



Canyon News

Black Mountain Park • Del Mar Mesa Preserve

Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve

Friends of Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve, Inc.

July / Aug. / Sept.

Volume 23, No. 3



Now, if we only had a middle! Stairs under construction in Crest Canyon. Black Mountain Open Space Park Senior Ranger Ed Christenson also manages the Crest Canyon Preserve, on the south side of the San Dieguito River Valley, west of I-5. **See inside for completion photo.**



Volunteers pose in front of a new Kiosk. Left to right Jason, Eric Smith, Brent Haws, Stephen Peterson, Ben Adams, Rachel Peterson, Daniel Cass, Andrew Edgar, Thomas Peterson, Brennen Perry, Michael Woo, Nathan Omega, Louis Cárdenas, Alejandro Rubbia, Albert Tat, Alex, Michael Peterson, Whitney Peterson, Mark Sutherland, Stephen Miller, and Jeff Winter.

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Park Village Kiosk

Thomas Peterson

My name is Thomas Peterson. I am a Life Scout and working on my Eagle Project. I am seventeen years old and I am a senior attending Westview High School. I was born in Utah, but moved to San Diego at a young age, so I only remember living here in Rancho Peñasquitos where I have lived for 16 years. As part of my Eagle Project, I had to lead a community service project. My project took place at the Los Peñasquitos Preserve Trailhead at the very west end of Park Village Road.

Before my project, the Trailhead was in a state of serious disrepair. Vegetation had grown onto the street, non-native plants infested the area, the brow ditches (drains) on either side of the road had been completely filled with dirt and other debris, and the fence blocking off the trail had been broken due to reckless driving. The Park Ranger Gina Washington and I decided to help out by: (i) getting rid of all plants on the road, (ii) cutting back the native plants, (iii) getting rid of the non-native plants, (iv) rebuilding the wooden fence, (v) sanding and painting the metal gate and the wooden fence, (vi) clearing out the brow ditches, and (vii) erecting a Kiosk to

See p. 3 for more

Free Hikes & Volunteer Opportunities

It's hot weather time, which means our hikes are usually during the cooler hours, including some evening ones.

Hikes are free. Be sure to wear good trail sneakers/boots, sun protection, insect protection, and bring plenty of water as the weather heats up. **Call 858-484-3219 for more information.**

Repeating Events

Every Saturday and Sunday:

Historic Adobe Ranch Tour

San Diego County Park docents lead a free guided tour of San Diego's second oldest standing residence, Rancho Santa María 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. The Ranch House is located on Canyonside Drive off Black Mountain Road near I-15 between Mira Mesa and Rancho Peñasquitos. **Thomas Bros. p. 1189 (C7).**

Every two months:

Black Mountain Open Space Park Citizens Advisory Committee:

Thurs. 6:30 p.m.: Sept. 10, Nov. 12 Public is welcome to attend this meeting to plan park activities. Meet in the Canyonside Recreation Center at Black Mtn. Rd. and Canyonside Driveway. **Thomas Guide p. 1189 (C7).**

Peñasquitos Canyon Citizens Advisory Committee

Thurs. 6:30 p.m., Sept. 17, Nov. 19 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).**

Friends of Peñasquitos Canyon Board of Directors

Tues. 6:30 p.m. Sept. 1, Nov. 3. Members are welcome to attend this business meeting to plan Friends' activities. Meeting is at the historic Adobe Ranch House at Black Mtn. Road and Canyonside Driveway. **Thomas Guide p. 1189 (C7).**

Every month:

Tracking Walk

Saturday, Aug. 8, Sept. 12, Oct. 10, Nov. 14, Dec. 12, 8 a.m. Everyone is invited to join us for a free, easy tracking walk to learn about the art of tracking and the Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve. Beginner and Intermediate levels. Meet at the historic Ranch House on Canyonside Dr., Rancho Peñasquitos. **Thomas Guide p. 1189 (C7).**

Miner's Loop Trail Walk, Black Mountain Open Space Park

Sat., 8 – 10 a.m. July 18, Aug. 15, Sept. 19. Hike the Miner's Loop Trail on the north face of Black Mountain Park. Meet at the Parking Staging area at 14850 Carmel Valley Rd., about 1/4 mile east of its intersection with Black Mtn. Rd. in Rancho Peñasquitos. **Thomas Guide p. 1169 E7.**

Other events:

July

Carson Crossing Waterfall Hike

Sun., July 26, 4 p.m. Join naturalist Linda King on this moderately paced loop walk to the waterfall and Carson's Crossing. Meet at 7107 Park Village Rd. at Celome Way in Rancho Peñasquitos, San Diego. Park by the kiosk. **Thomas Guide p. 1188 J7.**

Nighttime Hike w Mike Kelly

Fri., July 31, 7:30 - 9:30 p.m. Join naturalist Mike on this moderately paced loop walk to Carson's Crossing. Good chance of encountering Mule deer, owls, bats, and more. Meet at kiosk at Camino del Sur (old C. Ruíz) and Park Village Rd., Rancho Peñasquitos, San Diego. Park by the kiosk. **Thomas Guide p. 1189 (A7-B7).**

August

Carson Crossing Waterfall & Sycamore Crossing Loop Hike w L King

Sun., Aug. 16, 4 p.m. Join naturalist Linda King on this moderately paced loop walk to the waterfall and Carson's Crossing. Meet at 7107 Park Village Rd. at Celome Way in Rancho Peñasquitos, San Diego. Park by the kiosk. **Thomas Guide p. 1188 J7.**

Maps of Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve and Black Mountain Open Space Parks are available at www.penasquitos.org.

Night Time Spider Walk in Peñasquitos Canyon w Will Bowen Sat., Aug. 22, 7:30 – 9:30 p.m. In late summer and early fall you can't predict exactly when in the early hours of evening the Orb Spiders build huge, beautiful webs across the trail. Chance of meeting other spiders and possibly bats and owls. Bring flashlight. Meet at 4206 Sorrento Valley Blvd. in Sorrento Valley, San Diego. **Thomas Guide p. 1208 D5.**

Nighttime Hike w Mike Kelly

Fri., Aug. 28, 7:30 - 9:30 p.m. Join naturalist Mike on this moderately paced loop walk to Carson's Crossing. Good chance of encountering Mule deer, owls, bats, and more. Meet at kiosk at Camino del Sur (old C. Ruíz) and Park Village Rd., Rancho Peñasquitos, San Diego. Park by kiosk. **Thomas Guide p. 1189 (A7-B7).**

September

Carson Crossing to Waterfall Hike

Sat., Sept. 12, 4 p.m. Join naturalist Pat Watkins on this moderately paced loop walk to the waterfall and Carson's Crossing. Meet at 7107 Park Village Rd. at Celome Way in Rancho Peñasquitos, San Diego. Park by the kiosk. **Thomas Guide p. 1188 J7.**

Nighttime Hike w Mike Kelly

Fri., Sept. 18, 7 - 9 p.m. Join naturalist Mike on this moderately paced loop walk to Carson's Crossing. Good chance of encountering Mule deer, owls, bats, and more. Meet at kiosk at Camino del Sur (old C. Ruíz) and Park Village Rd., Rancho Peñasquitos, San Diego. Park by the kiosk. **Thomas Guide p. 1189 (A7-B7).**

Intermediate Tracker Naturalist Class

Wed., Sept. 16, 7 p.m. & Sat., Sept. 19, 8 a.m.

This class will delve into the finer details of tracking, awareness, and the philosophy of living in harmony with nature. Two day Event. Email to register or go to LPTT Website for more information.

Night Time Spider Walk in Peñasquitos Canyon w Will Bowen

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Who says hikers, bikers, and equestrians can't work together? Pictured are Friends' president Brian Swanson (hiker) with loppers, steadied while trimming back tree branches by an equestrian and biker during a trails cleanup.

Western Short-horned Walkingstick

Answer to photo question on back cover: Western Short-horned Walkingstick. This insect is a member of the Mantid family. The praying mantis is a better known member of this family. Unlike its carnivorous cousin, the Mantis, the Walkingstick is herbivorous, feeding on native vegetation. We are believed to have only three species of them in our region. Unlike the vast majority of their family, they are stick-like and without wings. They can be found in the chaparral and in tall grass and herbaceous plants, usually in hilly areas. Their color and form make them cryptic and thus hard to see. They look just like the twigs of the plants they live on!

(Kiosk project cont'd)

provide information to all bikers and hikers who use the Trailhead.

My project was quite aggressive in size. As a result, the planning and execution of my project took many hours. I called local stores asking for donations. My friends and I created and passed out fliers around the community asking them to help contribute to the community with donations. Many of the donations were two and three dollars, some were more, but the majorities were small donations. I received some discounts from local businesses, but the real money came from our own community including a very generous donation of \$400 from the Friends of the Peñasquitos Reserve. Thanks to the generous donations of neighbors and the Friends of the Peñasquitos Preserve we were able to collect all the money we needed for my Eagle Scout Project.

Part of my project involved building the massive Kiosk



Top. Finished Crest Canyon staircase. Bottom, Rangers Ed Christenson and Joel Tracy with Urban Corps members who the new stairway at Crest Canyon.

National Trails Day A Beehive of Activity

Brian Swanson

The preserve was, literally and figuratively, a beehive of activity on Saturday, June 6th. For weeks county park staff had been making plans to celebrate National Trails Day with an energetic work party consisting of Marine Corps members, high school students, the military YMCA, Boy Scout troops, a local LDS group, and many other small groups and individual park users of all ages. Mother Nature, however, tried to throw a monkey wrench into the event. Late Tuesday or early Wednesday, two large trees toppled when one fell into the other, blocking the main trail south of the creek, just east of Penasquitos Crossing. County staff, led by Supervising Ranger Paul Kucharczyk, sprang into action to open the road. There was only one hitch. One of the old, hollowed-out trees, was home to a very large, thriving beehive. Staff worked around this by donning protective gear, and soon the trees were cut up and the road was clear.

It took the bees a few days to get the message that they needed to relocate, but by Saturday morning there were just a few stragglers visible as about 40 of the more than 160 volunteers passed by on their way to one of the work sites. The honeycomb inside the hive looked tempting, but we all decided that we didn't want to mess with the bees.

There were so many volunteers that a few of the experienced were gladly recruited to lead work teams. After a welcome from Ranger Paul, the workers performed a variety of tasks. Large piles of decomposed granite had been strategically placed near some of the eroded trails. Many truckloads of mulch were spread around the ranch house orchard. Workers were divided up into groups of 10, and given wheel barrows, hoes, rakes, shovels, and assorted tools and gloves. While some filled holes, others pulled or cut invasive plants such as Canary Island date palms, black mustard and Italian thistle. Staff used Gators and trucks to distribute soil, tools and cold water. Huge piles of invasive plants turned into stuff sacks, that park staff hauled out.

Afterwards, workers were treated to a feast of chicken and carne asada tacos, and lively music courtesy of Trails and Rails. There were free pony rides for the kids, and informative booths manned by the San Diego Tracking Team, REI, the San Diego Mountain Biking Association, and Outdoor Outreach. Raptors were presented by Supervising Ranger Maureen Abare from Goodan Ranch/Sycamore Canyon Open Space Park. The courtyard was filled with shade-covered tables occupied by tired but happy volunteers. For a few hours Saturday, the courtyard reminded me of what it may have been like back in the Days of the Dons, when the Alvarados lived at the rancho.

Mark your calendars and join us again next year on the first Saturday in June.



Above. Ranger Paul Kucharczyk orients the many (160+) volunteers who turned out in the Preserve for National Trails Day. **Below. Supervising Ranger Maureen Abare** from Goodan Ranch/Sycamore Canyon Open Space Park shows off a Kestral to the volunteers. Several raptors are in Ranger Abare's care since they are unable to survive in the wild because of injuries sustain in the past. They are used for educational purposes.



Below. Friends' hike leader Will Bowen with attendees at one of his herb walk hikes.



Friends' Annual Meeting

Officers Elected, Bylaws Changed

June 16, 2009 the Friends annual meeting was held at the Preserve's historic ranch house. This was an especially important meeting since the Bylaws were changed, officers elected, and reports given.

First, the election results, based on a unanimous vote:

Brian Swanson was reelected as the Friends' President

Don Albright was reelected as Vice-president

Edward DiBella was elected Secretary

Pat Watkins was reelected Treasurer

Unanimously voted to the general seats on the Board of Directors were:

Maria Ruiz, Mike Kelly, Anne Harvey and Les Braund.

Maria is new to the Board. The mother of two teaches Spanish at the University of San Diego and has enjoyed hiking in the Preserve and participating in interpretive walks.

There were several changes to the bylaws. The most important one was to change the election procedure. Up until this meeting the bylaws required that officers and directors be elected at an annual meeting. With declining attendance over the past few years at annual meetings the outgoing Board of Directors recommended having a mail ballot election that, hopefully, would involve more members in the election process.

A number of reports were given, including two that highlighted an important evolution in the Friends activities.

Senior County Ranger Paul Kucharzyk reported on the recently held National Trails Day (see article in this issue) and other activities held in the park.

Senior City Ranger Gina Washington gave a similar report, highlighting the completion of the Camino Ruiz Trail on the south rim of the Preserve, the installation of the multi-million dollar wetlands restoration projects at the west end of the Preserve, the repairs to the Mohnike Adobe and the new picture book on the Preserve by high school volunteer Steve Pye.

Treasurer Pat Watkins provided a report on the status of the Friends finances. The Friends' finances are solid with current assets totalling \$141,691, most of which is grant monies earmarked for specific projects.

Land and land easement acquisition

President Brian Swanson delivered two important reports reflecting a big change in the Friends' activities and mission. He reported that the Friends agreed to receive 8 parcels of land east of Deer Canyon in Rancho Peñasquitos. These parcels are coming via a Bankruptcy Court proceeding of the defunct "The Environmental Trust," was a nominally non-profit organization that received open space parcels that the City and County of San Diego didn't want from developers. These parcels came with endowments to manage these lands in perpetuity. But TET was known for low-balling their bids to acquire these properties, meaning they weren't charging the developers enough to cover the actual costs of managing these lands, eventually leading to actual neglect of the land itself and bankruptcy. These 8

parcels should close escrow shortly and the Friends will begin active management to preserve and restore them.

Swanson also reported that the Friends were in the process of accepting 21 conservation easements on 21 parcels of land, mostly around Lopez Ridge and Canyon at the request of the Coastal Commission. The Friends accepted a similar easement from the CC several years ago. State law allows the holding of such easements on parcels coming through the CC's jurisdiction for a limited number of years. Then the CC has to find a non-profit entity to hold the easements or the control over the land under these easements reverts to the property owner. Such easements cover a variety of restrictions or permitted activities in the public interest. An example of a CC easement would be one that provide sfor public access to beaches otherwise blocked by development.

What the land acquisition and holding of land easements reflect is the evolution of the Friends to actually holding and managing lands in our geographic area of influence not owned by the City or County. The Friends expect to receive future land as a result of the development process within the City, including parcels on the Del Mar Mesa.

Membership Application

Membership category? Circle below:

Senior (62) or Student \$10 Individual \$15

Family \$20 Sponsor \$30 Patron \$100

Corporate \$250 Life \$1000

Contribution \$ _____

I/We are interested in the following:

Volunteer to help the committee (call to discuss)

Hikes

Indian Culture

Educational Workshops

School, Family, Youth Programs

Environment (Plants, birds, mammals, geology)

Other: _____ **7/09**

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City State Zip _____

Home Phone _____

Email _____

Please make checks payable to:

Friends of Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve, Inc.

P.O. Box 26523, San Diego, CA 92196

Thank you for your support! Your donation is tax deductible.
Call **858.484.3219** or **858.342-8856** for more information.

The Bat . . . So Misunderstood Story

Petra Koellhoffer, Trail Guide

[This story and pictures are reprinted from the June 2009 issue of Trail Talk, the newsletter of the Trail Guide volunteer group at Mission Trails Regional Park.]

As the sun begins to set in the western sky and the heavens kiss the clouds with hues of pinks and reds, the



night creatures begin to stir. All around me I can feel my brethren beginning to wake and take flight into the darkening skies. I, too, let loose of my hold in the rock crevice to join them in their flying aerobics. I am a bat.

We are mammals in the order of Chiroptera. Our forearms developed as wings and we are the only mammals that can actually fly. The word Chiroptera comes from the Greek word cheir "hand" and pteron "wing" as the structure of our open wing is very similar to an outspread human hand with a membrane between the fingers that also stretches between hand and body.

I am one of over 1,100 species of bats, 23 species in San Diego County alone, and we make up almost one quarter of all mammal species. It is so hard to understand why people are so afraid of us. Did you know that we play a very essential role in keeping the multitudes of nightflying insects in check? One of our little brown bats will eat more than 1,000 small insects in just one hour!

Another cousin of mine, the big brown bat, in a colony of about 150, helps farmers by eating up to 33 million root worms each summer. Our neighbors to the southeast have 20 million Mexican free-tailed bats that take flight from Bracken Cave in Texas. They eat almost 200 tons of insects

nightly. Not to mention the fruit bat that plays a valuable role in plant pollination and seed dispersal.

The smallest bat, which is also the world's smallest mammal, comes from Thailand and is called a bumblebee bat. He weighs less than a penny. The giant flying fox is my largest cousin. They reside in Indonesia and can have a wingspan of up to six feet. We are exceptionally vulnerable to extinction as our mother bats usually only have one 'pup' per year. The pups are left to roost while mom goes out to feed, though pups can cling onto the fur of their mothers to be transported. The females with pups often form nursery roosts with other females from the same area. Mother bats are amazing as they can find their pup in colonies of millions of young! If a mother's milk goes dry, pups have been seen feeding on other bat moms that still have milk. The male does not get involved with the raising of the pup. The female has sole responsibility of rearing the young. Although we are born with

wings, depending on the species, they can take up to four months to fully develop and be strong enough for flight. Our life span can be 20 years or more, which is unusually long for animals our size.

There are a lot of myths about us, and this is probably why people are so afraid of us bats. Let me try to set the record straight on some of these myths. Bats are not flying mice. We have our own order, as mentioned above but we are grouped with primates and lemurs in a grand order called Archonta.

Bats are not blind, in fact we can see just as well as you humans can. Fruit bats can see in color! Bats do not become tangled in your hair. Actually, insect eating bats are equipped with a built in sonar system that allows them to navigate at break neck speed through total darkness. If a bat swoops toward you, it is most likely after the mosquito that is hovering just above your head.

Bats are not ugly or dirty. Some of us resemble deer, rabbits and even Chihuahuas. We spend hours grooming ourselves to make our coats soft and silky. Not all bats are vampires. Out of the 1,100 plus species, only 3



Ravens Black as Night Story

Lyn Olsson, photos by Wendy Esterly, Trail Guides

What do you think of when you hear the word Raven? Do you think of Edgar Allan Poe's narrative poem, "The Raven"? Once upon a mid-night dreary . . . or maybe "The Raven" by Brothers Grimm, or maybe even the 1935 horror film starring Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi called . . . "The Raven." Ravens have been the subject of all kinds of lore, myth, religious belief, glee and anger. Ravens with their wily ways fascinate people for many reasons. They are incredibly intelligent (the "Einsteins of the bird world"), resourceful, beautiful, and individualistic.

The Common Raven, *Corvus corax*, was the one Poe wrote about in "The Raven" when he lived at the Commons at the University of Virginia. There is another species of Raven in the United States called the Chihuahuan Raven as it lives in southwestern US and Mexico. And, there are eight subspecies of *Corvus corax*, two of which inhabit North America. They are part of the larger family of corvidae, which includes jays, magpies and crows; about 100 total.

Corvus corax is a common resident in California and much of North America. They occupy more and varied habitat types than any other California bird. They also inhabit the Arctic, Eurasia to the deserts of North Africa, and to islands in the Pacific Ocean. They are common in Scotland, northern England, and the west of Ireland.



They are the most widely distributed of the corvids.

Ravens are omnivores, eating arthropods, seeds and grain, but most of their diet is meat. As scavengers they keep our world cleaner, as they frequent road kill sites, landfills, rubbish piles. They do prey on rodents, other bird nest-

lings and eggs, but many other birds do too. It is unfortunate that they also prey on baby desert tortoises in the Mohave Desert – a source of much anger for desert naturalists.

They start courting when still juvenile, but do not pair bond and breed until they are two to four years old. The pairs are monogamous and will stay together for life. They live about ten to fifteen years in the wild, up to fifty in captivity. Allopreening is an important part of their male-female bonding.

The female lays four to seven eggs (five to six is normal), and she incubates the eggs for about twenty days during which time the male feeds her. He also helps to raise the brood to adulthood. The young leave the nest after four to seven weeks but stay close for another week or so to gain confidence, and still stay close for about another six months. Ravens make their nests in tall trees. Look for the telltale white droppings below a likely roosting spot (this may take a while, and use binoculars) and you may find Raven nesting activity, or at least an old nest.

Mated pairs of ravens are territorial, protecting their food sources and normally stay away from other ravens. But they do come together for the occasional family gathering during which time they put on spectacular aerial shows, diving, barrel

(Bats cont'd)

species are vampire bats and they reside in Latin America. Vampire bats are very small (about the size of an M & M's pack) and do not attack humans or suck their blood. The approximately 1,097 remaining species of bats eat insects, fruit, nectar and pollen. A few of our species eat fish and frogs.

Bats do not carry rabies. Like all mammals, we are capable of catching the disease. Less than one-half of one percent of bats actually contracts the disease. In reality, more people die annually from contact with household pets than have died from contact with bats in all recorded history. But we bats are wild animals and should not be touched or handled. We may bite out of fear or self defense. If you find a bat 'grounded', it is most likely sick and should never be rescued with bare hands.

Bats are shy, gentle and intelligent creatures. Our populations are declining. Half the bats in the US are listed as rare, threatened or endangered.

So, as you look up towards the sky as the sun is setting and you see us doing our aerial dances, do not be afraid, but be appreciative by what we contribute to the world we all live in.

References: Bat Conservation International, Bat World, Wikipedia, Bats of San Diego County

rolls at 500 feet, and dropping objects from on high and then swooping down to grab them before they hit the ground. This is also courting behavior. Of course large groups do come together at particularly good feeding sites such as a large carcass or at a landfill. A very interesting book about their feeding practices in Vermont, which probably can be applied to other populations as well, is by Bernard Heinrich called *Ravens in Winter* (New York: Summit Books, 1989). It describes how young ravens, which don't have their own territories yet, will form loose flocks and will mob a particular meal to keep the adults from driving them off.

By the way, ravens produce pellets like raptors do (hawks, falcons, eagles, owls) and it would be interesting to see what's inside a raven-produced one.

Can You Name Me?



Can you find and name the critter in this photo?
See p.3 for the answer. Photo by Brian Swanson



Red Diamond rattlesnake recently photographed by Steve Pye in Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve. Note the “coon” tail, the alternating bands of white and black. This characteristic is a more reliable way to distinguish the Red Diamond from the Southern Pacific, a sub-species of the Western Diamondback, than by color alone. The two species can overlap in color characteristics, making it a less reliable distinguishing character. Our “Reds” are becoming uncommon, perhaps even rare in our coastal zone. This is thought to be due to two factors. One is the simple loss of their habitat as much of our coastal zone is developed. Second is the fact that Reds have a much bigger geographic territory they slither through than the Southern Pacific’s. This makes them vulnerable to being killed by vehicles, becoming road-kill. Thi and many other photos by Steve are available in his new book available at: <http://www.blurb.com/bookstore/detail/754363>



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