

# Tree Care for Birds and Other Wildlife

## March 15, 2017 Workshop Notes

The workshop was held at the West Coast Arborists office in Anaheim on Wednesday, March 15 from 10:30 am to 1:30 pm. Attending in person were: Gillian Martin, Cavity Conservation Initiative; Andy Trotter, Mike Palat, Corey Bassett and Chris Falco, West Coast Arborists; Ryan Gilpin, HortScience; Kara Donohue, Southern California Edison; Magen Shaw, Davey Resources; Star Howard, Wetlands and Wildlife Care Center, and Songbird Care and Education Center; and Anne Fege, consultant. Attending by phone were Susan Sims, Sims Tree Learning Center; David Lee, Davey Resources; Peter Andrucci, Bartlett Tree Experts and Mike Best; and Mike Best, Pacific Gas & Electric.

### **Actions after Workshop**

1. Best Management Practices (BMP) team will revise the draft again, and Steering Committee will approve the final version (Andy, Gillian, Ryan, Kara, Magen, Susan, Scott, Star, and Anne).
2. Outreach and marketing need to be planned and begin. Educational materials will be released after BMPs are finalized and marketing consultant reviews them.
3. List of invited and delivered presentations will be maintained, and Anne will set up the list.

### **Project Update**

Funds from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) were fully expended, with illustrations, communications strategy, and draft materials completed and submitted by December 15, 2016.

### **Best Management Practices**

Ryan Gilpin outlined the comments received during the comment period (January 10 to February 24). Most of the 22 comments were from arborists and tree care professionals. The most common comments were that the categories are confusing, overly restrictive, and too long. The meeting focused on four aspects of the draft BMPs, that were raised in the comments:

1. Are we suggesting using a Wildlife Biologist too often and it is not practical or necessary?

There are concerns about the scheduling, availability, and costs associated with onsite consultation by a Wildlife Biologist. There is no clearly accepted professional-level certification for Wildlife Biologists, and they are generally hired for their experience and qualifications.

2. Should we change the definitions or names of Wildlife Friendly Arborist or Wildlife Biologist to improve process? Should there be another category between WFA and WB?

Clarification will be added about the roles, authority, expertise and training of both. The group agreed to return to the term, Wildlife Trained Arborist. The group discussed whether there is a qualification in between, and decided that two levels are simpler and there really isn't a way to fit another level of training and roles into the criteria.

3. Would a tool box approach improve usability? Offer this document as a tool box in which specific parties can select and tailor components applicable to its specific needs.

A "toolbox" approach may be a more helpful way to organize the practices. The BMPs can be considered options for decisions that arborists can and should make, as professionals, for the field conditions. The wildlife biologist is a tool, not a requirement. Language from Avian Protection Program Guidelines (2005) may be helpful.

4. Would a programmatic approach improve usability? Offer that this is only one approach and many other approaches may be as reasonable as long as parties understand the risks, laws, and resources available.

Large organizations may be able to take a “programmatic approach,” and adapt the BMPs and training to their workforce and clients. This could include utilities, large tree care businesses, and municipalities.

The habitat value classifications will be restructured with characteristics, rather than broad descriptions. For example, riparian habitats are defined by vegetation. David Lee suggested that the criteria be based on assessing high-low-medium risks of violating regulations or impacting bird nests. Then high risk (riparian) would require a Wildlife Biologist be consulted. City park would be medium-risk, and allow for Wildlife Trained Arborist. Chris Falco suggested that a wildlife biologist may be an “overreach” for common situations, and that the BMPs could take a risk assessment approach. West Coast Arborists has a few risk-trained arborists, and they consult for others in the firm; this approach could be taken for wildlife expertise.

The BMPs can strengthen recommendations that high habitat work be done outside of breeding season. Comments included concern about pesticide application, and this needs to be included in the BMPs. Pruning to reduce nesting sites for nuisance birds will not be included in the BMPs. Sample management plan requirements and contract specifications may be added later as an additional resource (similar to the BMPs for pruning).

The BMPs will be reorganized to more quickly get to the recommendations, moving some of the introductory material to appendices. A better explanation will be written, of the need and the opportunity for arborists to navigate through the law and avoid wildlife issues. The landowner and arborist both have responsibilities. Introduction can include better description of the audiences, and refer to outreach targeted to various audiences. Shorter version of BMPs can be part of the outreach for various audiences.

The revision will probably not be completed before the Western Chapter ISA meeting in May. The commitment made in the Britton Fund proposal is that they be completed by August. Final edits, formats, and placement of illustrations will be done after the BMP content is finalized by the Steering Committee. The authors will provide a timeline by the end of March.

### **Surveys of current practices**

Magen and Anne are working with a research social scientist to finalize a survey about current tree care practices. This will give the project a better sense of what professionals currently know, believe, and practice, and what research is needed on the impacts of tree care on birds and other wildlife. Meeting attendees completed the draft survey and provided comments about the questions and responses.

### **Marketing**

Draft logo images, drawn by consultant Monica Edwards, were reviewed. Suggestions were made for further changes on two of the logos, including removing tree limb and adding songbird and/or hawk. The logos will be refined and sent to attendees for one more “vote.”

A marketing specialist is still sought, and tasks outlined for the outreach phase of the project. This could be a part-time consultant or someone working for a stipend. Several have made referrals. Anne will resend draft scope of work to Steering Committee.

Additional funds may be needed for this. Outreach can begin even before the BMP text is finalized, with updates to the flow charts. Tailgate session outlines can be drafted, and an example was provided for tailgates from Davey Resources and West Coast Arborists. Website needs to include “sign-up” link, for individuals to be added to the Roster.

Materials will be developed for key audiences, including newsletter text, eblast, ten-slide presentation, and shorter versions of the actual BMPs. All materials will be translated into Spanish.

### **Presentations**

Andy’s presentation, to the California Park and Recreation Society in Sacramento on February 28, was well received. It can be considered as a “standard” presentation for other presentations. Short ten-slide presentations will be developed and posted on the website. Templates for longer presentations will be available for project team members, on another site. The invitations and outreach delivery need to be tracked, and Anne will set up a GoogleDoc to do this.

Andy showed his presentation, and comments were offered:

- Add larger credits for photos.
- Put habitat photos with Category 1 slide, put vertical photo in Category 2 slide.
- Remove the 25% canopy slide because it isn’t in the pruning BMPs anymore.
- Include image of website, and information on how to get involved in the project.

Corey and Magen will give an overview of the project, at the April 5 meeting of the San Diego Regional Urban Forests Council.

Ryan and Gillian will give presentations at the Western Chapter of International Society for Arboriculture (ISA) in San Diego, May 8-11, 2017, <https://wcisacnect.com/>. Ryan will give an overview of this project, and present a 15-minute tailgate-level training that will be recorded and added to the website as a video. Gillian will present on, “The Wonderful Life of a Dying Tree.” Both Susan Sims-Tree Care and Cavity Conservation will set up booths, and they could have a flyer about this project.

Magen’s presentation on “Tree Care for Wildlife” was accepted, for the International Urban Wildlife Conference in San Diego, June 4-7, 2017, <http://www.urban-wildlife.org/>.

### **Phase Three.**

There is a strong need for the BMPs to be sponsored by a “crediting” organization, and that is the goal of “Phase 3” of the project. There is interest from Western Chapter ISA, but they need to have sustainable funding and an administrative structure. The San Diego meeting may provide opportunities to discuss this further with Western ISA. Monitoring information needs to be collected, on the effectiveness of the BMPs and program delivery for awareness and action.

**Other items.** Andy recently attended a forum with Orange County chapter of local officials, talking about shot-hole borer. This was a start in raising the issues and building relationships. Actions are very insufficient; parks and UC-Irvine have lost thousands of trees, especially sycamore.