as red-tailed and red-shouldered hawks, turkey vultures, and an array of herons and egrets hunting in the marsh.

July was the month of the Turtle Trek (Figure 1), where we walk along the San Gabriel River to look for signs of the Pacific green sea turtle. During this hike, there is a stop at Zedler Marsh to talk about the importance of salt marsh ecosystems and their contribution to the overall health of the ocean. Unfortunately, the turtles were not as active as previous Turtle Treks and only a few lucky guests were able to see these elusive creatures.

Our most recent hike was the Heron Hike in August. The water that was present in May had dried up, so the historical salt marshes were once again in their usual state. However, there was still some birding activity at the Market Place Marsh with two juvenile black-crowned night herons, a siege of snowy white egrets, two great blue herons passing over, and a yellow-crowned night heron roosting. It was one of our warmer hikes of the year and that was reflected in the birding activity as birds often take shelter from the heat.

Habitat Restoration Events

Monthly Habitat Restoration events take place at Zedler Marsh, which is currently the only active restoration site throughout the Los Cerritos Wetlands. Here volunteers can help with a plethora of activities from native plant installation, non-native plant removal, mulching, watering, trash clean ups, propagating and more! Restoration events follow immediately after Land Tours on the first Saturday of every month starting right at 10:30 A.M., please contact iwanttohelp@tidalinfluence.com for more information.

The LCWA has hosted four monthly habitat restoration events in which an approximate of **150 volunteers** who helped remove over **1225lbs of non-native vegetation, 150lbs of debris** (Figure 2), and **installed 70 containers of native species** in the marsh buffer to help restore endangered Belding's savannah sparrow, and much more. All this help from the community resulted in 450 hours of volunteer work time contributing **\$9,476 of in-kind services**.

Special Events

The past four months we have had a variety of age groups and community members near and far join us out at the wetlands. Thanks to the Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust we have hosted six educational field trips. Four of the field trips were for Title 1 elementary schools, and two were through the City of Long Beach's "BeSafe" program which brings groups from community centers at local parks in economically disadvantaged areas of the city (Figure 5). We currently have two more scheduled before the end of the summer and more are currently being planned once the new school year begins. On these trips, we offer a fun curriculum of ecological related activities where youths get to learn about the Los Cerritos Wetlands and Zedler Marsh. Our current activities include a scavenger hunt where students scavenge for plastic critters and learn about resource scarcity and the importance of native habitats for the local fauna. We also offer a plant press where students have a hands-on approach in learning native plants with an emphasis on field data collection (Figure 4). Our field trips end with a passive restoration activity where students get their hands muddy to make mud balls filled with native seeds to be tossed at an active restoration site. (Figure 4).

We have also hosted eight additional habitat restoration events at Zedler marsh thanks to our eager community that wants to get involved. We hosted two Earth Day events with our partner, Aquarium of the Pacific, in which 52 volunteers **removed 250 lbs of non-native vegetation** and **installed 195 container plants in saltmarsh buffer and mulefat scrub habitats** to optimize Belding's savannah sparrow and least Bell's vireo habitat. 154 total volunteer hours were contributed with **\$4,897 of in-kind services**.

In the last day of April, we hosted a Make-A-Difference Day where 35 volunteers removed over **100lbs of non-native plant vegetation** and **installed 65 container plants in mulefat scrub habitat** to optimize least Bell's vireo habitat. Make-A-Difference-Day totaled up to 105 volunteer hours and contributed **\$3,339 of in-kind services**.

In May, we hosted four separate field trips. Two field trips were for Wildlife Biology classes, and one was for a Marine Biology class from Long Beach City College. The 86 college students helped **remove over 300lbs of non-native vegetation** from some of our endangered southern tar plant mitigation areas. The fourth field trip was for a Plant Ecology class from California State University, Long Beach. The 26 students helped **install 53 container plants in mulefat scrub habitat** for the least Bell's vireo. In total the 4 classes totaled up to **224 hours** and **\$7,123 of in-kind services**.

In mid-July, we hosted a corporate volunteer event where 50 salt marsh plants were propagated totaling 40 volunteer hours contributed and **\$1,272 of in-kind services.**

Recently, we have partnered with the Conservation Corps of Long Beach. They have worked approximately 210 staff hours to help **repair a degraded trail** and **remove non-native vegetation** to clear a path for our Raptor Ramble nature tour (Figure 6).



FIGURE 1. Turtle Trek_walking through the Zedler Marsh roadway.



FIGURE 2. August restoration event: salt marsh trash pick-up (top), volunteer group (bottom).



FIGURE 3. Corporate volunteer group (top) propagating salt marsh plants (bottom).



FIGURE 4. Educational field trip activities: mudball (top) and plant press (bottom).



FIGURE 5. BeSafe program picnic area.



FIGURE 6. Conservation Corps of Long Beach fixing trails (top) and clearing non-native vegetation (bottom).