



# Canyon News

Black Mountain Park · Del Mar Mesa Preserve  
Penasquitos Canyon Preserve  
Friends of Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve, Inc.

Jan/Feb/Mar 2009  
Volume 23, NO 1

## Restoration Projects:

# Helping Hand for the Cactus Wren

Mike Kelly, Conservation Chair



**Cactus Wren** — Photo courtesy of James Gallagher, *Sea and Sage Audubon*.

The Friends need volunteers to help with a project to create habitat for a highly endangered bird species. We will be partnering with the Open Space Division of the City of San Diego's Parks & Recreation Dept. in a challenging project to implement a habitat restoration grant. The grant is about \$76,000 and will be used to begin a 10-year project, the creation of Cactus wren (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus*) habitat out of the highly disturbed, non-native weedy grasslands of the new Santa Luz addition to Black Mountain Open Space Park. The grant was written by the Friends and submitted by the City to the Natural Resources Conservation Service, an agency of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture.

The grant was funded as part of a competitive grant program to restore old agricultural lands, which Santa Luz is well qualified for, after more than a century of grazing and crops that didn't end until 5-6 years ago! Additional grants will be sought to expand the initial acreage. The Coastal Cactus wren is listed as a California State Species of Special Concern and Cleveland National Forest Sensitive.

### The role of cacti

Our Coastal Cactus wren is a songbird that favors coastal sage scrub as its preferred habitat, specifically a sage scrub with a large proportion of cacti, especially

See **Wren** p. 6 for more

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## Eagle Scouts in Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve

Senior Park Ranger

Gina Washington

Eagle Scouts have been busy in Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve during the month of November. Three Scouts completed three different projects at different locations around the Preserve. Eric Smith reconstructed a trail from Park Village Road into the canyon floor. The trail was severely eroded because there was not sufficient drainage. Eric received a large donation of fill sand-30, a type of trail material, from Vulcan to cap the trail. Eric supervised upwards of 20 volunteers during two days to create drainage and out-slope the trail. A couple of neighbors offered Eric their hoses and water to get good compaction on the new trail surface. The new trail work held up well during the first real rain of the season.

Garrett Murawsky built a pergola, shade structure, for the picnic area in the west end parking lot on Sorrento Valley Blvd. Garrett's project was two phased;

See **Scouts** p. 10 for more

## **Upcoming Hikes/Events**

Winter is here again and with that the possibility of rain. Remember that the trails may be closed due to recent rains and accumulation of water. That said, be sure to bring adequate water and sunscreen as you prepare for your hikes. All hikes are free to the public. If you're bringing an organized group, please call (858) 484-3219 to make arrangements.

### **Rain cancels hikes.**

Visit [www.peñasquitos.org](http://www.peñasquitos.org) if it's been raining recently as the parks are sometimes closed due to flood damage.

Be sure to wear hiking boots and bring water, insect repellent, and sun protection. See you on the trail!

## **Every Saturday & Sunday**

### **Historic Adobe Ranch Tour**

San Diego County Park docents lead a free guided tour of San Diego's second oldest standing residence, Ranch Santa Maria de Los Peñasquitos at 11 a.m. on Saturdays and 1 p.m. on Sundays, lasting 45 minutes. See an historic Mexican era rancho with three foot thick adobe walls, settler and Indian artifacts and tour the grounds.

## **January**

### **Friends of Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve Board Meeting**

Tuesday, Jan 6, 7 P.M.

Members are welcome to attend this meeting to plan Friends' activities. Meeting is at the historic Ranch House off Canyonside Driveway at Black Mountain Rd. **Thomas Guide p. 1189 (C7).**

### **Black Mtn Open Space Park Citizens Advisory Committee**

Thursday, Jan 8, 6:30 P.M.

Public is welcome to attend this meeting to plan park activities. Meeting is at the Canyonside Rec-

reation Center, 12350 Black Mtn. Rd. **Thomas Guide p. 1189 (C7).**

### **Geology walk through time**

Saturday, Jan 10, 9-11 A.M.

Walk through time with geologist Don Albright. Hike will take you through hundreds of millions of years of geology, visit the waterfall, and see a rare fossil. Wear good footwear for steep trail. Meet at Lopez Ridge Park at 7245 Calle Cristobal in Mira Mesa, one long block east of Camino Santa Fe. **Thomas Guide p. 1208**

### **Volunteer Habitat Restoration at Black Mtn. Park / Santa Luz**

Saturday, Jan 10, 9 A.M.— 1 P.M.

Help plant native plants in Black Mtn. Park to create coastal succulent scrub habitat for the endangered Coastal Cactus wren songbird. This is our first full fledged restoration areas on the Santa Luz portion of Black Mtn. Park. Bring water, sun protection, and gloves if you have them. Contact mike at [mkelly1@san.rr.com](mailto:mkelly1@san.rr.com) or 858-342-8856 for more info. Meet in the northeast corner of Black Mtn. Ranch Community Park at 14700 Carmel Valley Road in Rancho Peñasquitos, one block east of its intersection with Black Mtn. Rd. **Thomas Guide p. 1168 (J5).**

### **Wildlife Survey Volunteer Training**

Saturday, Jan 17, 9:15 A.M.

This free training includes basic track, sign, and habitat recognition, as well as details on the implementation of survey protocol, and is required for survey volunteers. No registration required. Bring a sack lunch. Meet at the historic adobe ranch house. **Thomas Guide p. 1189 (C7).**

### **Miner's Loop Trail Walk, Black Mountain /Rancho Peñasquitos**

Saturday, Jan 17, 8-10 A.M.

Join naturalist David Robertson for a hike along the Miner's Loop Trail on the north face of Black Mountain Park. Should be a good flower

show this year. Meet at the Parking Staging area off the new extension of Carmel Valley Rd. at 14850 Carmel Valley Rd., about 1/4 mile east of its intersection with Black Mtn. Rd. in Rancho Peñasquitos. Wear hiking boots and bring water and sun protection. **Thomas Guide p. 1189 (E7) or call 858-342-8856.**

### **Hike Black Mountain**

Sunday, Jan 18, 8 A.M.

Hike to the top of Black Mountain in Rancho Peñasquitos. Significant elevation gain. Wear hiking boots and bring water. Meet at the end of Laurentian Dr. **Thomas Guide p. 1189 (D2).**

### **Volunteer Habitat Restoration at Black Mtn. Park / Santa Luz**

Saturday, Jan 24, 9 A.M.— 1 P.M.

Help plant native plants in Black Mtn. Park to create coastal succulent scrub habitat for the endangered Coastal Cactus wren songbird. This is our first full fledged restoration areas on the Santa Luz portion of Black Mtn. Park. Bring water, sun protection, and gloves if you have them. Contact mike at [mkelly1@san.rr.com](mailto:mkelly1@san.rr.com) or 858-342-8856 for more info. Meet in the northeast corner of Black Mtn. Ranch Community Park at 14700 Carmel Valley Road in Rancho Peñasquitos, one block east of its intersection with Black Mtn. Rd. **Thomas Guide p. 1168 (J5).**

### **Carmel Mountain Vernal Pool & Flower Walk with Diana Gordon**

Saturday, Jan 24, 9 – 11A.M.

Visit vernal pools, one of San Diego's rarest habitats. Good chance to see wildflowers. From Carmel Valley take El Camino Real south. At its intersection with Carmel Mountain Road, proceed straight on what has become Carmel Mountain Road. Go up the hill several blocks to East Ocean Air Dr. Go left and park at Fairport and Shorepointe. Wear hiking boots, bring water and sun protection. Moderate hill to climb. **Tho-**

**mas Guide p. 1208, C2 or call 858.484.3219.**

### **Volunteer Trash Pickup Lopez Canyon**

Sunday, Jan 25, 9 A.M.— Noon  
Trash pickup in López Canyon. Meet at López Ridge Park at 7245 Calle Cristobal in Mira Mesa. Call Ranger John Garwood at 858-538-8066 for more info. **Thomas Guide p. 1208 (D5).**

### **Lopez Homestead History Hike**

Sunday, Jan 25, 3 — 4:30 P.M.  
Hike out into Lopez Canyon to learn about the Old Lopez Homestead, a small turn-of-the-century dairy farm. Visit the orchard, the Old Road, and see the remains of the barn, house, and milking station. Find out about the importance of the Lopez family in early San Diego history. Start: West End Parking Staging Area.

## **February**

### **Pierre Bovet Adobe History Hike**

Sunday, Feb 1, 3 — 4:30 P.M.  
Hike out to explore Carroll Canyon and visit the ruins of the Pierre Bovet Adobe. Find out why many such adobes of San Diego County were left to deteriorate. Learn about Pierre Bovet and his family and their place in San Diego history. Understand why this area should someday be part of the larger Preserve. Start: Meet at Fire Station near the corner of Scranton and Carroll Canyon Road.

### **Volunteer Habitat Restoration at the waterfall in Peñasquitos Preserve**

Tuesday, Feb 3, 9 A.M.— 2 P.M.  
Join volunteers from the hotel Grand Del Mar in planting native plants at the waterfall in Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve. Bring water, sun protection, and gloves if you have them. Contact mike at mkelly1@san.rr.com or 858-342-8856 for more info. Meet at the

Ranger Headquarters in the equestrian center off Black Mtn. Rd. at Mercy Rd. **Thomas Guide p. 1189.**

### **Geology walk through time**

Saturday, Feb 7, 9 — 11 A.M.  
Walk through time with geologist Don Albright. Hike will take you through hundreds of millions of years of geology, visit the waterfall, and see a rare fossil. Wear good footwear for steep trail. Meet at Lopez Ridge Park at 7245 Calle Cristobal in Mira Mesa, one long block east of Camino Santa Fe. **Thomas Guide p. 1208.**

### **Carmel Mountain Vernal Pool & Flower Walk with Diana Gordon**

Saturday, Feb 7, 9 – 11 A.M.  
Visit vernal pools, one of San Diego's rarest habitats. Good chance to see wildflowers. From Carmel Valley take El Camino Real south. At its intersection with Carmel Mountain Road, proceed straight on what has become Carmel Mountain Road. Go up the hill several blocks to East Ocean Air Dr. Go left and park at Fairport and Shorepointe. Wear hiking boots, bring water and sun protection. Moderate hill to climb. **See Thomas Guide p. 1208, C2 or call 858.484.3219.**

### **Carson Crossing to Sycamore Crossing Loop Hike**

Sunday, Feb 8, 3 P.M.  
Join naturalist Linda King for a 4-mile moderately paced loop hike. Good chance to see wild flowers. Bring sun protection, water, and good footwear. Meet at the end of Park Village Dr., next to #7107) in Rancho Peñasquitos at the white barricades. Good views. **Thomas Guide p. 1188-89 (J7).**

### **Tracking Walks**

Saturday, Feb 10, 8 – 10 A.M.  
Everyone is invited to join us for an easy tracking walk to learn how to track animals and discover the natural environment they live in. Wear shoes that are good in mud. Suitable for both beginners and intermediate levels. Meet at the historic ranch house. Take Mercy Rd. exit off I-15

west to Black Mtn. Rd., go right on Black Mtn. Rd. and take 1st left into Canyonside Dr., proceed to white-fenced parking lot. Park, walk west on trail to ranch. **Thomas Guide p. 1189 C7.**

### **Volunteer Habitat Restoration at Black Mtn. Park / Santa Luz**

Saturday, Feb 14, 9 A.M.— 1P.M.  
Help plant native plants in Black Mtn. Park to create coastal succulent scrub habitat for the endangered Coastal Cactus wren songbird. This is our first full fledged restoration areas on the Santa Luz portion of Black Mtn. Park. Bring water, sun protection, and gloves if you have them. Contact mike at mkelly1@san.rr.com or 858-342-8856 for more info. Meet in the northeast corner of Black Mtn. Ranch Community Park at 14700 Carmel Valley Road in Rancho Peñasquitos, one block east of its intersection with Black Mtn. Rd. **Thomas Guide p. 1168 (J5)**

### **“El Cuervo” Adobe History Hike**

Sunday, Feb 15, 3 — 4:30 P.M.  
Hike into the West End of Peñasquitos Canyon for a intimate look at the ruins of the “El Cuervo” Adobe. Become familiar with the controversy about who built it when. Find out about Francisco and son, Diego Alvarado — the probable builders. Includes a short side hike to examine Norwood Brown's old roundup corral and to discuss the impact of cattle grazing in the Preserve. Start: Parking Lot: 4206 Sorrento Valley Boulevard.

### **Tracking Intensive Class**

Saturday, Feb. 21, 8 A.M..  
Fee and Prerequisite required. Email lptt@cox.net to register or Go to www.sdtt.org for details and registration information.

### **Miner's Loop Trail Walk, Black Mountain /Rancho Peñasquitos**

Saturday, Feb. 21, 8 – 10 A.M.  
Join a naturalist for a hike along

See **Hikes** p. 4 for more

**(Hikes cont'd from pg 3)**

the Miner's Loop Trail on the north face of Black Mountain Park. Should be a good flower show this year. Meet at the Parking Staging area off the new extension of Carmel Valley Rd. at 14850 Carmel Valley Rd., about 1/4 mile east of its intersection with Black Mtn. Rd. in Rancho Peñasquitos. Wear hiking boots and bring water and sun protection. **Thomas Guide p. 1189 E7 or call 858-342-8856.**

**Volunteer Trash Pickup Lopez Canyon**

Sunday, Feb 22, 9 A.M.— Noon  
Trash pickup in López Canyon. Meet at López Ridge Park at 7245 Calle Cristobal in Mira Mesa. Call Ranger John Garwood at 858-538-8066 for more info. **Thomas Guide p. 1208 (D5).**

**Volunteer Habitat Restoration at Black Mtn. Park / Santa Luz**

Saturday, Feb 28, 9 A.M.— 1 P.M.  
Help plant native plants in Black Mtn. Park to create coastal succulent scrub habitat for the endangered Coastal Cactus wren songbird. This is our first full fledged restoration areas on the Santa Luz portion of Black Mtn. Park. Bring water, sun protection, and gloves if you have them. Contact mike at mkelly1@san.rr.com or 858-342-8856 for more info. Meet in the northeast corner of Black Mtn. Ranch Community Park at 14700 Carmel Valley Road in Rancho Peñasquitos, one block east of its intersection with Black Mtn. Rd. **Thomas Guide p. 1168 (J5).**

**March****Friends of Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve Board Meeting**

Tuesday, Mar 3, 7 P.M.  
Members are welcome to attend this meeting to plan Friends' activities. Meeting is at the historic Ranch House off Canyonside Driveway at Black Mountain Rd. **Thomas Guide p. 1189 (C7).**

**Geology walk through time**

Saturday, Mar 7, 9 — 11 A.M.  
Walk through time with geologist Don Albright. Hike will take you through hundreds of millions of years of geology, visit the waterfall, and see a rare fossil. Wear good footwear for steep trail. Meet at Lopez Ridge Park at 7245 Calle Cristobal in Mira Mesa, one long block east of Camino Santa Fe. **Thomas Guide p. 1208.**

**Carmel Mountain Vernal Pool & Flower Walk with Diana Gordon**

Sunday, Mar 8, 9 — 11 A.M.  
Visit vernal pools, one of San Diego's rarest habitats. Good chance to see wildflowers. From Carmel Valley take El Camino Real south. At its intersection with Carmel Mountain Road, proceed straight on what has become Carmel Mountain Road. Go up the hill several blocks to East Ocean Air Dr. Go left and park at Fairport and Shorepointe. Wear hiking boots, bring water and sun protection. Moderate hill to climb. **See Thomas Guide p. 1208, C2 or call 858.484.3219.**

**Black Mtn Open Space Park Citizens Advisory Committee**

Thursday, Mar 12, 6:30 P.M.  
Public is welcome to attend this meeting to plan park activities. Meeting is at the Canyonside Recreation Center, 12350 Black Mtn. Rd. **Thomas Guide p. 1189 (C7).**

**Volunteer Habitat Restoration at Black Mtn. Park / Santa Luz**

Saturday, Mar 14, 9 A.M.— 1 P.M.  
Help plant native plants in Black Mtn. Park to create coastal succulent scrub habitat for the endangered Coastal Cactus wren songbird. This is our first full fledged restoration areas on the Santa Luz portion of Black Mtn. Park. Bring water, sun protection, and gloves if you have them. Contact mike at mkelly1@san.rr.com or 858-342-8856 for more info. Meet in the northeast corner of Black Mtn.

Ranch Community Park at 14700 Carmel Valley Road in Rancho Peñasquitos, one block east of its intersection with Black Mtn. Rd. **Thomas Guide p. 1168 (J5)**

**Tracking Walks**

Saturday, Mar. 18, 8 — 10 A.M.  
Everyone is invited to join us for an easy tracking walk to learn how to track animals and discover the natural environment they live in. Wear shoes that are good in mud. Suitable for both beginners and intermediate levels. Meet at the historic ranch house. Take Mercy Rd. exit off I-15 west to Black Mtn. Rd., go right on Black Mtn. Rd. and take 1st left into Canyonside Dr., proceed to white-fenced parking lot. Park, walk west on trail to ranch. **Thomas Guide p. 1189 C7.**

**Beginner Tracker Naturalist Class (Part 1)**

Wednesday, Mar 18, 7 P.M.  
This two-part class is devoted to developing tracking and awareness skills, with an emphasis on wildlife physiology and habits, how to move in nature, and techniques for recognizing habitats and associated flora and fauna. Go to [www.sdtt.org](http://www.sdtt.org) for more information.

**Peñasquitos Canyon Citizens Advisory Committee**

Thursday, Mar 19, 6:30 P.M.  
Public is welcome to attend this meeting to plan park activities. Meeting is at the historic Ranch House off Canyonside Driveway at Black Mountain Rd. **Thomas Guide p. 1189 (C7).**

**Beginner Tracker Naturalist Class (Part 2)**

Saturday, Mar 21, 8 A.M.  
This two-part class is devoted to developing tracking and awareness skills, with an emphasis on wildlife physiology and habits, how to move in nature, and techniques for recognizing habitats and associated flora and fauna. Go to [www.sdtt.org](http://www.sdtt.org) for more information.

### **Miner's Loop Trail Walk, Black Mountain /Rancho Peñasquitos**

Saturday, Mar 21, 9 – 10 a.m.

Join naturalist Mike Kelly for a hike along the Miner's Loop Trail on the north face of Black Mountain Park. Should be a good flower show this year. Meet at the Parking Staging area off the new extension of Carmel Valley Rd. at 14850 Carmel Valley Rd., about 1/4 mile east of its intersection with Black Mtn. Rd. in Rancho Peñasquitos. Wear hiking boots and bring water and sun protection. **Thomas Guide p. 1189 E7 or call 858-342-8856.**

### **Volunteer Trash Pickup Lopez Canyon**

Sunday, Mar 22, 9 A.M.— Noon

Trash pickup in López Canyon. Meet at López Ridge Park at 7245 Calle Cristobal in Mira Mesa. Call Ranger John Garwood at 858-538-8066 for more info. **Thomas Guide p. 1208 (D5).**

### **Volunteer Habitat Restoration at Black Mtn. Park / Santa Luz**

Saturday, Mar. 28, 9 A.M.—1 P.M. Help plant native plants in Black Mtn. Park to create coastal succulent scrub habitat for the endangered Coastal Cactus wren songbird. This is our first full fledged restoration areas on the Santa Luz portion of Black Mtn. Park. Bring water, sun protection, and gloves if you have them. Contact Mike at mkelly1@san.rr.com or 858-342-8856 for more info. Meet in the northeast corner of Black Mtn. Ranch Community Park at 14700 Carmel Valley Road in Rancho Peñasquitos, one block east of its intersection with Black Mtn. Rd. **Thomas Guide p. 1168 (J5)**

## **April**

### **Geology Walk Through Time**

Saturday, Apr 18, 9 — 11 A.M.

Walk through time with geologist Don Albright. Hike will take you through hundreds of millions of

years of geology, visit the waterfall, and see a rare fossil. Wear good footwear for steep trail. Meet at Lopez Ridge Park at 7245 Calle Cristobal in Mira Mesa, one long block east of Camino Santa Fe. **Thomas Guide p. 1208.**

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## **Directions**

### **Carmel Mountain Trail Head**

From Carmel Valley take El Camino Real south. At intersection with Carmel Mountain Road, proceed straight on Carmel Mountain Road. Go up the hill to East Ocean Air Dr. Go left and park at Fairport and Shorepointe. Wear hiking boots. Bring water/sun protection. Moderate hill to climb. **Thomas Guide p.1208 (C2).**

### **Mercy Rd Parking-Staging Area**

In Mira Mesa. Take Mercy Exit off I-15 west to Black Mountain Rd. and straight across intersection into parking lot. Meet on upper level. **Thomas Guide p.1189 (D7).**

### **Northern Parking-Staging Area**

Located in Rancho Peñasquitos. From I-15 take the Mercy Road exit west to Black Mountain Road. Right on Black Mountain Road and up hill, left on Park Village Drive, about 1 mile to Camino del Sur. Left on Camino del Sur and park by the kiosk. **Thomas Guide p.1189 (A7-B7).**

### **Park Village Drive Meeting Area**

Located in Rancho Peñasquitos. From I-15 take the Mercy Road exit west to Black Mountain Road. Right on Black Mountain Road and up hill, left on Park Village Drive and take it all the way to the end at the white barricades and park entrance. **Thomas Guide p.1189-1188 (J7).**

### **Ranch House Walks/Tours**

Located in Rancho Peñasquitos. Take Mercy Exit off I-15 west to Black Mountain Road. Right on Black Mountain. Left at first light, Canyonside Park Dr. Go past ball fields to the white-fenced parking lot. Left into the lot. Walk up path to the ranch house. **Thomas Guide p.1189 (C7).**

### **Sorrento Valley Meeting Area**

Meet in parking lot at 4206 Sorrento Valley Blvd. on the north side of Sorrento Valley Blvd in Sorrento Valley, 1/4 mile east of its intersection with Sorrento Valley Road. **Thomas Guide p.1208 (D5).**

### **West-End Parking-Staging Area**

South side of Sorrento Valley Blvd. in Sorrento Valley, 1/2 mile east of intersection with Vista Sorrento Pky. From east take Mira Mesa Blvd. west to Camino Santa Fe. Right on Camino Santa Fe, then left on Sorrento Valley Blvd. to bottom of the hill. Entrance is on the left. From the west, Take I-5 or 805 to Sorrento Valley. Take Sorrento Valley Blvd. East, pass last building on the right. Preserve entrance is on right. **Thomas Guide p.1208 (D5).**

**Maps of Peñasquitos Canyon and Black Mountain Open Space Parks are available at [www.penasquitos.org](http://www.penasquitos.org).**



**(Wren cont'd from pg 1)**

Prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia* spp.) and/or Cholla (*Cylindropuntia* spp.) in tall, dense clusters. They raise their young in nests built in the cactus. This affords them protection against many predators. For food, they hunt insects in the other shrubs such as California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*) and California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*) present in the sage scrub. This specific habitat type is often called succulent sage scrub.

**Habitat loss**

Although there are currently no Cactus wren in Black Mountain Park, the area was once well connected north to Lake Hodges and the San Pasqual Valley — home to significant populations of the bird, and south to López Canyon where the birds also nested. Much of the bird's habitat in Southern California has been lost to development. The Santa Fe Valley, part of which is now called Santa Luz and 4-S Ranch, was no exception. Grazing and agriculture converted some of the native habitat as far back as the 1870s when the Luzardi Family first settled in the valley. Later, the development of 4-S Ranch, Black Mountain Ranch, Santa Luz, and other developments caused the loss of yet more habitat.

**Fires**

Compounding the loss of habitat have been the massive fires in Southern California in the past 15–20 years. The Cactus wren populations have declined throughout its range. Some of the birds are directly lost to the fires themselves, while others succumb to the lack of suitable habitat in the fires aftermath. While many of the shrubs typical of coastal sage scrub come back relatively quickly after a fire, the cacti are slower to



recover. When fires burn an area more than once in, say a decade, there can be a permanent loss of much of this habitat to invasive, non-native grasses and thistles, not suitable habitat for Cactus wren or many other species.

**Mobilizing help**

The Nature Conservancy, the Nature Reserve of Orange County, the Conservation Biology Institute, and the Audubon Society have been some of the leaders mobilizing a growing coalition of non-profit conservancies, federal and state agencies such as the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the California Dept. of Fish & Game to try to bring this songbird back from the brink of extinction. At a recent meeting hosted by the Zoological Society of San Diego at the Wild Animal Park, representatives of many groups and agencies joined with experts on this bird and its habitat to map out a strategy for restoring its habitats.

People came from Ventura, Los Angeles, Riverside, Orange, and San Diego counties, all home to Cactus wren populations. I represented the Friends at this meeting.

Several Cactus wren post-fire restoration projects won grant funding through the San Diego Association of Government's TransNet Program, a program set up to mitigate the environmental impacts of local road projects. These include projects in the San Pasqual Valley, Chollas Creek, and other areas. This mitigation program was negotiated with SANDAG as part of its 2004 ballot measure by the Endangered Habitats League ([www.ehl.org](http://www.ehl.org)) and the San Diego Conservation Resources Network ([www.sdcrn.org](http://www.sdcrn.org)), a coalition of 25 land trusts and conservation groups in San Diego County.

**Creating habitat in Santa Luz**

As a condition of development and a ballot measure supported by the voters (Proposition K) the owners of the Black Mtn. Ranch property are deeding over about half their property, over 2,000 acres, to the City of San Diego Open Space Park Division to be conserved in perpetuity as part of an expanded Black Mtn. Open Space Park. At least half of this land is non-native

See *Wren* p. 8 for more

## **Volunteers Wanted**

### **Grant for Outreach Coordinator**

The Friends just learned that we are one of five local conservation non-profits to win a competitive grant for an outreach coordination program. The announcement came from the San Diego Conservation Resources Network (CRN at [www.sdcrn.org](http://www.sdcrn.org)), a coalition of San Diego County land trusts and conservancies. The grant totals \$19,591. Other organizations that won grants were the Endangered Habitats Conservancy, the Back Country Land Trust, the Batiquitos Lagoon Foundation, and the Volcan Mountain Reserve.

This is the second year in a row that an anonymous foundation chose to regrant funds through CRN. This same national foundation, in partnership with The San Diego Foundation helped underwrite the launch of CRN several years ago ([www.TSDF.org](http://www.TSDF.org)).

The grant will underwrite a half-time outreach coordinator position. This person, The Friends' first paid staffer, will oversee a revamping of the Friends outreach materials such as the newsletter, mission brochure, north city trails map and other ways to reach the public with our conservation measure. In addition, this staffer will rebuild our volunteer program which has declined



**Senior Ranger Gina Washington and volunteers stand on newly constructed bridge over Peñasquitos Creek. Trail building and restoration are common volunteer activities."**



**Volunteers are shown planting native bunch grass in a restoration project in López Canyon. The new outreach coordinator grant will help the Friends involve more such community members in land stewardship.**

in recent years. This means rebuilding a contact system with the many scout, school, church, and community organizations in our north city area. Geographically, this program will focus on Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve, Del Mar Mesa Preserve, Carmel Mountain Preserve, and Black Mountain Open Space Park.

Public participation in conservation activities such as interpretive hikes, habitat restoration projects, wildlife surveys, trail building, and the Friends' Board of Directors have slipped in recent years. Stewardship of our natural and cultural resources here in the northern part of our city has always been a strength of the Friends. In fact the Friends have often blazed the trail for new volunteer activities such as volunteers being trained and allowed to

use power tools (chainsaws et al) on park projects, doing generating data from endangered plant and animal surveys used by conservation land managers, managing invasive weeds, and other activities now considered expected of a new startup canyon Friends' group.

If you have any ideas or would like to help with this new outreach effort, please contact Mike Kelly at [mkelly1@san.rr.com](mailto:mkelly1@san.rr.com).





## **Why Preserve Closes Rain & Floods in PQ Preserve**

Miguel Fuentes

Do you wonder why Senior City Ranger Gina Washington and Senior County Ranger Paul Kucharczyk close the Preserve during or after rain events? Take a look at the graphics accompanying this article to see what happens to the creek and floodplain, and by extension, to the trails that are in the floodplain during and after these rainfalls. These graphics are from the USGS web site on water ([http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ca/nwis/uv/?site\\_no=11023340](http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ca/nwis/uv/?site_no=11023340)) and are based on real time data gathered at a flow station on Peñasquitos Creek about a 1/4 mile east of Black Mtn. Rd. on the southern side of the creek.

These graphics cover just the fall/winter of 2008. Data from other, wetter years, especially when we've had the intense storms that dump a lot of water in a shorter period of time than this season's storms, would show even more dramatic changes in Peñasquitos Creek.

### **Dangerous waters**

Peñasquitos Creek can, like many other creeks and rivers, become dangerous to people. The graphics representing the cubic feet of water flowing in the creek don't convey this danger as well as the graphic showing the height of the water flowing in the creek and over its banks. Our creek went from a summertime low flow of 1-1.5' in height to almost 8' during our storms!

Flows like this wash out our bridges and make once passable fords impassable. Where you could hop across the rocks at the waterfall in the summer months you will find a raging torrent of water high above the rocks during and after a big rain event. You might say, well, I'll stay away from

strong, strong enough to knock some people off their feet and that wasn't during the height of the flow!

During high water events the creek has been high and full enough for kayakers to run it, something that can't be done outside flood season.

### **Easily damaged trails**

Once the creek tops its bank, it flows into secondary, seasonal channels; but once they're full it starts flowing across the canyon. Back during the "miracle march" rains in the 1990s people actually saw the water cover the canyon from toe of the slope on the south to the toe of the slope on the north side of the creek!

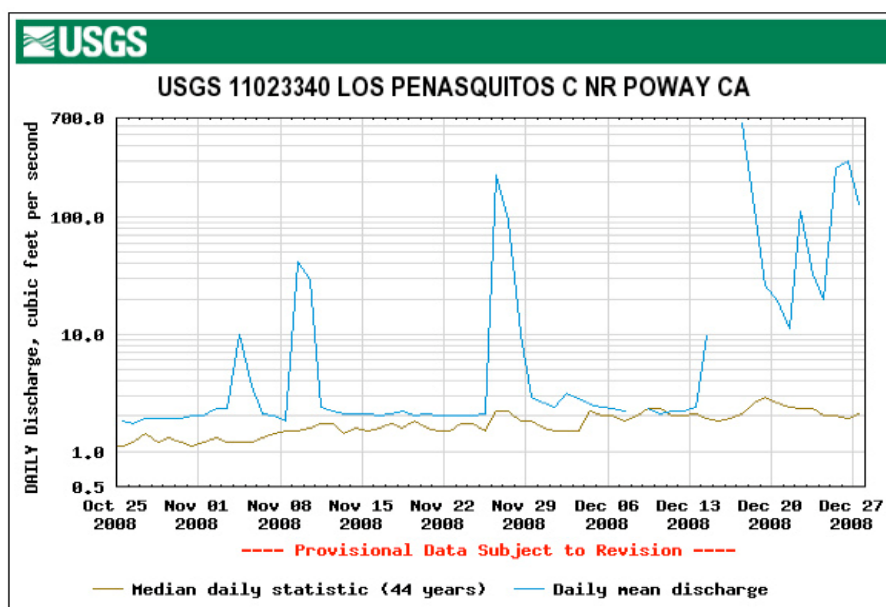
This water is highly erosive, often washing out large sections of trails. During one storm in the 90s retired Senior Ranger Bill Lawrence witnessed a flash flood in the canyon. A storm cell stalled in place over Poway and dumped

inches of rain in a matter of hours. Peñasquitos Creek rose so fast a flash flood occurred, sending a wall of water Bill estimated at 5 feet high racing down the creek.

The force of this water was so great that it punched out of the riparian forest above the waterfall and scooped out a hole above the falls, sending more than 80,000 cubic yards of trees, shrubs, and soil downstream. (Mike Kelly and some interns measured the hole.) A portion of the trail on the north-east side of the waterfalls was taken out as well. A new stream channel was established in this new hole, in addition to the old channel. Subsequent flood events broadened and elongated the channel and took more of the trail with it.

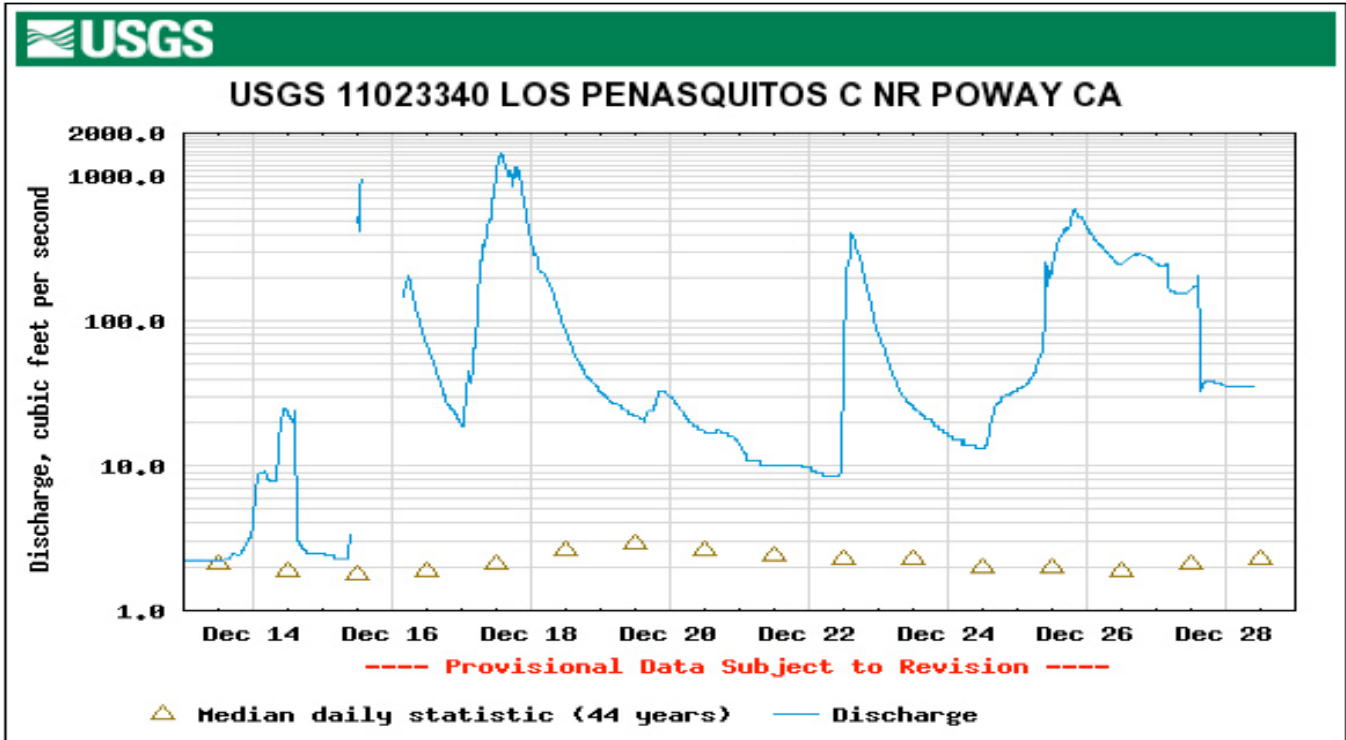
### **Trail users can damage trails**

Another type of damage that can occur after trails are flooded is from users. It can be a Ranger in a security vehicle, a contractor in a



*The flow volume of Peñasquitos Creek is shown for the last two months. Notice the spikes in volume during and after rain events.*





**Peak Flow:** A more detailed of a portion of the previous hydrograph above shows the flow changes over a matter of hours.

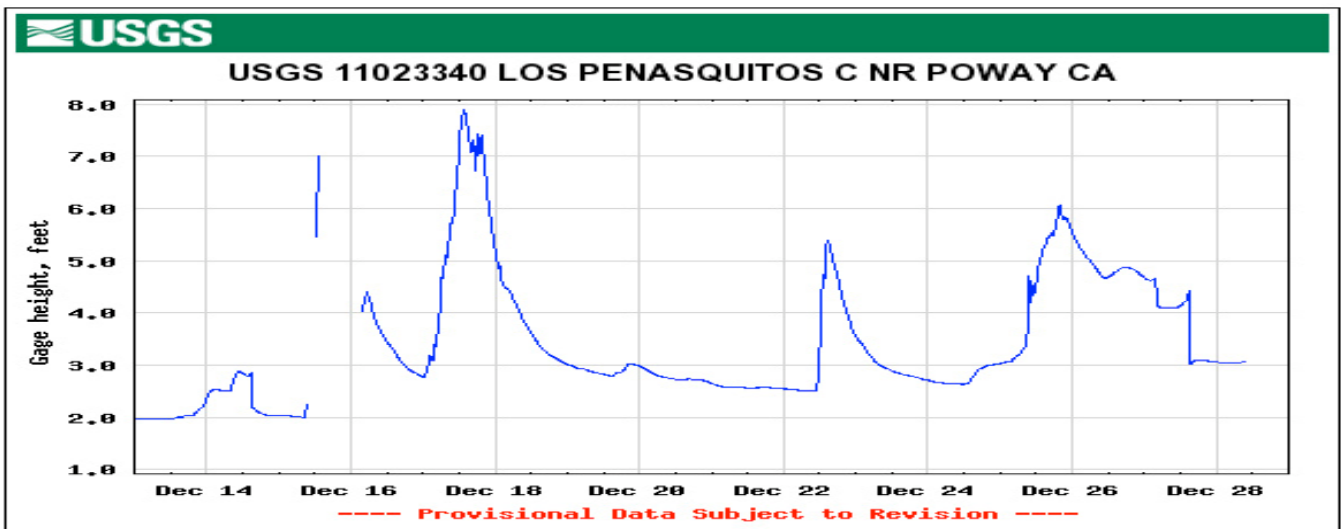
vehicle, horses, bikes, or feet of hikers. Ruts are easily made in wet trails. Trails get seriously widened when park users skirt the muddy sections and take to the vegetation on either side, eventually killing plants off and widening the trails. This is one reason the

Preserve is closed to users, to reduce damage to the trail tread.

Another reason the Preserve is closed after heavy rains is that emergency vehicles can't traverse the canyon without getting stuck. Even 4-wheel drive vehicles get stuck. That means an injured bicy-

clist or equestrian can't be easily transported out of the Preserve. Such injuries occur several times a year.

So, the next time you see a closed sign at a park entrance, it's closed for a good reason. See page 11 for two recent examples.



**Water Flow:** The graph above measures the height in feet of the creek as it passes the flow station. Note the increase from December 16 to 17, 2008.

**(Scouts cont'd from pg 1)**

the first day was spent putting in the supports. The second day was spent installing the actual structure. The pergola is phase one of the picnic area improvement. The second phase involves laying a compacted decomposed granite trail to and flooring under the pergola.

Andre Crabb installed many hundred feet of peeler log fencing to close illegal trails that have been created off of Sorrento Valley Blvd. The trails go through grasslands which are nesting habitat for the Northern Harrier. Andre's project consisted of installing the peeler log fence on the perimeter of the preserve and split rail fence closing the interior portion of the trail. He then used a Rotor-Tiller to loosen the soil of the trail so it will become re-vegetated over the next year.

All of these young men did a tremendous job of coordinating their projects and completing them on time. They are all a real asset to the resources that make Los Peñasquitos Canyon such a great place to visit.

## Join the Los Peñasquitos Volunteer Patrol

Erik Basil, Treasurer, LPCP-CAC Member,  
LPCP Volunteer Patrol

The Los Peñasquitos Volunteer Patrol is an ongoing cooperation between members of the Preserve community and Rangers Gina Washington and John Garwood. Members ride and walk the Preserve to assess current conditions, interact with visitors in the manner of a "trail docent" and to provide assistance, first aid and emergency response in coordination with the Ranger(s) and local agencies. If you're already visiting our Preserve, it's a fun way to ensure others' experience is as good and safe as it can be and, if you're not regularly visiting Los Peñasquitos, the Patrol is a great "excuse" to visit!

The Volunteer Patrol is looking for more participation in 2009, and we're looking for equestrian, hiking and cycling volunteers. Participation requires each volunteer to have/maintain both CPR and First Aid training, to complete a course in procedures and radio protocol, and to demonstrate a commitment to cheerful interaction as an "ambassador of the pre-

serve". One must also be over 18 years of age.

Anyone reading this that is interested in becoming a member of the LPCP Volunteer Patrol should contact Ranger Washington to indicate your interest. ( gwashington@sandiego.gov ) If we get enough response and interest before the New Year, there's a great possibility that the City will put on a group training day for the First Aid/CPR certifications many will need to earn/renew (and you might find a motion at the CAC asking to fund it for a few bucks). What a great way to get First Aid/CPR training "for free"!

You don't have to be a member of the CAC (or any other committee) to participate, but CAC members who complete the courses and participate in at least one "patrol ride/hike" will win a Cup of Coffee, donated by me (and brewed at a time coincident with its award, fear not)! Heck, I will extend this generous offer to any new member of the Patrol. Contact Ranger Washington now!



## People to Know: Don Albright

Vice President,  
Friends of Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve, Inc

Don is a retired geography-history teacher from the San Diego City Schools. His retirement job is doing geology activities for the San Diego Natural History Museum classes, field trips, and Baja expeditions. He's also a former Engineering Geologist for the Bridge Dept., California Division of Highways (now Caltrans). He's a long-time Baja explorer with a passion for exploring its mountains, canyons, deserts, and natural history. Another of Don's careers was

as a park naturalist for the California State Parks system.

He divides his leisure time between Southern California, Baja, Arizona, New Zealand, and Australia. He is a founding member of the Friends of Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve and leads regular geology walks in the Preserve. Don currently lives in Lakeside.

## **Letter to the Editor & Response**

### **Some Corrections, Mt. Carmel Ranch Addendum**

John Northrop, PhD

In the Oct/Nov/Dec issue of Canyon News, Mike Kelly and Anne Harvey wrote that the bathrooms the Stephens added did not affect the historical designation because they did not alter the outside of the original building. However, they were added as an annex, or wing, to the west side of the original house as shown in Figure 1. Thus, the outside of the house was indeed altered so the Historic designation was affected [see accompanying photo].

#### **Mike Kelly answers:**

While Jack Northrop is correct on the placement of the bathroom, it did not affect the building and property's status as a 'Historical Landmark.' If you visit the City's website you will find a list of "Historical Landmarks Designated

by the SD Historical Resources Board. Mount Carmel Ranch is still listed as Historic Resources Board (HRB) # 391 as Anne Harvey and I reported. The "Designation Criteria" for this property was based on 3 major factors: A (for Historical Person); B (Architecture); and C (Cultural Landscape), for the period of 1899-1945. The Historic Individual referred to here was its association with the "Sisters of Mercy," of course. The Cultural Landscape designation was because of its functioning at one time as "a working farm, retreat and homeless shelter." Repairs and even changes to historical sites are often necessary to allow their continued use, whether it be as a landmark visitors come to or a residence still lived in. In general, such repairs and changes are permitted if they are consistent with or



don't substantially change the original character of the landmark.

Having said this, I join with others in the community who do worry that there is too little review of historic landmarks after their designation and that some, if not many, of them are being changed enough to warrant revisiting their historic designations. This issue has recently received some attention in our local press.



**Work around trail**, shown above, used to avoid muddy spot in trail. — Photo by Senior Ranger Gina Washington.

### **Why Trails Are Closed**

#### ***Recent Examples***

***Blown out portion*** of trail, shown below. — Photo by Senior Ranger Gina Washington.





**Friends of Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve, Inc.**

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Vice President: Don Albright 619.443-5937  
Treasurer: Pat Watkins 858.538-2527  
Secretary: Rick Botta 858.672-0584

**Other Members of the Board of Directors**

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Newsletter: Carol Cooper  
Tracking Team Coordinator: Rick Botta,  
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- Indian Culture
- Educational Workshops
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Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

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