



Canyon News

Black Mountain Park • Del Mar Mesa Preserve

Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve

Friends of Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve, Inc.

Oct., Nov., Dec. 09

Volume 23, No. 4

Volunteers Clean Up Carmel Mtn. Preserve

Karen Billing, *The Carmel Valley Leader*

Volunteers at Carmel Mountain Preserve for the 25th annual I Love A Clean San Diego cleanup were kept plenty busy on Saturday.

A crowd of 80 people came to the cleanup site, organized by Qualcomm employees, and found a car hood, an old refrigerator, hardened bags of cement and creosote-laden telephone poles.

Some of the collected trash has been there for 30 to 40 years, said cleanup leader Anne Harvey – proved by a bounty of rusted cans of beer from a beer company that no longer exists and by the antique nature of the refrigerator.

"It's really important to get the trash out of here so we can all enjoy the pristine environment," San Diego City Park Ranger Gina Washington said.

The preserve is accessed off East Ocean Air Drive, adjacent to the soon-to-be-opened Ocean Air Park. Volunteers like the Florez family came from as far away as Murrieta to participate in the cleanup.

Clean-up group leaders Harvey, Dave Hogan and Dr. Oliver Ryder were all involved in saving the preserve years ago.

"It's a miracle that this property was saved," Hogan said, noting the planets must have aligned in the right way for environmentalists and developers to come to an agreement.

See p. 4 for more

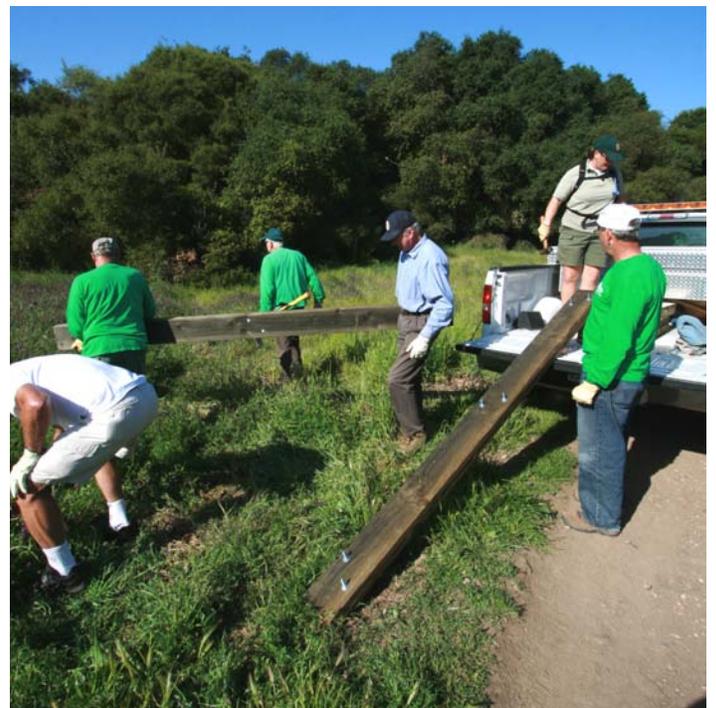


Qualcomm and other volunteers load trash into dumpster on Carmel Mtn. Trash as old as 50 years old was found and removed. This may have been the first comprehensive cleanup of the area ever. Photo by Anne Harvey

Grand Trail Opening

Brian Swanson, president

Saturday morning, August 7th, a small crowd of excited people gathered at the Camino Ruiz Neighborhood Park, on the south rim of Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve, for the long-awaited grand opening of the Camino Ruiz Trail. This



Senior Ranger Gina Washington and volunteers working on the Camino Ruiz trail. Photo by Steve Pye.

See p. 6 for more

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Free Hikes & Volunteer Opportunities

While spring and its rain bring us the color of wildflowers, the cooler weather of fall and winter bring us the color of changing foliage. Sycamore, willows, and cottonwood trees change their colors, generally the yellows. Good places to see fall foliage are Lopez Canyon below Camino Santa Fe and Sycamore Crossing west of the waterfall. Poison oak (see the photo in this issue) leaves change from green to red this time of the year and are quite pretty. Some people, intent on gathering colorful fall foliage unknowingly pick up red poison oak!

Hikes are free. Be sure to wear good trail sneakers/boots, sun 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:

Friends of Peñasquitos Canyon Board of Directors

Tues., Nov. 3, 7 p.m.

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).**

Black Mountain Open Space Park Citizens Advisory Committee:

Thurs. Nov. 12, 6:30 p.m.

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., Nov. 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).**

Every month:

Tracking Walk

Sat. 8 a.m.: Nov. 14, Dec. 12, Jan. 9

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., Nov. 21 & Jan. 16, 8 – 10 a.m.

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:

October

Volunteer Restoration Project at the Waterfall

Sat., Oct. 31, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. Help expand the native plant restoration at the waterfall. Weeding, mulching, and planting are the order of the day. No experience necessary. Community Service credits eligible. Meet at 7107 Park Village Rd. at Celome Way in Rancho Peñasquitos, San Diego. Park by the kiosk. Call Mike Kelly at 858-342-8856 for more info. **Thomas Guide p. 1188 J7.**

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

November

Explore Trans-County Trail in the east end of Peñasquitos Canyon w Mike Kelly

Sat., Nov. 7, 9 - 11 a.m.

Explore the underappreciated east end of Peñasquitos Canyon (see article this newsletter). Walk about 2 miles of the 100+ mile Trans-County Trail on an oak shaded trail. See centuries old oaks, the Oak Memorial Garden for Victims of Violence, the Kumeyaay inspired Rock Art walls, and the old Stagecoach Road in Sabre Springs. Meet on the corner of Mercy and Black Mtn. Rds in Mira Mesa. **Thomas Guide p. 1189 (D1).**

Carson Crossing to Sycamore Crossing Loop Hike

Sun., Nov. 8, 8 a.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.**

Advanced Tracker/Naturalist Program

Wed. Nov. 18, 7 p.m. &

Sat., Nov. 21, 8 a.m.

This 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. Email to register or go to www.sdtt.org for more information.

Shamanic Hike with Will Bowen

Sun. Nov. 22, 3 – 5 p.m. A short hike to a power spot where we will explore shamanic traditions of the indigenous people of the Americas. We'll learn about saging, calling the directions, creating sacred space, and harnessing the energies of nature for healing, insight, and wisdom. We'll also do some healing work, sharing and storytelling, and make some shamanic art. This is a good opportunity for self-healing and to connect with the spirit of the

holiday season through nature. Please bring a blanket to sit on and a drum or rattle. Meet in West End Parking Staging area, Sorrento Valley, San Diego. **Thomas Guide p. 1208 D5.**

December

Nature Walk from Mercy Road

Sun., Dec. 6, 8 a.m. Join naturalist Linda King for this moderately paced nature walk. Chance to see Mistletoe and California Holly, yellow sycamores, and red poison oak. Learn native plants and their uses. Meet in Mercy Road Parking-Staging area, upper level at the junction of Mercy and Black Mtn. Roads in Mira Mesa. See **Thomas Guide p. 1189.**

Shamanic Hike with Will Bowen

Sun. Dec. 20, 3 – 5 p.m. A short hike to a power spot where we will explore shamanic traditions of the indigenous people of the Americas. We'll learn about saging, calling the directions, creating sacred space, and harnessing the energies of nature for healing, insight, and wisdom. We'll also do some healing work, sharing and storytelling, and make some shamanic art. This is a good opportunity for self-healing and to connect with the spirit of the holiday season through nature. Please bring a blanket to sit on and a drum or rattle. Meet in West End Parking Staging area, Sorrento Valley, San Diego. **Thomas Guide p. 1208 D5.**

January 2010

Wildlife Survey Volunteer Training

Sat., Jan. 16, 9:15 a.m. – 4 p.m. This free training includes basic wildlife 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 on Canyonside Drive off Black Mountain Road near I-15 between Mira Mesa and Rancho Peñasquitos. **Thomas Bros. p. 1189 (C7).**

Del Mar Mesa & Waterfall Walk with Linda King

Sun., Jan. 17, 8 a.m. Join naturalist Linda King for this loop walk up to the Del Mar Mesa over to Walden Pond and down to the waterfall. Meet at 7107 Park Village Rd., at Celome Way in Rancho Peñasquitos. **Thomas Guide p. 1188 (J7).**

Lopez Canyon Homestead Hike with Will Bowen

Sun., Jan. 31, 3 – 5 p.m. Hike out into Lopez canyon to visit the ruins of the Lopez Homestead – a turn of the century dairy farm. Find out about the Lopez family and their place in early San Diego history. Explore the ruins of the old house, barn, milking station, and smoke house. Learn about how and where they grazed the cattle and how they got the milk to market. Meet at West End Parking Staging Area. **Thomas Guide p. 1208 (C/D 5).**

Restoration Projects Ramp up Again

Mike Kelly, conservation chair

Cooler temperatures mean we're heading into planting weather. We'll be focusing on native plant restoration projects in both Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve and Black Mountain Open Space Park.

In Peñasquitos Canyon we'll be continuing a planting project on the north side of the waterfall. That will be our focus this fall. Then, from January on we'll turn to our Cactus wren restoration project sites in Black Mtn. Park.

We can use all the help we can get since we have a 5-year, 5-site project underway to provide habitat for the endangered Coastal Cactus wren bird in Black Mtn. We can accommodate both individuals and groups. Contact Mike Kelly at mkelly1@san.rr.com or 858-342-8856 for more information or to sign up. Coming up:

Saturday, Oct. 31, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Peñasquitos Waterfall
Meet at 7107 Park Village Rd.,
at Celome Way in Rancho
Peñasquitos.

&
Saturday, Nov. 21, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Call/email for details.



Poison oak in both its green and red phases, toxic in either case! Remember the limerick: "Leaves of three, let it be, for poison oak it just might be. Photos by Janet Nelson



(Cleanup cont'd)

Ryder, of the San Diego Zoo's Institute for Conservation Research, said that the preserve in Carmel Valley's backyard is an incredibly special piece of land.

Its high promontory with ocean views is something that in other communities might have become all hilltop homes. Instead the trail winds through heavy brush, giving hikers, runners and mountain bikers a quiet, peaceful trip with amazing views.

"It's phenomenal what this community has done to ensure that centuries from now people will be able to see what the land looked like," Ryder said.

On Saturday, volunteers arrived to see a brand new wooden post at the entrance to the preserve that reads: "Land set aside for habitat protection" with space to post maps and other information.

Rangers also built a new bridge across a small ravine at the preserve's entrance. A trail runner on Saturday morning said a quick hello to Ranger Washington before flying right over the new bridge on his way up the hill.



Friends' Directory

Officers

President: Brian Swanson 760.739.5451
 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

Edward DiBella, Ann Harvey, Mike Kelly

Walk Leaders

Brian Swanson, Don Albright, Will Bowen, Mike Kelly, Pat Watkins, Linda King and Barbara Moore.

Committees:

Newsletter: Mike Kelly at 858-342-8856.
 Tracking Team Coordinator: Rick Botta, 858.672-0584
 Conservation Chair: Mike Kelly, 858.566.6489
 Webmaster: Beth Williams
 Wildlife Surveys: Patrick Campbell, 760.471.9197



Above: Dave Hogan and Ollie Ryder, pictured on the right in the group of four, were co-leaders of the cleanup teams. Carmel Mountain Preserve has some of the greatest diversity of plants and animals in San Diego County. The fight to preserve it took 15 years and countless volunteer hours. In the winter and spring, naturalist Diana Gordon leads nature walks to view vernal pools and wildflowers on the 'mountain.'
 Photo by Anne Harvey

Left: San Diego Coast horned lizard, an endangered reptile that lives on Carmel Mtn. Photo by Steve Pye.

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: _____ **10/09**

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.

Orb Weavers and Black Widows Spider Hike Report

Will Bowen. PhD

I started a new series of hikes this last summer called “The Night Time Spider Walk.”

These hikes grew out of the regular night hikes that Mike Kelly and I have led in the summer months for many years. On the night hike we usually look for deer, owls, bats, and night blooming plants and sometimes we contemplate the stars and constellations. Even if we don't see any critters it's just really nice to be out in the canyon at dark when it's cooler and when the senses other than vision, such as hearing and smell, are more enhanced.

Orb Weavers

Last year on one of the night hikes some spider enthusiasts introduced me to the orb weavers' large, beautiful and symmetrical webs, which in many places crossed the trail. I remembered that and decided I would look for them again this year. I wasn't exactly sure when they would start to show up, just sometime near the end of summer and the start of fall.

The first spider hike was scheduled for August 22nd. I went down in the canyon a few days beforehand and could not find any webs, so I was a little anxious that we might not find any on the hike. I knew we would find black widow spiders though, because we have a large colony that live under the road barricades where Sorrento Valley Blvd heads up the hill to become Calle Cristobal.

Luckily we found two small orb weavers right away on a metal sign post along the sidewalk. We dusted one of the webs with cornstarch to see the web better. There are many different kinds of orb weavers and some have not even been described by science. Every evening in the first hours of dark during the late summer they make a new web.

And Black Widows too!

Right after the first orb weavers, we explored our black widow spider colony. From the parking lot at 4206 Sorrento Valley Blvd all the way up to the path down to the canyon gate there were black widow spiders – mostly large, black females with a red hourglass markings on their belly. We also saw some males which are different colored and some juveniles. The black widows hide up under, where wood of the post meets the metal railing, during the day and come down at night, repairing and adding to their web.

In contrast to the uniform and symmetrical two dimension web of the orb weaver, the web of the black widow is

really a mess! It's an orderly disorder which one hike participants described as “looking like fractals.” It's three dimensional and cube shaped with no apparent pattern, but it traps insects well. We were careful not to reach down there because although they don't usually bite, the female will if she thinks you're going after her egg sac. The egg sac looks something like a white cottony marble.



Orb weaver spider on its web. Photo by Will Bowen

That night we walked pretty far into the canyon before we found more orb weavers. We discovered two side by side crossing the trail. One of the orb weavers was orange and the other a mottled yellow color. The amazing thing was that the orange weaver had attached a leaf as a counter weight to hold the web in place which dangled over the trail. A tiny grey spider of a different species had even built a small web on the hanging leaf. This was no accident because on the next hike we found another leaf counter weight on a web.

My second hike took place on September 26. We had a lot of people attending that night and a ton of kids who are really great to have on a hike because they seem to all love spiders and bugs much more than adults – they haven't lost their wonder or awe at nature.

I remember asking one little girl. “Do you like spiders?” And she replied, in a very mature and adult-like fashion, “Well, I don't know. I am here to find out more about them so I can decide!”

That night we didn't see any deer, owls, or bats, but we found all kinds of orb webs. It was just amazing to see them crossing the trail or hanging high between the trees. We watched them building and rolling down their strands. Many people took pictures.

Orb weavers are such great architects and artists. Native Americans of the Southwest, such as the Navajo and Hopi, say that they learned to weave their rugs from watching orb weavers. You can see why.

I started to wonder – what if man could somehow harness the spider strand for our own purposes? Or make a similar material for building.

I think the search for orb weavers and spider webs is a great addition to the summer night time repertoire and I hope all the Friends get a chance to see these spiders.

I know I am looking forward to doing the Spider Walk again next year.

Funds Still Needed

Trail for All People Status Report

Jas Arnold

Friends members have been hearing about this trail for several years now. It has remained a pie-in-the-sky with the concept established, yet the path to the finished product unclear. This murkiness is diminishing. The immediate goal is to achieve City of San Diego approval (entitlement). City staff will review the project for design, environmental issues, and other factors that may impact the region. This will entail the payment of City processing fees, the creation of conceptual drawings, and the shepherding of the project plans through the City Bureaucracy.

The anticipated costs for the above-described work is \$30,000. Contributions made by many of you will help to defray these costs. Recently, a \$300 grant was made to the Trail for All people project in the name of the Friends from the Rancho Peñasquitos Town Council. The RP Planning Board will be approached in the next couple of months for a donation coming from developer fees. With an entitled project, the raising of the funds necessary to actually build the trail should be much easier. Friends, thank you for your support. A wonderful project which will benefit *All* will soon be a reality.



(Camino Ruiz trail cont'd)

0.6 mile section of trail winds beneath a shady canopy of scrub oaks and other mature chaparral, and includes three small bridges. It's the first official trail connection between the community of Mira Mesa and Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve. This hiker and biker trail has been many years in the planning under the careful stewardship of Open Space Trails Manager (and former PQ senior ranger) Rick Thompson. The canyon which the trail winds through is home to a vibrant wildlife community. Users should be sure to obey the Preserve's leash law and clean up after their pets.

Foothill Associates (biological consultants) biologist Dick Rol performed biological surveys and helped site the trail around sensitive plants and habitats. City Park Ranger staff and volunteers put in 420 hours of labor constructing the trail. Senior Ranger Gina Washington directed the volunteers, most notably master trail builders Bill Witzell and Jim Snyder, aided by Terry Gaughen, Dennis Driscoll, Jim Rehoreg and Steve Pye.

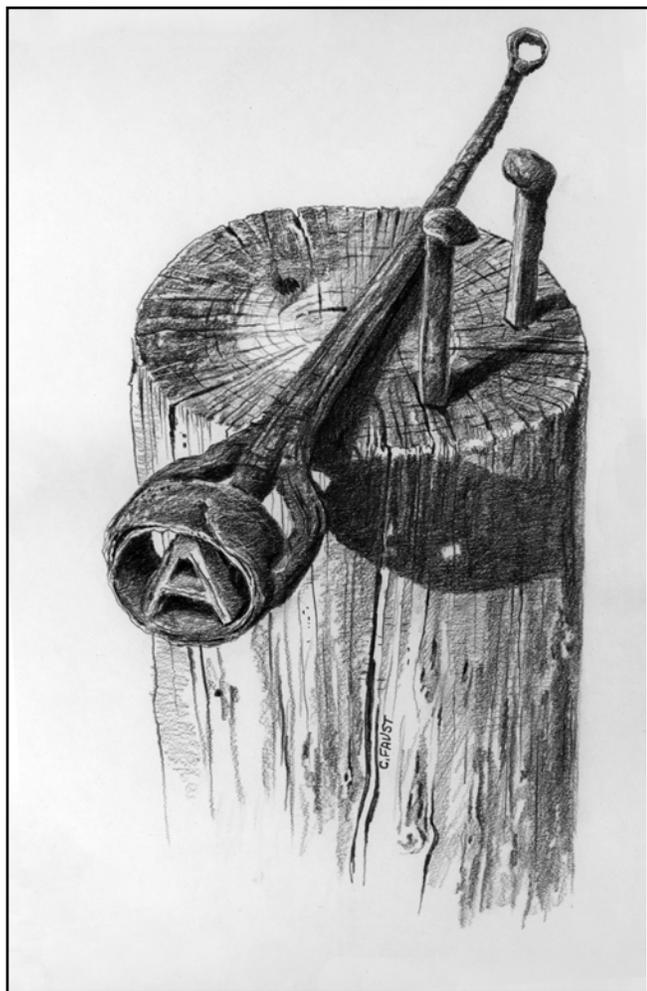
Among the 50 or so people present for the dedication were San Diego City Councilmember Carl DeMaio and his community representative John Ly, numerous city and county open space parks staff including Sr. Ranger Gina Washington, Ranger John Garwood, County Supervising Ranger Paul Kuczarczyk, County Ranger Rusty Rhodes, City Deputy Director of Open Space Chris Zirkle and Steve Haupt, along with Boy Scouts. Eagle Candidate Ryan Olmstead built the trailhead kiosk which the Friends and Multi-Use Trails Coalition funded. Also in attendance were los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve Citizens' Advisory Committee Chair Marvin Gerst and CAC Board members Anne Harvey, Erik Basil, Pam Stevens, Dean Kirby, and Brian Swanson, Trails Committee member Bobbi Remnant, Friends of Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve president Brian Swanson and Board members Anne Harvey and Les Braund, San Diego Mountain Biking Association representatives, Mira Mesa Recreational Council Chair Joe Fritchtel.

Councilmember DeMaio reminded us that it's not just our sun, beaches and bays that draw residents and tourists to San Diego, but also our canyons and trails. For trails like this to happen, we must balance habitat needs with public access. Sometimes preserving intact habitat is appropriate, while other times a well designed and placed trail may be appropriate. Partnerships between the city and user groups, such as here, are essential to bring projects from the planning to the implementation stage, especially during these times of shrinking budgets. After several other brief speeches, the ceremonial scissors were used to cut the yellow ribbon, and a swarm of bikers and hikers headed out to explore this gem of a trail. Be sure to check it out on one of your next visits to the Preserve!

New Book Updates the Record Preserve Logo Wrong

Mike Kelly

The logo the Friends use on the front of this newsletter and other literature and also used by the City and the County on Preserve signage is not what we all thought it to be: the cattle brand of the Peñasquitos Ranch in the 19th century. We were all wrong. Prior to her death the former County Historian Mary Ward documented the discovery in 1983 of the brand below, the Circle A brand. For the full story of this mixup of brands and who the old logo brand belonged to pick up the soon-to-be published *Pieces of History: Prehistory & History of Rancho Peñasquitos*, co-edited by me and the current County Historian, Dr. Lynne Newall Christenson. The book should be available the first of the new year. The illustration is by Charles Faust.



Above right the ‘Oak Memorial Garden.’ More than a hundred oak trees have been planted by and for families of victims of violence. The garden was established in honor of Cara Knott, a young woman slain nearby in a crime that has become infamous in San Diego’s modern history. Right, a pond along the trail. Photos by Janet Nelson.

(Underappreciated trails cont’d)

County Trail?” Its name comes from the fact it runs from Torrey Pines State Reserve all the way to the visitor’s center at Anza Borrego State Park, over a 100 miles! One access is at the juncture of La Tortola St. and Paseo Mateo St. in Rancho Peñasquitos. Cross the creek to the south side



via the stepping stones and turn left on the trail. Second is from the Ranger Station at the equestrian center at Mercy and Black Mtn. Rds. The trail begins to the south of the Ranger Station, next to Mercy Rd. Third is from the County’s Mercy Rd. parking-staging area. Access the trail at the undercrossing that goes *under* Black Mtn. Rd. and follow the directions from the Ranger Station.

The caption with the picture describes the trail to the Oak Memorial garden. From there it goes up the hill above the pump station and picks up the old stagecoach road that heads east and merges with the Sabre Springs trail system, which in turn takes you to the Poway City Line near Springhurst St. Along the way you’ll pass by the Wildlife Refuge area at Springbrook Way. I’ve encountered joggers, bikers, and equestrians on this beautiful trail.

Stagecoach Road

Once on the Stagecoach Road periodically check over the edge of the trail down the hill and you’ll see free-standing, mortarless walls typical of the 19th century. At points you can look across the canyon where the trail curves and see some of the retaining walls. Historically, rather than connecting with the Sabre Springs trail system, the Stagecoach Road dropped down the hill and across the creek where the cattle stock pond is now.



Underappreciated East End Trails

Mike Kelly, conservation chair

How many of our Friends and the hiking public have *never* hiked a trail to the east of Black Mountain Road? Most – I suspect – from who I see on the trails. In the old days Mike McCormick and myself led ‘Mystery Tree’ walks from Black Mtn. Road east to the stream crossing at Ridgewood Community Park, adjacent to the preserve. Damage to these trees with the Mexican era sign map on them led to our discontinuing these walks. Since then, however, the trail has been continued east of Ridgewood all the way under I-15 to the San Diego Poway city boundary line. “New” natural, historical and cultural features are now accessible for your viewing pleasure! I’m detailing some of them in words and pictures in this article.

Access

First, how do you find this trail, called the “Trans-
See p. 7 for more



Above, trail passes through Coast live oaks. Three bridges across Peñasquitos Creek brings you near the picturesque (est. 300+ years) oak shown left. Continuing under I-15 brings you to a colorful wall inspired by Kumeyaay art at Metropolitan Wastewater’s facility. Photos by Janet Nelson.



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