

Thursday, July 19, 2007



THE BEACH REPORTER

The Weekly Newspaper of the Beach Cities

8:00 pm | RealFeel® High: 63
 Currently: 66 | Humidity: 82
 Winds: WSW at 9 mph

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Serving the Communities of Manhattan Beach, Hermosa Beach, Redondo Beach and El Segundo

Online Poll

Weekly poll question and prizes coming soon!

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Question of the Week

Question: Redondo Beach Unified School District officials are thinking about placing a bond measure on the November ballot to pay for a new round of school modernization. The district plans to hold another public discussion at its July 24 meeting before deciding whether to move forward with the process.

* Do you think voters would approve a bond measure that could range from \$150 million to \$200 million to pay for school improvements?

* If district officials do decide to place a bond measure on the ballot, what types of safeguards should be in place to ensure the money is properly spent?

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Columnists

Signs of Life by Paul Silva

(Updated: Thursday, July 19, 2007 10:25 AM PDT)

Hope on tiny wings

A very small and remarkable thing happened around these parts recently, a joint project between nature and man.

After facing extinction, the El Segundo blue butterfly is back. It was spotted on a specially designated, four-acre refuge created along coastal bluffs near the border of Redondo Beach and Torrance. (The El Segundo moniker comes from the days when the butterfly could be found in large numbers near LAX, before the area was heavily developed.)

According to reporting by our sister publication, the Daily Breeze, scientists working to save the butterfly were surprised that the insect returned as quickly as it did. All it took was a little replanting of native vegetation and some regional cooperation among city and county officials as well as local environmental groups.

Despite the success of the project, not everyone is happy. Some local residents claim that the dune buckwheat that the butterfly thrives among (and is native to the South Bay) is not as attractive as the ice plant and other ground cover that was removed to create the coastal refuge.

I say, if the choice is between non-native (and invasive) ice plant and a native butterfly, I pick the butterfly. Nobody ever wrote a poem about ice plant.

More importantly, nature appears to have picked the butterfly, too. With ice caps melting, record-breaking droughts in some areas and devastating floods in others, it's time we listen more to nature's choices.

Coincidentally, the bald eagle is also making a comeback. Last month, the Interior Department said that the bald eagle has increased in population to the point where it no longer needs to be classified as endangered. Government officials pledged they would continue protection efforts to make sure the iconic bird thrives.

The comeback of the bald eagle is important, but the El Segundo blue butterfly rescue is more impressive. No one was going to let the bald eagle - symbol of American independence, vigilance and strength - disappear. But a little blue butterfly the size of a thumbnail that lives its entire adult life in seven days? Who would miss it?

Maybe no one. I consider myself a pretty green guy, but I've never bought the notion that a butterfly flapping its wings in El Segundo can start a hurricane in El Salvador. Environmentalists argue that we should save as many species as possible partly because we don't know which one might be the linchpin whose disappearance will be our undoing.

It's a good argument, but I don't think the El Segundo blue butterfly is a

Stocks

Market Watch



Index	Last Trade	Change
NASDAQ	2687.60	-32.44
SP 500	1534.10	-18.98
Russ 2000	836.44	-15.41
AMEX	2373.28	-13.93
NYSE	10072.93	-121.08
30 YR BOND	50.64	-0.54

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linchpin. I think it may just be a whimsy of nature, a fragile flicker of color serving no discernible purpose. That is exactly why it should be preserved. The definition of what is essential in nature should not be measured by what serves our purposes.

The El Segundo blue butterfly deserved to be saved because it was probably here before us, and because we had the ability to save it. Humankind has long held pride in its large accomplishments, like harnessing fire, building skyscrapers, splitting the atom, and being able to get ice without opening the refrigerator door. It's time we focused on the little things, and not just so we can figure out a way to put 10,000 songs on the head of a pin.

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What I like about the butterfly success story is that it required humility, patience and a desire for restoration. The scientific term is "reintroduction," finding a way to put a species back into the state that we found it.

The coastal dune may be less attractive to some without the green carpet of ice plant, but the spare, spidery covering of buckwheat is a useful reminder of how far our sense of aesthetics has wandered from the area's sandy origins.

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The return of the El Segundo blue butterfly should be seen as a modest redemption, not for this little insect but for ourselves. We brought him back, and some day, thousands of years from now, we may need his evolutionary descendants to do the same for us.

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Think about it: If they had the intellectual and physical capacity to do so, how many of the world's species would choose to reintroduce us?

To put it another way, would a butterfly ever write a poem about a man?

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