

# Tree Care for Birds and Other Wildlife

## September 1, 2016 Workshop Notes

The workshop was held at the West Coast Arborist Office in Anaheim on September 1, 2016 from 10:30 am to 1:30 pm. Attending in person were: Gillian Martin, Cavity Conservation Initiative; Andy Trotter, Mike Palat, and Corey Bassett, West Coast Arborists; Ryan Gilpin, HortScience; Chris Guenther, City of Escondido; Kara Donohue, Southern California Edison; Star Howard, Wetlands and Wildlife Care Center, and Songbird Care and Education Center; Jose Mercado and Sal Mercado, Hispanic Arborists' Association; Matthew Green and David Diaz, David's Tree Service; and Anne Fege, consultant.

The following participated by teleconference (GoToMeeting): Amelia Oliver, California ReLeaf; Magen Shaw and David Lee, Davey Resource Group; Diana Ruiz, Resource Conservation District; Susan Sims, Sims Tree Learning Center; Noreen Weeden, Golden Gate Audubon; Vic Leipzig, Sea and Sage Audubon; John Ekhoft, California Department of Fish and Wildlife; Robin Rivet, City of San Diego Community Forest Advisory Board and City of LaMesa Environmental Sustainability Commission; Roy Leggitt, Tree Management Experts; Melinda Bradbury, Jim Browne, and several others who were not identified by name.

### Actions after Workshop.

1. Steering Committee will continue to meet monthly by teleconference call (Andy, Gillian, Ryan, Kara, Magen, Susan, Scott, Star, and Anne). Star Howard, certified wildlife rehabilitator (Wetlands and Wildlife Care Center, and Songbird Care and Education Center) agreed to be a member of the Steering Committee.
2. The Best Management Practices (BMP) committee will draft the remaining sections of the BMP document and send to Steering Committee to review, then to project Roster to review before the next workshop.
3. Next workshop is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, November 30, 10:30 am to 1:30 pm at West Coast Arborists office in Anaheim. Agenda will focus on finalizing the text version of the BMPs, reviewing available training and educational materials, and approving plans for professional training and outreach/education.

Decision-making Process. This group has participants and supporters that represent a range of professional, industry, and agency perspectives. The BMPs, training and education programs need to be fully explored, discussed, and generally support by the participants. The group acknowledges that there are some controversial issues and not all will be "satisfied" with the project outcomes. The following process will be followed, to strive for "informed consent" of the participants:

1. The BMPs and other project elements will be sent to project participants (roster) and posted on website ([www.treecarebirds.org](http://www.treecarebirds.org)), to invite broad review and comment.
2. The draft BMPs and other project material will be discussed at workshop(s) to strive for full understanding of substantial comments and issues, and to make consensus-based revisions.
3. Steering Committee will approve the BMPs and other project elements, striving for consensus rather than majority "vote."
4. When Steering Committee cannot reach consensus, Gillian and Andy will make the final decision(s) about BMP language and other project elements.

Training and Professional Education. A short discussion confirmed that this project will not develop and offer training courses but provide criteria for a 6-8 hour “wildlife aware arborists certification.” However, the project will a) develop presentations that can be delivered to industry events and smaller meetings to promote the BMPs and special training, and b) develop bi-lingual, one page educational materials for use in the field.

Jose Mercado expressed interest in having a short presentation (both English and Spanish) that he and others could give to tree care workers as part of safety and other on-the-job training sessions. A one-page handout and powerpoint presentation could be provided for these training sessions. Mike Palat reminded the group that short sessions can be routinely offered at International Society for Arboriculture (ISA) and Professional Tree Care Association (PTCA) classes and conferences.

A few arborist and other tree care training organizations now offer wildlife-aware classes (Wildlife Aware Training, Sims Tree Learning Center, Oroville CA, <http://www.tlcwildlifeawareness.org/About-Us.html>; and Certified Wildlife Protector, Wildlife Training Institute, Sacramento CA, [http://wildlifetraining.org/Wildlife\\_Certification.html](http://wildlifetraining.org/Wildlife_Certification.html)). The establishment of these BMPs may interest others in offering the training. Consistency would be fostered with focused, relevant training materials prepared by this project. These can build on materials that are already available, such as the presentation on cavity nesters that Gillian and others have given. Magen offered to share training materials that she is using with utility-related tree care workers.

Training materials need to incorporate the “heart” of tree care for birds and other wildlife. Why do we like trees in our lives? What would our lives be like, if we didn’t have birds and other wildlife in our cities?

Strategic Objectives. The six objectives were reviewed, and the fifth revised to reflect recent discussions about whether this project would develop and offer training courses.

5. Set criteria and develop some materials for training and education programs to protect birds and other wildlife and enhance habitats during tree care.

Best Management Practices. More than 30 comments were received on the draft BMPs, and Ryan outlined the ten that were controversial and/or not easily incorporated into the revised BMPs. The following additional comments were offered by the group:

- There is a “bird bias,” with limited referral to small mammals, bats, and other wildlife. Bats will be addressed in the BMPs.
- BMPs need to refer to meeting permit requirements, particularly in sensitive riparian habitats
- “Minimum-impact” tools (particularly non-motorized) could minimize bird and wildlife disruption in nesting season or when a nest is detected in adjacent trees or other parts of the canopy. When a nest is detected in other parts of a tree canopy or in adjacent trees, pole pruners could be used to trim lower limbs. John Ekhoﬀ will contact John Martin (US Fish and Wildlife Service) about any available information or guidance on this.
- In addition to noise, the impacts to birds and other wildlife also depend on the duration of the tree care treatment, weather, and other factors. Species vary in their sensitivity to equipment used in tree care.

- Regulations need to be closely followed, if the tree care is to be done in areas that are occupied habitat for threatened/endangered species.
- There are still concerns that some property owners and/or tree care companies will intentionally remove trees with birds and nests, or remove them prior to nesting season so they don't have to deal with requirements and restrictions. The unlicensed tree care companies and workers will continue to get this business.
- Emphasize that these BMPs will streamline actions to meet regulations, and keep tree care companies from suffering public relations attention (such as the nests in Newport Beach, July 2015, <http://www.ocregister.com/articles/tree-663861-birds-baby.html>)
- Cultural change may be slow, but the establishment of recommended BMPs and the training sessions will accelerate the enhanced attention to wildlife habitat and raise expectations for quality tree care work.

Comments about the draft written text:

- The “primer” about wildlife (for arborists) and the explanatory materials about tree management (for wildlife biologists and birders) are both key sections in these draft BMPs.
- Acknowledgements need to be added.
- Reference needs to be made to California forestry regulations, and to urban forestry practices. Anne will discuss these with urban forestry staff in the City of San Diego.
- The BMPs will include the work flow chart in graph form and also as a decision key. Language will be made as simple as possible for non-professionals but will maintain the professional standard and level of detail expected of a BMP. The Introduction will likely be written toward the end of the project and include, among other things, information from Magen's literature search.

Science/Literature Review. Magen Shaw and others continue to work on the literature/science review. Anne has is working with a retired research social scientist to develop questions and analysis of a survey to assess current tree care and wildlife practices, and reasonableness of various mitigation options.

Public Education. Gillian has gathered names, contact information, and communication approaches (website, newsletters, social media) for organizations that could education and promote the BMPs to the broader environmental community and the public. The next workshop will gather more information and inputs for the public education campaign, branding, key messages and marketing materials. Diana Ruiz and David Lee will share media plan templates for this phase of the project.

Proposal to Britton Foundation. Gillian reported that additional information has been provided to the Britton Fund Grants Committee, and a decision is expected by the end of September.