

SOCIETY FOR CONSERVATION BIOLOGY – BERKELEY CHAPTER

**Minutes for: TUESDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2005**

Agenda:

1. Introductions & attendance
2. Dues
3. Web page
4. Field Trip
5. San Jose Meeting
6. Strawberry Creek Restoration
7. East Africa Partnership
8. Guest Speaker: Holly Doremus on ESA reform

1. Introductions & attendance

The new SCB board was introduced to the group. In case you missed it, the new board is:

Cole Burton – Co-President  
Mike Wasserman – Co-President  
Pauline Kamath – Treasurer  
Morgan Tingley – Secretary

21 people were in attendance for this meeting.

2. Dues

Membership dues are collected once per year at the fee of \$10.00. Fees go to a variety of purposes, including food and drinks for our meetings, support for our tri-annual regional meeting, and incidental costs (e.g. field trips or supplies). We are open to suggestions of new uses for our capital.

3. Web page

New SCB Webmaster Tim Dechant was introduced to the group. He plans to have an updated website in the next month, and eventually unveil a new and exciting design for the website.

4. Field Trip

Morgan announced the planned field trip at the end of the month. SCB is combining with Cal Birders to go to the Hawk Hill hawkwatch in the Marin Headlands on Saturday, October 29<sup>th</sup>. We are carpooling from the west circle, leaving at 9 am, and meeting at Hawk Hill at 10 am. Drivers will be needed and a show of hands indicated 6 potential drivers and 14 potential hawkwatchers. For directions go to <[www.ggro.org](http://www.ggro.org)>. For more

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information on the trip, including expected species, please contact Morgan ([mtingley@nature.berkeley.edu](mailto:mtingley@nature.berkeley.edu)).

Important: Bring layered clothes as it can be quite chilly. Also, binoculars and scopes (if available) are very helpful.

### 5. San Jose Meeting

Professor Lynn Huntsinger gave a short plug for the international SCB meeting in San Jose this coming June. We have several roles to play at the meeting. First, Lynn is looking for interested students to help in reviewing abstracts. If you missed filling out a form at the meeting, please contact Lynn ([buckaroo@nature.berkeley.edu](mailto:buckaroo@nature.berkeley.edu)) for more information. Second, they are hoping that the Berkeley and Davis SCB chapters can run an informational table at the meeting on how to start up your own chapter. It's still a ways in the future, but if you're going to be here in June, you might want to add it to your calendar.

### 6. Strawberry Creek Restoration

Adena provided an update on the restoration. Seedlings are currently growing in gardens around Berkeley and planting is being planned for late November. There have been numerous inquiries for the position of Restoration Coordinator. However, if you have interest in this position, contact Adena ([arissman@nature.berkeley.edu](mailto:arissman@nature.berkeley.edu)).

There will be a trip this Friday (14<sup>th</sup>) to a Berkeley-area nursery to pick out plants for the restoration. If you are interested in going, contact Eric ([abelson@uclink.berkeley.edu](mailto:abelson@uclink.berkeley.edu)).

### 7. East Africa Partnership

Mike gave a general overview of the East Africa Partnership. We are hoping to provide support for scholarly activities to our sister chapter, including but not limited to: sending unused journal copies, books, computers, and field equipment; and providing review support for grant applications or other professional endeavors. We are the second SCB chapter to develop a sister chapter and are hoping to develop a rich and worthwhile partnership. If you have ideas, we are very excited to hear about them, and please bring them to the next SCB meeting in November where we will be discussing the issue in more depth.

### 8. Guest Speaker: Holly Doremus on the proposed ESA ammendment

Holly Doremus, Professor of Environmental Law at UC Davis, gave a very informative overview of the ESA, the proposed changes in the House and Senate, and what role we can have as concerned citizens and scientists. An overview of the issue, as presented by Holly, is as follows.

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The House has recently passed HR 3824 (look up at <thomas.loc.gov>), the “Threatened and Endangered Species Recovery Act”, put forth by Representative Pombo (R-??). The bill aims to reform the Endangered Species Act (ESA), which has not been amended since 1980. The ESA is supposed to be looked at every few years, however, the Pombo bill wholly guts the act.

There is widespread agreement that the ESA needs reform, but the reform needs to strengthen the act and its powers, not weaken it. Right-wing frustration with the ESA is typically presented as frustration that species are not being de-listed, thus presenting evidence that the ESA is not functioning correctly as a recovery tool. A selection of the things that the Pombo bill does:

- When landowners want to develop or modify land that would involve a “taking” of a protected species, the F&WS will now have a shortened period of review of applications to take.
- If the application is not reviewed in time, the application will be assumed “approved” and no repercussions can happen down the line if negative impacts on endangered species do occur.
- If the application is rejected, then the government (via the F&WS’s budget) will be liable to compensate the land owner for the *full value of the lost opportunity to develop*. Unlike with most government agencies, under the Pombo bill, if F&WS cannot meet all of its payments, they will be deducted from the following years’ budgets.
- Eliminates the Habitat Conservation Plan requirement of landowners.
- Redefines the meaning of species in “jeopardy,” thus allowing to push species further towards extinction before protective clauses come into play.
- Redefines “best available science” to only include science that has been peer-reviewed, “field-tested,” and with methods and data that have passed OMB approval.

Holly expressed her hopeful opinion that she does not think that the Pombo bill will be able to pass the Senate, however she does expect a concerted attack on the ESA to go up for a vote in the Senate sometime this spring. The Pombo bill is currently in the Senate committee on Environmental and Public Works (EPW), led by Inhofe (R-OK). Before EPW can vote on it, it has to get through the subcommittee on Wildlife and Parks, led by Chafee (R-RI). Chafee seems supportive of making the ESA work, and has suggested that he will draft his own version of the bill. At any rate, he has expressed that he will not present a bill to EPW until an awaited report by the Keystone Center on ESA reform is finished. Chafee’s eventual ESA reform bill will likely focus on three things:

- 1) Incentives for private landowners
- 2) Role of State and Local government
- 3) Role of Science and scientists

Holly’s talk was highly informative and we expressed much gratitude to her for coming and joining us. If any of us have more questions on the ESA, she asked us to contact her at <hddoremus@ucdavis.edu>.

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Following the talk, we discussed letter-writing options to present our opinions. It was decided that we have some time until letters are absolutely needed, and we should use that time to develop a chapter-wide opinion piece. Individuals are welcome (and encouraged) to write letters to their senators now, so that they know that this is an important topic to them. If you do write a letter, please send it to the board so we can steal – I mean learn from – your ideas. Before the next meeting, the board will meet to discuss our position and brainstorm some ideas. Opinions welcome.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:20 pm.

\*\* END MINUTES \*\*

Respectfully submitted,  
Morgan Tingley, Secretary