

Daily Pilot

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Raul Roa | Staff Photographer

SCIENTISTS FROM the Pacific Marine Mammal Center in Laguna Beach study an endangered fin whale that washed up at Bolsa Chica State Beach.

Dead whale washes ashore

BY MATT SZABO

A 65-foot dead whale was found washed up on Bolsa Chica State Beach on Wednesday.

The female adult fin whale remains on the beach near Lifeguard Tower 17. California State Parks representative Kevin Pearsall said Thursday morning that it will likely take at least a couple of days before it is removed from the beach.

"We are going to remove it," Pearsall said. "We're not even going to bury it because it's so big. It will be removed by a designated removal company that takes it to a landfill."

Pearsall said the U.S. Navy and National Oceanic Atmosphere Administration were headed to Huntington Beach to investigate the whale that washed ashore.

Workers from Pacific Marine Mammal Center, located in Laguna Beach, also were on site Thursday to gather samples of the fin whale, which is an endangered species.

"It's proving to be just a little bit difficult, just because the whale is pretty decomposed," Pacific Marine Mammal Center public relations manager Krysta Higuchi said. "But we're trying to take this sad incident and gather as much research and knowledge as we can, trying to get more metrics and life history of this animal. We don't normally get this opportunity to get these types of samples from these animals."

Higuchi said the whale is believed to be one of two — the mother of a mother and daughter pair — that was killed off the coast of San Diego by an Australian Royal Navy vessel on May 8.

After it was struck by the HMAS Sydney, the larger whale was subsequently towed offshore. Pacific Shore Expeditions reported that the carcass was being feasted on by blue sharks near San Clemente Island last week.

With the weekend approaching, Pearsall said he encourages beachgoers to stay away.

"It is incredibly retched smelling, because of its decomposing state," he said. "We've had a couple of people lose it from the smell, and vomit, so they need to be prepared and stay away from it. It's been out to sea for a while now dead."

Daily Pilot photo editor Raul Roa contributed to this story.

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Banning Ranch oil field a future park?

Helped by a \$50-million donation, the 384-acre piece of land is closer to becoming publicly accessible green space.

BY LOUIS SAHAGÚN

High atop the coastal bluffs of Newport Beach, where homes in exclusive neighborhoods list for an average of \$3 million, an active oil field of rusting pump jacks, brine tanks and winding dirt roads is giving conservationists new hope for an "immense" and publicly accessible green space.

This could be the year, they say, that the 384-acre Banning Ranch oil field finally becomes a public park and nature preserve.

Bolstered by a \$50-million donation from Orange County philanthropists, the Trust for Public Land on Wednesday said it has secured an exclusive agreement to buy the largest chunk of undeveloped coastal real estate left in Southern California.

"With sweeping coastal views and fantastic recreational opportunities, a future park at Banning Ranch could serve 8.4 million people who live within an hour's drive," said Diane Regas, president and chief executive of the nonprofit.

Now, in accordance with the agreement, the trust has 12 months to raise the additional \$47 million needed to complete the \$97-million purchase and begin restoring the environmentally distressed tableau of scarps, vernal pools and mesas that are home to fairy shrimp, peregrine falcons and federally endangered California gnatcatchers.

The Banning Ranch project reflects a growing environmental consciousness in Southern California regarding open, natural spaces and what they mean for the health of urban residents and the economy.

Undoing the environmental damage done by what was once a star in Orange County's oil and gas industry won't be cheap or easy. But the currents of change coursing through the seaside property north of Pacific Coast Highway were evident on Tuesday, when Guillermo Rodriguez, the Trust for Public Land's state director, and Paolo Perrone, its

See **Banning**, page A3

N.B. adjusts zoning for some fitness centers

THE NEWPORT BEACH

City Council approved a zoning amendment to allow for food and health and fitness facilities in the Dover-Westcliff zoning district.

Mark Boster
Los Angeles Times



BY LILLY NGUYEN

Restaurants and health and fitness centers will now be permitted along a stretch of Dover Drive in Newport Beach, provided they comply with parking requirements and secure a use permit from the city.

The Newport Beach City Council unanimously approved a zoning amendment to allow for the establishment of such businesses in an area predominately occupied by multi-tenant office buildings.

The zoning district is com-

posed of six parcels of land on the westerly side of Dover, between 16th Street and Westcliff Drive.

City staff said in a report prepared for the May 11 meeting that the impetus for the proposed amendment to current zoning was that they heard from some property owners last year who were struggling to lease office space. Their hope was to lease underused spaces to operators of restaurants or larger health and fitness facilities.

See **Zoning**, page A2

Costa Mesa tourism industry showing signs of life after pandemic

BY SARA CARDINE

With California businesses and events poised for a June 15 comeback, cities impacted by stinging losses in tourism dollars during the pandemic, caused partly by record-low hotel occupancy rates, are now looking to rebound. Costa Mesa is no exception.

Travel Costa Mesa, a nonprofit marketing organization that boosts Costa Mesa tourism by engaging outside interest in local businesses and events, estimates citywide hotel occupancy fell

from an average of nearly 80% in 2019 to about 42% in 2020. By February of this year, that rate hovered just over 30%.

Fewer people booking rooms at local hotels has caused a steep decline in the transient occupancy tax revenue coming into city coffers from an additional 8% bed tax above the cost of a nightly hotel room rate.

That tax brought about \$8.6 million into the city's general fund in fiscal year 2018-19. One year later, that revenue source

See **Tourism**, page A2

Waymakers Orange County works in H.B. to reduce impaired driving

BY MATT SZABO

Dan Gleason remembers a time when there was a different downtown Huntington Beach.

The area along and around Main Street has always been known for its bevy of bars and restaurants, but it hasn't exactly always been known as a family-friendly environment.

"It was a destination to go and party," the Waymakers Orange County Project PATH program director said. "You could be staying in a hotel in Huntington Beach and go down to the desk and say, 'Hey, can you recommend a good place for dinner?' There was a time when they'd tell you to go to Newport Beach."

"They've really done a nice job in trying to address that ... That's changed. It's a different environment."

Waymakers has worked with numerous groups in Surf City since 2007 to try to facilitate that change, Gleason said. The nonprofit recently completed a two-year cycle of providing impaired driving prevention services, in partnership with the Huntington Beach Police Department, the Downtown Business Improve-



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

MANAGER SAMANTHA KINSELLA and server Ebony Gallegos, from left, at Baja Sharkeez in downtown Huntington Beach on Thursday. The bar was recently honored for its efforts to reduce drunk driving.

ment District (BID), Alcohol Beverage Control and local bars and restaurants.

The coalition, called Collective Impact, held a training seminar for local restaurant security staff at the Huntington Beach Hyatt on May 4. Interim Police Chief Julian Harvey attended, as did Mayor Kim Carr and about 70 local bar and restaurant repre-

sentatives to learn the Zone Alcohol Practices for Security Staff program.

Waymakers provided the impaired driving prevention services through a grant from the Orange County Public Health Agency, Gleason said.

"A lot of times security is over-

See **Reduce**, page A3

THE LOBBY of the Hilton Orange County/Costa Mesa, seen in May 2020, sits empty during the coronavirus pandemic.

Raul Roa
Staff Photographer



ZONING

Continued from page A1

Seimone Jurjis, the community development director, noted the zoning amendment was requested by Councilman Duffy Duffield.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints — located at 801 Dover Drive — raised some concerns about parking problems.

David McPhie, a first counselor with the church, said the building sees heavy use relative to its size and that officials have made efforts to contend with parking issues over the years.

"It's worked out OK because these uses are complimentary," said McPhie, adding that the church has "struck a delicate balance."

"When you have an office building with a use during the business day in the work week and they're using the parking, we fit very well with that because we're in the evenings and on the weekends primarily."

Church officials said they currently have an easement on an adjoining lot and some arrangements with nearby tenants and parking to ameliorate the parking issues on their specific parcel.

Councilman Noah Blom said he was concerned about "penalizing" property owners that were asking for the change, though they may have had previous agreements with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that allowed them to use their parking.

"The applicant came to

me originally to express the need for this change. As we all know, the market for office space is tough at this point and the use within a few hundred yards away is restaurants and gyms and things," Duffield said.

Duffield added that the question posed to staff was why it was that the six parcels were zoned as they were.

"I drive by [those buildings] every day and there's very little activity and this is a way to rejuvenate that little zone and the impact that it may have to this facility is inevitable, but at the same time, these property owners are somewhat desperate to put a product there that is usable and has a future," Duffield said.

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TOURISM

Continued from page A1

had shrunk to \$6.58 million. By the June 30 close of this fiscal year, the city anticipates it will receive just \$4.77 million, according to figures provided by the Finance Department.

With out-of-town trips halted by recurring coronavirus surges and fears of transmission, Travel Costa Mesa's own financial picture similarly suffered a pandemic-related shortfall.

Once operating with an annual budget of \$2.7 million, officials forecast in February a budget of just \$786,382. TCM President Paulette Lombardi-Fries said the group's small staff of six took 40% pay cuts from April through October just to survive.

"COVID hit us in mid-March (last year), and by April, it was bad," she recalled Thursday. "2020 was just an incredibly difficult year for the hospitality industry."

Travel Costa Mesa operates from funds received through a special partnership with 11 local hotels, which pay an additional

3% above the occupancy tax in exchange for being promoted by the group's marketing efforts through a city-approved Business Improvement Area (BIA) agreement.

But even in the past few months, as the novel coronavirus rates continue to decline and more people are vaccinated against COVID-19, the tourism business finally seems to be gaining steam.

Lombardi-Fries said since February's grim budgetary prognosis, more people have been making Costa Mesa a weekend destination, perhaps due to its proximity to major tourist attractions like Disneyland and Orange County coastlines. "Leisure business is looking excellent," she added.

The recent uptick in occupancy, and the BIA dollars that come with it, caused Travel Costa Mesa to adjust its budget estimate upward, to \$956,000.

Corporate conferences, international tourism and business trips, however, are continuing to lag, leaving those in the local tourism industry unclear as to when business might return to pre-pandemic

norms.

Travel Costa Mesa spokeswoman Jenny Wedge said that despite the temporary salary cuts and decline in out-of-town business, she and fellow staff members pivoted to become a de facto clearinghouse of vital coronavirus-related information for local business owners and their clientele.

"We were pretty much busier than ever, because we were trying to support the city and local businesses that were still open," Wedge said Thursday. "Usually, our outreach would be to people outside our area, but no one was traveling, so we turned local."

Lombardi-Fries is confident that, by continuing to foster local connections and collaborations within Costa Mesa's business sector, Travel Costa Mesa and the city will soon be on the road to economic recovery. "Now more than ever, it's important for us to work closely with every arm of tourism in our city to drive the success we once saw," she said.

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THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE

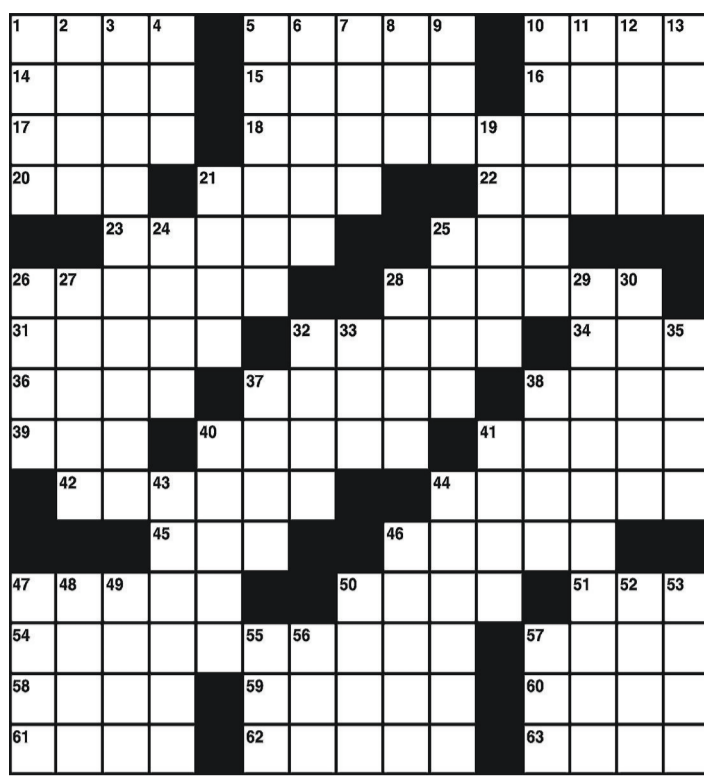
By Jacqueline E. Mathews

ACROSS

- 1 Surpasses
- 5 Purple Heart or Bronze Star
- 10 Drain problem
- 14 Group dance
- 15 Horse-and-buggy drivers
- 16 Bring up the ...; come last
- 17 High point
- 18 Artistic black outline
- 20 Suffix for journal or final
- 21 Voter survey
- 22 Impudent
- 23 Darkish wood
- 25 City transport
- 26 Altercations
- 28 Most immaculate
- 31 Concluded
- 32 Rascal
- 34 Place for 3 nursery rhyme men
- 36 Mix with a wooden spoon
- 37 Walks with heavy steps
- 38 Flying toy
- 39 Cheap metal
- 40 University officials
- 41 Uses a sieve
- 42 Blowhard
- 44 Fish out of water
- 45 Popular pet
- 46 Sicker than before
- 47 More conniving
- 50 Cave dwellers
- 51 Org. for Broncos & Bears
- 54 Persnickety
- 57 Goodyear product
- 58 Baker's need
- 59 Area of expertise
- 60 Till drawer stack
- 61 Cruz & others
- 62 More peculiar
- 63 Ice ...; cold epochs

DOWN

- 1 Asian language
- 2 Fumbler's word



SUDOKU

By The Mepham Group

Complete the grid so each row, column and 3-by-3 box (in bold borders) contains every digit, 1 to 9. For strategies on how to solve Sudoku, visit sudoku.org.uk.

	9						8	
	2		7					5
8	7			6			2	
				3				9
2			4		9			7
6				1				
				4				1
1			6		2		4	
	3						9	

For answers to the crossword and Sudoku puzzles, see page A3.

- 3 Faking
- 4 Brass instrument
- 5 Bricklayers
- 6 Deschanel or Procter
- 7 Pickle variety
- 8 _ Wednesday;
- 9 Initials for JFK's

- 10 Fold line
- 11 "Why don't we!"
- 12 Porridge ingredients
- 13 Author Zane
- 19 Seize another's office
- 21 Fishing spot
- 24 Coffin platform

- 25 Ne'er-do-wells
- 26 Relax
- 27 Loosen, as a knot
- 28 Skateboarder's protections
- 29 Becoming rigid
- 30 _frutti
- 32 Mini blind piece
- 33 Hoodwink
- 35 "Father Knows"
- 37 Nuisance
- 38 Sign of affection
- 40 Journal
- 41 Men
- 43 Indian & Atlantic
- 44 Many a PTA member
- 46 Squander
- 47 On the ...; in trouble
- 48 Not taped
- 49 Covered with frosting
- 50 Cuckoo or loon
- 52 No longer tied up
- 53 Smaller amount
- 55 Roswell sighting
- 56 _ off; fall asleep
- 57 Come _ halt; stop

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WOMEN'S WATER POLO

CdM alumna's 4 goals help U.S. overwhelm Canada in exhibition

BY MATT SZABO

LOS ALAMITOS — The journey to become one of the top women's water polo players in the world was quick for Corona del Mar High alumna Maddie Musselman.

Her coming out party came as an 18-year-old at the 2016 Summer Olympics. She was the second-leading scorer for Team USA, helping the Americans win their second straight gold medal.

Nearly five years later, Musselman has continued to progress. As for the Olympic gold medal, she and her teammates are ready to run that back this summer.

She led Team USA with four goals and two assists in a 17-5 exhibition win over Canada on Wednesday afternoon at Los Alamitos Joint Forces Training Base.

It was the second match since the coronavirus pandemic began for Team USA. The first was a 13-8 victory over the same Canada

squad on Monday in Commerce. The teams complete the three-match series on Friday at 6 p.m., at Goleta Dos Pueblos High.

"It's an opportunity, obviously, for us to prepare for [Tokyo], but just an opportunity to play together," Musselman said. "We haven't been on the same team the whole time ... It's exciting to get back those connections that we haven't felt in a long time. With practice, as great as that is to prepare, it's a lot different playing someone else."

Musselman said the extra year in-between Olympics, which came when the 2020 Summer Games were postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic, was actually beneficial in terms of her leadership. She's a three-time All-American at UCLA who will be a redshirt senior next year.

"I learned a lot, in terms of where I can go as a player, still being young but having a lot of experience," she said. "Being able to go to Rio [de Janeiro in 2016] and

have a different role than I have now, stepping into that, I think that extra year has helped me. I'm able to help out those who are a little bit newer and don't have that same experience that a lot of us do have."

The Olympic roster is scheduled to be announced June 3, and Team USA is ripe with locals who are eager for another opportunity to compete for the gold. Sisters Makenzie and Aria Fischer (Laguna Beach) and Kaleigh Gilchrist (Newport Harbor) also won gold in 2016.

CdM graduate Stephania Haralabidis and Edison product Alys Williams are seeking their first Olympic appearance.

Additionally, veteran Melissa Seidemann, who completed her first year as CdM girls' water polo coach this year, is a two-time gold medalist.

Each contributed to Team USA's blowout win Wednesday. Haralabidis had three goals and an assist — one of the goals of the no-



Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

U.S. WOMEN'S national water polo team's Maddie Musselman takes a shot at the Los Alamitos Joint Forces Training Base on Wednesday.

look variety — while Williams scored twice.

Gilchrist led Team USA with three assists, while Aria Fischer and Seidemann each scored once. Makenzie Fischer had an assist. The Americans were stout defensively, opening up a 6-0 lead before Canada scored midway through the second quarter.

"We talked about improving defensively as a team coming off of last game," Williams said.

"The first three quarters, we held them to two goals, which is

really positive. But it's also like, the last quarter they scored three, so how can we improve that for next time? We're happy with the effort ... but it's about closing out the final quarter as well."

Team captain Maggie Steffens and Rachel Fattal each added two goals for the winners.

The Olympics are about two months away, as Team USA begins on July 24 against host Japan.

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F.V., CdM earn seeds in CIF dual meet wrestling championships

BY ANDREW TURNER

The CIF Southern Section released the pairings for its wrestling dual meet championships on Wednesday, with five local programs advancing to the postseason.

There are four boys' wrestling teams that qualified. Fountain Valley and Corona del Mar, which won team titles in their respective divisions during the 2019-20 season, lead the charge again.

Previously completed in a single day, the CIF dual meet wrestling championships will be contested one round at a time this year.

CIF Assistant Commissioner Thom Simmons said that the move to having the dual meet wrestling championships held over several

days was brought on by the coronavirus and state public health guidelines.

"[To] the best of our knowledge, the last time that the dual wrestling championship was decided over several days was in 1994," Simmons said in an email. "The CIF-SS then went to a one-day format. The problem was always gym availability, and we felt it could be done in one day."

Additionally, the CIF individual wrestling championships will not take place, which means no Masters Meet for the section and no state tournament.

Boys' wrestling competition is scheduled to begin on Tuesday, with teams looking to keep their seasons alive through the finals on June 5.

Fountain Valley received



Kevin Chang | Staff Photographer

FOUNTAIN VALLEY'S Max Wilner sweeps Servite's Valor Buck's right leg in a match during the Five Counties wrestling tournament in Fountain Valley on Jan. 11, 2020.

the No. 4 seed in the Division 2 bracket. The Barons won the Surf League again this season, extending their league title streak to 10.

In its Division 2 playoff

opener, Fountain Valley (3-1) will square off with Beckman (4-3-2, Pacific Coast League at-large) at home. The Barons won the Division 3 championship

against Long Beach Milikan 31-30 last season.

"Our kids really want to win it," Barons coach Brad Woodbury said. "We got a tough division, and of course all the divisions are tough, so we're just going to go one match at a time. We're working hard. It's a crazy year."

Edison (2-1), an at-large selection out of the Surf League, will travel to take on Pacific Coast League champion Laguna Hills in another Division 2 tilt.

Corona del Mar (6-1) will not begin its title defense in Division 6 until the second round on May 29.

The second-seeded Sea Kings have a first-round bye, and they will host the winner of Westlake (2-3, Marmonte League at-large) and Inland Valley League champion Menifee Herit-

age (4-1).

In the Division 6 title match last season, CdM topped Montebello 48-16.

"We can win it," Sea Kings coach Mark Alex said. "It's going to be tough, but we can win it. I'm happy with our No. 2 seed. [Top-seeded] Western is a really good team this year."

Newport Harbor (2-5) fell to CdM in the Battle of the Bay match with the Wave League title on the line, but the Sailors got into the Division 6 bracket with an at-large bid. The Sailors will start at home against Cerritos (5-4, 605 League at-large).

In girls' wrestling, Marina will host Norwalk Glenn (3-0) in a first-round match on Wednesday.

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