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South Coast Habitat Restoration Newsletter

Spring 2018

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Thomas Fire and 1/9 Debris Flow

The December 2017 Thomas Fire burned in Ventura and Santa Barbara for more than a month. Destroying 281,893 acres, it earned the title of the largest wildfire in California history. The fire burned over 1,000 structures, leaving many residents without homes or with damaged homes that are no longer inhabitable. The devastation was compounded when on January 9, 2018, the Thomas Fire burn areas experienced a catastrophic storm event, resulting in substantial debris flows and mudslides, killing 23 people and damaging over 100 Montecito homes.

We were humbly moved by the power our natural events had on the lives of our community members. With respect to those that had suffered loss during

this time, we moved slowly and deliberately when assessing how we would begin to address the damage on our past and present watershed projects.

As we examined the damage, we found that many of our past, and current projects had been impacted. Over 75% of the Carpinteria Creek watershed was burned in the Fire. The storm event resulted in damage of previously restored sites on the Carpinteria Creek. Damage included removal of a majority of the native riparian vegetation and destabilized stream banks (previously restored). We have been working with landowners to help them with recovering from the damage and planning for future recovery.

The mission of **South Coast Habitat Restoration** is to protect, conserve, and restore the various habitats and native biodiversity of Santa Barbara and Ventura counties.

For more information please visit us at:
schabitatrestoration.org

Interested in supporting SCHR?
Contact us at
info@schabitatrestoration.org

CREATURE FEATURE: BLUE HERON (*Ardea Herodias*)



The blue heron is a large bird in the heron family Ardeidae, and is prevalent in most of North and Central America as well as the Caribbean and Galápagos Islands. Due to their adaptable nature, they can be found in almost any wetland habitat, including marshes, mangrove swamps, flooded meadows, lake edges, and shorelines, as long as the body of water has a good source of fish. Notable features include slaty flight feathers, red-brown thighs, and a black stripe up the flank. The blue heron's neck is rusty-gray, its head is pale, its face is white, and its bill is dull yellow. Its head to tail length of 36"-54", a wingspan of 66"-79", a height of 45"-54", and a weight of 4-8 lbs. Its diet consists primarily of small fish, but it will also eat shrimp, crabs, aquatic insects, rodents, and other small mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and small birds. Females lay one brood of eggs per year between April and May, and may lay between three to six eggs per brood. Eggs are usually laid at two-day intervals, incubated for around 27 days, and hatch over a period of several days.

Upcoming Events & Information

River Rally – Tahoe April 29 – May 02, 2018

River Rally, hosted annually by River Network, is a national conference for river and water champions. Unique in its focus on providing practical education, inspiring courage, and celebrating achievements, River Rally brings together hundreds of people from across the United States and the world who care about rivers and water issues. Join NGO staff and volunteers, academics, agency and foundation representatives, industry innovators, and community leaders for the biggest (and most fun) water-focused event of the year!

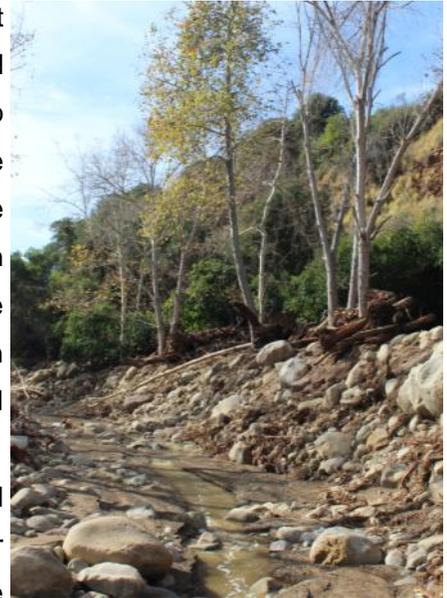
SERCAL Conference

The 25th annual, California Society for Ecological Restoration or SERCAL Conference, will be held at the Marina Village Conference Center in San Diego May 9 – 12, 2018. The three day conference will include workshops field tours, presentations, and other educational activities dealing with the restoration of California native habitats. Check out sercal.org for more information.

A Letter to our Community

SCHR would like to extend our deepest condolences to our Santa Barbara and Ventura County community members who have been affected by the Thomas fire and the 1/9 Debris Flow. Assessing the damages to the SCHR restoration projects, we are shocked in seeing the impact this powerful storm has had on human lives, homes, businesses, local watersheds and the natural environment.

As our community cleans up the mud and boulders, SCHR will continue on our mission of working to protect, conserve and restore native habitats.



Salmonid Restoration Conference

The 36th annual, Salmonid Restoration Conference was held in Fortuna California, at the River Lodge, April 11 – 14, 2018. The four day conference consisted of two days of workshops and field tours followed by two days of concurrent sessions. SCHR Staff, Alyssa Obester and Mauricio Gomez attended the conference. It was a great opportunity for them to learn from colleagues on their efforts to restore watersheds and salmonid populations in California. They also participated in the poster session of the conference and shared information on the Integrated Water Strategies project they are working on with partners from Sierra Watershed Progressive, Central Coast Salmon Enhancement, NorthStar Engineering, and Hicks Law. A big thank you to the National Forest Foundation and Southwest Airlines for supporting travel to the conference!



Alyssa and Mauricio in Fortuna by the Eel River.

Weed, Don't Seed!



The Thomas fire has left the mountains in the Los Padres National Forest barren of vegetation, rain and debris flow have caused soil erosion like we have never seen before. If you are one that loves our local flora, or are just worried about erosion in these areas, we encourage you to not spread seed these areas. There is no need to try and speed up the healing process, nature will heal itself. Fire and erosion are ecological processes, and are dynamic functions of ecological systems. Scientific research shows us that chaparral environments recover from intense fires. There are native seeds within the soil waiting to begin their rejuvenation. The vegetation is well adapted to fire and regenerates after a fire event, sprouting from stem bases or from soil stored seeds. The shrubs of mature

chaparral will come back, but are not the first to recover, herbaceous plants will begin sprouting first and will remain dominant for the first couple of years. If you have the desire to help with the recovery of open spaces, please contact the following organization for volunteer opportunities: Los Padres Forest Association, Santa Barbara Bucket Brigade, The Land Trust for Santa Barbara County, Ventura Land Trust or the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy. If you need assistance with your private property, please contact your local Flood Control District, Natural Resources Conservation Service or other government agencies.

Finding the Beauty

To many locals, the natural beauty of Santa Barbara and Ventura County is the centerpiece of their social activities. The beautiful trails, scenic ocean views, exceptional surf breaks and scenic parks are where we spend our free time. Like so many breathtaking natural environments, we can thank natural events for their formation. Like the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone National Park or the lava fields of Hawaii, the mountains and watersheds in our region were formed by an unexpected, and sometimes tragic, natural disaster. Although the Thomas Fire and the 1/9 Debris Flow



brought devastation for our community, it is helpful to remember that massive changes to the world's landscape are not new to this world. With this devastation, new life has followed. The March rains have brought the fresh green of native seedlings, downed trees provide nutrients for new growth, and clear watersheds may provide a new landscape for regional fish to inhabit. After being burned, chaparral shrubs are sprouting from their bases or emerging from the blackened ground as tiny seedlings. Native wildflowers are beginning to color the hillsides like floral arrangements, and the wildlife populations will follow a natural process of recolonizing the region. This process has repeated itself time and time again, and will continue to replay its recovery after each fire. That is what chaparral does. The beauty of our region continues on, Mother Nature has shown her strength and now she provides solace in her beauty.

What are we doing now to protect and restore?

Here is what South Coast Habitat Restoration is working on now to accomplish their mission.

1. We are working with Hicks Law, Central Coast Salmon Enhancement, and Sierra Watershed Progressive to enhance streamflows in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties. Currently, SCHR is developing a model that utilizes habitat, land use, and other geographic data to determine the best locations to enhance streamflow for Southern California steelhead. Next steps include landowner outreach and the development of water conservation plans. Future phases of the project will involve implementing water conservation projects for the enhancement of streamflow. This project is funded by the Wildlife Conservation Board's Prop1 Streamflow Enhancement grant program.
2. We were awarded \$22,000 from the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project to continue *Arundo donax* in the Refugio Creek watershed. SCHR will be working with the Land Trust for Santa Barbara County as well as Channel Islands Restoration and local volunteers to remove *Arundo* and replant native trees to improve the health of the creek. *Arundo* is a non-native plant that grows very quickly, uses high quantities of water and displaces native plants. Stay tuned for the volunteer opportunities coming in the Fall.
3. Davy Brown Update: SCHR was recently awarded \$45,000 from the California Fish Passage Forum to complete the designs for the removal of the three Southern California steelhead barriers to migration on Davy Brown Creek in the Los Padres National Forest. We're also in the process of obtaining environmental permits for the project.

Fire and Flow Forum



SCHR, in conjunction with Federal and State agencies, convened many partners at a Fire and Flow Forum in February. The forum brought researchers, environmental organizations, government agencies and landowners to discuss the impact of this winter's events. The first Fire and Flow Forum was hosted at the SB Zoo. At the meeting, attendees discussed how the recent wildfires and flooding impacted the local watersheds of Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties. Featured topics included information on trails, restoration projects, water quality impacts, research needs, impacts of flora and fauna, and more. With over 80 people attending the meeting, it is evident there is a great need for more Forums such as this. SCHR, along with the other organizers, have begun

the planning additional forums in the future in order for planning efforts to begin that will help with future recovery efforts. Check us out on Facebook or the SCHR website for more information about the April Fire and Flow Forum or contact us at: info@schabitatrestoration.org.

1% For The Planet Donor Profile—Newf Surfboard Net

A big thank you to our 1% For The Planet donor, Newf Surfboard Net. 1% For The Planet is a network of companies that give at least one percent of their sales to environmental causes. It was started by Yvon Chouinard (Member # 1, owner and Founder of Patagonia, Ventura, California) and Craig Mathews (Member #2, owner and founder of Blue ribbon Flies, West Yellowstone, Montana) and has grown into a global movement."

Recently, SCHR director Mauricio, had the opportunity to hike Carpinteria Creek with Newf Surfboard Net owner, Stan Schneider to show him some of our projects and how the fire and flooding impacted the habitat. It

was a great opportunity to show Mr. Schneider the direct impact his support has on the work we do at SCHR.



Stan and Mauricio take a selfie on Carpinteria Creek.



Stan and his Newf Surfboard Net.

Mr. Schneider shared the following about 1% For the Planet and SCHR, "Newf Surfboard Net supports Small Non-Profit Grassroots Environmental Organizations that are protecting and preserving our watershed from summit to sea. Newf Surfboard Net supports South Coast Habitat Restoration as one of our six - 1% for the Planet sponsorships doing their part in keeping our watersheds clean, flowing and protecting the creatures whom live there. 1% of the sale of each surf board bag sold goes to our sponsorships. It is always a joy visiting our sponsorships in seeing how much they do with limited budget and staff and the great deal of patience and expertise the staff has in accomplishing their task at hand. Cheers to SCHR and the many of hard working environmental organizations doing their little part in preserving our natural environment."

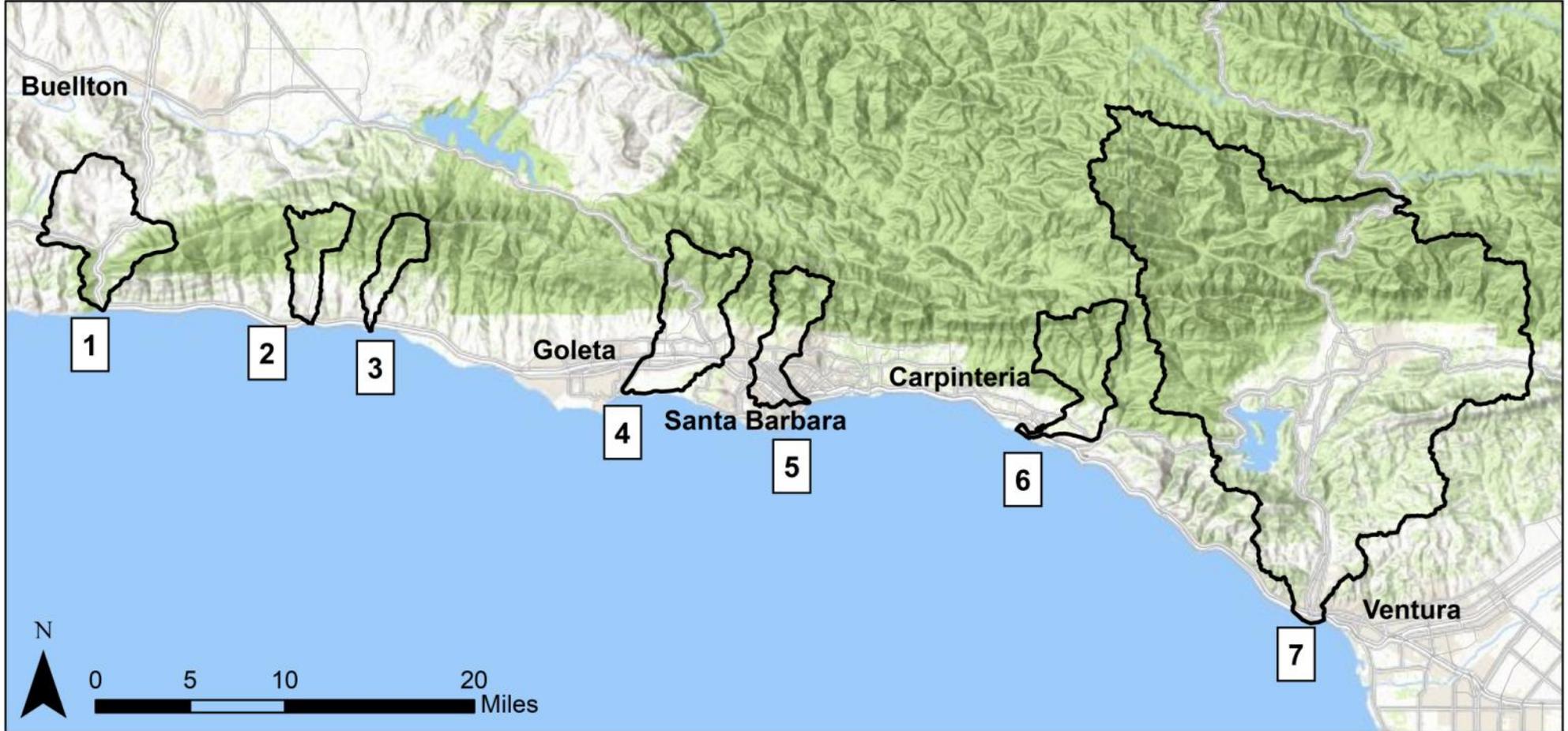


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How well do you know our watersheds?

Label the watersheds below and send this back to South Coast Habitat Restoration to be entered in a raffle to win a beautifully handcrafted fish mug!



- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____
- 7) _____

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