

Stu News Laguna

Laguna Beach's Online Newspaper and Community Forum

March 4, 2025

Laguna Greenbelt, Inc. hosts Wildlife Corridor Tour for UCI Students

On Thursday, Feb. 6, the Laguna Greenbelt hosted the fourth annual tour of the Irvine-Laguna Wildlife Corridor (ILWC) for Professor Jessica Pratt of the University of California Irvine and her class of 20 graduate students in the Conservation & Restoration Science Program. Led by Board Members John Foley, Ann Larson and Lance Vallery, the students were shown key sections of the ILWC. Additional attendees included Anthony Falcone and Tony Capitelli, directors of Strategy and External Affairs for the Laguna Greenbelt. The purpose of the tour was to brief the students on the ILWC while providing them with an opportunity to learn about and discuss the unique challenges facing an urban wildlife corridor.



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The ILWC is a dedicated wildlife pathway being constructed to reduce habitat fragmentation in the southern Orange County region. When completed, the ILWC will provide a six-mile route for wildlife to travel between the Cleveland National Forest and the 22,000-acre South Coast Wilderness.

During the tour, students were presented with the history and status along different sites of the ILWC. Following the presentations, the students shared their observations and asked questions. These discussions highlighted the importance of wildlife mobility over the I-5 freeway, the limitations of the existing tunnel under I-5, and the impacts on native vegetation and wildfires near urban development. Students then shared their input in an open discussion, providing their ideas for solutions, while learning more about the barriers to improvements.



A picturesque view of the Irvine-Laguna Wildlife Corridor

Board Member John Foley said, “I hope that our tour highlighted the promise of the Irvine-Laguna Wildlife Corridor, while providing insight on the challenges we face. Significant improvements at the I-5 crossing are essential to bringing a fully functioning corridor to fruition. I really enjoyed my conversations with the students, hearing their questions, observations and thoughts on improvements and solutions for the Corridor.”

Speaking for the Laguna Greenbelt, President Norm Grossman said, “I would like to offer a special thanks to Professor Jessica Pratt for including the Irvine-Laguna Wildlife Corridor in her curriculum and helping organize the tour. Youth engagement and advocacy are critical to successful completion of this project. I look forward to continued student engagement.”