


CITY OF LOS ANGELES

URBAN NATURE GUIDEBOOK




ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: This guidebook was prepared by LA Sanitation & Environment's Biodiversity Team in 2023. The guidebook was written by LASAN's California Climate Action Corps Fellow, Ryan Kinzel, under the direction of LASAN's Biodiversity Program Manager, Michelle Barton. The guidebook was edited by LASAN's Assistant Director, Mas Dojiri, and Environmental Affairs Officer, Amanda Amaral. Unless credited, photos are from LASAN staff or the public domain. Special thank you to all individuals and organizations who contributed information, expertise, and photos:

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- Natural History Museum of LA County
- Pierce College
- San Fernando Valley Audubon Society
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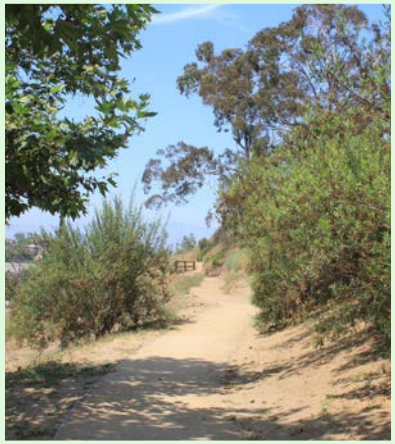

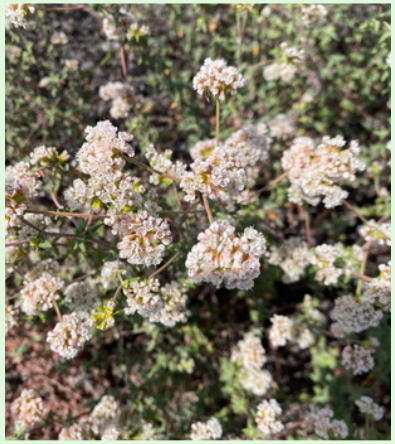

BACKGROUND: The City of Los Angeles Urban Nature Guidebook showcases 20 native plant gardens, greenways, natural parks, and wildlife reserves around the City. Each entry highlights collaborative partnerships and features three defining attributes that make each of these biodiversity gems so special.

By demonstrating that nature can thrive in at a variety of settings within cities, ranging from small urban school yards to large natural parks, like Griffith Park, we hope to show that urban spaces can support the incredible array of plants and animals that live in Los Angeles and inspire the transformation of additional lands across the City into biodiverse habitats.

Photo credits clockwise from top left:
iNaturalist, Nurit Katz, LASAN, LAWA, LASAN, NHMLAC.

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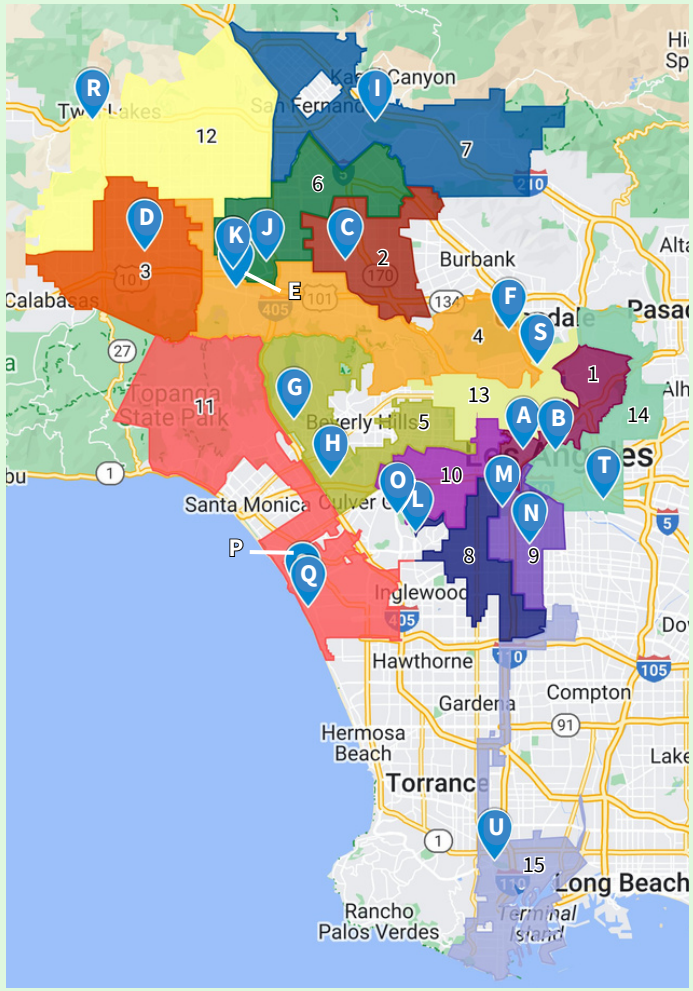


**Ordered sequentially by Council District*

ESPERANZA ELEMENTARY

LAUSD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Photo: Brad Rumble

ESPERANZA ELEMENTARY

LAUSD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

680 Little St,
Los Angeles 90017

Council District 1

Native Plant Garden

BACKGROUND: Esperanza Elementary School is located in the heart of the historic Westlake neighborhood in downtown Los Angeles. It is a public school that serves a diverse student body of 640 students, ranging from pre-Kindergarten to fifth grade.

Courtyard native plant landscaping.

Students in the native plant garden.
Photo: Emily Cobar

PARTNERS: The Los Angeles Audubon Society (LA Audubon) partnered with Esperanza Elementary School to create a habitat and urban garden for education. LA Audubon brings expertise in bird conservation and has hosted bird-watching activities. The Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust (LANLT) received a grant from the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), aiming to expand the presence of nature across the entire campus, beyond the existing habitat. While the grant project has not started yet, it will bring valuable greening and habitat to the school grounds.

DEFINING FEATURES OF ESPERANZA ELEMENTARY

Burrowing owl on a tree branch. Photo: Brad Rumble

Native plants in the garden.

Students birdwatching. Photo: Brad Rumble

HOTSPOT FOR WILDLIFE

Esperanza is a birding hotspot with 84 unique species recorded on the eBird platform to date. Many migratory bird species use the habitat as a stopover site including the yellow-rumped warbler, burrowing owl, and white-crowned sparrow. In addition, other wildlife that are found in this habitat include 31 species of butterfly, praying mantis, ladybird beetles, and native bee species. The remarkable biodiversity at Esperanza Elementary showcases the potential for a diverse array of wildlife to coexist with humans even in the most urban settings.

PERMEABLE SURFACES DECREASE RUNOFF

Since Esperanza Elementary is located in Westlake, an urban neighborhood covered in hardscaping, the presence of permeable surfaces that can infiltrate rainwater is especially important. Esperanza Elementary School utilizes permeable surfaces that allow rainwater to infiltrate the soil, replenishing the groundwater and providing much-needed water for the plants. Additionally, permeable surfaces reduce the amount of runoff and pollutants carried away to the ocean, which enables Esperanza Elementary School to play a role in mitigating water pollution.

TOUCHSTONE FOR THE WESTLAKE COMMUNITY

Esperanza Elementary School is a beacon of community engagement and environmental stewardship in the Westlake area. With activities, such as planting and bird-watching, the school brings together students, families, and the surrounding community, which is especially important as many students at Esperanza come from disadvantaged communities with limited access to greenspace. By providing these opportunities, Esperanza empowers students to become environmental stewards.

FIRST STREET U.S COURTHOUSE

FEDERAL COURTHOUSE BUILDING

FIRST STREET U.S COURTHOUSE

FEDERAL COURTHOUSE BUILDING

350 W 1st St,
Los Angeles 90012

Council District 1

Native Plant Garden

BACKGROUND/SITE HISTORY: The First Street U.S. Courthouse opened in October 2016. Located in the Civic Center District of Downtown Los Angeles, the 10-story, 633,000 square foot building serves as a hub for legal proceedings. The design and construction of the building were driven by goals of sustainability, security, and cost-effectiveness. The First Street U.S. Courthouse is LEED certified.

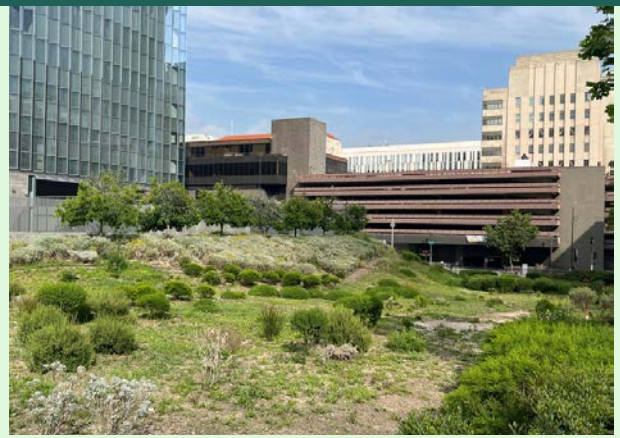
Native plant gardens behind the courthouse.

Aerial view of cactus garden and rooftop courtyard.
Photo: Kenji Wright

PARTNERS: The landscaping work at the First Street U.S. Courthouse was overseen by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA). Clark Construction and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) were responsible for designing and building the courthouse, while Mia Lehrer & Associates handled the landscape design. GSA's contractor conducts regular maintenance visits, monitoring the landscaping conditions and addressing any specific needs.

DEFINING FEATURES OF FIRST STREET U.S COURTHOUSE

Stormwater treatment device.



Native plants behind the courthouse.

California buckwheat.

LEED CERTIFICATION

As a LEED-Certified building, the First Street U.S. Courthouse upholds sustainable practices. It incorporates water-efficient fixtures, drought-tolerant landscaping, and a 100,000-gallon rainwater cistern to minimize water waste and support the urban ecosystem. Additionally, the courthouse's solar panels generate 525,000 kWh of clean energy annually, significantly reducing its carbon footprint. The courthouse demonstrates the potential of innovative approaches in reducing environmental impact while preserving biodiversity.

SHOWCASING SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S BIOMES

The courthouse's landscaping has distinct sections, representing unique Southern California biomes. Surrounding the building, there is a blend of chaparral and oak woodland and on the rooftop, there is a drought-tolerant desert landscape. The courthouse ensures pesticide-free maintenance, hand-pulling any weeds that may appear. Additionally, the courthouse landscaping is irrigated with reclaimed water, reducing strain on water resources. This dedication to environmentally-friendly maintenance practices preserves the landscape and leads to cost savings.

SOIL RESTORATION

To ensure a flourishing habitat, all disturbed or compacted soils on the courthouse grounds were restored before landscaping occurred. Regular soil quality testing at the landscaped sites provides insights into soil health, allowing managers to better support plant growth. This is meaningful because soil is the backbone of biodiversity. The courthouse's dedication to maintaining healthy soil nurtures a diverse range of plant and animal species.

TUJUNGA WASH GREENWAY

LA RIVER GREENWAY

Photo: Paul Edelman

TUJUNGA WASH GREENWAY

LA RIVER GREENWAY

5851 Coldwater Canyon Ave, Van Nuys 91401

Council District 2

Greenway

BACKGROUND: The Tujunga Wash Greenway was restored in 2007, to restore natural habitat, install native plant landscaping, and create pedestrian and bike paths for active recreation. This collaborative restoration effort between government agencies, community organizations, and environmental groups balanced flood control needs while developing an inviting public space. Today, the greenway plays a vital role in supporting the local ecosystem by infiltrating and storing up to 118 million gallons of water from the Tujunga Wash flood channel annually, helping to replenish the San Fernando groundwater basin. The Tujunga Wash Greenway showcases the potential of turning functional infrastructure into a sustainable and vibrant community asset.

Riparian plants and mulch along the wash. Photo: Paul Edelman

PARTNERS: The LA County Department of Public Works and the LA County Flood Control District own and oversee the Tujunga Wash Greenway. The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) constructed the restoration project, with funding through grants from the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, California Natural Resources Agency, and LA County Open Space District. Today, the County continues to maintain the greenway, working to preserve the ecological integrity of the area and maintain water quality.

Gateway to the Tujunga Wash path. Photo: Paul Edelman

DEFINING FEATURES OF TUJUNGA WASH GREENWAY

Great blue heron.

Side view of the Tujunga Wash. Photo: Paul Edelman

Toyon leaves and berries.

INDICATOR SPECIES

A number of the City's Biodiversity Indicator Species, or species whose presence is indicative of good ecosystem health, have been observed along the wash using iNaturalist, a community science application. The indicator species that have been observed include side-blotched lizards, Lorquin's admiral, red-tailed hawks, western bluebirds, western toads, western meadowlark, California quail, acorn woodpecker, and the elusive bobcat and mountain lion.

FOSTERING BIODIVERSITY, CULTURE, AND ECO-CONSCIOUSNESS

The Tujunga Wash Greenway shows the potential of multi-benefit design in urban spaces. The wash embraces biodiversity by providing natural habitats, while dedicated bike paths offer a way for people to access these habitats. The inclusion of murals, such as the Great Wall of Los Angeles, add cultural importance to the space. Spaces like the Tujunga Wash Greenway allow people to experience urban biodiversity, deepening bonds with nature and inspiring eco-consciousness.

NATIVE PLANTS PURIFY POLLUTED WATERS

Through nature-based innovative efforts, a once neglected waterway is now a flourishing wash. Native plants that are thoughtfully integrated into the streambed serve as natural purifiers as water passes through. At the same time, these native plants create a thriving habitat for an array of species. This remarkable ecological revival shows the power of nature-based solutions.

S. MARK TAPER LIFE SCIENCE GARDENS

BOTANICAL GARDENS AT PIERCE COLLEGE

Photo: Pat Farris

S. MARK TAPER LIFE SCIENCE GARDENS

PIERCE COLLEGE BOTANICAL GARDENS

6201 Winnetka Ave,
Woodland Hills, 91367

Council District 3

Native Plant Garden

BACKGROUND: In 1999, faculty decided to create a Mediterranean climate showcase garden at Pierce College. Faculty collaborated with landscape architects and the Pierce College Foundation to design and fund the garden. The garden features California native plants and plants from other Mediterranean climates around the world, like Australia, and is an important, multi-use space on campus.

Allen's hummingbird. Photo: Pat Farris.

Pond with riparian plants. Photo: Pat Farris.

PARTNERS: The Life Sciences Department at Pierce College designed and maintains the gardens. The department brings its expertise to create and nurture this educational space.

DEFINING FEATURES OF S. MARK TAPER LIFE SCIENCE GARDENS

Volunteers shoveling mulch. Photo: Pat Farris.

A MULTI-PURPOSE HAVEN FOR STUDENTS AND WILDLIFE

The S. Mark Taper Life Science Botanical Gardens serve multiple purposes. First, they provide a peaceful environment for students and the public to enjoy and relax. Second, the gardens serve as a habitat for small wildlife, which is essential to maintaining biodiversity in urban areas. Finally, as an outdoor laboratory for biology courses, it offers students an accessible option for hands-on learning. The multi-use role of these gardens, serving the general public, as well as scientific studies, sets S. Mark Taper Life Science Botanical Gardens apart from other gardenscapes.

Fossil imprints on the "Evolution Walk". Photo: Pat Farris

THE "EVOLUTION WALK"

The gardens feature a special trail called the "Evolution Walk", which guides visitors on a journey through evolutionary time. The trail provides in-depth information about the natural history of the site and its plants. The educational experience is enhanced by interpretive signage, free brochures, and plant identification placards. These small features enhance the educational value and accessibility of the gardens by providing visitors with an interactive understanding of natural history.

Prickly pear cactus. Photo: Pat Farris

DROUGHT-TOLERANT VEGETATION

The botanical gardens showcase drought-tolerant vegetation from around the world. The garden highlights plant species from California, the Mediterranean Basin, Chile, South Africa, and Australia—regions that share similar Mediterranean climates. These carefully selected plants serve as living proof of the adaptability of flora in arid environments.

LAFD STATION 83

FIRE STATION

LAFD FIRE STATION 83

FIRE STATION

4960 Balboa Blvd, Encino 91436

Council District 4

Native Plant Garden

BACKGROUND: Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) Station 83, established in 1942, serves the Encino community with fire and rescue services. A portion of the grounds has been converted into a native pollinator garden, piloting the use of native plants on the grounds of LAFD fire stations. The progress of this pilot program is being monitored by the Mayor's Office and City Council.

PARTNERS: LAFD Station 83 has partnered with the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society (SFVAS) to create a pollinator garden on a section of its grounds. Volunteers from the SFVAS help maintain the space, watering plants and weeding as needed, and have made financial contributions that have enabled the implementation and upkeep of the native pollinator garden. Other partners, including the Encino Neighborhood Council and Los Angeles City Council District 4 (Nithya Raman), have also been instrumental in supporting and funding the native plant landscaping efforts at the station. Council District 4 has graciously provided resources, including services of the Los Angeles Conservation Corps for occasional weeding and mulching.

Tree well with native plants.

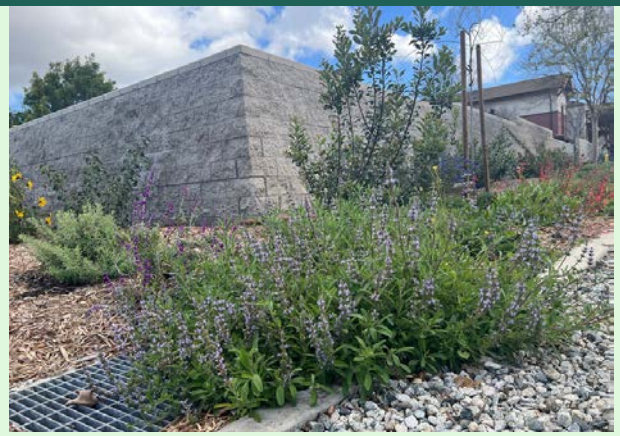
Native plant landscaping.

DEFINING FEATURES OF LAFD STATION 83

Potential for garden growth in unused planting beds.

TRANSFORMING PLANTING BEDS AND ATTRACTING WILDLIFE

In 2022, the planting beds at LAFD Station 83 were cleared of weeds and then planted with native, pollinator-friendly plants, making them a magnet for pollinators, and bird watering stations were hung nearby to supplement the seeds and bugs from the garden. Notably, this project was made possible by contributions from community organizations like SFVAS, as well as support from Los Angeles City Council District 4 and the Los Angeles Conservation Corps.



Cleveland sage.

NATIVE PLANT DIVERSITY AT FIRE STATION 83

The LAFD Station 83 native plant garden features an array of beautiful native plants that attract and support pollinators. Currently, the garden showcases toyon, chaparral beard tongue, desert willow, chamise, narrowleaf milkweed, Baja fairy duster, yarrow, sunflowers, Cleveland sage, bladderpod, sugar bush, California sagebrush, desert mallow, and more. SFVAS has ambitious plans to expand the plant palette and footprint of the pollinator gardens in the future.

Permeable decorative gravel.

LEVERAGING PERMEABLE SPACE

LAFD Station 83 has around 13,000 square feet of permeable land. This is noteworthy because many urban fire stations have little permeable space, making it challenging to create gardens. In contrast, LAFD Station 83 has the unique advantage of having ample space to establish vibrant and environmentally beneficial native plant installations.

GRIFFITH PARK

NATURAL MUNICIPAL PARK

GRIFFITH PARK

NATURAL MUNICIPAL PARK

4730 Crystal Springs Dr, Los Angeles 90027

Council District 4

Natural Park

BACKGROUND: Griffith Park, comprised of 4,210 acres, is the largest municipal park with urban wilderness in the United States. Managed by the City's Recreation and Parks Department, Griffith Park is an iconic, renowned landmark in the center of Los Angeles that has tremendous cultural and ecological value. Griffith Park's size and location make it a special place for Angelenos and wildlife. The site contains a mix of recreational activities and dedicated wilderness areas. The park was made possible via a generous donation from Colonel Griffith J. Griffith and his wife, Mary Agnes Christine, who donated 3,000+ acres to the City of Los Angeles in 1896 to create a public park. Ever since, Griffith Park has served as an important public space for generations of Angelenos. The Department's Park Ranger Division, which is responsible for safety and preservation, offers educational programs at the park.

Hiker on the Fern Dell Nature Trail.
Photo: City of Los Angeles Dept. Recreation and Parks

PARTNERS: Partners at Griffith Park include Friends of Griffith Park, Los Angeles Parks Foundation, and Sierra Club. These partners support the park's conservation, restoration, and sustainable management. Friends of Griffith Park promotes public awareness and holds volunteer events. The Los Angeles Parks Foundation has provided resources and support for the park's ongoing maintenance. The Sierra Club holds community events, like hikes.

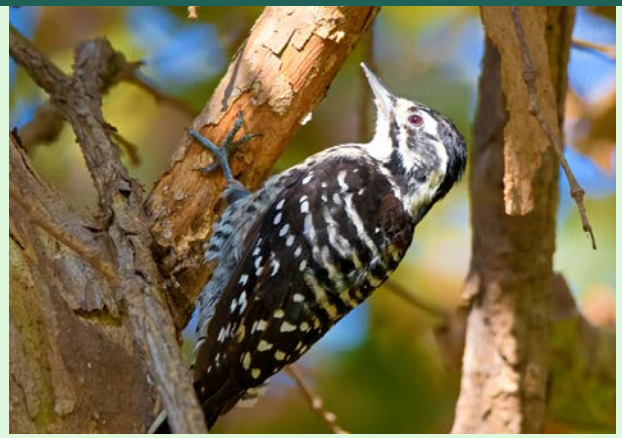
Mule deer.

DEFINING FEATURES OF GRIFFITH PARK

Junior Ranger hike. Photo: City of Los Angeles Dept. Recreation and Parks

ATTRACTIONS AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

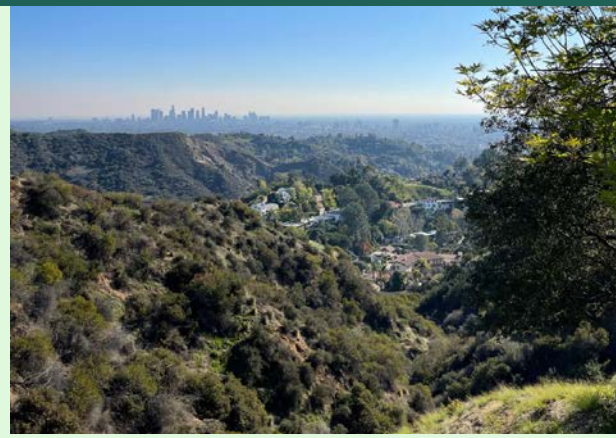
Griffith Park offers a variety of attractions that promote biodiversity. The park has museums, caves, trails, and the LA Zoo, providing opportunities for people to engage with the natural world. In addition to these attractions, Griffith Park offers educational programs that promote biodiversity conservation. Visitors can participate in composting workshops at the Griffith Park Composting Facility, learn about plants at the Horticulture Learning Center and Demonstration Garden, take guided walks, and participate in various school programs at the Griffith Observatory.



Nuttall's woodpecker.

WILDLIFE IN THE PARK

Griffith Park is renowned for its remarkable biodiversity. With its large size and diverse habitats, the park is home to many plant and animal species, some of which are rare, threatened, or endangered. Researchers have documented about 200 species of birds in the park, about 60 of them year-round residents. Additionally, the park is home to 50 species of butterflies, 19 species of reptiles, and 40 species of mammals, including the recently deceased, iconic mountain lion, P-22.



Chaparral plants.

DIVERSE PLANT COMMUNITIES

Griffith Park has a diverse range of plant communities including coastal sage scrub, oak and walnut woodlands, and riparian ecosystems. The park has a wide variety of native flora, including species of oak, walnut, lilac, mountain mahogany, sage, toyon, and sumac, as well as threatened species of manzanita and barberry. In total, over 150 plant species have been documented at Griffith Park.

SAGE HILL

UCLA NATURE CLASSROOM

Photo: Andy Kleinhesselink

SAGE HILL

UCLA NATURE CLASSROOM

Sage Hill,
Los Angeles 90024

Council District 5

Natural Park

BACKGROUND: Sage Hill is the most biodiverse native landscape on the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) campus. Situated in the northwestern corner of the campus, Sage Hill has long served as an informal setting for teaching and research. Recognizing its potential, UCLA officially established Sage Hill as a living laboratory and nature classroom. Because Sage Hill is an active restoration site and hosts many classes and research projects, access is restricted to UCLA students, faculty, and staff.

Plant life at Sage Hill. Photo: Andy Kleinhesselink

PARTNERS: In coordination with a campus advisory committee composed of UCLA faculty, students, and staff, the Institute of the Environment and Sustainability (IoES) manages the site, plans restoration activities, and facilitates course access for the benefit of the entire campus. UCLA is partnering with members of the Gabrielino-Tongva Tribal community to co-steward Sage Hill in a way that respects their role as knowledge bearers and traditional land caretakers in the region. The space is available for Tribal activities including education, harvesting, gathering, and caretaking.

Spotted towhee. Photo: Nurit Katz

DEFINING FEATURES OF SAGE HILL

California poppies. Photo: Nurit Katz

THE WILDEST PLACE ON CAMPUS

Dubbed the "wildest place on campus," Sage Hill stands as one of the last patches of native coastal sage scrub habitat in urban West Los Angeles. Despite its compact 3.5-acre size, the site boasts an impressive array of flora and fauna, with a staggering 418 identified species. Among them are black sage, sticky monkeyflower, and laurel sumac, providing vital habitat for wildlife, such as big-eared woodrats, black-bellied slender salamanders, and spotted towhees.

UCLA students next to a pile of removed weeds. Photo: Tom Gillespie.

STUDENT-DRIVEN CONSERVATION

Student enthusiasm for preserving Sage Hill has played an important role in maintaining this ecologically valuable pocket of native habitat. UCLA students serve on the Sage Hill advisory committee and play an active role in decision-making. Student research conducted for courses in IoES and other departments provides valuable information needed to manage the site. Student clubs and volunteers engage in hands-on restoration activity including removing invasive plants, planting native plants, and monitoring the site.

Allen's hummingbird. Photo: Nurit Katz.

NATURE ENHANCES UCLA'S LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Sage Hill plays an important role as an outdoor, hands-on classroom at UCLA, providing a wild space for exploration and discovery. Faculty and students across a spectrum of disciplines including American Indian studies, archaeology, ecology, film, design, geography, humanities, and many more, actively use this space for teaching and research. Outdoor educational spaces like Sage Hill are important for student learning and facilitate meaningful connections with nature.

WESTWOOD GREENWAY

WATER TREATMENT GREENWAY

Photo: Westwood Greenway, Inc.

WESTWOOD GREENWAY

WATER TREATMENT GREENWAY

2598-2596 Westwood Blvd
Los Angeles 90064

Council District 5

Greenway

BACKGROUND: In the early 2000s, the two-acre site that would eventually become the Westwood Greenway was intended to become parking for Metro's light rail line. Due in large part to community advocacy, the site instead has been revitalized into a vibrant green space with native plants and an engineered stream that supports biodiversity. Site revitalization included "daylighting" a section of a former creek to restore surface flows; dry-weather flow in the storm drain is redirected from the surrounding area, pumped through the Greenway, and then rejoins the storm drain system flowing to Ballona Creek and Santa Monica Bay. The Greenway is built on land owned by the City of LA and augmented by adjacent LA Metro land.

Educational signage along the walking path. Photo: Westwood Greenway, Inc.

PARTNERS: Westwood Greenway, Inc., Councilmember Emeritus Koretz, LA Metro, LA Sanitation & Environment, and the City of Los Angeles Bureau of Engineering partnered to implement the Westwood Greenway. These collaborators supported the development, maintenance, and success of the Greenway. Westwood Greenway, Inc. offers volunteer opportunities, expertise, and support. Councilmember Emeritus Koretz provided resources, guidance, and advocacy. The City of Los Angeles Bureau of Engineering contributes expertise in planning and design, ensuring compliance with regulations.

Water quality testing. Photo: Westwood Greenway, Inc.

DEFINING FEATURES OF WESTWOOD GREENWAY

Visitors on a guided tour of the greenway. Photo: Westwood Greenway, Inc.

UCLA STUDENT COLLABORATION FOR BIODIVERSITY EDUCATION

In 2022, UCLA students collaborated with Westwood Greenway Inc. to develop a site-specific Biodiversity Index, modeled after the LA City Biodiversity Index, for the Westwood Greenway as part of a practicum project. The students published their findings and offered recommendations to improve the habitat on site. The partnership with UCLA students exemplifies the Westwood Greenway's engagement with the local community, including university students, to promote innovative ideas and knowledge in biodiversity conservation.

Sedge plants planted along a waterway. Photo: Westwood Greenway, Inc.

CERTIFIED AS AN OCEAN FRIENDLY GARDEN AND AS WILDLIFE HABITAT

The Westwood Greenway is certified as an Ocean Friendly Garden by the Surfrider Foundation and as Wildlife Habitat by the National Wildlife Federation. The Greenway's Ocean Friendly Garden certification attests to its water-wise approach, utilizing native plants to capture runoff and filter pollutants from reaching Ballona Creek. As a certified Wildlife Habitat, the Greenway is dedicated to supporting wildlife through providing food sources, shelter, and water, and maintaining the land with sustainable practices.

California buckwheat. Photo: Westwood Greenway, Inc.

DIVERSE FLORA AND FAUNA

A variety of carefully selected planted vegetation can be found at the Greenway including narrowleaf milkweed, white alder, oaks, Catalina cherry, douglas iris, mallows, and several sages. In addition to these planted species, the Greenway is also home to self-established plants, such as California poppy, sedges, and willow. The presence of birds, mammals, lizards, and a variety of insects highlights the ecological richness of the Westwood Greenway.

SEPULVEDA BASIN WILDLIFE RESERVE

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AREA

Photo: Nurit Katz

SEPULVEDA BASIN WILDLIFE RESERVE

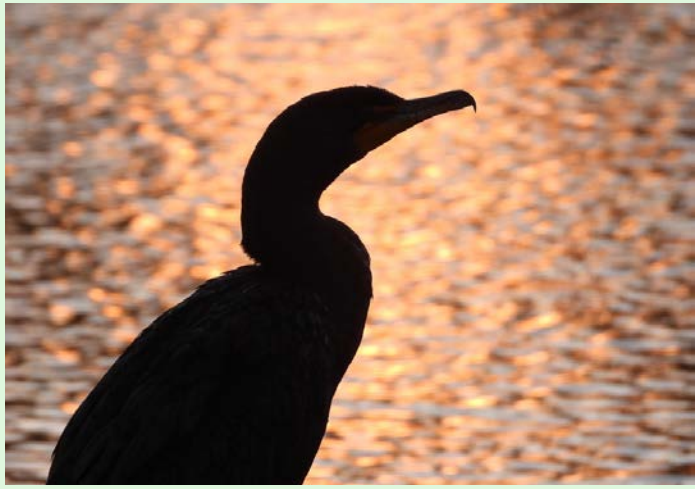
WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AREA

6350 Woodley Ave,
Van Nuys 91436

Council District 6

Wildlife Reserve

BACKGROUND: The Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve began in 1979 as a 48-acre revegetation project by the U.S Army Corps of Engineers. In 1981, the Army Corps more than doubled the reserve to include over 100 acres. Today, the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve features native plants and trees, hiking trails, a wildlife lake with viewing stations, and an outdoor educational amphitheater. The reserve provides habitats that support a range of wildlife, including a variety of birds, frogs, lizards, turtles, snakes, rabbits, coyotes, and opossums.



Double-crested cormorant. Photo: Nurit Katz

PARTNERS: The Wildlife Reserve is overseen and managed collaboratively by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the LA City Department of Recreation and Parks, and the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Areas Steering Committee. The steering committee, which is composed of representatives from the Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains, San Fernando Valley Audubon Society, California Native Plant Society, Friends of the LA River, LA Audubon Society, Sierra Club, and The River Project, has helped preserve the natural environment, promote native plant species, and advocate for restoration of the Los Angeles River and its tributaries.

Western fence lizard. Photo: Nurit Katz

DEFINING FEATURES OF SEPULVEDA BASIN WILDLIFE RESERVE

Peregrine falcon. Photo: Nurit Katz

WILDLIFE HOTSPOT

The Reserve is home to an array of wildlife, making it a popular spot for nature enthusiasts. It provides habitat for over 200 bird species, including great blue heron, peregrine falcon, and northern mockingbird, as well as sensitive, threatened, and endangered species like the least bell's vireo and southwestern willow flycatcher. It's also a stopover location for migratory birds, making it an important site for conservation efforts. Additionally, Sepulveda Basin is home to a variety of amphibians, reptiles, and mammals such as fox, opossum, raccoon, and rabbits.

Volunteers planting native plants during a restoration event.

HANDS-ON LEARNING

The Sepulveda Basin offers a unique opportunity for students to learn about the natural world. Several education programs and youth camps operate out of the Basin, including the Sepulveda Basin Environmental Education Program (SBEEP) organized by the San Fernando Audubon Society and the Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains. With SBEEP, students have the chance to participate in field trips and learn about ecology firsthand. This program is completely free for schools, reducing financial barriers and enhancing accessibility to nature education.

California rose. Photo: Nurit Katz

A DIVERSE RANGE OF PLANT COMMUNITIES

The Sepulveda Basin is home to a diverse range of plant communities, including riparian forest, riparian shrubland, oak and walnut woodlands, coastal sage scrub, and aquatic plant communities. Within the wilderness area, there are approximately 100 species of native California plants, each contributing to the Sepulveda Basin's rich ecological diversity.

HANSEN DAM RECREATION AREA

WILDLIFE AND RECREATION AREA

HANSEN DAM RECREATION AREA

WILDLIFE AND RECREATION AREA

11770 Foothill Blvd, Lake View Terrace 91342

Council District 7

Natural Park

BACKGROUND: The Hansen Dam was constructed in 1940 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to mitigate flooding. It is located in the northeastern San Fernando Valley neighborhood of Lake View Terrace. Within the Hansen Dam Recreation Area, the City of Los Angeles oversees various day-use facilities, including golf courses, riding stables, and walking trails. One prominent feature is the Hansen Dam Aquatic Center, spanning 40 acres and offering a range of water-based recreational activities. The center includes a 9-acre recreational lake and a 1.5-acre swimming lake, providing opportunities for fishing and boating. The park's natural areas have diverse habitats, including montane chaparral, woodlands, and riparian ecosystems. Efforts are underway to restore the ecological balance by removing invasive plant species and reintroducing native plants.

PARTNERS: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers manages and maintains Hansen Dam and the reservoir in partnership with the City of Los Angeles. The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) collaborates with the Army Corps of Engineers to manage water supply and water conservation efforts. Community-based organizations, like the Sierra Club, have held volunteer restoration events at the Hansen Dam to remove invasive plants.

Golden currant. Photo: iNaturalist

Yellow-rumped warbler. Photo: iNaturalist

DEFINING FEATURES OF THE HANSEN DAM RECREATION AREA

Artificial wetlands.

Great egret. Photo: iNaturalist

Willow plant.

MULTI-BENEFICIAL WETLANDS

The recently restored Hansen Dam Wetlands mitigate the negative impacts of stormwater pollution via bioswales, infiltration basins, treatment wetlands, and native vegetation, all of which work to clean pollutants and improve water quality. These innovative stormwater management techniques not only protect the delicate aquatic ecosystems, but also provide a vital habitat for diverse wildlife species. The native vegetation enhances the overall ecological health of the wetlands and provides food and shelter for wildlife.

EDUCATIONAL EXHIBITS INSPIRE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Located within the Hansen Dam Recreation Area, the Discovery Cube Science Center is an educational hub for children and families. "The Organics Waste Lab" at the Science Center provides information on the importance of composting and includes hands-on activities. The Discovery Cube Science Center empowers children to become environmental stewards, encouraging them to make changes in their daily lives to improve the environment in Los Angeles.

WILDLIFE HABITAT

The natural areas of the Hansen Dam Recreation Area are intentionally preserved to maintain biodiversity. These lands serve as habitats for various plant and animal species, supporting ecological balance. Native vegetation provides food, shelter, and nesting sites for wildlife. By preserving these undeveloped lands, the park contributes to the conservation of biodiversity and offers visitors the chance to experience the beauty of nature.

NORMAN O. HOUSTON PARK

RECREATION AREA

NORMAN O. HOUSTON PARK

RECREATION AREA

4800 S La Brea Ave,
Los Angeles 90008

Council District 8

Natural Park

BACKGROUND: Norman O. Houston Park was built in the 1980s, providing recreational space for South LA residents. Former City Councilwoman Pat Russell named the park after a local businessman, Norman O. Houston. In 2014, the park underwent a $2.5 million renovation, which funded the creation of new walking paths, installation of workout equipment, construction of a playground, and landscaping improvements. Over the years, Norman O. Houston Park has also been a community gathering space, hosting events such as the South LA Pride celebration in 2022. Furthermore, Norman O. Houston is adjacent to the southernmost point of Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area, allowing visitors easy access to hiking trails and biodiversity throughout the Baldwin Hills.

Sign at park entrance.

PARTNERS: Norman O. Houston Park is actively managed by the City's Department of Recreation and Parks. Partnerships with the Baldwin Hills Nature Conservancy, which helped fund the park's renovation in 2014, and with the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, which helps maintain the Park to Playa trail, have been crucial in creating and maintaining this community space.

Walking path through trees.

DEFINING FEATURES OF NORMAN O. HOUSTON PARK

Outdoor fitness equipment.

Park to Playa Trail map.

Side-blotched lizard.

BALANCING BIODIVERSITY AND RECREATION

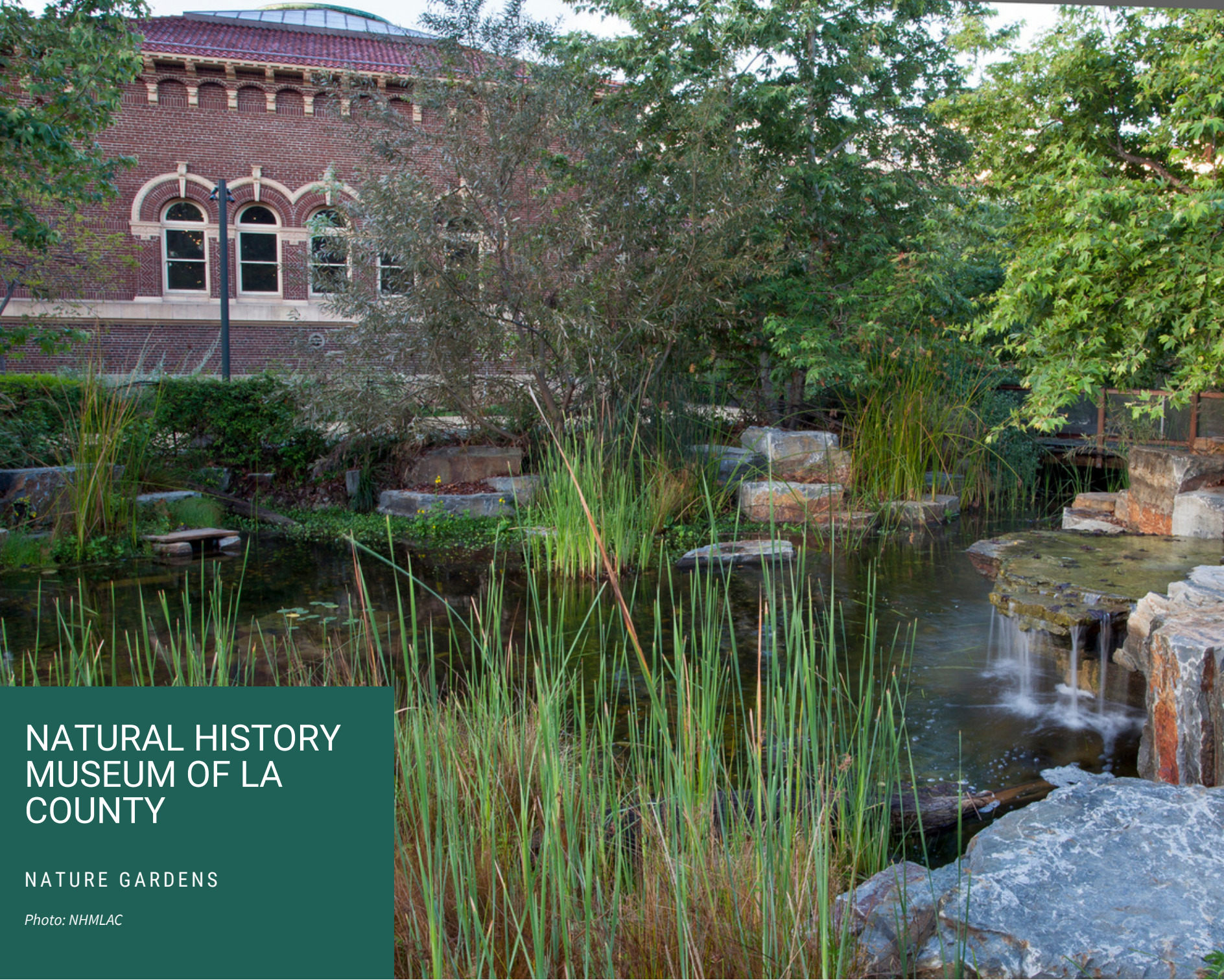
Despite its small size, Norman O. Houston Park is well-connected to the larger network of parks and open spaces in Baldwin Hills through trails and transit, making it easily accessible. Additionally, the park offers various recreational amenities, including a basketball court, bike path, fitness equipment, and picnic tables, attracting visitors from all around Los Angeles. This small, yet versatile, park has a balance of nature and recreation for everyone to enjoy.

THE PARK TO PLAYA TRAIL

Norman O. Houston Park is a part of the Park to Playa Trail. This 14-mile regional trail goes through diverse ecosystems, from the Baldwin Hills Parklands all the way to the Pacific Ocean. Trails are important for guiding visitors along designated paths, ensuring that adjacent sensitive habitats are protected from human trampling. Furthermore, trails like the Park to Playa trail are important amidst continued urbanization of Los Angeles, helping to create connections between fragmented ecosystems for humans and wildlife.

BIODIVERSITY IN AN URBAN PARK

Norman O. Houston Park, which is adjacent to the expansive Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area, is home to some impressive biodiversity despite catering to recreation. Species documented by the iNaturalist community include side-blotched lizards, red-tailed hawks, California buckwheat, toyon, sagebrush, and western bluebirds. Norman O. Houston is a perfect place for people to enjoy picnics under the shade of trees and to listen to birds.



NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF LA COUNTY

NATURE GARDENS

Photo: NHMLAC

NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF LA COUNTY

NATURE GARDENS

900 Exposition Blvd,
Los Angeles 90007

Council District 9

Native Plant Garden

BACKGROUND: The Natural History Museum of LA County (NHMLAC) opened to the public in November 1913. Over time, the museum gradually outgrew its original structure and was renovated and restored, reopening in the spring of 2009 with new exhibits such as the Age of Mammals, Dinosaur Hall, and Becoming Los Angeles. The 3.5-acre nature gardens were created on what used to be an asphalt parking lot, with the aim of providing habitat for and environmental education about native wildlife in an urban setting. The gardens, designed and planted by Studio-MLA in 2013, incorporate water, rocks, plants, and soils to support a variety of insects, reptiles, mammals, and birds. The nature gardens utilize native and climate-appropriate plants to create wildlife habitat.

Pathway in the gardens. Photo: NHMLAC

PARTNERS: The overall design and planting of the museum nature gardens was a collaboration between Mia Lehrer and Associates, now known as Studio-MLA, and the Natural History Museum's "habitat team" made up of science and education staff. This collaboration ensured that the gardens were thoughtfully designed to match the museum's mission of providing an enriching experience for visitors while supporting native wildlife. Additionally, Pacific Advanced Civil Engineering played a role in constructing two water features within the gardens: the habitat pond and a concrete water feature for kids to play in.

Students at the bird-viewing platform. Photo: NHMLAC

DEFINING FEATURES OF THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF LA COUNTY NATURE GARDENS

Student with an insect in a vial Photo: NHMLAC

Monarch butterfly on a native milkweed. Photo: NHMLAC

Succulents on the living wall. Photo: NHMLAC

ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING AT THE MUSEUM

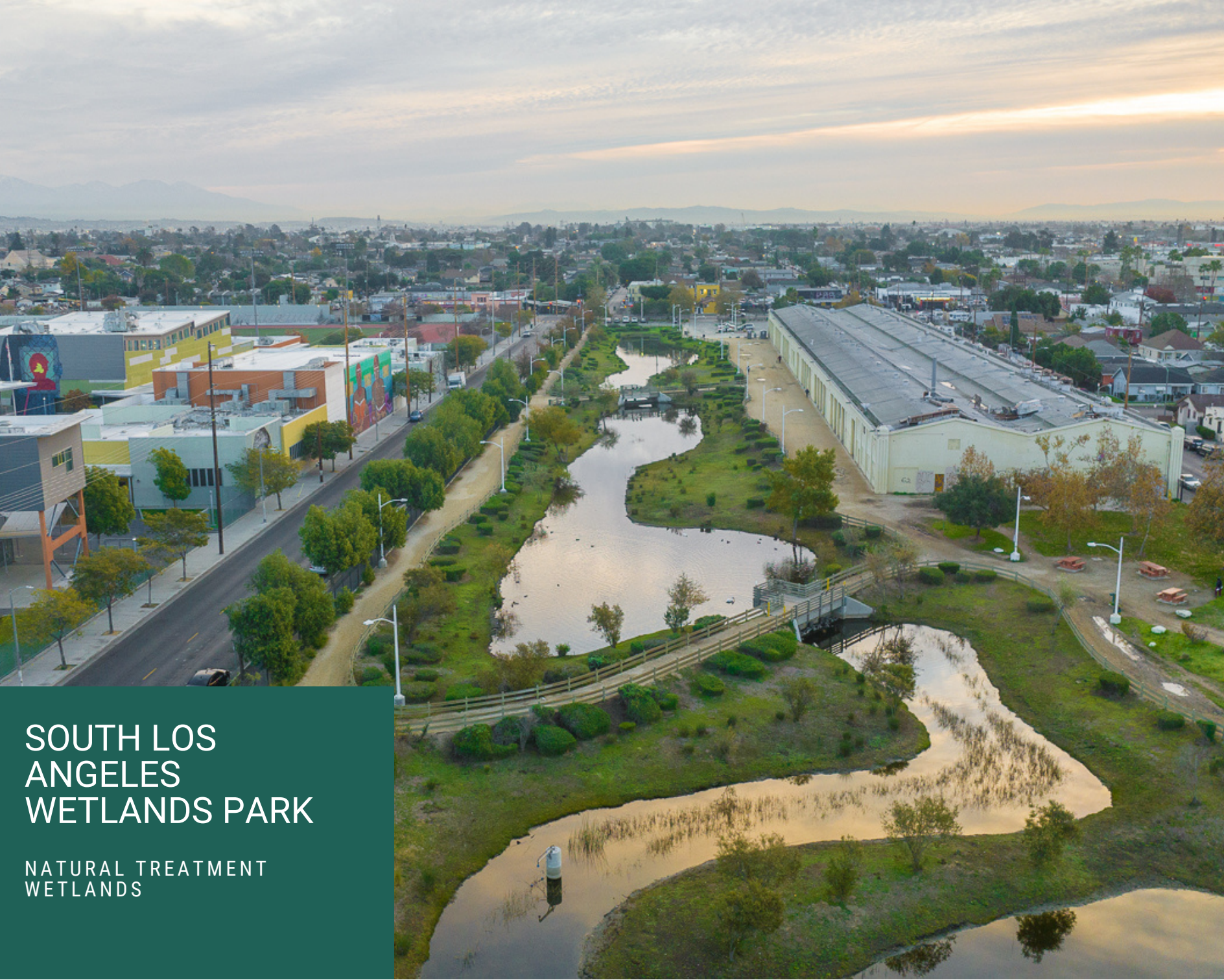
The nature gardens offer a wide range of environmental learning. It features the "Get Dirty Zone" which is a hands-on learning area where visitors can learn about the importance of composting and even see compost bins in action. The nature gardens also have an "Edible Garden" which is full of different edible plants and hosts gardening workshops. In addition to these interactive exhibits, the museum also regularly runs school programs, providing educational opportunities for students of all ages.

THE VIBRANT INSECT LIFE OF THE NATURE GARDENS

The nature gardens at the Natural History Museum of LA County are home to an array of insect species, with 655 observed varieties. Visitors can observe dragonflies, butterflies, and bees as well as hover flies, scuttle flies, and beetles. By providing suitable conditions and incorporating water sources and appropriate plants, the nature gardens are a hotspot for urban biodiversity. The vibrant insect life within the nature gardens serves as a reminder of our capacity to sustain wildlife amidst a cityscape.

OUTDOOR NATURE GARDENS AND THE LIVING WALL EXHIBIT

The outdoor nature gardens have over 600 types of plants, featuring both California native species and plants from around the world. The nature gardens also have a meadow dedicated to pollinators, providing them with a space to feed. A major highlight of the outdoor exhibits is the living wall, which is a sandstone wall covered with a variety of dry-climate plants that emulates a cliff-adapted ecosystem.



SOUTH LOS ANGELES WETLANDS PARK

NATURAL TREATMENT WETLANDS

SOUTH LOS ANGELES WETLANDS PARK

NATURAL TREATMENT WETLANDS

5413 Avalon Blvd,
Los Angeles 90011

Council District 9

Greenway

BACKGROUND: South LA Wetlands Park is situated in an industrial area of the South Park district, where green space is scarce. Prior to construction, the space was a bus and rail yard. The transformation of the space into a thriving green park has helped address public health and quality of life challenges. The park incorporates a smart water treatment system that diverts stormwater to a small treatment facility that purifies the water and removes trash and chemicals, including oil. The cleansed water is released into the Los Angeles River, ultimately reaching the ocean. By using natural treatment wetlands to treat stormwater, the park is a testament to the value of multi-benefit, innovative approaches to environmental challenges.

View from the walking path.

PARTNERS: The construction of the South LA Wetlands Park involved the Department of Public Works, including LA Sanitation & Environment and the Bureau of Engineering, and the Department of Recreation and Parks. The EPA Urban Waters Federal Partnership played a significant role in supporting the revitalization of the wetlands.

Edge of the wetlands with riparian plants.

DEFINING FEATURES OF THE SOUTH LA WETLANDS PARK

City employee working in the wetlands.

View from the pedestrian bridge.

Pedestrian bridge over the wetlands.

STORMWATER TREATMENT

The wetlands at South LA Wetlands Park promote ecosystem health by treating stormwater. When polluted stormwater enters water bodies such as rivers, lakes, or oceans, it can harm aquatic ecosystems. Pollutants like oil, grease, and chemicals present a significant threat to aquatic organisms. Stormwater can be treated through various means, including natural ecosystems such as the treatment wetlands at the South LA Wetlands Park, as well as other green infrastructure like bioswales. These measures help protect aquatic and riparian organisms and ecosystems.

WETLAND AND RIPARIAN HABITAT

This project established a wetland with riparian and emergent marsh habitat in the heart of a densely-populated urban community. The vegetation, composed of 88 California native shrubs and trees, provides a thriving habitat for wildlife. Furthermore, the plants on site are maintained without harmful pesticides or fertilizer, further promoting watershed health.

A THRIVING PARK IN THE HEART OF THE CITY

South LA Wetlands Park is a shining example of how abandoned industrial sites can be transformed into thriving green spaces. Once a concrete pavement bus and rail yard, this area now boasts a biodiverse landscape that is open to the public. This amazing transformation demonstrates the potential for repurposing idle land for the benefit of both people and the environment.

KENNETH HAHN STATE RECREATION AREA

PARK AND RECREATION AREA

Photo: LA County Dept. Parks and Recreation

KENNETH HAHN STATE RECREATION AREA

PARK AND RECREATION AREA

4100 S La Cienega Blvd, Los Angeles 90056

Council District 10

Natural Park

BACKGROUND: The Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area, formerly the Baldwin Hills State Recreational Area, opened in 1983. It was renamed in 1988 in honor of LA County Supervisor Hahn to honor his conservation work. The park has since been expanded by acquiring land from decommissioned oil drilling operations. The Baldwin Hills & Urban Watersheds Conservancy, which has representatives from both the City and County, plays a significant role in managing and protecting the area. The City, County, and State work together to conserve and preserve this important coastal sage scrub habitat.

Hummingbird Garden.

PARTNERS: Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area is managed by the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation. It is overseen as a state park by the California Department of Parks and Recreation. The Baldwin Hills Conservancy plays a vital role in funding conservation efforts. Community organizations, like LA Audubon, host bird walks, while Mujeres de la Tierra and Northeast Trees organize tree planting events.

Gopher snake.

DEFINING FEATURES OF KENNETH HAHN STATE RECREATION AREA

Coyote brush.

Park to Playa Trailhead.

Anna's hummingbird perched on a bird feeder. Photo: iNaturalist

COASTAL SAGE SCRUB SUPPORTS WILDLIFE AND ENDEMIC BEE DIVERSITY

Native coastal sage scrub habitat plays a crucial role in supporting wildlife, particularly insect species, and is recognized for attracting the highest diversity of endemic bees in North America. This highlights the habitat's significance in maintaining regional biodiversity. The coastal sage scrub habitat onsite, and the species it supports, transcend jurisdictional boundaries and require collaboration to ensure they are protected.

CONNECTIONS ALONG THE PARK TO PLAYA TRAIL

Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area is one of the six segments of the 14-mile-long Park to Playa Trail. The trail passes through various County- and City-managed sites, highlighting the shared effort in maintaining outdoor spaces. As part of this trail, this recreation area provides easy access to nature, seamlessly linking parks and the Pacific Ocean for all Angelenos to connect with the outdoors. A notable feature of this trail is the Trail Bridge, which helps connect fragmented habitats, enhancing access for both humans and wildlife.

A NESTING GROUND FOR BIRD SPECIES

Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area is more than just a scenic location; it's also a crucial nesting ground for over 40 different species of birds. To appreciate these wonderful birds, The Los Angeles Audubon Society offers monthly birdwatching walks. These walks expose people to the beauty of the Baldwin Hills neighborhood and the wildlife that calls it home.

BALLONA WETLANDS

ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

BALLONA WETLANDS

ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

303 Culver Blvd
Playa Del Rey 90293

Council District 11

Wildlife Reserve

BACKGROUND: Over 4 million acres (nearly 90%) of coastal wetlands in Southern California have been lost due to development. The Ballona Wetlands stand out as one of the few remaining coastal wetlands in Los Angeles. The Ballona Wetlands function as an ecological reserve and have immense ecological significance. Despite this, the Ballona Wetlands have been degraded over time and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife has proposed ambitious plans to restore the site.

Wildlife photographer.

PARTNERS: The restoration and conservation efforts at the Ballona Wetlands are supported by key partnerships. The wetlands are owned and managed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Friends of Ballona Wetlands plays a role in advocating for the protection of the wetlands. The Bay Foundation monitors the wetlands and collaborates on planning and implementing restoration projects.

California poppies.

DEFINING FEATURES OF BALLONA WETLANDS

Scrub habitat.

Students exploring saltwater marsh.
Photo: Friends of Ballona Wetlands

Great blue heron.

COASTAL SALT MARSHES ARE HIGHLY PRODUCTIVE HABITATS

Coastal salt marshes are unique ecosystems shaped by tides and freshwater flows. Salt marshes are highly productive ecosystems, fostering the growth of many wetland plant species that provide food and habitat for animals. The coastal salt marshes, as well as upland habitats, at the Ballona Wetlands provide valuable habitat for a variety of native plants and animals, including many rare, threatened, and endangered species. The wetlands are also a habitat for numerous biodiversity indicator species, including cinnamon teal, gray fox, and California kingsnake.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

The Friends of Ballona Wetlands' Explore Ballona! Nature Camp provides opportunities for students across Los Angeles by offering field trips to the Ballona Wetlands. Along with educational field trips, the organization also offers group hikes, nature walks, and birding trips, providing a chance to explore and appreciate the natural beauty of this unique ecosystem. In addition to education programs, Friends of Ballona Wetlands has worked to restore the wetlands for nearly three decades. To accomplish this, they've relied on the hard work of dedicated volunteers.

DESIGNATED AS AN IMPORTANT BIRD AREA

The Ballona Wetlands are home to more than 300 bird species. This diversity of species has earned Ballona recognition as an "Important Bird Area" by the Audubon Society, highlighting its significance in preserving regional biodiversity. Furthermore, this status brings attention to the preservation of potentially sensitive bird species and their habitats.

LAX DUNES

COASTAL SAND DUNE RESERVE

Photo: Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA)

LAX DUNES

COASTAL SAND DUNE RESERVE

226 Napoleon St,
Playa Del Rey 90293

Council District 11

Wildlife Reserve

BACKGROUND: The LAX Dunes are located in what used to be the Surfridge community. Surfridge was a beachside residential community with over 600 homes, that was subjected to noise pollution from the nearby Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). In the 1960s, the City of Los Angeles converted the area into dune habitat. Today, the original residential streets still exist within the dune complex. Despite the impact of past development and disturbance to the soils, the LAX dunes have transformed into a sanctuary for a variety of native flora and fauna, spanning over 302 acres. The dunes are home to numerous species, including the federally endangered El Segundo blue butterfly and its host plant, seacliff buckwheat.

El Segundo blue butterfly. Photo: LAWA

PARTNERS: The LAX Dunes are owned and managed by Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA). LAWA actively supports initiatives to maintain and enhance the ecological value of the dunes that brush against LAX. The Bay Foundation (TBF) plays a role in the conservation efforts, working alongside other organizations and stakeholders. TBF concentrates on leading volunteer events, with a specific focus on the Coastal Dunes Improvement Project area.

San Diego horned lizard. Photo: LAWA

DEFINING FEATURES OF THE LAX DUNES

LAWA volunteers. Photo: LAWA

COASTAL DUNES IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

The Coastal Dunes Improvement Project focuses on restoration at the LAX Dunes. The project plays a role in rehabilitating the delicate coastal dune habitat through the planting of native species and the removal of invasive plants. Since 2013, the project has had significant community engagement, with over 2,000 participants actively involved in 84 restoration events. These efforts have resulted in the contribution of over 6,000 volunteer hours and the removal of more than 2,500 bags of invasive plant species.

Seacliff buckwheat. Photo: LAWA

THE LAST OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S COASTAL DUNES

The LAX dunes are the largest remaining representation of a coastal dune community in Southern California. As such, they hold incredible ecological value, serving as a habitat for more than 900 species, including many endemic and endangered species, such as the El Segundo blue butterfly, as well as special status species like the California legless lizard. Preserving this dune habitat is essential for protecting California's unique biodiversity.

University students, LAWA employees, and TBF volunteers at a weeding event. Photo: LAWA

CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIPS

The Bay Foundation and Loyola Marymount University (LMU) have collaborated to conduct comprehensive vegetation monitoring and mapping initiatives that, amongst other efforts, have assessed changes in dune vegetation over time and helped identify priority areas for restoration work. The data obtained through this partnership furthers the preservation and enhancement of the unique biodiversity in the northern portion of the LAX Dunes.

CHATSWORTH NATURE PRESERVE

ECOLOGICAL PRESERVE

CHATSWORTH NATURE PRESERVE

ECOLOGICAL PRESERVE

Chatsworth, CA 91311

Council District 12

Wildlife Reserve

BACKGROUND: The Chatsworth Nature Preserve is owned and managed by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP). The Chatsworth Nature Preserve served as an active reservoir from 1919 to 1972, primarily supporting agricultural irrigation needs in the San Fernando Valley. In 1972, the Division of Safety of Dams determined the Chatsworth Reservoir dam would be unsafe in a major earthquake. As a result, the reservoir was drained and decommissioned. In 1997, the Los Angeles City Council designated the site as a nature preserve. The site is the only nature preserve in the City of Los Angeles and remains the largest natural area in the northwestern San Fernando Valley region. The Chatsworth Nature Preserve is dedicated to scientific studies, education, and conservation efforts.

PARTNERS: Organizations such as Santa Susana Mountain Park Association, Sky Valley Volunteers, and Herp Connection advocate for the conservation of the Chatsworth Nature Preserve and its ecology.

California sagebrush.

Preserve stewards at the ecology pond.
Photo: LADWP

DEFINING FEATURES OF CHATSWORTH NATURE PRESERVE

The Chatsworth Nature Preserve. Photo: LADWP

Chaparral plants.

Red-tailed hawk. Photo: John Luker

A VARIETY OF HABITATS

The Chatsworth Nature Preserve is home to an array of ecologically important habitats including oak woodlands, savannah, riparian areas, grasslands, and vernal pools, which form temporary wetlands during the rainy season and provide habitat for specialized plants, insects, and amphibians.

TRANSFORMATION INTO A NATURE PRESERVE

The designation and reimagination of the Chatsworth Reservoir as the Chatsworth Nature Preserve in the 1990s marked a shift towards prioritizing conservation and education. Today, site managers work closely with organizations, such as the Sky Valley Volunteers, a group of environmental stewards dedicated to habitat restoration and education. Additionally, the site's emphasis on scientific studies further highlights the significance of preserving natural areas for the benefit of future generations.

FLOURISHING BIODIVERSITY

Chatsworth Nature Preserve is home to over 200 bird species and a wide variety of amphibians and reptiles. Many mammals, including desert cottontails, gray foxes, coyotes, and raccoons are common, while others, like bobcats, mountain lions, and mule deer, are observed less frequently.

GLENDALE NARROWS

LA RIVER RIPARIAN HABITAT

GLENDALE NARROWS

LA RIVER RIPARIAN HABITAT

Glendale Fwy,
Los Angeles 90039

Council District 13

Wildlife Reserve

BACKGROUND: The Glendale Narrows stands out as a distinct part of the Los Angeles River, since it has a soft-bottom (non-concrete) riverbed. The natural riverbed fosters the growth of riparian plants, which provide habitat for a variety of animal species–creating a unique ecosystem in the middle of the City. This stretch of the river provides many opportunities for people to connect with nature via recreational opportunities such as walking, cycling, rollerblading/skating, horseback riding, bird watching, and kayaking. The Elysian Valley Bike Path is a highlight of this section–connecting the LA Zoo to Lincoln Heights near downtown Los Angeles.

View of the Glendale Narrows. Photo: Kat Superfisky

PARTNERS: The LA River, and associated flood management structures, are managed by the LA County Flood Control District (LACFCD) and the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), in cooperation with the City and County of LA, and the USACE, manage the LA River Recreation Program to increase safe public access. Together, these agencies ensure the safety and responsible use of this natural area for the community's enjoyment.

Riparian plants. Photo: Kat Superfisky

DEFINING FEATURES OF THE GLENDALE NARROWS

Plants on riverbed. Photo: Kat Superfisky

Kayakers in the Narrows. Photo: LA River Kayak Safari

Students along the riverbank. Photo: Kat Superfisky

FLORA AND FAUNA OF GLENDALE NARROWS

Plants include native trees like willows, sycamores, cottonwoods and oaks, as well as other riparian species, such as cattails, rushes, mulefat, and elderberry. This dense and diverse vegetation serves as a temporary landing pad or permanent home for various bird species, including great blue heron, white egret, black-neck stilts, black phoebe, red-winged blackbird, red-tailed hawk, osprey, and others. Dragonflies, yellow swallowtail butterflies, western fence lizards and carp can all be spotted, and the calls of Pacific tree frogs can be heard at sundown in this stretch of the river.

KAYAKING THE LA RIVER

The Glendale Narrows is one of two Recreation Zones along the LA River, where entering into the channel to fish and kayak is allowed from Memorial Day through September 30 (the river's "dry season"). Kayakers experience an entirely different version of LA while paddling through the deepest ponds of the river, as well as rapids and riffles formed by the patterns of sediment and rock. Visit lariverrecreation.org for up-to-date information on water quality and to sign up for a tour with experienced guides who tell stories about the ecosystem's history and ongoing revitalization efforts.

CREATING CONNECTIONS THROUGH PUBLIC PARKS

The City of LA, California State Parks, and MRCA formed the "100-Acre Partnership at Taylor Yard" (Partnership) to collaboratively plan the largest, continuous open space along the River. The Partnership concept evolved from community and stakeholder feedback and the critical need for a coordinated planning and improvement approach across the 100-acre Taylor Yard site. These open spaces will also provide key ecological and community connections between Elysian Valley and the hillsides of Mt. Washington.

ESTRADA COURTS

PUBLIC HOUSING COMPLEX

Photo: Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA)

ESTRADA COURTS

PUBLIC HOUSING COMPLEX

3232 Estrada St,
Los Angeles, 90023

Council District 14

Native Plant Garden

BACKGROUND: Estrada Courts is a public housing complex that is located in the Boyle Heights area, which supports individuals and families. The complex was built in 1942 by the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) and has 414 units. In recent years, the complex has been relandscaped with native plants. The complex also features a collection of captivating murals that serves as an expression of the vibrant heritage, history, and artistry of the community, adding to the colorful atmosphere of the housing complex.

Mural on an Estrada Courts building.
Photo: HACLA

Walkway through the landscaping.
Photo: HACLA

PARTNERS: HACLA partnered with the Theodore Payne Foundation to improve the Estrada Courts landscaping with native plants. The Theodore Payne Foundation is known for promoting the use of California native plants in landscaping. Through this partnership, Estrada Courts has transformed its outdoor space to be more vibrant, sustainable, and biodiverse.

DEFINING FEATURES OF ESTRADA COURTS

Shrubs against concrete wall. Photo: HACLA

Walkway through the native plant landscaping. Photo: HACLA

Sage plant. Photo: HACLA

SUSTAINABLE LIVING

The native plant landscapes at Estrada Courts set it apart from housing with more traditional landscaping. By using native plants, the complex cuts water usage and associated expenses, as native plants are adapted to the local climate and need minimal irrigation. Moreover, Estrada reduces maintenance costs as native landscapes typically require less mechanical intervention, like mowing, and do not need fertilizers or pesticides, which promotes a healthier living environment and minimizes residents' exposure to harmful chemicals.

WORKSHOPS FOR RESIDENTS AND YOUTH

In collaboration with the Theodore Payne Foundation, HACLA provides engaging workshops on California native plants to residents of Estrada Courts and staff. These workshops not only educate participants on the benefits of native plants, but also provide training on plant installation and maintenance, covering topics, such as how to select plants, identify a planting location, irrigate plants, and manage pests. The workshops ensure residents, staff, and youth are equipped with skills needed to take care of California native plants.

NATIVE, DROUGHT-TOLERANT PLANTS

In total, 18,000 square feet of gardens at Estrada Courts have been planted with native, drought-tolerant plants. The curated palette includes an array of species, such as apricot mallow, blue sage, western redbud, desert willow, and many more. The landscape now serves as a peaceful, biodiverse oasis, allowing residents and visitors to immerse themselves in the beautiful native flora.

KEN MALLOY HARBOR REGIONAL PARK

MUNICIPAL NATURE PARK

KEN MALLOY HARBOR REGIONAL PARK

MUNICIPAL NATURE PARK

25820 Vermont Ave,
Harbor City, 90710

Council District 15

Natural Park

BACKGROUND: Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park is home to Lake Machado, a large freshwater lake, as well as an abundance of trees, picnic areas, and playgrounds. With a sprawling 231 acres, it ranks as the third largest park in the City of Los Angeles park system. Lake Machado at Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park has undergone a major transformation. Previously labeled as an impaired water body, it suffered from intense pollution. In a restoration project completed in 2017, around 240,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediment were hydraulically dredged and a treatment system, including a constructed wetland, was installed to improve water quality.

Aerial view of the park.

PARTNERS: Via the Lake Machado Ecosystem Rehabilitation Project, the City of Los Angeles aims to restore Lake Machado's ecosystems. The project has also involved organizations like the International Environmental Service Club, which has engaged students in restoration efforts.

Walking path and bridge.

DEFINING FEATURES OF KEN MALLOY HARBOR REGIONAL PARK

Culvert with riparian plants.

Black phoebe. Photo: iNaturalist

Newly planted riparian plants.

RESTORATION OF LAKE MACHADO SUPPORTS LOCAL BIODIVERSITY

The restoration of Lake Machado at Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park removed polluted sediment and introduced a vibrant wetland system. A testament to the power of nature-based solutions, this project improved water quality and created a sanctuary for diverse species to flourish.

190+ BIRD SPECIES OBSERVED POST-RESTORATION

After Lake Machado's rehabilitation in 2017, there was a dramatic increase in bird diversity. Over 190 different bird species have been observed on iNaturalist, a significant jump from the 70+ species prior to restoration. This a testament to the park's importance as a biodiversity hotspot. Notably, the historic pre-development bird list is even longer, which indicates that the park is still in the process of recovering from development and that with continued improvements and care, the park could support an even greater variety of species in the future.

STUDENT STEWARDS AID IN HABITAT RESTORATION

Harnessing the enthusiasm of student volunteers, the restoration efforts at Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park have included a variety of community organizations, such as the International Environmental Service Club. The club has empowered students to aid in restoration such as removing invasive weeds, planting native plants, and performing park clean ups.

GUIDEBOOK PARTNERSHIPS

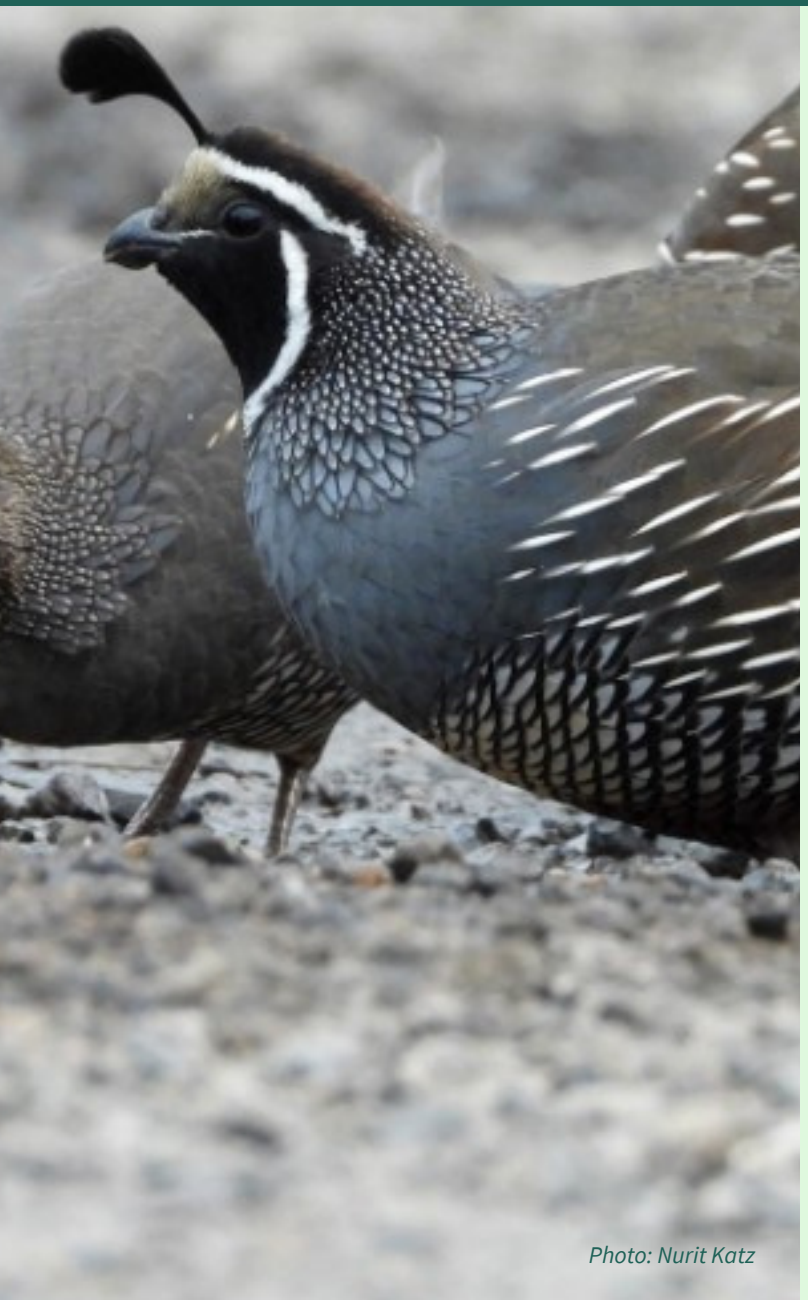


Photo: Nurit Katz

Thank you to all individuals and organizations who contributed information, expertise, and photos to this guidebook.

LA environment SANITATION
CITY OF LOS ANGELES
zero waste • zero wasted water

Contact Us

LASAN is dedicated to protecting public health and the environment for all Angelenos. For more information about the Biodiversity Program, please visit us at lacitysan.org/biodiversity

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