



NEWS AND VIEWS

Winter 2012 / 2013

Upper Las Vegas Wash highlighted in Orion Magazine

Our local Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) Educator, Margie Klein recently published an article in Orion Magazine on the Upper Las Vegas Wash. The article discusses the history of the area, location and size and sensitive species of the area. Thanks Margie for spreading the word!

http://www.orionmagazine.org/index.php/place_where_you_live/view/upper_las_vegas_wash_7187/



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WORLD WETLANDS DAY

World Wetlands Day is just around the corner and we're celebrating! Many of our local agencies and partners from the Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee will be working together to create an event to remember with nature walks, exhibits and service projects. The event will run from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm on January 31st and is open to the public. Several school groups have already agreed to participate.

World Wetlands Day is, as the name suggests a world-wide event with over 163 countries participating. The official day every year is February 2nd but local organizers are holding the event during the week this year to encourage school group participation. The event marks the signing of the Convention on Wetlands or Ramsar Convention in 1971. This agreement's mission

is "the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world" (http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-about-mission/main/ramsar/1-36-53_4000_0__).

This year's theme for the day is "Wetlands and Water Management" with the objective to raise awareness of the interdependence between water and wetlands.

Volunteer opportunities are still available in the exhibit area or assisting with the children's groups. Please take the time to join as a participant or volunteer on World Wetlands Day. Call the Wetlands Park at 455-7522 for more information or to volunteer.

UPPER LAS VEGAS WASH PALEONTOLOGY

By Kathleen Springer (Senior Curator of Geological Sciences at the San Bernardino County Museum)

North of the city of Las Vegas, the upper Las Vegas Wash drainage carves a swath through a desert landscape punctuated by light colored sediments laid bare by wind, rain and erosion. For those who look closely, the rocks also hold evidence of ancient inhabitants of the region—mammoth, ground sloths, bison, camels, horses, giant lions and even sabre-toothed cats. The bones and teeth of these long-vanished behemoths reveal the nature of life here during past millennia. Fossils of Ice Age animals have been known from the Tule Springs area of upper Las Vegas Wash since the early 1900s, but most early studies were driven primarily by the search for evidence

of early people. After the “Big Dig” in the early 1960’s where an early human/megafauna association at the end of the Ice Ages was sought and found lacking, paleontologic interest in Tule Springs faded. Forty years later, investigations by paleontologists and geologists from the San Bernardino County Museum, supported by the Bureau of Land Management, have resulted in hundreds of new fossil discoveries throughout the upper Las Vegas Wash, greatly extending the geographic and temporal footprint of the original investigations. These studies defined the Tule Springs local fauna from the upper Las Vegas Wash with recognition that it encompasses the largest

late Pleistocene vertebrate fossil assemblage in the Mojave Desert/southern Great Basin. And while the upper Las Vegas Wash is home to literally thousands of spectacular fossils from the Ice Ages, it is their geological context that makes them truly unique in the American southwest. Detailed geologic mapping by the Museum in this area has revealed an amazing sequence of ancient spring deposits (paleowetlands) dating back more than 250,000 years, encompassing a sedimentary and faunal record of multiple glacial-interglacial climatic shifts including the end-Pleistocene transition right up to the first appearance of early humans in the region.



Columbian mammoth tusk discovered in the Upper Las Vegas Wash

Photograph courtesy of San Bernardino County Museum



Photograph courtesy of San Bernardino County Museum

The upper Las Vegas Wash showcases the dramatic changes in climate that have taken place since the end of the last glacial period. A desert ecosystem today, the wash contains evidence of cooler, wetter conditions during past times, including abundant freshwater mollusc shells and extensive deposits of calcium carbonate formations called tufa that can only form in a narrow range of environmental conditions,

making them important indicators of past climate. The sediments themselves also give evidence that abundant desert wetlands existed here, punctuated by abrupt climate change. Dating the rocks, using radiocarbon and other methods, has allowed a precise chronology to be established for these deposits. Deciphering all of the clues in these sediments is allowing scientists to track how these wetlands waxed

and waned at the end of the Ice Ages in response to global climate drivers - with the aim of understanding how the animals themselves responded to past climate change. This result has implications for the future of modern wetland systems and their dependent biota, which are already under threat by anthropogenic pressures and warming climates.

SMILODON DISCOVERY

A recent discovery has been made at the Upper Las Vegas Wash by the team from the San Bernardino County Museum - a sabertooth cat.

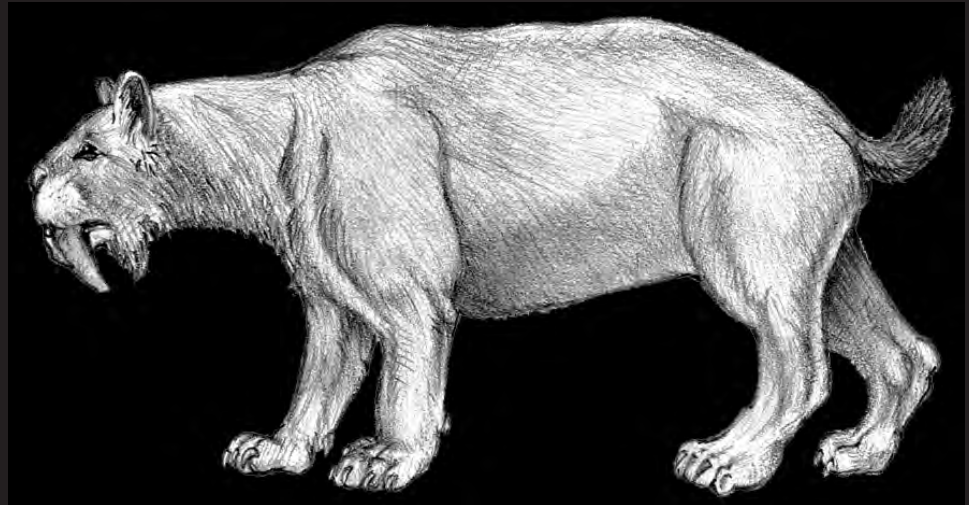
Bones of mammoths, camel and bison have all been discovered here but 2012 marks the first time *Smilodon* has been found.

Smilodon is often called a saber-toothed tiger but is actually not related to a tiger at all. To date, three species of *Smilodon* are recognized. They vary in size, geographic extent, and time they lived.

The sabertooth cat is best known for its long canine teeth. They were predators but likely used stealth rather than speed to bring down prey. The limbs of *Smilodon* were relatively shorter and more robust than those of running cats, indicating power over speed.

The two bones photographed to the right are from the Upper Las Vegas Wash.

http://www.rgj.com/article/20121215/NEWS/312150062/Sabertooth-cat-bones-found-Las-Vegas-Wash?nclick_check=1



Artwork by Adrienne Picchi



Smilodon proximal humerus



Smilodon distal radius

Photographs courtesy of San Bernardino County Museum

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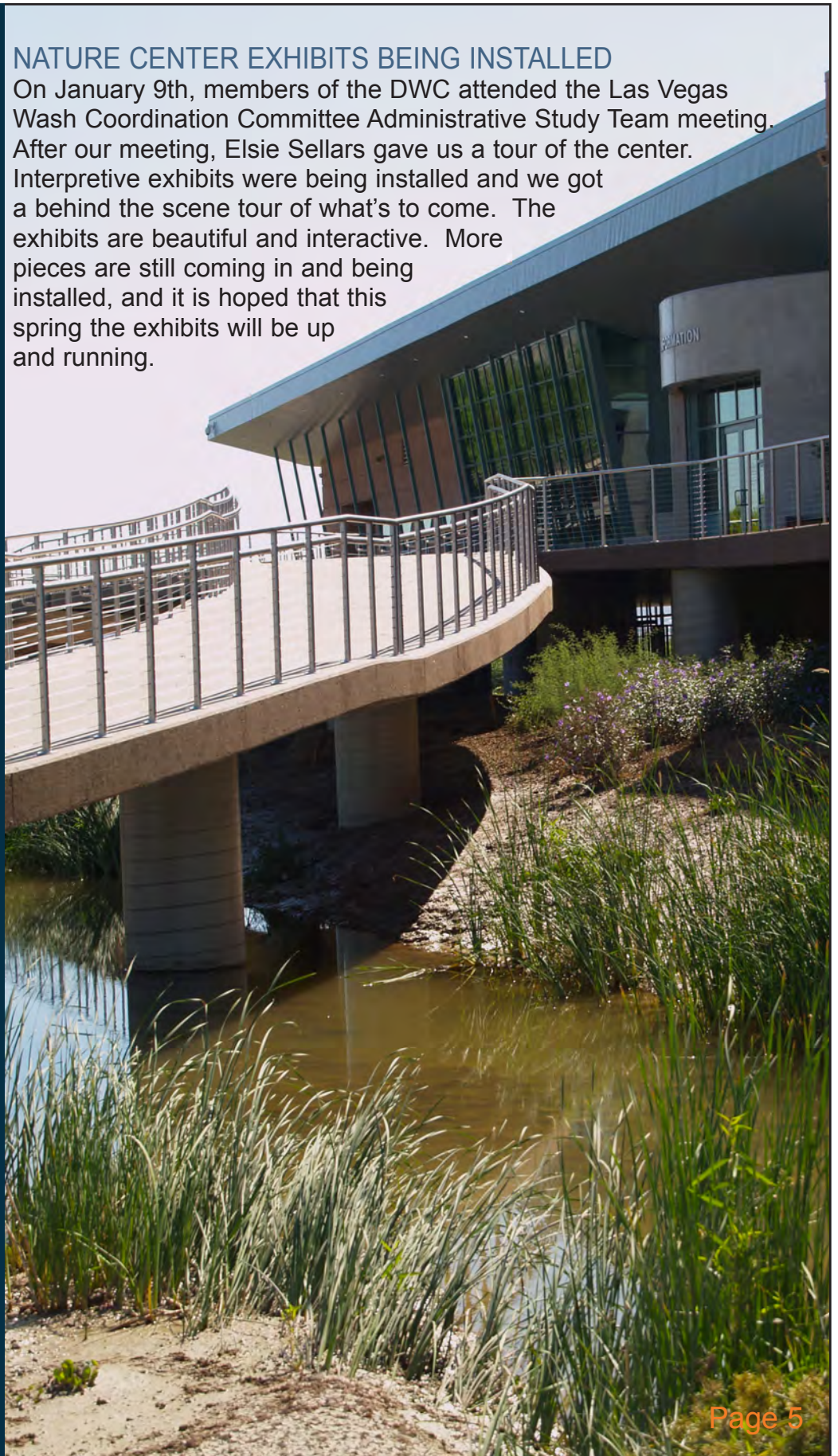
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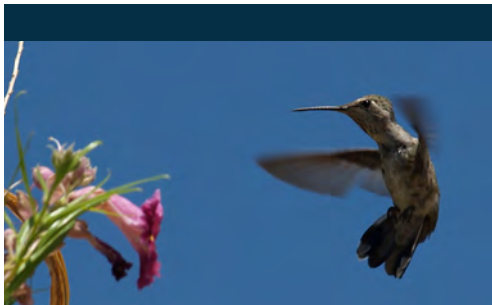
Desert Wetlands Conservancy

The mission of the DWC is to influence policy, create partnerships, and initiate activities in advocacy of the Las Vegas Valley Watershed, including the Desert Wetlands Park.

NATURE CENTER EXHIBITS BEING INSTALLED

On January 9th, members of the DWC attended the Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee Administrative Study Team meeting. After our meeting, Elsie Sellars gave us a tour of the center. Interpretive exhibits were being installed and we got a behind the scene tour of what's to come. The exhibits are beautiful and interactive. More pieces are still coming in and being installed, and it is hoped that this spring the exhibits will be up and running.





Our Thanks To all of our New and Renewing Members!

PLEASE CHECK THE EXPIRATION DATE ON YOUR MAILING LABEL TO SEE IF IT IS TIME TO RENEW!

YOU CAN RENEW ONLINE AT: <http://desertwetlands.org/how-to-help>

Share Our Vision!!

We are an all-volunteer, 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt organization that receives no regular tax-based support. Our strength and our ability to carry out our mission is through our members. There are many ways to join: access our website, <http://www.desertwetlands.org>, or our Facebook, (search for Desert Wetlands Conservancy), email membership@desertwetlands.org, or write to DWC, PO Box 93574, Las Vegas, NV, 89193-93574 and you will receive membership information.

Membership options for Individuals and Families:
Student/Senior \$20
Individual \$25
Supporting \$100
Sustaining \$250
Family \$50
Steward \$500

All contributions to our programs are taxdeductible to the fullest extent of the law. There are a number of ways to help us described on our website.

If you have not yet taken the plunge to join, please do so now. You will demonstrate your interest in wetland issues and the impact on our community! The Wetlands Park is a place to enjoy!

Have you visited the Park recently? The new Visitor Center is open. Cross Boulder Highway on Tropicana and travel one mile east, then look for the Wetlands Park sign, just where Tropicana turns into Broadbent Ave. Head down Wetlands Park Lane. Signs will direct you to the new location. If it has been a while since you've visited the Park, you will be amazed at the changes and improvements that have taken place. The Park is for your benefit. Come and enjoy it!

There are many opportunities to get involved and to show your support-not only through membership in the DWC, but by contributing funds or labor for needed physical improvements, and educational materials. If you have put off renewing, remember your membership ends one year from the date you paid your dues.

WINTER 2012 / 2013



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