

Tree Care for Birds and Other Wildlife

Notes of February 17, 2016 Workshop

The meeting was held at the West Coast Arborist Office in Anaheim on February 17, 2016 from 8:30 a.m. to noon. Attendees were: Gillian Martin, Cavity Conservation Initiative; Andy Trotter and Mike Palat, West Coast Arborists; Diana Ruiz, Resource Conservation District; Magen Shaw and Andrew Cacciaguida, Davey Resource Group; Ryan Gilpin, HortScience; Kara Donohue, Southern California Edison; Cheryl Thomas, Sea and Sage Audubon; Chris Guenther, City of Escondido; Robin Rivet, Certified Arborist (LaMesa); and Anne Fege, consultant. The following participated by teleconference (GoToMeeting): Amelia Oliver, California ReLeaf; Carlos Jauregui, Los Angeles Audubon; Diane Hichwa, Madrone Audubon; David Lee, Davey Resource Group; and William Ramseyer, Pasadena Audubon Society.

Updates since October 30 Workshop

1. Funds from California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) must be expended by December 2016, and will cover the completion of BMPs, background report, and plans for the training and education phases of the project.
2. Andy and Ryan plan to submit a proposal to the Britton Foundation (part of the International Society of Arboriculture).
3. The “steering group” has been meeting monthly by teleconference call (Andy, Gillian, Ryan, Kara, Magen, and Anne).
4. BMPs have been drafted by a subcommittee that was led by Ryan and Kara.
5. Anne is outlining and drafting sections of the report. Most sections will be written by professionals contributing their time. Funds have been set aside for an editor and graphics (sketches) for the draft BMPs and the report.
6. A project website will be established, and this will later become the website for training and education.

The next in-person meeting will be on May 2 or 5 in or near Anaheim, before or after the Western Chapter of International Society for Arboriculture 2016 Conference and Trade Show in Anaheim on May 2-5, 2016 (<http://wcisaconnect.com/>). Agenda will focus on finalizing the BMPs, discussing approaches to professional training, and identifying elements of the outreach and public education plan/

Project Objectives and Charter

Minor changes were made, and the project objectives are now to:

1. Compile knowledge about impacts and benefits of tree care practices on nesting birds and other wildlife
2. Understand issues relating to tree-wildlife conflicts, regulations, public safety risks, and liabilities
3. Explore how to minimize impacts to nesting birds while acknowledging financial and logistic implications to the tree care industry
4. Develop Best Management Practices (BMPs) to protect birds and other wildlife and enhance habitats during tree care
5. Develop training and education programs to protect birds and other wildlife and enhance habitats during tree care
6. Establish relationships among agencies, cities, utilities, arborists, birders, and other wildlife advocates

Geographic Scope

The habitats, tree species, and many bird species are common to both southern and northern California, and the same state and Federal laws and regulations apply. As there is considerable interest in northern California, Andy and Ryan are assembling a list of prospective, interested participants in the tree industry and will invite them to be added to the project “roster” and to attend the next workshop via GoToMeeting. Gillian assembled a list of Audubon chapters in California, and has sent an email and letter inviting their participation.

Best Management Practices. Kara and Ryan reviewed three figures, and comments were offered.

Figure 1 (approach to reducing tree care impacts). The decision steps will be reversed, starting with the habitat, then the season. A decision box will be added, to include permits required in riparian habitats, and requirements for California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) will be referenced. Rather than referring to breeding seasons for various birds, the same processes and decisions will be applied throughout the year.

Figure 2 (reducing impacts from tree care practices). Steps will be added for pre-job onsite briefing with the tree care crew, and a checklist provided for arborists/tree care personnel to observe immediately before beginning tree care activity. Clear decision boxes will be made for health, safety and emergency situations for a tree(s). For trees deemed a safety hazard, add an option for reducing safety risks by restricting public access near these trees (such as closing a trail or playground). The project will address limiting impacts of birds creating nuisance situations only to the extent they are identified as a health and safety issue. Definitions will be provided for “trained wildlife personnel,” avian biologist (not qualified biologist), “sign” of nesting wildlife, and wildlife emergency. Palm trimming will be addressed.

Figure 3 (increasing habitat amount, diversity and resilience). One list will be made, as the effect of habitat investments generally results in multiple benefits (habitat amount, diversity and resilience), and the Venn diagram may be confusing. Look forward to how practices may change with drought, climate change, and other environmental changes. Focus on increasing canopy cover, increasing undisturbed habitats and reducing fragmentation, and reducing opportunities for hybrids (such as London plane trees near riparian areas). Reword “killing trees” to: Recruit live trees to be snags, including girdling, shortening limbs, and making jagged cuts.

The list of tree maintenance activities was discussed. The BMPs will not address activities relating to hazard assessments, tree inventories, and incorporating tree care into master, community, and project development plans. The will address:

1. Pruning trees, including canopy cleaning and pruning limbs
2. Removing trees, leaving a snag and grinding stumps
3. Preserving older trees, and adding tree support (cables, staking)
4. Planting trees
5. Tree health care, including pesticides, growth hormone regulators and nutrient injections
6. Trimming palms

TREE CARE FOR BIRDS AND OTHER WILDLIFE

DRAFT CHARTER

(after discussion at February 17, 2016 workshop)

The arboriculture and wildlife communities in southern California are working together to develop ways to enhance habitat through tree care practices. Meetings were held in July and October to outline a strategic approach and to start drafting Best Management Practices. The BMPs will focus on tree care to protect birds and other wildlife during and beyond nesting season, and enhance habitat for birds and other urban wildlife. The three-year project will also develop training and certification for tree care workers, and public education materials.

Project objectives. Five objectives are guiding the project:

1. Compile knowledge about impacts and benefits of tree care practices on nesting birds and other wildlife
2. Understand issues relating to tree-wildlife conflicts, regulations, public safety risks, and liabilities
3. Explore how to minimize impacts to nesting birds while acknowledging financial and logistic implications to the tree care industry
4. Develop Best Management Practices (BMPs) to protect birds and other wildlife and enhance habitats during tree care
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Scope. The project was initially focused on southern California. As most urban habitats extend throughout the state, and the same laws and regulations apply, it was extended to apply to the entire state.

Audiences. There are three primary audiences for the project. The general public and property owners are secondary audiences.

- Tree care industries, including arborists and landscapers
- Public and private managers of urban trees (municipalities, maintenance assessment districts, homeowners associations, property managers)
- Wildlife advocacy groups and wildlife professionals

Project Leadership. The project is led by Gillian Martin, Program Director, Cavity Conservation Initiative, and Andy Trotter, Vice President, West Coast Arborists. Project participants include experts in bird nesting biology and habitats, wildlife regulations, arboriculture, and urban forestry. Work groups have been established, and quarterly workshops are held to review and finalize the project's work. Administrative and technical support is provided by Anne S. Fege, Ph.D., urban forestry consultant. Grant funding has been provided by California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire), Pomona Valley Audubon Chapter, Sea and Sage Audubon, West Coast Arborists, and the Cavity Conservation Initiative.

Project Sponsors. The following organizations have reviewed this charter, and officially agree to be project sponsors:

XX Audubon Society, YY Tree Care Company, ZZ Professional Association