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MYUNG J. CHUN Los Angeles Times

U.S. DISTRICT Judge David O. Carter tours skid row with Officer Deon Joseph this month. Carter declined to explain on the record why he puts himself in danger, but he said he gets tested for the coronavirus regularly.

Judge refuses to live in a bubble

At 76, David O. Carter knows he should be home safe. But he wants more for L.A.'s homeless.

BY BENJAMIN ORESKES

"Anybody want to test my accountability by walking with me in a few moments down to skid row?"

U.S. District Judge David O. Carter leveled the question at a room full of attorneys on a recent Tuesday afternoon.

"Do you all believe me, or do you want to see it?" he pressed. "Do you want to see it?"

At 76 years old, Carter knows he should be at home and away from people, not in a cavernous ballroom in the basement of the Alexandria Hotel surrounded by attorneys and journalists, or outside leading a tour of the largest concentration of homeless people in the country. Public officials have warned that his age puts him at high risk for contracting the coronavirus and dying of COVID-19.

But as the pandemic has unfolded, Carter, long known as brash, verbose and stubbornly hands-on, has been on a mission to force changes in the living conditions for the homeless people of L.A.

He is the judge assigned to a lawsuit filed last month against the city and county of Los Angeles by the L.A. Alliance for Human Rights. The group of business owners and downtown residents, among others, is demanding solutions to what they see as unsafe and inhumane conditions in encampments — especially given the pandemic.

On this particular Tuesday, two attorneys representing the county and several others representing advocacy groups decided to take Carter up on his offer to see whether the new hand-washing stations on skid row actually worked. In court, Carter had been frustrated that the stations the city was touting didn't have water in

[See Carter, A6]

Parts of state say they are ready to reopen

Counties with few cases contend they'll base moves on science, but Newsom has final word

BY RONG-GONG LIN II, JOHN MYERS, LUKE MONEY AND HANNAH FRY

SAN FRANCISCO — Leaders in the central California county of San Luis Obispo are confident they have flattened the coronavirus curve. The coastal county of 283,000 people recorded 134 cases and one death, and this week, there were only two confirmed infected people in hospital beds.

Yet a large share of its economy — the once-bustling shopping district of downtown San Luis Obispo, the famed wine tasting rooms around Paso Robles, the coastal tourist meccas of Morro Bay and Pismo Beach — remained closed tight.

So officials this week are making a bid with Gov. Gavin Newsom to begin a slow and gradual reopening process, one they say is guided by science but also recognition that San Luis Obispo County might be in better shape to ease stay-at-home rules faster than more populous hot spots like Los Angeles County and Silicon Valley.

"This is not like flicking on a light switch, it's more like operating a dimmer," San Luis Obispo County Supervisor Bruce Gibson said Tuesday. "We're going to bring it up and see if it works, and we do have mechanisms to go back to a certain level of restriction."

They have joined a small group of other local officials in California to ask Newsom to consider changes in his sweeping

[See Restrictions, A7]

Urban creatures coming out to play

As we're squirreled away at home, animals are reclaiming their turf

BY LOUIS SAHAGUN

Naturalist Gerry Hans stood in the middle of a lonely road in Griffith Park on Saturday, inhaled deeply through his face mask and admired the natural sights and sounds of an oddly serene landscape that typically draws thousands of visitors each weekend.

"It's sheer heaven not hearing the deafening clatter of tourist helicopters hovering over the Hollywood sign," he said, with an appreciative sweep of his eyes.

As California's coronavirus lockdown enters its second month, some residents on the edges of Griffith Park and other urban ecosystems swear that Mother Nature is reclaiming territories that once echoed with humanity's tumult.

On message boards, shut-ins trade emotional "coyote talk," recounting the movements of stealthy canids as they search for prey along quiet streets. Others share snapshots of hawks and owls nesting in the trees of city parks and center dividers, and of raccoons and rats raiding trash cans, suggesting that — by bits and pieces — wildlife is restaking old claims. Although local experts insist these creatures were always there and were just ignored in more industrious times, shelter-at-homers are enjoying a rare glimpse into Southern California's natural heritage.

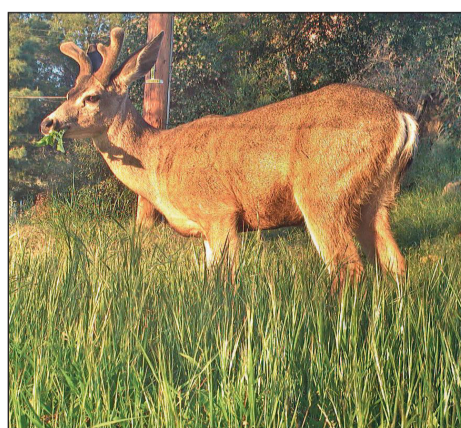
On Hans' expedition Saturday, the loudest sounds were the trills and chatter of

[See Animals, A4]



AL SEIB Los Angeles Times

NATURALIST Gerry Hans, who is president of the nonprofit organization Friends of Griffith Park, looks for wildlife along Western Canyon Road.



GERRY HANS



GERRY HANS

IMAGES of a deer and a coyote were captured this month by a remote camera just outside Griffith Park. Wildlife sightings seem to be up as streets quiet down.

Trump orders suspension of applications for green cards

President cites effort to curb pandemic's economic fallout. But the ban won't include foreign farm laborers.

BY MOLLY O'TOOLE, NOAH BIERMAN AND ELI STOKOLS

WASHINGTON — President Trump, citing the economic impact of the coronavirus shutdown, on Tuesday ordered a 60-day ban on new immigrants seeking permanent status in the United States.

The ban will cover people seeking green cards that provide permanent status, not temporary visitors. It would also not affect foreign agricultural laborers, Trump said. Although he cited the need to protect American workers, his announcement did not spell out how the order would accomplish that goal.

The administration has already sharply restricted immigration, including steps taken last month to respond to the coronavirus outbreak. White House officials have said additional actions beyond those Trump announced could affect foreign workers currently in industries that are not considered essential, but the president suggested that no such steps are imminent.

The president said he expected to sign the new order Wednesday, although he added that "it's being written now as we speak," suggesting that important details could still change.

"We want to protect our U.S. workers," Trump said in announcing the ban.

"By pausing immigra-

tion, we will put Americans first in line for jobs as America reopens," he added. "A short break from new immigration will protect the solvency of our healthcare system and provide relief to jobless Americans."

Last fiscal year, the U.S. granted lawful permanent residence, broadly known as a green card, to nearly 577,000 individuals. Officials approved 500,000 more petitions for non-immigrant workers that Trump said Tuesday will not be affected by his order, including agri-

[See Trump, A4]

STATE PLANS TO BROADEN TESTING CRITERIA

California is now giving coronavirus testing priority to asymptomatic people in high-risk settings.

BY EMILY BAUMGAERTNER

California public health officials have partially lifted restrictions on who should receive tests for the coronavirus, recommending for the first time that asymptomatic people living or working in high-risk settings such as nursing homes, prisons and even some households should be considered a priority.

The move makes California the first state to broaden restrictive federal guidelines and reflects increasing availability of testing, as major labs report sufficient supplies and excess capacity to run more procedures, according to the state Department of Public Health.

The developments are viewed by some experts as a significant step toward establishing widespread testing in California to identify and isolate every coronavirus case.

"California is leading the way," said Brandon Brown, an epidemiologist at UC Riverside. "We will be able to test more individuals, identify more people currently with COVID-19, isolate them, and thereby both flatten the curve and prevent the future spread of infection."

But others say it's too early to tell if sufficient progress is being made to enhance a testing process that has been botched from the

[See Testing, A7]

MORE COVERAGE

Senate backs deal for small businesses

The lawmakers overwhelmingly approve increased funding for a popular loan program that ran out of money last week. **NATION, A7**

Pandemic could transform cities

As communities suffer a tragic scourge, the silver lining could be the evolution of architecture. **CALENDAR, E1**

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U.S. to suspend green card applications

[Trump, from A1] cultural and other temporary workers.

The announcement targeting green cards came after a day of confusing messages. Trump tweeted Monday night that he planned to sign an order to “temporarily suspend immigration into the United States!” White House and Homeland Security Department officials were left to play catch-up, unable to answer questions about what the president intended.

On Tuesday, Trump acknowledged the ban was not the sweeping sealing-off of the United States that his tweet had suggested, and he added that immigrants already in the United States “are not supposed to be” in more danger of removal under the order.

He also suggested that some immigration for family unification may continue.

“We have to do that obviously even from a humane standpoint — there will be some people coming in,” he said.

Past plans from the White House have favored parents, spouses and children while proposing to bar other relatives, but it was unclear what exemptions the current plan would involve.

The lack of clarity reflected the often-chaotic nature of policymaking in Trump’s White House.

Trump has been openly frustrated with polls showing the majority of Americans think he has done a bad job in handling the coronavirus outbreak, and he has frequently turned to immigration — a main campaign staple for him — when he feels a need to demonstrate executive action.

On Tuesday afternoon, the president’s reelection campaign sent an email to supporters touting the potential action and denouncing “fierce criticism from the Fake News media and their Democrat Partners” even as no details had been announced and no order had been signed.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-San Francisco), in an interview on PBS, dismissed the president’s move as a “distraction.”

Trump is “always engaged in distractions like immigration, distractions like supporting people in the street,” Pelosi said. “They’re all distractions away from the fact ... that he’s a total failure when it comes to testing.”

Because the president has often promised sweeping executive actions that have not lived up to his rhetoric, without written text it is impossible to judge the full impact of his pledge.

Like other efforts by the administration to bypass certain U.S. laws and international obligations in order to achieve its long-stated goal of dramatically reducing immigration to the United States, Trump’s exe-



ALEJANDRO TAMAYO San Diego Union-Tribune

THE TRUMP administration this week extended what is in effect the closure of U.S. borders with Canada and Mexico to “nonessential travel.” Above, a traveler from Mexico in March at the San Ysidro crossing.

cutive action is likely to face legal challenge.

Although an across-the-board ban has never been imposed in the U.S., immigration law gives the president broad authority to restrict entries in emergencies. The Supreme Court in 2018 upheld Trump’s authority to impose a travel ban on a group of countries, most of which have Muslim majorities, that the administration said posed a terrorism risk.

Yet Stephen Yale-Loehr, professor of immigration law at Cornell Law School in New York, said the president’s latest order targeting potential permanent residents probably exceeds Trump’s legal authority.

Even before Trump’s announcement, officials had put most entries into the U.S. on hold. Just Monday, the administration extended what is in effect the closure of U.S. borders

with Canada and Mexico to “nonessential travel,” as well as a controversial order from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that immigration officials are citing to rapidly expel most migrants at the U.S. southern border.

In a month, border authorities have turned back roughly 11,000 migrants with minimal processing, including, for the first time under the U.S. modern immigration system, asylum seekers and hundreds of unaccompanied children.

Beyond the border, most visa offices abroad have closed, applications for other travel to the U.S. have been frozen, and interviews for citizenship and other forms of permanent legal status have been suspended. Immigration courts across the country have been shuttered, and hearings suspended or rescheduled.

The refugee program, al-

ready drastically reduced, has practically ground to a halt.

The administration has made exceptions for some workers amid the pandemic, however. Officials recently touted bringing in Mexican and Central American agricultural laborers and extending H-2A permissions for seasonal workers, saying that would “protect the nation’s food supply chain, and lessen impacts from the coronavirus [COVID-19] public health emergency.”

On Tuesday, Trump said that with the new ban, “farmers will not be affected... If anything, we’re going to make it easier.”

Although Trump said he doesn’t want out-of-work Americans to face immigrant “competition” for jobs, Theresa Cardinal Brown, a former Homeland Security Department official at the Bipartisan Policy Center, said research shows immi-

grants don’t compete with native-born workers for employment, or lower their wages.

“Immigrants are highly represented in the very jobs that are sustaining our economy now,” Cardinal Brown said in a statement responding to Trump’s announcement, “especially frontline healthcare workers, as well as grocery clerks, food and agriculture production, and delivery services.”

Yale-Loehr said continuing to permit temporary visitors while barring green card applicants undermines the administration’s argument that the measure is a necessary part of its pandemic response.

“If the purpose of the executive order is to help prevent the spread of coronavirus,” he said, “it defies logic to bar green card applicants but still admit people applying for temporary visas.”

Trump’s move came amid a difficult political stretch for the president. A Washington Post poll released Tuesday morning said 54% of Americans view his response to the pandemic negatively, while 72% say governors have done a good job in handling the coronavirus crisis. New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, a Democrat whose televised briefings have made him one of the most prominent faces among governors, met with the president at the White House on Tuesday.

Trump often returns to the topic of immigration when he is concerned about losing support from his political base.

On Monday, he invited an Army lieutenant general to discuss the construction of temporary hospitals, only to ask him for an update on building the wall along the border with Mexico, Trump’s signature campaign promise. On Tuesday, Trump brought up the wall again.

Inside and outside the White House, some Trump aides and allies have pushed him to focus on meeting the “commander in chief” moment the pandemic has presented.

But he remains concerned about maintaining his political base, which two people who have spoken with him in recent days view as the reason why he has encouraged his supporters in certain states to “liberate” themselves from stay-at-home orders issued by several Democratic governors — and why he is pushing forward with the anti-immigration approach that propelled his campaign four years ago.

Times staff writer Chris Megerian in Washington contributed to this report.

Urban animals, birds are reclaiming their turf

[Animals, from A1] resident woodpeckers and migrating birds — western tanagers, black-headed grosbeaks, hooded orioles and warblers — moving through the boughs of sycamores, pine trees and gnarled oaks. Just out of view, in the park’s canyons and slopes, lurked opossums, skunks, coyotes, deer, bobcats and a lone mountain lion known as P-22. An eerily quiet parade of visitors clad in ball caps, running shoes and face masks ambled along a stretch of Western Canyon Road that is usually choked with cars and tour buses.

Roadkill of western gray squirrels, rabbits, ring-necked snakes and western toads has plummeted to zero, according to Hans, a wildlife expert with the nonprofit Friends of Griffith Park. And for the first time

in memory, rare peregrine falcons have been seen swooping over the Hollywood sign, instead of in the vicinity of downtown skyscrapers, where they nest and dine on pigeons.

While naturalists like Hans have thrilled to the prospect of new wildlife sightings, some Southern California residents have been rattled by their brushes with the great outdoors. On March 18, a resident of the Villeurbanne townhomes in Orange posted this warning on Nextdoor: “This evening while walking my dogs, a pack of six coyotes saw us, stopped running and two started heading my way. I held the dogs close and started yelling at the coyotes, then they stopped long enough for me to duck behind the houses, getting in the back gate. So scary!”

Responses the next day included this one: “The coyotes think we all moved away with no cars driving around.”

Wildlife biologists, however, say this rich urban ecosystem was always there, and it is too early to know how the wild side of Los Angeles and Southern California is responding to the month-old lockdown.

For example, research biologists have seen no evidence that Southern California’s increasingly isolated and inbred populations of mountain lions are benefiting from seeing far fewer vehicles on the freeways that cut across their ever-shrinking islands of habitat.

“There is no evidence that the animals that we’re tracking are crossing freeways any more in the last couple of weeks,” said Seth P.D. Riley, wildlife ecologist

and branch chief for the National Park Service’s Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. “But that is not too surprising — it is a very short time frame.”

While there are fewer vehicles on roads and freeways these days, there are “still quite a few, from a wildlife perspective, especially during midday, early a.m., and evening hours,” he added. “The couple of animals that have happened to have been near freeways recently have not crossed. Of course, we cannot interview them, sadly, to find out what they are thinking.”

Similarly, research scientist Niamh Quinn, who serves as human-wildlife interactions advisor for UC Cooperative Extension, said none of the five collared coyotes she is studying in the cities of Hacienda Heights, Roland Heights, La Verne and Chino Hills “have changed their behavior yet.”

“I do believe, however, that human behavior has been altered significantly by the lockdown in ways that are closing the gap between us and what’s wild around our own homes — and that’s great, up to a point,” she said.

She worries that animals may be pushed into closer conflicts with humans.

“We have to interact with wildlife from a distance. That is because we still do not know all the diseases that, say, coyotes and rats carry with them.”

Despite reports of em-

boldened coyotes in urban settings, there is no evidence of an increase in the rate of coyote attacks since the lockdown went into effect, according to the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health.

In any case, conservationists are rejoicing in the scene at Griffith Park a month after its roads were closed to traffic and its trailheads were blocked to keep out hordes of daytripping parents and children mingling with tourists for a hike up scrubby slopes and canyons.

Directly in front of Hans on Saturday, western gray squirrels casually crossed Fern Dell Drive at Griffith Park’s southwestern edge, near where it had been cordoned off with yellow tape. To the left, woodpeckers hunted for insects in sycamores shading an empty parking lot.

“Follow me. I want to introduce you to some new arrivals,” said Hans, leading the way up a gentle slope to a flat spot in a grove of oaks. “Hear that chattering up high in the trees?” he whispered with a smile. “That is the call of Cooper’s hawks fortifying a nest.”

That nest was not the only reason conservationists have plenty to crow about this year. The 2020 Griffith Park raptor survey tallied 122 active hawk, falcon and owl nests — a record jump from 60 nests counted a year ago.

But raptors are sensitive to human disturbance — so sensitive that human activity can cause them to abandon their nests.

“Noisy crowds are a big issue for Griffith Park’s raptors during their breeding season,” Hans said. “Perhaps not quite so much this year. We’ll see.”

Researchers hope a network of strategically placed cameras throughout the nation can provide scientists with a precise picture of how wildlife reacted when the commotion and clatter of urban life, from Disneyland to New York City, came to a standstill.

“Think of these cameras as unbiased observers,” said Ted Stankowich, a biologist and director of the Mammal Lab at Cal State Long Beach.

“Looking forward to an analysis of the imagery they’ve collected,” he said, “is a case of finding something to be excited about in this horrible time of suffering.”

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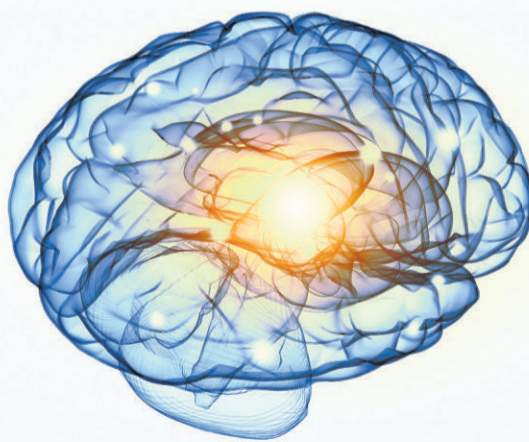
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