



Photographs by MYUNG J. CHUN Los Angeles Times

ASSISTANT VECTOR ecologist Ale Macias releases sterilized male *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes at a trouble spot in Upland.

Deploying ‘ankle-biter fighters’

Vector control is releasing sterilized male mosquitoes in targeted Southland areas in an effort to reduce the population of the irritating and dangerous *Aedes aegypti*



THE SPECIES can carry the dengue virus and spread other illnesses.

BY LILA SEIDMAN

Jennifer Castellon shook, tapped and blew on a box to shoo out more than 1,000 mosquitoes in a quiet, upscale Inland Empire neighborhood.

The insects had a job to do, and the pest scientist wanted every last one out.

Their task? Find lady mosquitoes and mate.

But these were no ordinary mosquitoes. Technicians had zapped the insects, all males, with radiation in a nearby lab to make them sterile. If they achieve their amorous quest, there will be fewer baby mosquitoes than there would be if nature ran its course. That means fewer mouths to feed — mouths that thirst for human blood.

“I believe, fingers crossed, that we can drop the population size,” said Solomon Birhanie, scientific director for the West Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District, which released the mosquitoes in several San Bernardino County neighborhoods this month.

[See Mosquitoes, A5]

How Hermès trophy Birkin bags became criminal currency

BY HARRIET RYAN

The dark-green handbag was not her only Birkin, but it was the only one she left behind when she went to Europe. So it was there last year when two burglars jumped a retaining wall at her Pacific Palisades mansion and smashed through a sliding door on the pool deck.

They were in and out in 15 minutes, a security camera showed, moving with speed and strategy. They raced past computers and televisions to get to her walk-in

closet. On a shelf alongside dozens of other luxury handbags she had been collecting since her teens sat the Birkin.

“I had only worn it once, on my birthday,” said the woman, who spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of inviting another burglary. The thieves took the Birkin, most of the other bags, and, revealingly, receipts from a drawer in her home office that established the authenticity of many of the purses. “They were,” she said of the thieves, “like trained assassins.”

She thought the Birkin

was gone forever. But months later, she was shocked to find it for sale on a sleek website catering to other women who prize such handbags.

The Birkin, Hermès’ capacious leather carry-all, has long been coveted by celebrities and fashionistas. Now, it and other status-symbol purses have become objects of obsession for a less glamorous set: home burglars. Sophisticated theft gangs from South America are suspected in a rash of residential break-ins across the country in recent years.

[See Birkins, A6]

A brutal end to her dreams of home

Mirna Soza was saving up to move back to Nicaragua. Then she was killed on the train in L.A. leaving work.

BY NOAH GOLDBERG

Each night for Mirna Soza was a bit like the last. She worked every day for the last three years as a security guard at Original Tommy’s hamburgers in North Hills, clocking in around 7 p.m. and working until 3 or 4 a.m. Then, usually, she would



JOSE CASTILLO

MIRNA SOZA took public transit home daily from her job as a security guard in North Hills.

hang around the restaurant until the sun started to rise before taking public transit home, where she would sleep until she had to wake up and do it again. It was safer to ride when the sun came up, she thought. But sometimes she was too tired to wait and she’d leave earlier, as she did Monday morning.

It’s not possible to know what Soza was thinking about that day as she took the B Line home from work. She might have been thinking about the small house she was having built back in Nicaragua. The house was in Managua, where two of her

[See Killing, A9]



JULIE JACOBSON Associated Press

REGGIE BUSH pauses during his Heisman acceptance speech in 2005. Five years later, he forfeited it.

Bush can once again strike Heisman pose

USC running back has his 2005 award reinstated after a long fight in what he calls ‘a personal victory.’

BY RYAN KARTJE

Reggie Bush, after years spent fighting to retake his place among college football’s most prestigious fraternity, is finally getting his Heisman Trophy back.

The Heisman Trust had for years dragged its feet in acknowledging the legendary Trojan running back as its 2005 winner after he forfeited the trophy in 2010 amid major NCAA sanctions against USC that

found he had accepted improper benefits. Bush had pushed harder in recent years to see his trophy returned, even going so far as to sue the NCAA for defamation. Still, the trust continued to balk at the possibility.

But that tone changed abruptly on Wednesday as the trust announced it was officially reinstating Bush, a decision the organization said was spurred by the up-

[See Bush, A9]

Trophy back, but tarnish remains

Bush and USC should herald Heisman’s return, but NCAA findings can’t be forgotten, writes Bill Plaschke. **SPORTS, B10**

Justices skeptical of Idaho ban on abortion

A state law barring the procedure even in emergencies draws sharp questioning at the Supreme Court.

BY DAVID G. SAVAGE

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court justices voiced doubt Wednesday about a strict Idaho law that would make it a crime for doctors to perform an abortion even for a woman who arrives at a hospital suffering from a serious, but not life-threatening, medical emergency.

Solicitor Gen. Elizabeth Prelogar, representing the Biden administration, said such cases are rare and tragic. They are not elective abortions, she said, but pregnancies that have turned into medical emergencies.

Prelogar urged the high court to rule that federal emergency care law applies nationwide and sometimes requires hospitals and their doctors to perform an abortion — regardless of any state restrictions on the procedure — if a pregnant patient’s health or life is at risk.

The justices sounded closely split, but Prelogar’s argument appeared to gain traction with some conservatives.

The clash over emergency rooms is the first direct challenge to a state’s abortion law to come before the high court since the justices overturned *Roe vs. Wade* in a 5-4 vote in 2022.

The court’s conservatives said then that states and their lawmakers were free to restrict or regulate abortion.

Idaho’s lawmakers voted to forbid abortion except when it is “necessary” to prevent the patient’s death. In court, their lawyers argued that the authority to regulate doctors and the practice of medicine rests with the state.

But the Biden administration sued Idaho and said it was violating the federal Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act that Congress adopted in 1986. The law requires hospitals

[See Abortion, A7]

Biden signs war aid for Ukraine

Long-delayed package also helps Israel and Taiwan and includes Gaza relief. **NATION, A4**

Protesters pitch tents at USC

Students angry over Palestinian deaths join national encampment wave. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Disney’s theme parks shine

Expansions in Anaheim, elsewhere point up value of those properties. **BUSINESS, A8**

Weather

Clouds slow to clear. L.A. Basin: 65/54. **B5**

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