

The Roadrunner

Friends of the Northern San Jacinto Valley

www.northfriends.org

February 2009

Despite the state-wide drought we have been fortunate to have a lot of rain in December and February. Hopefully, it will translate into a good showing of wildflowers, plants, and insects this spring. The San Jacinto Wildlife Area offers so many wonderful opportunities to observe the subtle changes of seasons. Hiking from the wildlife area to Lake Perris or perhaps the Olive Grove area gives one a chance to take in the beautiful scenic landscape. From the reclaimed water ponds there are beautiful views of Mt. San Gorgonio and Mt. San Jacinto. Come visit the wildlife at the San Jacinto Wildlife Area and enjoy the view.

As you are looking at these vistas, take a moment to remember that Riverside County, Moreno Valley and the city of San Jacinto are busy reviewing and approving projects with land uses which are not compatible with the SJWA and its Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan reserve system objectives. These land use decisions will forever change efforts to preserve lands and the threatened and endangered species they support. They will severely affect hunting opportunities at the SJWA. So please take time to read our articles and consider how important it is that all of you make an effort to voice your support of the San Jacinto Wildlife Area for current visitors and future generations to enjoy.

SAN JACINTO WILDLIFE AREA News:

SAN JACINTO LAKE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT, December 2008 by Tom Benson, Compiler, San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society: On Tuesday, December 16, 2008, seventeen intrepid volunteers showed up to participate in the San Jacinto Lake CBC. We had great weather and tallied a total of 138 species. Some of the highlights included: a Wood Duck at the San Jacinto Wildlife Area, a Hooded Merganser in the northeast portion of the circle, 2 Common Loons at Lake Perris, 2 Bald Eagles at the San Jacinto Wildlife Area and Lake Perris, 2 Ferruginous Hawks, 2 Golden Eagles at the San Jacinto Wildlife Area, 2 Merlins and 4 Prairie Falcons at various locations, 31 Mountain Plovers along Bridge Street, 7 Thayer's Gulls, 1 Lesser Black-backed Gull (a first for the count!), and 21 Glaucous-winged Gulls along Ramona Expressway and/or at Lake Perris, 9 Barn Swallows, and a Yellow Warbler and 8 Nutmeg Mannikins (also a count first) at the San Jacinto Wildlife Area. Once again thank you to all who participated and made this a successful count.

UPDATE ON BLUEBIRD BOXES by Sue Nash:

A number of years ago the Santa Ana Watershed Association (SAWA) placed 15 "blue" bird boxes on three locations near wetlands on the SJWA. We have yet to see a western bluebird using the boxes, but they are very popular with tree swallows that now stay year-round at the SJWA. One of the boxes is missing and several need to be replaced or repaired. SAWA and staff at the SJWA will be working with the

Friends to replace, relocate and clean the bird boxes. The bird boxes will be the focus of our March 14 walk so please join us for the morning. If you are interested in helping to maintain, clean and repair bluebird boxes, contact Sue Nash at (909) 228-6710 and snash22@earthlink.net

FRIENDS' NEWS & PROJECTS:

FRIENDS OF THE NORTHERN SAN JACINTO VALLEY v. DEPARTMENT OF FISH and GAME, WILDLIFE CONSER-VATION BOARD, CALIFORNIA WATERFOWL ASSOCIATION by Sue Nash: This lawsuit, which was filed in August of 2007, is in the court of appeal (Friends lost at the trial court and appealed). We expect a decision by early this summer vacating the approval and requiring an Environmental Impact Report to repair the damage done to the SJWA by construction approved by the Wildlife Conservation Board without first considering a California Environmental Quality Act document.

PROPOSED VILLAGES OF LAKEVIEW SPECIFIC PLAN 342 by Ann McKibben: The McAnally Chicken Ranch project has been closely tied to Lewis Operating Corp's project the Villages of Lakeview (TVOL). Since the chicken ranch project has been withdrawn, Lewis Operating Corp is moving quickly to seek approval of the TVOL project. Instead of releasing their draft environmental impact report (DEIR) during the summer 2009 as originally planned, they are hoping to release the report as early as February 19, 2009. It is possible that the project will go before the Riverside County Planning Commission this summer, and it may go before the Riverside County Board of Supervisors for approval before the end of the year. If approved, the Villages of Lakeview project would put 10.000+ homes in the rural communities of Lakeview and Nuevo. The project proponent plans to build 3,000 units of the project on 350 acres between the southern boundary of the San Jacinto Wildlife Area (Marvin Road) and the northern border of the Ramona Expressway. It is not good land use planning to put 3,000 housing units next to the wildlife area, a cornerstone reserve in Riverside County's Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan, neither is it a compatible land use. Other issues of concern include: loss of prime agricultural lands, leap frog development, and creating a 'divided city' since the Ramona Expressway is slated to expand to a six to eight lane freeway as part of the Mid County Parkway. There is strong opposition to the project from Lakeview and Nuevo residents. For more information on the project, contact project planner Matt Straite, Riverside County Planning Department at (951) 955-8631. Planning Commission agendas can be found at: http://www.rctlma.org/planning/content/hearings/pc/current_p c.html The Friends will have information posted on our web page: www.northfriends.org Please take time to submit comments and list your concerns about the project and the major significant impacts on the San Jacinto Wildlife Area when the DEIR is released.

PROPOSED MCANALLY CHICKEN RANCH CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT NO.3512 by Ann McKibben: According to the Riverside County Planning Department, project proponents working to get the McAnally Chicken Ranch approved (a chicken ranch which would have housed 2.2 million chickens adjacent to the San Jacinto Wildlife Area) have withdrawn the project. The county was fast-tracking the project, and it would have bypassed the county Planning Commission and gone directly to the county Board of Supervisors for approval if the project had gone forward. The approval of Proposition 2 in this fall's election was cited as the reason the project was withdrawn.



Marsh A, SJWA, January 2009

George Hague

MOTTE RANCH (Specific Plan 366) by Ann McKibben: The proposed plan would locate 2,200 homes between the San Jacinto Wildlife Area and the Ramona Expressway (project location is east of the proposed Villages of Lakeview project). Dwellings would be placed adjacent to the floodplain and land with severe geotechnical issues (large ground cracks, soil compaction and proximity to the Casa Loma Fault). After no action for a number of months, the project proponent is planning on resubmitting the first screen check of the specific plan and EIR. For more information on the project, contact project planner Matt Straite, Riverside County Planning Department at (951) 955-8631.

SAND DRAG RACES IN SAN JACINTO by George Hague: The National Sand Drag Association (NSDA) has wanted to have several racing events very near the boundaries of Mystic Lake and the San Jacinto Wildlife Area (SJWA). A local resident with farmland located near Bridge Street, between Gilman Springs Road and the Ramona Expressway, has volunteered the use of his land for these races. Some of this land has been designated for conservation under the Western Riverside County Multi Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) and may contain existing constrained linkages. Protected species in this area include, but are not limited to, the following: Bell's sage sparrow, loggerhead shrike, cactus wren, Stephens' and San Bernardino kangaroo rats, southern California rufous-crowned sparrow, San Jacinto Valley crownscale and spreading navarretia. While the race track itself is only the length of a football field, the impacts on adjacent lands used by the racers and onlookers is substantially greater. The NSDA wanted to have races last September in this location and the County told them they needed to obtain the proper permits, and in December, when they applied again, they were told the same thing. In both cases they were denied being able to race, because they did not obtain permits as the county has told them several times. It has been because of the vigilance of groups like the FNSJV that the County has been alerted of planned racing events even though no permits had ever been obtained. The landowner has now turned over the permit applications process to his attorney. If you go to http://www.sand-drags.com/Events%20Page.html you will see they are planning another race at this location from March 13th- 15th. As of February 11, the project proponents submitted an application to get approval for their project.

UPDATE OF RIVERSIDE COUNTY GENERAL PLAN by George Hague: The Riverside General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) has been meeting since the fall of 2008. We have met three times with the next meeting March 11th from 10:00 a.m. to noon in Room 5C of the Riverside County building at 4080 Lemon Street, Riverside. There are about 15 members with George Hague representing the environmental community and one real community member. Most of the other members are connected to development and/or water interests. This committee's responsibility is to make recommendations on mainly land use changes to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. Most of these changes would result in taking lands that are presently in a rural state and allow for more urbanization. This would include County lands adjacent to the SJWA. The public is allowed to attend the meetings and speak on issues. You can web also the site go http://www.rctlma.org/planning/content/hearings/gpac/gpac.ht ml and learn more. Please feel free to contact George Hague at gbhague@gmail.com for more information.

LAKEVIEW/NUEVO MASTER PLAN/EMWD by Sue Nash: Eastern Municipal Water District approved the final Environmental Impact Report for the Lakeview/Nuevo Area Master Plan for Water, Sewer, and Recycled Water (State Clearinghouse # 2007-1010-43). This project has been planned to supply all the pipelines, etc. which will be needed to supply The Villages of Lakeview and other proposed new development in the Lakeview/Nuevo area. This Master Plan assumes, but does not assure, that there will actually be sufficient affordable potable water to put in these pipelines for development and to supply local agricultural needs.

PROPOSED HIGHLAND FAIRVIEW CORPORATE CEN-TER (Moreno Valley) by Ann McKibben: The Friends have been following and commenting on this project for a number of years. The project proponent wants to build a 2.42 million square foot logistic center for Skechers Shoes along the southern edge of Highway 60 between Redlands Boulevard and Theodore Street in eastern Moreno Valley. (Skechers has signed \$100 million 11-year lease with the developer for a distribution center at the proposed corporate park center.) Some of the concerns regarding the project are: increased truck traffic (2,200 truck trips per day for HFCP), increased air pollution and levels of diesel particulates, poor traffic analysis, loss of farmland, and loss of view shed. Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report were submitted in September 2008. The city fast tracked the project and released the Draft Final Environmental Impact Report on December 19, 2008 and gave the public only 20 days to comment on the document. It went before the city's Planning Commission on January 8 and 15 with the commission voting 4-2 against the project. The city held a special council meeting on February 3 where they heard approximately seven hours of public testimony. A second hearing was held on February 10 and the Moreno Valley City Council meeting unanimously approved the project by a vote of 5-0. The complex history of this project is related to a number of issues, one of which is the fall election where two new city council members were elected to replace two long-time council members, Frank West and Charles White. Both Mr. West and Mr. White were targeted by the Moreno Valley Taxpayers Association which spent over \$350,000 to unseat them. The association accepted \$263,000 from Highland Fairview developer Iddo Benzeevi and \$100,000+ from local businessman Jerry Stephens of Diversified Real Estate. The treasurer for the MV Taxpayers Association is Moreno Valley Planning Commission member Michael Geller. Mr. Geller is also a law partner with Moreno Valley City Councilmember Richard Stewart. According to recent newspaper articles, Mr. Benzeevi plans to move ahead with construction of the project as quickly as possible. If this project proceeds, it is thought that the Prologis Park and Ridge Property Trust projects (distribution centers) along Highway 60 will also move forward through the planning process. The Sierra Club has filed a lawsuit on the project and you can contact George Hague at gbhague@gmail.com if you have any questions. The Friends think this is an extremely important lawsuit and are supporting it. If you would like to help us, you can forward a contribution to the Friends. Please send it to our mailing address at: P.O. Box 9097, Moreno Valley, CA 92552-9097.

PROLOGIS PARK by Ann McKibben: The Friends commented on the Notice of Preparation on this project in February 2008. The project proponent wants to build a 2,244,419 square foot industrial center along Highway 60 in eastern Moreno Valley. The proposed project is west of the Highland Fairview Corporate Park (HFCP) and would be accessed via Moreno Beach Drive and Redlands Boulevard. The Friends have similar concerns regarding this project as with the HFCP. Planner for the project is: Jeff Bradshaw, (951) 413-3224.

QUAIL RANCH SPECIFIC PLAN by Ann McKibben: The Friends commented on the Notice of Preparation for this project in February 2008. The proposed project would place approximately 1,500 units on 1,263 acres of land. The project site is located along Gilman Springs Road, north of Jack Rabbit Trail and is about three miles south of Highway 60. It is outside the city limits but within its sphere of influence. The project area is directly across the road from the north end of Mystic Lake and the San Jacinto Wildlife Area (SJWA). The Quail Ranch Golf Course will be redesigned so the golf course is placed in the Alquist-Priolo Zone of the Claremont Strand of the San Jacinto Fault along Gilman Springs Road. Planner for the project is: Jeff Bradshaw, (951) 413-3224.



Trail from Viewing Platform, SJWA

MID COUNTY PARKWAY by Ann McKibben: Comments on the draft environmental impact report/draft environmental impact statement for the Mid County Parkway (MCP) were due January 8, 2009. The proposed project would expand the Ramona Expressway from the city of San Jacinto to the city of Corona to a six to eight lane freeway. The Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) held a number of public meetings on the project. The preferred project route would displace approximately 300 homes and/or businesses, a city park and a fire station in the city of Perris. The MCP would also go through or affect four distinct Habitat Conservation Plans which are designed to preserve and protect threatened and/or endangered species in Riverside County. It would leave existing homes next to the new freeway and expose residents to high levels of air pollution and diesel particulates. The 'old' Cajalco Road would remain in place, meaning that Cajalco Road and the Mid County Parkway would be parallel routes and disrupt the rural landscape and homeowners adjacent to each roadway. The RCTC hopes to certify the final environmental document and approve the project by mid to late 2009. Please check their web site for the project at: http://www.midcountyparkway.org/ for updated information and the schedule for approval of the pro-Or you can contact the Friends northfriends@northfriends.org for updated information.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIRD LOSS by Sue Nash:

A just released study by California Audubon indicates that climate change will cause 110 of 310 California native bird species to disappear from at least 25 percent of their current ranges by the end of this century. (www.audubon-ca.org). Using Audubon Christmas Bird Counts, North American Breeding Bird Surveys and the World Climate Research Programme's Coupled Model Intercomparison Project, scientists have shown that native birds in California will precipitously decline as the result of global warming because: 1) our current network of protected lands was not designed to buffer species, communities and whole ecosystems against climate change, and 2) the major climate variables influencing species' distributions are expected to change so quickly that even highly mobile species like birds will be unable to keep pace. This startling and disturbing new information will be used by Friends in commenting on the Draft Environmental Impact Reports for development projects like The Villages of Lakeview.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS: We are very grateful for the support and response from our members and friends this fall during our fall membership appeal. We sincerely appreciate all of your donations and support as we all work to protect the San Jacinto Wildlife Area. Once again, thank you for your very generous donations!

<u>WEST NILE VIRUS</u>: Please remember to use non-toxic insect repellant while visiting the San Jacinto Wildlife Area, especially during early morning hours and around dusk when mosquitoes are present.

FRIENDS' WEB PAGE: Please check out the Friends' web page at: www.northfriends.org for information about our nature walks and updated "Take Action" information where our comment letters are posted.

LINKS:

Friends of the Northern San Jacinto Valley:

www.northfriends.org

San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society: www.sbvas.org Rare Bird Alert:

http://listserv.arizona.edu/archives/birdwest.html (Southeastern California RBA) or

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/inlandcountybirds/

NATURE WALKS AND FIELDS TRIPS AT THE SAN JACINTO WILDLIFE AREA:

March 14, 2009, Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to Noon BIRDING AND BLUEBIRD BOX NATURE WALK

The SJWA has approximately fifteen bluebird boxes. They were placed at the wildlife area by the Santa Ana Watershed Association to help provide habitat for bluebirds and other bird species that have lost nesting habitat in the inland counties. Rampant urbanization increases the loss of riparian habitat and the loss of habitat, in turn, means a decline in the bird population. Tree swallows have used the boxes for a number of years. Join us as we learn more about the importance of placing bird boxes and see how many bird species we can identify on this morning walk. Learn more about SAWA at: http://www.sawatershed.org/ Leaders: Talula Barbee & Samantha Dempster.

April 4, 2009, Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to Noon SJWA BUG WALK

Bugs. We love them, loathe them, and they are our 'friends'. Join us while we learn about the importance of bugs and how valuable they are in the cycle of life. This walk is excellent for kids who are curious and want a hands on experience as we catch and release butterflies, dragonflies, damselflies, beetles, ants, and many others. Leaders Gordon Pratt and Greg Ballmer are our bug and bee experts and will help us learn some basic information about the insect world. We will also identify birds and see how many species of bugs and insects we can find. Leader: Gordon Pratt and Greg Ballmer.



Insect Walk, May 2008

April 18, 2009, Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to Noon SJWA PLANT AND WILDFLOWER WALK

Depending on the amount of rain we get this winter and spring, we are hoping for a good showing of plants and wildflowers for our walk. Leader Dave Bramlet is a leading expert on the plants of the San Jacinto Valley. Three of the rarest plants found on the SJWA are: San Jacinto Saltbush, Spreading Navarretia, and Thread-leaved Brodiaea and if we are lucky we may see each of them. Many other plants and wildflowers can be found on the SJWA so join us as we spend the morning learning to identify plants and flowers. This is a joint walk with Southern California Botanists. Learn more about SCB at: http://www.socalbot.org/ Leader: Dave Bramlet.

FOR INFORMATION on the Friends walks, call Ann McKibben at (951) 924-8150 or Sue Nash at (909) 228-6710. Our walks are free and open to all. Children are welcome and you do not need to be a member of the Friends to join us on any of our walks.



WHERE TO MEET: All nature walks meet at the appointed time in the parking lot of the San Jacinto Wildlife Area head-quarters at 17050 Davis Road, Lakeview. There are picnic tables and restrooms available if you want to spend the day.

BEGINNING BIRD WALKS: San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society organizes and sponsors Beginning Bird Walks (BBW) at various locations in Riverside County. We are fortunate that a number of the walks are held at the San Jacinto Wildlife Area. Please check their web site at: www.sbvas.org for information on dates and locations for all their Beginning Bird Walks. Or call Cathy Tobin at (951) 684-9613. **Thank you SBVAS!**

FOR ALL WALKS: Bring binoculars, camera (if you are interested), non-toxic insect repellant, sturdy walking shoes, hat, sunscreen, plenty of water, lunch, snacks, and wear appropriate clothing for the weather.

TO VISIT THE SAN JACINTO WILDLIFE AREA:

Hours: The wildlife area is open seven days a week from Dawn to Dusk. You are welcome to visit on your own at any time. There is an Information Kiosk on the east side of Davis Road adjacent to the parking lot.

<u>DIRECTIONS</u> TO THE SAN JACINTO WILDLIFE AREA: San Jacinto Wildlife Area, 17050 Davis Road, Lakeview. Telephone: (951) 928-0580. **DAVIS ROAD IS CLOSED**

FROM MORENO VALLEY. Please use one of these alternate routes to visit the San Jacinto Wildlife Area. *From Moreno Valley*: go south on Perris Boulevard to the Ramona Expressway; go east on the Ramona Expressway to Davis Road in Lakeview; go north on Davis Road 2.3 miles to the headquarters. *From Hemet/San Jacinto Area*: take the Ramona Expressway west to Davis Road in Lakeview; go north on Davis Road 2.3 miles to the headquarters. *From Highway 215*: take the Ramona Expressway east to Davis Road in Lakeview (traffic signal); go north on Davis Road 2.3 miles to the area headquarters.

WAIVER FORM: The Friends will be asking all walk participants to sign waiver of responsibility forms. Please be aware that minors (under 18) cannot sign the waiver. The signator must be a parent or other responsible adult. If you will not be with or are dropping off a minor at one of the Friends' nature walks, please call or email Sue Nash (909) 228-6710 or email her at: snash22@earthlink.net for a copy of the form so you can sign it and have the minor bring it with them.

PLEASE USE CAUTION WHILE DRIVING ON DAVIS ROAD IF THERE HAVE BEEN RECENT

RAINS. Do not drive on Davis Road if it is muddy or it is raining. During the rainy season, please call the wildlife area headquarters, (951) 928-0580, during regular work hours to ask about road conditions.

OTHER NEWS:

THANK YOU to Margie Breitkreuz and Ann McKibben for preparing our fall newsletter for mailing.

SELF-GUIDED AUTO TOUR: A self-guided auto tour is available for visitors to use at the San Jacinto Wildlife Area. These reusable guides follow a series of signs and explain what can be seen at each of the seven stops. You can pick them up from a box which is adjacent to the entrance kiosk. You will find a "return" box for the guides sitting on the other side of the road as you leave the wildlife area.

TIRED OF OUR NEWSLETTER? The Friends would be happy to remove your name from our mailing list if you no longer want to receive our newsletter. Send your name and address to: Friends of the Northern San Jacinto Valley, P.O. Box 9097, Moreno Valley, CA 92552-9097; e-mail: northfriends@northfriends.org or call Ann McKibben at (951) 924-8150 to have your name deleted. Our current newsletter is posted on the Friends' web page at: www.northfrieinds.org

UP-COMING EVENTS:

MARCH 20 & 21; JUNE 5 & 6, 2009 (9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.) – HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE COLLECTION, Moreno Valley City Maintenance Facility, 15670 Perris Blvd., Moreno Valley; verify time: 1-800-304-2226. http://www.rivcowm.org/hhw/hhw schedule.html

APRIL 4 (noon to 5 p.m.) & 5 (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.), 2009 – *PLANT SALE*, UCR Botanic Gardens. Information: (951) 784-6962. www.gardens.ucr.edu

May 16, 2009 (Noon to 5:00 p.m.) – IDYLLWILD EARTH FAIR, Idyllwild Town Hall, Idyllwild. www.earthfair.com

MAY 16, 2009 (10 a.m. to 3 p.m.) – *DUCK DAZE*, Hidden Valley Nature Center, 11401 Arlington Avenue, Riverside. Information: (951) 785-7452.

FRIENDS OF THE NORTHERN SAN JACINTO VALLEY

P.O. Box 9097 Moreno Valley, CA 92552-9097

e-mail: northfriends.org web page: www.northfriends.org

Board Members: Greg Ballmer, Jane Block, George Hague, Ann McKibben, Doug Morton, Sue Nash, Tom Paulek, Paul Prado

The Friends of the Northern San Jacinto Valley is a local conservation group dedicated to preserving and protecting the northern San Jacinto Valley, San Jacinto Wildlife Area, and Mystic Lake. We are a 501(c)(3) organization.

The Roadrunner comes out twice a year in February and September. It is written and edited by Ann McKibben, Sue Nash, Tom Paulek, and George Hague.



Cleaning Bluebird Boxes, SJWA, February 2009

MEMBERSHIP FORM – Please enroll me as a contributing member of the Friends of the Northern San Jacinto Valley. I will contribute:	
\$10.00\$20.00\$50.00\$	100.00Gift Membership
Name	
Address	
City	State/Zip Code
Telephone	_Date
e-mail	
Make checks payable to: Friends of the Northern San Jacinto Valley Mail to: Friends of the Northern San Jacinto Valley P.O. Box 9097 Moreno Valley, CA 92552-9097	
e-mail: northfriends@northfriends.org The Friends is a 501(c)(3) organization.	

The Roadrunner, February 2009 FRIENDS OF THE NORTHERN SAN JACINTO VALLEY P.O. Box 9097 Moreno Valley, CA 92552-9097

"Return Service Requested"