



Irvine-Laguna Wildlife Corridor

Connecting Habitats
from Mountains to Coast

A Project of the Laguna Greenbelt, Inc.



Cicada Songs Are Loud!

Thanks to Laura Cohen, Resource Specialist at OC Parks, for her regular newsletter featuring current events in the Laguna Coast and Aliso and Wood Canyons Wilderness Parks. As a reminder, the Irvine-Laguna Wildlife Corridor connects the coastal wilderness parks (all 22,000 acres) across urbanized Irvine to the Cleveland National Forest and the rest of the Santa Ana Mountains.

From this month's letter:

"Our cicadas spend two to five years underground sucking juices from roots before they emerge to sing and mate. Three kinds of cicadas in the East and Midwest spend a full 17 years underground. They are emerging this year - all at once. [Click here](#), scroll down, and click on the link to hear their sounds.

"The high-pitched songs of the cicada can be heard now in the parks. Cicadas are hardly noticeable here as compared to those in the East and Midwest. [Click here](#) to hear the sound of one of our cicadas."

New Trail Use Pilot Project Tests Changes

On another note, there is a new Trail Use Pilot Project in some of the parks, to test how changing the way some trails are used will impact the parks. Please click [here](#) for more information.

Have a wildlife photo taken in Orange County you want to share? Simply reply to this email, and it may be featured with your name in a future newsletter!

Photo Credit: Jeff Lofftus, park visitor

Women Advocates for OC Wilderness

This month, Laguna Greenbelt, Inc. is featuring women of note who have advocated for natural habitats and wildlife in Orange County. We are fortunate to have many women within the organization, and also throughout the region, who have done so much good to protect and preserve our wilderness habitats. They continue to work towards the common good and offer leadership and inspiration to all of us.



Dr. Elisabeth Brown, Boardmember, Laguna Greenbelt, Inc.

Elisabeth Brown is a biologist and science writer who joined the Laguna Greenbelt, Inc. Board in the 1980 and served as its President from the early 1980s until 2019. An embryologist by training, her thesis topic at UCI explored coordinated hatching behavior in California Quail.

Elisabeth created the public access program in Laguna Coast Wilderness Park, and for many years, she taught the Naturalist Training course at Saddleback College for would-be park docents. She has written trail guides, an OC field guide, and educational brochures for wilderness-adjacent neighborhoods. Her monthly nature columns ran in local newspapers for two decades.

Elisabeth's involvement in managing local wild lands has included founding roles in the Nature Reserve of OC and the Coastal Greenbelt Authority. She was an early champion of the Irvine-Laguna Wildlife Corridor and continues to offer her expertise and support for this project. Dr. Brown has also done the monumental and essential task of inspiring and training many advocates that continue this important work.

Thank you, Elisabeth Brown, for your tireless support of Laguna Greenbelt, Inc. and your work throughout Orange County for the care of wildlife and open space!



Shannon Crossen, Senior Conservation Biologist at ICF International, Inc.

Shannon Crossen lends her expertise in conservation biology, wildlife crossing design, and more to the Irvine-Laguna Wildlife Corridor by serving as a Science Advisor to the Laguna Greenbelt, Inc.

Ms. Crossen, who grew up in Orange County, has 13 years of experience in conservation biology and transportation planning. She conducts conservation and connectivity assessments and planning throughout California, Oregon, and Washington. Shannon is a Senior Conservation Biologist at ICF International, Inc.

Prior to joining ICF, Shannon served as a biologist with the California Department of Transportation. Shannon's experience includes research and planning in habitat restoration, wildlife-roadway mitigation development, and wildlife population dynamics and distributions. She is particularly interested in wildlife connectivity assessments, design of wildlife crossing structures, wildlife-human conflict remediation, and wildlife noise impact assessments and mitigation development.

Shannon has a strong background in biological resource planning and project management with expertise in transportation-related development and planning. She conducts biological resource impact assessments, prepares biological resource technical studies for environmental documents (NEPA/SEPA/CEQA), consults and coordinates with environmental regulatory agencies, and prepares environmental regulatory permitting and Endangered Species Act consultations.

Thank you, Shannon, for your commitment to wildlife and habitats in Orange County and throughout the Western United States!

Farrah Khan, Mayor of Irvine

As Mayor of Irvine, Farrah Khan has already been busy working to



improve the standard of environmental policies and actions in the City. A key champion in Irvine's new Community Choice Energy (CCE) program, which is currently being formed and adopted. It will increase the City's control over its power supply and give residents the ability to choose renewable energy.

Ms. Khan remarked, "You know, we just started our CCE program, which I 'm really excited about, and that was one of the boldest steps that we 've taken towards sustainability, " Khan said. "We 're one of the first cities in Orange County. And now we 've got other cities looking at us and wanting to join in. So, again, that 's going to be a beacon.

"This is something that is going to help us convert over to renewable energy in a very short amount of time (source: [here](#))."

Ms. Khan supports of the completion and functionality of the Irvine-Laguna Wildlife Corridor, and we look forward to seeing Irvine and the region step into a new era of true sustainability.

Khan says, "You think of what makes a city green and sustainable – it's creating a community that residents can enjoy today while ensuring that future residents will be able to enjoy it even more so. It's creating a legacy that will endure for generations to come (source: [here](#)).

Ms. Khan is the Chair of Irvine's Green Ribbon Environmental Committee, which advises Irvine's City Council on matters of sustainability. She has expressed interest in making Irvine as sustainable as possible for future generations.

Thank you, Farrah Khan, for your past and future leadership in making Irvine a world-class sustainable city!

Jean Watt, Founder

Jean Watt was raised in Pasadena with summers spent in Newport Beach. She received a BA in Economics at Stanford University just after World War II and moved on to become a Registered Nurse. She married James Y. Watt who started his OB/GYN medical practice at Hoag Hospital in 1953 and together they spent the next years raising four children and attending to the PTA and Girl Scout opportunities.



The 1970s, with the new Federal Air Quality and Water Quality laws as well as California's Environmental Quality Act, got her attention such that she co-founded SPON (Stop Polluting Our Newport) in 1974. Later Jean served on the Newport Beach City Council from 1988-1996 after which she became a Board member of the Environmental Nature Center and a founding Board member and president of the Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks.

Jean Watt's interest in the Orange Coast River Park began in the mid-1990s when Bob Fisher, then Orange County's Harbors, Beaches and Parks Director, and Reed Holderman, then with the California Coastal Conservancy, began planning for such a regional coastal facility. When Jean and others formed the Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks in 1997, they initiated the OCRP Committee, developed a Concept Plan and have worked to implement it since that time.

What sets Jean Watt apart from most leaders and makes her a great leader, is her understanding that successful leaders give credit to others and those who help make the vision a reality. Her accomplishments are many, but she shares her successes with those she inspired to make them happen. She understands that we need to involve many people to take the role of being those that function behind the scenes, below the surface, and on the front lines to make the vision happen. *Jean's finest achievement has centered on promoting, encouraging, and recruiting many outstanding citizens to be stewards of our environment.*

Some of Jean's major contributions to the region include:

- Founded Friends of Harbors Beaches and Parks, and created one of California's first Green Maps, which was the basis landscape scale environmental mitigation projects as part of OCTA's Measure M 2 funding measure. The renewed Measure M (M2) included \$245 million for conservation projects protecting landscapes, habitats, ecosystem

- function, and sustainability.
- Founded Stop Polluting Our Newport which over its 40-year span has:
 - Stopped a coastal freeway from dividing Newport Beach;
 - Kept Upper Bay an undeveloped and natural estuary;
 - Promoted a cleaner Bay and stopped inland nurseries from releasing algae-producing nutrients that run into the Bay;
 - Secured significant open space around the Upper Bay
- Founded Orange Coast River Park – Banning Ranch (a portion) with a goal of a fully-realized Orange Coast River Park used for public natural open space. This would round out a 60-year battle to preserve Newport’s coastal heritage.

Thank you, Jean Watt, for your lifetime of commitment and work towards the better meant of habitats and wildlife in our region!

Action Alert!

Legislative Spotlight: SB 790

SB 790 (Stern) will be heard in the Assembly Water, Parks, and Wildlife Committee on July 1, followed by a hearing in the Assembly Transportation Committee on July 5th. Read the language for this bill at the [California Legislative Website](http://findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov).

Please join us in supporting this measure. You can do this by calling your state Assembly Member as soon as possible - the earlier, the better (Find yours at <http://findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov>).

Talking Points for SB 790: Wildlife Protection and Movement Act

“Hi, my name is ____ and I’m [Title and Organization]. I’m calling about to express my support for SB 790 by Senator Stern which will be heard in the Assembly Water, Parks, and Wildlife Committee and the Assembly Transportation Committee.”

Why the bill is important:

- SB 790 encourages Caltrans to implement wildlife crossing projects – such as bridges, underpasses, and fencing – that prevent animals from being killed and humans from being injured by vehicle-wildlife collisions.
- Not only saves individual animals, but also promotes the health of the entire species because it gives animals like mountain lion access to potential mates and prevents isolated islands that force inbreeding. It also allows animals to access higher altitudes and cooler habitat, which scientists say is essential to species’ ability to cope with climate change.

What the bill does:

- The bill gives the Department of Fish and Wildlife the authority to give Caltrans compensatory mitigation credits for doing crossing projects. The credits will be flexible enough that Caltrans will want to earn them.

Why the bill is needed:

- There are other state programs that can facilitate wildlife crossing projects, but they have some important limitations. The intent of the bill is not to replace these tools, but to give the departments another option to facilitate corridors.
- Overall, this mitigation credit will help facilitate wildlife crossings and protect biodiversity of species.

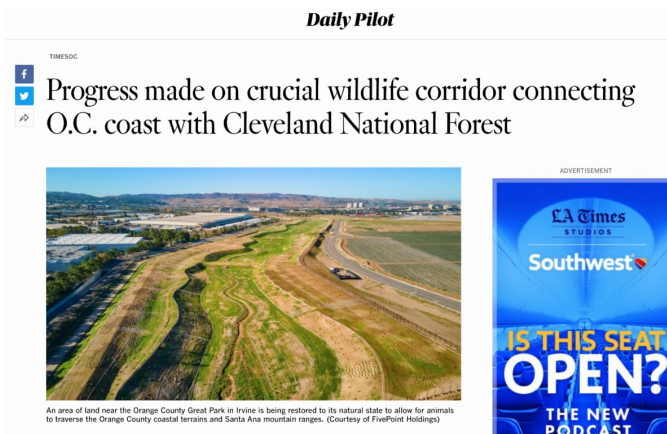
The ask:

- We hope the Assemblymember can vote yes on the bill.
- Does the Assemblymember need any more information about the bill?

In Case You Missed It...

From LA Times:

"In the last year and a half, FivePoint planted 98% of the vegetation, which includes more than 15,000 shrubs and plants, 24,000 cactuses and 4,500 trees. All of the irrigation lines have been installed. The supplemental watering will be necessary in the first few years as the infant vegetation grows."



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