As summer hits, tourism still lags from pre-pandemic highs

MATTHEW HALL
Daily Press Editor

As Santa Monica enters the height of the summer season, the city’s tourist industry has yet to recover from its pandemic slump.

That’s not to say the industry is in decline. Visitor numbers are increasing and there are signs the area continues to be attractive to tourists.

A recent survey by cheaphotels.org ranked Santa Monica as the second most expensive summer destination for hotels and while local officials said the details of the survey should be taken with some skepticism due to questions over the methodology, the broad implication, that Santa Monica remains a popular visitor destination was true.

The survey is based on 30 cities in California with at least 20 hotels or inns. For each destination, the average price for the cheapest available double room was established for the period spanning July 1 to August 31, 2023. Only hotels rated at least three stars and located close to the beach or city centers were considered for the survey. Rates were established in late June based on prices shown on leading hotel booking sites.

“My first response would be, California is in the number one spot as an international destination in the United States. They’re number one. And then Los Angeles LAX is the top point of entry for most travelers into California. They are above both San Diego in San Francisco,” said Misti Kerns, CEO, Santa Monica Tourism and Travel. “So when you look at that, I mean certainly Santa Monica sitting in the county of Los Angeles, as the premier beach area, there’s no surprise that we’re ranking as a more popular destination from a price structure.”

Kerns said local tourism, and the spending it brings, has not recovered from the pandemic slump but continues a steady rebound.

The total number of visitors to Santa Monica reached 5,320,500 last year and while that’s far short of the 8,413,100 that came in 2019, it is a 51% increase from 2021. Total spending by tourists is up 28% year on year but at $961,711,800 its about half of the $1.89 billion recorded in 2019. Hotel tax revenue paid to the city actually surpassed 2019 levels last year reaching $59,232,000 but retail tax into the city was only recovered from its pandemic slump.

DAVID COLGAN
Special to the Daily Press

What’s living beneath the waves? It’s a question many Southern California swimmers and surfers ponder when they visit the beach. Now, thanks to environmental DNA, or eDNA, scientists have the most comprehensive answer ever to that question. A UCLA-led study published in the journal PLOS One has identified 80 species of fish and rays living within southern California surf zones — the areas where ocean waves break onto the beach.

“Environmental DNA opens up a wealth of possibilities to monitor our local beach ecosystems,” said Paul Barber, a UCLA professor of ecology and evolutionary biology, and the paper’s senior author. Researchers collected ocean samples at 18 sites stretching from the Channel Islands to Catalina. Then they extracted the DNA that animals shed into that water in the form of dead skin, scales and other body parts. Finally, that DNA was matched by species to samples from genetic libraries.

The research, which was published in PLOS One, turned up a broad array of fish, sharks and rays — including leopard sharks, school sharks, bat rays, round stingrays, opaleye, northern anchovies, flatfish, giant kelpfish and surfperch.

The study’s lead author is Zack Gold, who conducted the research as a UCLA doctoral candidate and is now a marine scientist at the Pacific Marine Environmental Lab Ocean Molecular Ecology group of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association. Gold said one of the
For the third time this week, Earth sets an unofficial heat record. What’s behind those big numbers?

SETH BORENSTEIN  
Associated Press

Earth’s average temperature set a new unofficial record high on Thursday, the third such milestone in a week that already rated as the hottest on record and what one prominent scientist says could be the hottest in 120,000 years.

But it’s also a record with some legitimate scientific questions and caveats, so much so that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has distanced itself from it. It’s grabbed global attention, even as the number — 63 degrees Fahrenheit (17.23 degrees Celsius) — doesn’t look that hot because it averages temperatures from around the globe.

Still, scientists say the daily drumbeat of records — official or not — is a symptom of a larger problem where the precise digits aren’t as important as what’s causing them.

“Records grab attention, but we need to make sure to connect them with the things that actually matter,” climate scientist Friederike Otto of the Imperial College of London said in an email. “So I don’t think it’s crucial how ‘official’ the numbers are, what matters is that they are huge and dangerous and wouldn’t have happened without climate change.”

Thursday’s planetary average surpassed the 62.9-degree mark (17.18-degree mark) set Tuesday and equaled Wednesday, according to data from the University of Maine’s Climate Reanalyzer, a tool that uses satellite data and computer simulations to measure the world’s condition. Until Monday, no day had passed the 17-degree Celsius mark (62.6 degrees Fahrenheit) in the tool’s 44 years of records.

Now, the entire week that ended Thursday averaged that much.

Johan Rockstrom, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany, called the 63-degree mark “an exceptional outlier” that is nearly 6 degrees warmer than the average of the last 12,000 years. Rockstrom said it will “with high likelihood translate to even more severe extremes in the form of floods, droughts, heat waves and storms.”

“It is certainly plausible that the past couple days and past week were the warmest days globally in 120,000 years,” University of Pennsylvania climate scientist Michael Mann said. He cited a 2021 study that says Earth is the warmest since the last age ended, and said Earth likely hasn’t been as warm dating all the way to the ice age before that some 120,000 years ago.

Climate scientist Zeke Hausfather of the tech company Stripe and Berkeley Earth temperature monitoring group said he wouldn’t be surprised if it is the warmest in 120,000 years. But he said long-term proxy measurements like tree rings aren’t precise.

This week’s average includes places that are sweltering under dangerous heat — like Jingxing, China, which checked in almost 110 degrees Fahrenheit (43.3 degrees Celsius) — and the merely unusually warm, like Antarctica, where temperatures across much of the continent were as much as 8 degrees Fahrenheit (4.5 degrees Celsius) above normal this week.

Temperatures were so brutally hot Thursday in Adrar, Algeria, that the overnight low dropped only to 103.3 degrees (39.6 degrees Celsius). That was an all-time nighttime low for Africa, according to weather historian and climatologist Maximiliano Herrera.

The temperature is ramping up across Europe this week, too. Germany’s weather agency, DWD, has predicted highs of 37 degrees C (99 degrees F) on Sunday and the Health Ministry has issued a warning to vulnerable people.

While there are small spots of cooler-than-normal temperatures across the globe, the University of Maine measurement is an average. That means some places — including both polar regions — will be extraordinarily warmer than normal and others will be cooler. On average it’s about 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit (1 degree Celsius) warmer than the 1979-2000 average, which is warmer than the 20th and 19th century averages.

And 70% of the world is covered by oceans, which have been spiking record heat for months.
Cooper hiring in June could help the Fed achieve an elusive ‘soft landing’ for US economy

CHRISTOPHER RUGABER
AP Economics Writer

Another month, another solid gain for America’s job market.

Employers in the United States slowed their hiring in June yet still produced a healthy increase, further evidence of an economy that has defied persistent forecasts of a recession.

The pace of hiring by businesses and government agencies — 209,000 added jobs last month — was the smallest monthly gain in 2 1/2 years. But it was enough to reduce the unemployment rate from 3.7% to 3.6%, near a half-century low.

The latest evidence of economic strength makes it all but certain that the Federal Reserve will resume its interest rate hikes later this month, ending a streak of 10 rate increases that were intended to curb high inflation.

Yet there were also signs in Friday’s government report that the job market is cooling to a more sustainable pace of growth — a trend that, if sustained, could reassure the Fed that its rate hikes are cooling inflation pressures without derailing the economy.

“This is kind of a Goldilocks report,” said Julia Coronado, president of MacroPolicy Perspectives, an economic research firm. “It’s a resilient labor market — not too hot, not too cool.”

WHY IS HIRING SO CONSISTENT?

The economy has been beset by high interest rates, elevated inflation and nagging worries about a possible recession resulting from the Fed’s efforts to quell price increases.

Yet several factors are countering those headwinds and perpetuating hiring, which typically boosts consumer spending and propels the economy.

Industries that are typically sensitive to rising borrowing costs — such as housing and car sales — appear to have adjusted to the Fed’s higher rates. To take one example: Mortgage rates have nearly doubled since the Fed began raising borrowing costs 15 months ago. But most of that increase had occurred by last fall. In recent months, housing has shown signs of rebounding, with sales and construction of new homes picking up.

And higher interest rates typically would lead to job losses in the construction and manufacturing industries. This time, the opposite has happened: Construction firms added 23,000 jobs last month, automakers 4,300. There are so few homes available that even reduced demand for housing is spurring the economy.

Likewise, despite sharply higher loan rates, auto sales have risen this year largely because of pent-up demand after years of reduced supply.

Construction companies are also benefitting from ongoing infrastructure spending by the Biden administration, and so are other industries.

Mick Groneweld is CEO one of such company, Fehr Graham, an environmental engineering firm based in Rockford, Illinois. Groneweld says his company is looking to add at least 40 workers to its 230-person staff. The company, which designs water and wastewater projects and roads and industrial parks, mostly for cities and towns, is seeing healthy demand for its services. It is seeking to hire engineers, environmental scientists, accountants and surveyors.

Another trend stoking its hiring: Many of Fehr Graham’s employees retired during the pandemic and its aftermath, and the company needs more younger workers.

HOW WILL THE FEDERAL RESERVE RESPOND?

A rate hike at the Fed’s meeting later this month is considered all but reassured. Whether the Fed will hike again when it next meets in September is harder to foresee.

The central bank’s policymakers may take solace from the slowdown in hiring, particularly once they exclude government jobs, which don’t reflect the state of demand in the economy. Fed officials signaled last month that they envision as many as two additional quarter-point rate hikes before the year ends.

But Chair Jerome Powell has also said he hopes to engineer a so-called “soft landing,” by which the economy slows enough to tame inflation but not enough to succumb to a recession.

Friday’s jobs report suggests that the Fed may achieve that often-elusive goal, economists said.

“The Fed is on track for a soft landing,” said Betsey Stevenson, an economics professor at the University of Michigan. “What they have to do is steer us the rest of the way down. We didn’t crash, but that doesn’t mean that we won’t crash.”
Elevated mortgage rates are leading to sharply higher monthly payments even as home prices ease

ALEX VEIGA
AP Business Writer

Would-be homebuyers are willing to take on sharply higher mortgage payments, even as home prices have begun to pull back this year.

“Homebuyer affordability eroded further in May as prospective buyers continue to grapple with high interest rates and low housing inventory,” Edward Seiler, the MBA’s associate vice president of housing economics, said in a release last week.

The median monthly payment listed on applications for home purchase loans jumped 14.1% in May from a year earlier to an all-time high $396,100, according to the National Association of Realtors.

Home prices have kept falling since, most recently sliding 3.1% in May from a year earlier to a median $396,100, according to the NAR.

Still, the national median home price remains nearly 40% higher than it was three years ago. Meanwhile, the average rate on a 30-year home mortgage climbed to a new high for the year this week at 6.3%, mortgage buyer Freddie Mac said Thursday. That’s more than double what it was two years ago.

The combination, along with a stubbornly low level of homes for sale, is driving mortgage payments higher, pushing the limits of what many homebuyers can afford.

Consider that two years ago the median national monthly payment on home loan applications was $1,320.48, or 63.4% less than what it was last month.

A recent forecast by Realtor.com calls for the average rate on a 30-year mortgage to drop to 6% by the end of the year. Lower rates could motivate some homeowners to sell, adding more sorely needed inventory to the market. However, lower rates could also spur more buyers to come off the sidelines, which would heighten competition and push up prices.

Home prices have kept falling since, most recently sliding 3.1% in May from a year earlier to a median $396,100, according to the National Association of Realtors.

Some of the nation’s largest truck makers on Thursday pledged to stop selling new gas-powered vehicles in California by the middle of the next decade, part of an agreement with state regulators aimed at preventing lawsuits that threatened to delay or block the state’s emission standards.

California is trying to rid itself of fossil fuels, passing new rules in recent years to phase out gas-powered cars, trucks, trains and lawn equipment in the nation’s most populous state.

It will take years before all of those rules fully take effect. But already some industries are pushing back. Last month, the railroad industry sued the California Air Resources Board to block new rules that would ban older locomotives and require companies to purchase zero-emission equipment.

Thursday’s announcement means lawsuits are less likely to delay similar rules for the trucking industry. The companies agreed to follow California’s rules, which include banning the sale of new gas-powered trucks by 2036. In the meantime, California regulators agreed to loosen some of their emission standards for diesel trucks. The state agreed to use the federal emission standard starting in 2027, which is lower than what the California rules would have been.

California regulators also agreed to let these companies continue to sell more older diesel engines over the next three years, but only if they also sell zero-emission vehicles to offset the emissions from those older trucks.

The agreement also clears the way for other states to adopt California’s same standards without worrying about whether the rules would be upheld in court, said Steven Cliff, executive officer of the California Air Resources Board. That means more trucks nationally would follow these rules. Cliff said about 60% of the truck vehicle miles traveled in California come from trucks that arrive from other states.

“I think that this sets the stage for a national framework for zero emission trucks,” Cliff said. “It’s a really stringent California-only rule, or a slightly less stringent national rule. We still win in the national scenario.”


“This agreement enables the regulatory certainty we all need to prepare for a future which will include ever increasing volumes of low and zero-emissions technologies,” said Michael Noonan, director of product certification and compliance for Navistar.

Elevated mortgage rates are leading to sharply higher monthly payments even as home prices ease

SMALL BUSINESS
STARTUP?
LET ME HELP YOU SUCCEED

TAXES • BOOKKEEPING • STARTUPS • CORPS. • LLCS

(310) 395-9922
SAMUEL B. MOSES, CPA
100 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1800 Santa Monica 90401

This agreement enables the regulatory certainty we all need to prepare for a future which will include ever increasing volumes of low and zero-emissions technologies

- Michael Noonan, director of product certification and compliance for Navistar

California cities. Of the top 10 most ozone-polluted cities in the U.S., six are in California, according to the American Lung Association.

Mariela Ruacho, clean air advocacy manager for the American Lung Association, said the agreement is “great news” that “shows California is a leader when it comes to clean air.” But Ruacho said she wants to know how the agreement will change estimates of health benefits for Californians. The rules regulators adopted in April included an estimated $26.6 billion in health care savings from fewer asthma attacks, emergency room visits and other respiratory illnesses.

“We really want to see an analysis of what if any emission loss would be and what that means for health benefits,” she said.

Cliff said regulators are working to update those health estimates. But he noted those estimates were based on banning the sale of new gas-powered trucks by 2036 — a rule that is still in place.

“We’re getting all the benefits that would have been,” he said. “We’re essentially locking that in.”

California has reached similar agreements int he past. In 2019, four major automakers agreed to toughen standards for gas mileage and greenhouse gas emissions.
COVID Didn’t Kill Me

Editor:

I read with equal parts interest and dismay your article last week concerning a Bay Area landlord’s experiences with tenants’ bad behavior apparently enabled by the eviction moratorium still in place there. People acting in bad faith, as that landlord’s tenants seem to be doing, cannot really be defended, and I don’t wish to try.

As a contrast, however, are my own experiences as a tenant. For 21 years I have been a resident at the same address of Sunset Park. I moved into my apartment during Summer 2002, while the country was still very much reeling from 9/11, and several years before the global financial crisis (and its famous “jobless recovery”). For the first 19 years I was a model tenant: rent paid on time (mostly – though there were as many instances where I paid rent early as I paid late, usually due to work-related travel). But just as important, I was quiet, didn’t cause damage to my unit or the common areas, and was never the subject of complaints by neighbors to either the landlord or police, despite the fact that all of those happened to my various neighbors through the years.

In the midst of my 18th year of tenancy, of course, the COVID-19 pandemic threw the whole world into an unprecedented crisis. I was employed as a college teacher for about a dozen years prior, and the pandemic disrupted higher education just as completely as any other industry. My teaching jobs were cut in half with the shutdown (one college closed completely, as it had no online component to its classes) and I taught my last academic class in December 2020. Despite what the news headlines say, jobs are not “back” in every industry, and college faculty positions are a prime example where jobs are definitely not “back” to pre-COVID levels and will not be for many years. Of course I held other positions prior to being a professor, but there is now a 15 year gap in my work experience that has proven to be a problem for non-academic positions I’ve applied for in recent months. I’ve also made clear to outreach organizations and potential employers alike that I’m perfectly willing to do anything to get back into the workforce, including stacking shelves or any other such position that has openings. But of course I have no experience for that type of work, and I am back to square one.

Yet I will become a member of Santa Monica’s homeless population come August 15. With the end of the eviction moratorium in Los Angeles County, my landlord finally started the eviction process. I don’t blame him, as I am many months behind on my rent, and have no credible expectation that I will be able to resume current monthly rent payments in the near future (to say nothing of past due rent). Of course my likelihood of finding gainful employment will plummet significantly once I am unhoused, and as the date draws near I am by necessity shifting my focus from job hunting to learning what I will need to know how to survive after August 15.

COVID-19 didn’t kill me, but surviving it just might.

Michael Pottenger, Santa Monica

COMMUNITY NEWS

Citywide

Jay Alan Cohen Obituary

Jay Alan Cohen, 69, of Santa Monica, passed away on July 6, 2023. Jay was born and raised in Philadelphia. Son to David and Mimi Cohen (deceased); brother to Stephen (Ruth) and Neal (Florence); and uncle to Michael (Jessica), Becky (Brian), Sarah (Alan) and William as well as numerous grand-nieces and nephews.

Jay graduated from Phillips Academy Andover, Brandeis University and Villanova University School of Law. He had a varied and exciting career in law, technology and international business. He loved reading literature and writing in his spare time. He was devoted to his pets and had a lifelong passion for international travel and the Philadelphia Flyers NHL team.

He made Santa Monica and Southern California his adopted home and lived there for a good portion of his life. The family would like to thank his friends and caregivers for the comfort and support they provided Jay. Memorial gifts should be sent to Cedars Sinai Medical Center in memory of Jay. The burial service will be Monday, July 10 at 10 a.m. at Mount Sinai Cemetery in Hollywood Hills.

SUBMITTED BY FIO COHEN

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING WITH RESPECT TO THE ISSUANCE OF TAX-EXEMPT REVENUE OBLIGATIONS BY THE CALIFORNIA ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY FOR THE PURPOSE OF FINANCING OR REFINANCING THE COST OF ACQUIRING, DEVELOPING, CONSTRUCTING, INSTALLING, EQUIPPING AND FURNISHING OF EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES FOR THE BENEFIT OF NEW ROADS SCHOOL AND/OR A RELATED ENTITY

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that at 5:30 p.m., or as soon thereafter as the matter may be heard, on July 18, 2023, at the City Hall Council Chamber, 1685 Main Street, Santa Monica, California, the City Council of the City of Santa Monica (the “City Council”) will conduct a public hearing (the “Public Hearing”) at which the City Council will hear and consider information concerning the issuance, from time to time, pursuant to a plan of finance, of one or more series of tax-exempt revenue obligations by the California Enterprise Development Authority (the “Issuer”) in an aggregate principal amount not to exceed Twenty Five Million Dollars ($25,000,000) (the “Obligations”) for the benefit of New Roads School, a nonprofit public benefit corporation, duly organized and existing under the laws of the State of California (the “State”), and/or a related entity (the “Borrower”). The Issuer will loan the proceeds of the Obligations to the Borrower pursuant to one or more loan agreements (collectively, the “Loan Agreement”). The proceeds of the Obligations loaned to the Borrower will be applied to (a) finance or refinance the cost of acquisition, construction, development, improvement, renovation, furnishing and equipping of the Borrower’s educational campus consisting of (i) an approximately 2.6 acre campus located at 3131 Olympic Boulevard, Santa Monica, California 90404 and bordered by Olympic Boulevard to the south, Nebraska Avenue to the north, Franklin Street to the east and Berkshire Street to the west, including approximately 73,150 square feet of improvements including classrooms, a theater, science labs, offices, outdoor play and sports areas, parking, and related and ancillary facilities, and (ii) an approximately 9,700 square foot building located at 1836 Franklin Street, Santa Monica, California 90404 (collectively, the “Facilities”), and (b) pay certain costs of issuance in connection with such financing or refinancing. The Borrower is an organization described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (the “Code”), and will own and operate the Facilities in connection with its mission of providing an inspired college preparatory program for students in grades K-12 where an authentically diverse student population develops personal dedication to learning, a respect to independent thinking and an expanding curiosity about the world and its people. The Obligations will be paid entirely from repayments by the Borrower under the Loan Agreement.

Neither the faith and credit nor the taxing power of the City of Santa Monica (the “City”), the State, or any other political corporation, subdivision or agency of the State is pledged to the payment of the principal of, premium, if any, or interest on, the Obligations, nor shall the City, the State or any other political corporation, subdivision or agency of the State be liable or obligated to pay the principal of, premium, if any, or interest on, the Obligations.

Additional information concerning the above matter may be obtained from, and written comments should be addressed to, City Clerk, City of Santa Monica, 1685 Main Street, Room 102, Santa Monica, California 90401 or email to councilmtgitems@santamonica.gov.

The meeting facility is wheelchair accessible. For disability-related accommodations, please contact (310) 458-8341 or (310) 458-8696 TTY at least 72 hours in advance. Every attempt will be made to provide the requested accommodation. All written materials are available in alternate format upon request. Santa Monica Big Blue Bus Lines numbered 2, 5, and 9 serve City Hall.

Dated: July 8, 2023
CRISIS: An area has been set aside to help animals recover from toxic algae.

We need people to volunteer to help identify stranded animals, to help educate the public about what’s happening and help us keep these animals safe while they rest and recover.

- Traci Park Councilwoman

We need people to volunteer to help identify stranded animals, to help educate the public about what’s happening and help us keep these animals safe while they rest and recover.

“We’ve seen [marine mammal] events that have been really bad in the past, but nothing quite like this,” Warner told the Current. “It’s a rare occurrence to see a neurological toxin where the symptoms are very severe and you see these animals in absolute distress all over the beaches where they normally don’t haul out because of them being so populated. This is a very new phenomenon.”

According to Warner, it all started at the end of May when wildlife officials at MMCC began seeing the effects of the toxins on marine life. By the end of June, the San Pedro-based organization was at maximum capacity with 120 “marine mammal patients,” which is 100 more than the center treats in a year.

Warner said that within a two week period, they received over 1000 calls from locals reporting marine mammals in distress.

The sea lions are disproportionately affected by the neurotoxin as they regularly consume large quantities of shellfish as well as small fish, which eat the deadly algae. The heart and brain damage is in direct proportion to the amount of infected fish the mammals consume.

A full-time veterinarian is currently delivering treatment that consists of seizure medication as well as supplying fluids to the sea lions in effort to wash out the toxins. In addition, the sea lions are isolated from human contact in order to provide them with a restful “stress-free environment.”

According to Warner, immediate treatment can, within the span of 72 hours, prevent further brain issues such as memory loss. While algae blooms have been known to last from 4-8 weeks in the past, Warner said the MMCC is currently awaiting a status update on future blooms from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), with the hopes that the worst has passed.

Park raised concerns over recent reports of local beachgoers approaching, petting and taking photos alongside the sea lions.

“People need to understand the different stages of recovery the sea lions are in right now. Some are recovering, others are not. It’s important for the public to be aware of what’s happening and to give these animals the respect they deserve,” Warner told the Current.

“We need people to volunteer to help identify stranded animals, to help educate the public about what’s happening and help us keep these animals safe while they rest and recover,” Park said.

Warner and Jones praised Park and city officials for rallying the community and thanked the “wonderful neighbors” for volunteering.

“While the wheels of government tend to churn very slow, this has been amazing. It’s very clear that people in Southern California love their ocean, beaches and their creatures that are a sense of joy for all of us.”

eight sea lions suffering from domoic acid poisoning, which is a neurotoxin produced by the bloom of toxic marine algae called Pseudo-nitzschia australis. The toxin can cause seizures and heart failure by attacking the brain and heart.

At a press-conference held on Thursday afternoon, Councilwoman Traci Park was joined by Los Angeles city, county and wildlife officials including John Warner, CEO of MMCC and Gary Jones, Director of Department of Beaches & Harbors to discuss the marine mammal crisis.

“We’ve seen [marine mammal] events that have been really bad in the past, but nothing quite like this,” Warner told the Current. “It’s a rare occurrence to see a neurological toxin where the symptoms are very severe and you see these animals in absolute distress all over the beaches where they normally don’t haul out because of them being so populated. This is a very new phenomenon.”

According to Warner, it all started at the end of May when wildlife officials at MMCC began seeing the effects of the toxins on marine life. By the end of June, the San Pedro-based organization was at maximum capacity with 120 “marine mammal patients,” which is 100 more than the center treats in a year. Warner said that within a two week period, they received over 1000 calls from locals reporting marine mammals in distress.

The sea lions are disproportionately affected by the neurotoxin as they regularly consume large quantities of shellfish as well as small fish, which eat the deadly algae. The heart and brain damage is in direct proportion to the amount of infected fish the mammals consume.

A full-time veterinarian is currently delivering treatment that consists of seizure medication as well as supplying fluids to the sea lions in effort to wash out the toxins. In addition, the sea lions are isolated from human contact in order to provide them with a restful “stress-free environment.”

According to Warner, immediate treatment can, within the span of 72 hours, prevent further brain issues such as memory loss. While algae blooms have been known to last from 4-8 weeks in the past, Warner said the MMCC is currently awaiting a status update on future blooms from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), with the hopes that the worst has passed.

Warner and Jones praised Park and city officials for rallying the community and thanked the “wonderful neighbors” for volunteering.

“We’ve never seen the government act so fast and responsive in my entire life,” Warner told the Current. “While the wheels of government tend to churn very slow, this has been amazing. It’s very clear that people in Southern California love their ocean, beaches and their creatures that are a sense of joy for all of us.”
positive findings was that white seabass DNA samples appeared consistently at all of the test sites.

That’s significant because white seabass, which has been overstressed historically, was the focus of a 1995 California conservation plan. While earlier studies had indicated that the species was recovering slowly, the new study provides evidence that the comeback has been more robust than previously thought.

The researchers also evaluated eDNA as a method for monitoring ocean life in comparison to two more traditional approaches: beach seine, in which species are captured with nets, and baited video cameras. They found that eDNA revealed a more comprehensive picture of the all the animals living in the surf zones studied: The genetic sampling revealed 58 species that weren’t detected by the other methods.

The other research methods still have scientific value, though. For one thing, eDNA doesn’t reveal information about the animals’ size, age and sex. In addition, eDNA data is vague at best in terms of quantifying how many of each species are present in a given area, but recent advances in the technology could lead to improvements in that regard, too.

As the boundary between land and ocean, surf zones are critical ecological “edges” that are particularly challenging to study due to their turbulent, always-shifting nature, said UC Santa Barbara marine ecologist Jenifer Dugan, a co-author of the paper.

“Remarkably little is known about the fish communities that live in surf zones,” Dugan said. “We relied on scientific duck-diving with beach seines and swimming baited cameras out through the surf to learn more about these understudied fish.”

While genetic labs are needed to process eDNA samples, even nonscientists like lifeguards and beachgoers can collect the water samples. That means it can be done more cheaply, in more locations and more often — giving conservation science the opportunity to better understand how marine life is affected by oil spills and other pollution events, extreme temperatures and other short-term environmental concerns.

In addition to Gold, the paper’s other lead author is McKenzie Koch, who teaches science to children at Ocean Institute, a nonprofit education organization. Koch, who contributed to the paper as an undergraduate at UCLA, said encouraging citizen scientists to participate in research gets them to care more about protecting wildlife.

“If we continue to connect recreation to science, we’ll end up with a more motivated generation,” she said.

Barber added that researchers at environmental nonprofits like Heal the Bay already are regularly testing water from the region’s beaches for unhealthy bacteria. Because that water also contains eDNA, those samples could be useful for long-term monitoring of marine life, which Barber said could be especially informative as the oceans warm due to climate change.

Among other benefits, the study provides the clearest picture yet of ocean life that lives off the coast of Malibu, Santa Monica and other top beach destinations. For example, the research identified evidence of leopard sharks and school sharks in those areas. But Gold said that shouldn’t be a reason for beachgoers to stay away, because humans aren’t those sharks’ prey.

“Most of the fish we’re seeing are herbivores or eat invertebrates in the sand,” he said. “UVs on the 405 are a much bigger threat than sharks.”

Still, it’s nice to know when round rays, which sting when disturbed, are present. Simply shuffling one’s feet along the sand can help avoid a painful injury, Gold said, speaking from personal experience.

David Colgan is a writer for UCLA where this story first published.

CLIMATE

FROM PAGE 2

Scientists say the heat is driven by two factors: Long-term warming from greenhouse gas emissions from the burning of fossil fuels and a natural El Nino warming of part of the Pacific that changes weather globally and makes an already warming world a bit hotter.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on Thursday issued a note of caution about the Maine tool’s findings, saying it could not confirm data that results from monthly or yearly data. ... We experience the world hour-by-hour, day-by-day, not in monthly or yearly averages.

Discussions about how official the records are aren’t as important as the public getting the message “that Earth is warming and humans are responsible,” said Max Boykoff, a University of Colorado environmental studies professor who tracks media coverage of climate change.

“The issue of climate change doesn’t often get its 15 minutes of fame. When it does, it’s usually tied to something abstract like a scientific report or a meeting of politicians that most people can’t relate to,” said George Mason University climate communications professor Ed Maibach.

“Feeling the heat — and breathing the wildfire smoke, as so many of us in the East Coast for example — is a tangible shared public experience that can be used to focus the public conversation,” he said.

TOURISM

FROM PAGE 1

about a third of what it was pre-pandemic.

International travelers are traditionally worth more to city coffers and create less strain on city services but only 21% of visitors are currently foreign compared to about 50% a few years ago. Kerns said she expected it would take another year for the travel industry to adjust to a normal cycle after zero activity during lockdown and then pent up demand expending last year.

“So we still have some catching up to do,”

So we still have some catching up to do, but it’s happening quicker than everybody forecasted

-Misti Kerns, CEO, Santa Monica Tourism and Travel

In the short term, she said visitors will likely follow the pattern established in recent weeks with a high number of Los Angeles area residents visiting on weekends but subdued numbers during weekdays. However, a heat wave would drive many more people to the beach.

“If we start hitting that, 90 degree weather in Downtown, in the valley and higher, then we’re going to continue to see an increase in our daytime population. I mean, there’s no way around that,” she said. “Converting those people to an overnight stay is where we hope we can capture more of that, where they’re not having to drive in here and drive around all the time.”

Part of the local recovery has been driven by large sporting events in the area including the Superbowl, MLB All Star game, Wrestandem and US Open. With the World Cup and Olympics on the horizon, she said those visitors could be invaluable to the local industry given Santa Monica’s proximity to both the airport and SoFi stadium.

“One of the things that people confuse about the audience is sports people that like to go watch are also business people,” she said. “So they may do business while they’re here and then go into what we call ‘blesure’ which is business and leisure. You know, they might have their family come in after their two days of business, stay for the weekend for whatever game or sporting event or concert activity is happening, and we’re seeing some of that come in as well.”

While Kerns is optimistic about the future, fears around homelessness, crime and the ongoing labor dispute targetting hotels could all stunt that recovery.

As a Santa Monica resident, she said she knows why residents are concerned but the local experiences don’t always become problems for tourists.

“The things that you’re talking about that may affect us locally, don’t necessarily translate to those that are coming in from out of town unless they have a direct negative experience,” she said. “And I think that while we are challenged right now, the opportunity of people having a good experience here far outweigh that.”

That said, it is still important for local officials to work on issues both to address quality of life concerns from residents and as a means of funding city services. Locals would have to pay about $1,300 per person to replace the value of tourism when funding city services that locals rely on.

“I think it’s important to remind ourselves that things are moving forward, and they’re moving forward in a positive way,” she said. “And yes, we have some challenges, but we’re only going to get through it by open discussion and collaboration and people being willing to sit down and have those tough conversations.”

editor@smdp.com
FOR QUOTES PLEASE CALL 310-573-8074 or email cindy@smdp.com
TODAY’S BIRTHDAY (July 8)

You’re not the wave with its ups and downs; you are the water, powerfully responding to the fullness of life. Your talent for creating memorable experiences will be employed often, to glorious effect. More highlights: You’ll be the star of someone’s life and revel in the role. You’ll be put in charge. You’ll see the sunset in many new places. Virgo and Pisces adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 6, 26, 3, 38 and 18.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You’ve been wronged, no doubt, but the real question is if it’s worth righting. Holding on to anger only gives you tense muscles. Let go of it and laugh and you’re back to the lighter side of life.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Someone wants that special kind of attention you give and is too proud to ask for it directly. Address the situation with your renowned sensitivity and you’ll be rewarded in kind.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Before you break out your wallet, consider other options, like borrowing, swapping, etc. Tonight: if you don’t like where the fates are leading you, dig in your heels. Sometimes the fates should be wrestled to the ground.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). You manage modesty while sharing what you’ve got. A perfect balance of ego and ability isn’t easy to strike, but you’ll do so and attract opportunities, both professional and personal.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). You’ll have increased powers of self-control. Radical thought: Instead of applying them to make yourself do what is unpleasantly “good for you,” why not apply your power to creating more enjoyment in your life?

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You have many ways of showing respect. You arrive early. You listen well. You’re deferential and thankful. This comes easily to you. Draw the line at silence. You’re at the table because your voice needs to be heard.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). When someone has seen a lot and is extremely difficult to impress, you’ll take it on as a challenge! With your novel, intelligent approach, it’s well within your capability to turn the heads of sophisticates and even break through to the jaded.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You’ll be around people who make you want to spend more time with them in any capacity that seems doable — work, play or most likely some combination of the two. The best connections happen while playing to one another’s strengths.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You’re up for adventure but your idea of it may not match the offering at hand. So, before you share in the quest, get clear on what you’re signing up for. The best mark to hit will feel safe but not too comfortable.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Today represents a high creatively. Reality and imagination blend well; you will live what you imagine, and you will imagine based on the living. As you shape the experience, others will want to get in on it.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You’ll witness a performance, perhaps one that you are simultaneously giving. Be like a kindly parent watching a child’s recital. Appreciate the effort while allowing room for the unexpected turns of nervous creativity and the occasional imperfection.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You celebrate events, but don’t forget to celebrate the everyday. Those times when nothing much is happening are to be cherished. Things are about to get interesting, active and itinerant, so take this moment to relax and conserve your energy.

SCRAMBLE

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY’S SUDOKU

Sudoku

Fill in the blank cells using numbers 1 to 9. Each number can appear only once in each row, column, and 3x3 block. Use logic and process of elimination to solve the puzzle.

Newsday Crossword

ACROSS
1. Doesn’t handle well
6. Agency with a BankFind search tool
10. Farsighted hunter
15. Place for cast offs?
16. What a column is named for
17. Matched the number on one’s card
21. Notte, before midnight
22. Mustachioed modern mythmaker
23. Grist for a mill
27. Sudden spring
28. Asynchrony measurement
29. Muslim mayor (since 2016) of London
31. Many TV drama title characters
32. March march slogan starter
33. Cambridge unit selling through Amazon
37. Claw at
38. Work on the side
39. Mirrors
40. Warranted
42. What a thesaurus ain’t
44. Drill bits
45. Dashes or pinches
49. Rat tail
50. Endured
51. Sign of the Christmas season
55. Common counsel
56. Serve
57. Send up

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY’S CROSWORD

1. A story that is an anagram of a fruit
2. Treaty of Versailles prohibition
3. AFIT’s #6 Male Screen Legend
4. Besties’ milestone
5. Alaskan letter carrier
6. “Common household” pet, per the CDC
7. Fitting
8. Category for Dracula
9. Happen without much help
10. “All we demanded __ right to twinkle”: Marilyn Monroe (with 10 Down)
11. It makes olives less bitter
12. “Great big, thick, hot, juicy” 1971 debut
13. Word from Middle English for “arrogance”
14. Elevated opening
15. Interjectional intensifier
25. Off
26. Persistent appetites
29. Base man
30. Walks all over
31. Dig it
32. It adjoins China in Risk
33. Dramatizes, perhaps
34. Weeper
35. Big picture
41. Pita’s Sri Lankan kin
42. Jane’s boss (1980) and fiancé (1981)
43. Appraisal qualification
46. Harlem Renaissance middle name
47. Jerk
48. All in
51. Organic pot scrubber
52. Volume 1 of many a reference
53. Minor stretch (posture improver)
54. Make a call

SATURDAY STUMPER by Matthew Sewell
Edited by Stanley Newman
www.stanxwords.com
**FIND THE WORDS**

This is a theme puzzle with the subject stated below. Find the listed words in the grid. (They may run in any direction but always in a straight line. Some letters are used more than once.) Ring each word as you find it and when you have completed the puzzle, there will be 18 letters left over. They spell out the alternative theme of the puzzle.

© australianwordgames.com.au 5899

**School sports carnival**

```
R E E H T B U S E S W E E P
O A R L O K S L R I G G Y M
K V H I G H J U M P S W E R C
C Y H E A D J T S F A S T Y S
A I H T R A R E T E A M A E P
S N S I V B O V A L C E K L E
L G H E A T F I R S T T O T L C
S T L L N I A R T E R E N O T
T I L O R S R E S T C R L D A
N P E U O D G M S H I O L T T
I D P T L I A A N B U O E O O
O N O D L S G I B R T V C V R
P A R O C C Q O S S E E G I S
E S P O D U N F I N A L A P S
R A T R E S C P T N B O Y S E
```

Solutions to yesterday's Words puzzle:
Always take safety gear.
SUNDAY | JULY 8

CITY OF HOPE’S THIRD ANNUAL ‘RIDE WITH JOSHI’ FUNDRAISING BIKE RIDE

Founded by Sterling Simms, vice president of A&R at Columbia Records who also sits on City of Hope’s Future Hope Committee, Ride With Josh is an annual cycling event and fundraiser named in honor of his late brother Joshua who lost his battle with diabetes at age 19. City of Hope has joined forces with Sterling, and elite cycling brand Rapha, to elevate this cause and raise funds to support research that may help lead to cures for a chronic condition which affects 1 in 10 Americans. Presented coast to coast and virtually, Ride with Josh encourages cyclists at all levels to join us to get out and ride in support of eliminating diabetes in all its forms. Join riders in Santa Monica for a day of riding for all levels. Take in the breathtaking beach city views and challenging hills as you ride through this coastal city. After a day of riding, enjoy any of the local eateries, relax at the beach or take in the thrills of the Santa Monica Pier. Rapha, Los Angeles 1347 Fourth St. Santa Monica, CA. https://ourhope.cityofhope.org/event/ride-withjosh-2023/479400

COMMUNITY DOG TRAINING CLASSES - FUNDRAISING EVENT

In celebration of National Pet Month, Love At First Sight®, a pet care and dog behavior and training company in Santa Monica, is thrilled to announce their first fundraising event called “Donation Days” through their Community Dog Training Classes, hosted by their charity program, the Love At First Sight® Initiative. Classes are $25 and start Saturday, at 12 PM, at Virginia Ave Park in Santa Monica. The fundraising event will continue on Saturdays through the end of the summer. 100% of the proceeds from the classes are donated to various charities for animals in need. For ages 10-15. July 12: Fiction, July 19: Poetry, July 26: Memoir Main Library, Children’s Activity Room

THURSDAY | JULY 13

SANTA MONICA PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD MEETING

The Library Board consists of five members appointed by the City Council for a four-year term. The Board meets on the 2nd Thursday of the month at 6:00 PM at the Main Library, Administrative Conference Room, 601 Santa Monica Blvd., Santa Monica. The public is welcome to attend. Current and past agendas and minutes are available on smpl.org.

FRIDAY | JULY 14

OPEN MIC MUSIC

Open mic music every Friday at 7pm to 10pm. At Urubar coffeehouse 3301 pico Blvd Santa Monica ca. 90405. Open to all ages no alcohol, open to all. With a professional sound system and lighting system now. Just come in and play. Tickets will be for sale for the event until there is no more room. You get 2 songs or ten mins.

SATURDAY | JULY 15

NOTHIN’ BUT SAND BEACH CLEANUP

Join Heal the Bay for our July Nothin’ But Sand Beach Cleanup. REGISTRATION WILL BE OPEN SOON!! Save the Date for a beach cleanup with a big impact. Check back later to reserve your bucket and we’ll SEa you on the sand February 18, 2023.