



Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee

E-mail update

June 2007

New Techniques Help Monitor Acro"bats"!

A two-year bat monitoring study was completed in January 2006 on the Las Vegas Wash, providing valuable information about these under-studied creatures. Of the 16 different species identified during the course of the study, two are listed as state sensitive, four are state protected, and eight are federal species of concern. Bats have historically been difficult to study but new technology is making data collection easier and more representative of the bat population. Prior to the mid-90s, most of the local bat data available had come from anecdotal and mist net studies, which do not adequately represent species diversity due to the field limitations they have. Biologists have since developed acoustic monitoring stations that can record the patterns of echolocation, the high frequency, sonar-like navigation system used by bats. These patterns can then be analyzed to determine the species of bat that gave the call.

Upcoming Meetings

Operations Study Team
June 6, 2007
8:30 a.m.



One of the three bat monitoring stations at the Las Vegas Wash.



Townsend's big-eared bat -photo credit: Bruce Lund.

Three of these acoustic monitoring stations have been installed along the Las Vegas Wash. The stations consist of a microphone and a recording device, as well as temperature, light and humidity monitors that are all mounted onto a tall metal pole. The monitoring stations only run from dusk to dawn when bats are most active, recording the echolocation sounds and storing the data on a flash card as a digital file. The recordings are graphed by sound frequency and time and utilized to identify individual species and indicate certain behaviors like feeding. Not only has this technology identified six species that had previously never been documented in the Las Vegas Valley, but it also gives us a better idea of the diversity and role these important creatures play in the local community.

Although the initial two-year study is complete, data continues to be collected due to the low cost of interpretation and maintenance of the stations.

New Bird Survey Begins

The Las Vegas Wash Project Coordination Team has recently begun a new bird survey on the Las Vegas Wash. The new survey focuses on a group of birds referred to as secretive marsh birds, which include bitterns and rails, among others. These birds can be difficult to detect using more traditional survey methods, such as point counts, due to the fact that they tend to occupy densely vegetated wetland habitats that are hard to access.

The new study uses the standardized North American marsh bird monitoring protocol. This method corresponds with the peak breeding season months and consists of a five-minute passive listening period followed by broadcasting a series of recorded vocalizations of each target species to elicit a responding vocalization from within the vegetation. Each recorded vocalization is followed by a period of silence to listen for a response.

The first few rounds of surveys have been completed and biologists have already had good success all along the Las Vegas Wash. Species that have been documented include: American coot, common moorhen, Virginia rail, least bittern, pied-billed grebe and sora. This survey is currently being supplemented by a call broadcast survey that targets the federally endangered Yuma clapper rail. Surveys for this secretive marsh bird require a special permit and are carried out by licensed consultants.



The sora is an example of a secretive marsh bird.

Did You Know?

Clark County's Sunrise Trailhead Complete

Clark County Parks and Recreation is pleased to announce the official opening of the Sunrise Mountain Trailhead. The new trailhead is located on the north side of the Las Vegas Wash along Hollywood Boulevard and is a beautiful addition to the Wetlands Park. The site is complete with plenty of parking, restrooms, six shaded picnic areas and an equestrian staging area. There are currently no designated trails in the immediate area but as Clark County continues to implement its master plan for the Wetlands Park, this area will serve as a strategic hub for outdoor activity in the area.



A view of the new Sunrise Mountain Trailhead.