



Wildlife and Habitat Conservation

In an effort to restore native plants and animals that once flourished, but in more recent decades had all but vanished, Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) in 1986 began its Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) Dunes Restoration Project, voluntarily setting aside a 200-acre parcel of land on the western portion of LAX as a natural wildlife preserve.

The preserve is now home to more than 1,000 species of plants and animals. The area supports 43 acres of protected original native dune habitation that are virtually undisturbed and is the largest remaining coastal dune area in Southern California.

The dunes' wildlife inhabitants include the endangered El Segundo Blue butterfly, the San Diego Horned Lizard and the silvery legless lizard. LAX is also addressing the presence of the endangered Riverside Fairy Shrimp, discovered adjacent to the dunes area in the late 1990s.

The El Segundo Blue Butterfly

In 1976, when counts showed fewer than 500 El Segundo Blue butterflies, it became the first insect listed as a Federal Endangered Species. To encourage the butterfly's comeback, LAWA's restoration project focused on planting the coastal buckwheat plant, the butterfly's sole food source. Today, the butterfly population is more than 24,000.

Native Animals

Under LAWA's stewardship, two lizards classified by the State of California as Species of Concern – the San Diego Horned Lizard and the silvery legless lizard – also are prospering in the dunes.

Native Plants

Certain plants, including the El Segundo Dunes California Spineflower, also depend on the dunes for their existence. When it was discovered in the dunes 1987, only 299 of the plants existed. Due to the clearance of non-native vegetation, the spineflower population has soared. Many other varieties of plants also now blossom on the preserved dunes.

Land Restoration

LAWA has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Palos Verdes Land Conservancy to replace 21 acres of sage/grassland habitat units. This land restoration program resulted from the impacts of the LAX South Airfield Improvement Project on the sage/grassland habitat. The Three Sisters Preserve Habitat on the Palos Verdes Peninsula has been selected as the location for the restoration. The preserve has spectacular ocean views and great hiking trails, but has been neglected for decades.

When restoration is complete, LAWA expects the area will return to a thriving ecosystem with native vegetation and wildlife. A walk through the preserve will allow visitors to experience the area in its natural state and enjoy the scenic view.