



Canyon News

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

April, May, June, 2011
Volume 25, No. 2

Rattlesnakes Add Excitement to Volunteer Event

Mike Kelly, Conservation Chair

Volunteer work parties are usually fun, but I wouldn't ordinarily call them pulse-pounding exciting! Saturday, March 12, however, was an exception. Boy Scout Troop 648 turned out more than 40 scouts and a number of parents to help restore two areas at the waterfall in Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve.

Although having 40 plus young boys in one place generates a certain level of excitement, it was the presence of four different rattlesnakes during the day-long event that brought the real excitement! Only one of the rattlers had the sense to run for the hills. The other three had to be removed from the area so the work could proceed. They were safely relocated by this author and one of the parents.

One of the rattlers was a baby, with just a button — too young to have rattles yet. But no rattles doesn't mean they're not poisonous. The others were all adults of various sizes. All were of the Southern Pacific subspecies of the Western diamondback (*Crotalus viridis helleri*). They were all well hidden in tall grass until the scouts and other volunteers started raking away the grass.

Luckily, one of the dads, like myself, was experienced in safely capturing and moving rattlesnakes — although next time I'll bring my snake stick with me to make it a little less exciting!

Last year Senior Ranger Gina Washington had to relocate a rattler from the same site. It must be good hunting, good habitat for them.

Other animals added to the day's excitement, including scorpions

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and a native pocket mouse. The scorpions were small and almost translucent, typical of our local scorpion species.

The scouts were great and put in a lot of hard, physical work whacking, raking, and moving the weeds to a giant brush pile nearby. They also planted about 50 native plants, including Lemonade-berry, Black sage, California sagebrush, scrub oaks, coyote bush, California spine bush, and Laurel sumacs.

The project was well received by the public, many giving a shout out and a thanks as they hiked, jogged, or biked by the site. Some stopped to ask what we were doing and what plants we were restoring.

This project is part of an effort to win a Hornday award, an important part of the scouting tradition. Thanks to Larry Paul of Troop 648 for taking the lead on this project. Larry and several scouts are frequent participants in Friends' restoration work parties.

Photos by Janet Nelson



Events, Meetings, Training, Hikes, And Volunteer Opportunities

All of our hikes are free. There is a fee for the Tracking survey classes. See below for details or 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 Canyon-side Park Driveway off Black Mountain Road between Mira Mesa and Rancho Peñasquitos. Thomas Bros. p. 1189 (C7)

Every month:

Wildlife Tracking Walk

Saturday, 8 AM - 10 PM: Apr. 9, May 14, June 11, July 9, Aug. 13, Sept. 10, Oct. 8, Nov. 12, Dec. 10

Everyone is invited to join an SDTT tracker for a free, easy introductory tracking walk to learn about the art of tracking and the Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve. Look for tracks, scat, and further evidence that coyotes, bobcats, raccoon, deer and other wildlife have been in the area! Information at www.sdtt.org. Meet at the Historic Adobe Ranch House on Canyon-side Park Drive and Black Mountain Road, Rancho Peñasquitos. Thomas Guide p. 1189 (C7)

Volunteer Trash Pickup Lopez/Peñasquitos Canyons

Sunday, 9 AM - 1 PM: Apr. 24, May 22, June 26, July 24, Aug. 21, Sept. 25, Oct. 23, Nov. 27

Trash pickups in Lopez & Peñasquitos Canyon. Volunteers needed! Community service credits available. Meet at Lopez Ridge Park at 7245 Calle Cristobal in Mira Mesa. Call Ranger John Garwood at 858-538-8066 for more info. Thomas Guide p. 1208 (J3)

As the weather warms up, please remember to bring plenty of water and sun protection (hat or sun screen or both) when you visit the parks and canyons.
Hiking boots or trail sneakers are recommended when hiking the trails.

Every two months:

Black Mountain Open Space Park Citizens Advisory Committee **Thursday, 6:30 PM: May 12, July 7, Sept. 8, Nov 10**

Public is welcome to attend this meeting to plan park activities. Meet in the Canyon-side Recreation Center at Black Mountain Road and Canyon-side Park Driveway, Rancho Peñasquitos. Thomas Guide p. 1189 (C7)

Peñasquitos Canyon Citizens Advisory Committee

Thursday, 6:30 PM: May 19, July 14, Sept. 15, Nov. 17

Public is welcome to attend this meeting to plan park activities. Meeting is at the Historic Adobe Ranch House on Canyon-side Park Driveway and Black Mountain Road, Rancho Peñasquitos. Thomas Guide p. 1189 (C7)

Friends of Peñasquitos Canyon Board of Directors

Tuesday, 7 PM: May 3, July 5, Sept. 6, Nov. 8

Members are welcome to attend this business meeting to plan Friends' activities. Meeting is at the historic Adobe Ranch House at Black Mountain Road and Canyon-side Park Driveway, Rancho Peñasquitos. Thomas Guide p. 1189 (C7)

Quarterly:

Beginning Tracking Wildlife Surveys **Saturday, 8 AM - 4 PM: July 16**

This class prepares you to participate in surveys that monitor the wildlife in major open space preserves and other critical areas. Topics include basic recognition and identification of animal tracks and other signs, introduction to track patterns and gaits, wildlife journaling, an overview of the survey protocol, and more! Classroom time is supplemented with plenty of time in the field ("dirt time").

Training is required for survey volunteers and also serves as a prerequisite for the Intermediate Tracker/Naturalist class. After this training, students are expected to participate in at least one SDTT wildlife survey. Preregistration is not required for individuals, but requested for groups. The \$25 fee includes a number of valuable reference materials. Dress prepared to spend time outdoors and bring a sack lunch and water.

Please bring your calendar to sign up for transects. For more information: 760.715.4102 or www.sdtt.org. Meet at the Historic Adobe Ranch House on Canyon-side Park Driveway and Black Mountain

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

Road, Rancho Peñasquitos. Thomas Guide p. 1189 (C7)

Intermediate Tracking for Wildlife Surveys

Class: Wednesday, 7- 9 PM: Sept. 21
Field: Saturday, 8 AM-4 PM: Sept. 24

This class expands on the beginning training and includes recognition and interpretation of tracks and sign on a variety of surfaces. There are exercises in speculative tracking, aging, soil dynamics, debris interaction, trailing, mammal skull and dental identification, and tracking on various substrates. Additional gait interpretation is covered. Cost: \$50 (\$10 discount for SDTT or Friends members). Pre-registration required. Go to www.penasquitos.org/classes.htm for more information or e-mail lpitt@cox.net to register.

Advanced Tracking Wildlife Surveys

Class: Wed., 7- 9 PM: May 18, Nov. 16
Field Sat., 8 AM - 4 PM: May 21, Nov. 19

The Advanced Class continues to develop your tracking proficiency. Subtle details of track identification are presented. Techniques and exercises for trailing animals through various surfaces will enable you to stay on the right track. Drills and exercises will help expand your knowledge base, point out areas to work on, and give you a preview of the tracker evaluation process. Cost: \$50 (\$10 discount for SDTT members). Pre-registration required. Go to www.penasquitos.org/classes.htm for more information or send e-mail to lpitt@cox.net to register.

Upcoming Hikes

April

Hike to the Waterfall

Saturday, April 2 9:00 AM --1:00 PM

The Canyoners from the San Diego Natural History Museum will be leading this one. Enjoy a short, level walk along Peñasquitos Creek through sycamore and eucalyptus trees. The long walk to a waterfall located midway through the preserve is 6 miles round trip. Some of the oldest rock formations in San Diego County can be seen at the falls. Meet at the staging area at Black Mountain Road and Mercy Road. There is a \$3 parking fee. Thomas Guide p. 1189 (D7)

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

Sunday, April 17 8:00 - 11:00 AM

Join the Canyoners from the San Diego Natural History Museum for a hike through chaparral to view the remains of an old

arsenic mine. Wild flowers should be plentiful on this moderately challenging hike. Meet at the Parking Staging area at 14850 Carmel Valley Road, about 1/4 mile east of its intersection with Black Mountain Road in Rancho Penasquitos. Thomas Guide p. 1169 (E7)

Herb Walk with Will Bowen
Sunday, April 17 4:00 - 5:30 PM

Learn to identify the different trees, plants, and shrubs of Carmel Mountain Nature Preserve. Find out how they were used for food and medicine by Native Americans, Spanish, and Anglo American settlers and end up with a grasp of the native flora. Meet at 4730 Fairport Way at Shorepoint Way in San Diego. Thomas Guide p. 1208 (C2)

Hike from Camino Ruiz Trailhead
Saturday, April 30 8:00 - 11:00 AM

Join naturalist Mary Lueking for a moderately paced, 4-mile hike. As we go down the trail to the canyon floor, we should see many wildflowers and other native plants and animals as we pass through varying habitat zones. Wear shoes suitable for portions of the trail that are steep and uneven. Meet at the trailhead near the entrance to Camino Ruiz Park in Mira Mesa. (11489 Camino Ruiz). Thomas Guide p.1209 (B1)

May

Miner's Loop Trail Walk, Black Mountain Open Space Park
Saturday, May 14 9:00 - 11:00 AM

Join hike leader David Robinson to hike the Miner's Loop trail on the north face of Black Mountain Park. Meet at the Parking Staging area at 14850 Carmel Valley Road, about 1/4 mile east of its intersection with Black Mountain Road in Rancho Penasquitos. Thomas Guide p. 1169 (E7)

Herb Walk with Will Bowen
Sunday, May 22 5:00 - 6:30 PM

Learn to identify the different trees, plants, and shrubs of Lopez Canyon. Find out how they were used for food and medicine by Native Americans, Spanish, and Anglo American settlers and end up with a grasp of the native flora. Meet at the West End Parking Staging Area.

June

Night Time Wildlife Hike with Mike Kelly
Saturday, June 11 7:30 - 9:30 PM

Join naturalist Mike Kelly on this moderately paced loop walk to Carson's Crossing and back. Good chance of seeing Mule deer, owls, bats, and night flowering plants. Meet at the kiosk and gate on the corner of Park Village Rd. and Camino del Sur in Rancho Peñasquitos. Park by the kiosk. Thomas Guide p. 1189 (A7-B7).

Volunteer Opportunities

Friends' Open Space Volunteer Project
Saturday, April 16 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Help restore open space owned by the Friends of los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve in Rancho Peñasquitos. Community Service hours are available. No experience is needed. Bring gloves if you have them (we'll have extras), water, and sun protection. Meet on Waterford Lane near its intersection with Adobe Bluffs Rd, opposite Adobe Bluffs School. Contact Mike Kelly at mkelly1@san.rr.com for more info or to RSVP for a group.

Fiesta de los Penasquitos Booth
Sunday, May 1 10:30 AM - 5:30 PM

Help Staff the Friends' booth display and pass out literature at this annual street fair in Rancho Penasquitos. Always a fun outing. Contact Pat Watkins at p Watkins2008@gmail.com for more information or to volunteer.

Friends' Open Space Volunteer Project
Saturday, May 7 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Help restore open space owned by the Friends of los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve in Rancho Peñasquitos. Community Service hours are available. No experience is needed. Bring gloves if you have them (we'll have extras), water, and sun protection. Meet on Waterford Lane near its intersection with Adobe Bluffs Rd, opposite Adobe Bluffs School. Contact Mike Kelly at mkelly1@san.rr.com for more info or to RSVP for a group.

National Trails Day
Saturday, June 4 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Join our park rangers and experienced volunteers in repairing and reconstructing trails, collecting trash and removing brush from various areas in the Preserve in the morning. After all the hard work, enjoy good food, good company and good music as a thank you for all the hard work. Meet at the Adobe Ranch House located on Canyonside Park Driveway off Black Mountain Road between Mira Mesa and Rancho Peñasquitos.

RB Alive! Expo Booth
Sunday, June 5 9:30 AM - 4:30 PM

Help staff the Friends' booth display and pass out literature at this annual street fair in Rancho Bernardo. Email Pat Watkins at p Watkins2008@gmail.com for more information or to volunteer.

Miner's Loop Trail Walk, Black Mountain Open Space Park
Saturday, June 18 9:00 - 11:00 AM

Join hike leader Arne Johanson to hike the Miner's Loop trail on the north face of Black Mountain Park. Meet at the Parking Staging area at 14850 Carmel Valley Road, about 1/4 mile east of its intersection with Black Mountain Road in Rancho Penasquitos. Thomas Guide p. 1169 (E7)

Herb Walk with Will Bowen
Sunday, June 19 5:00 - 6:30 PM

Learn to identify the different trees, plants, and shrubs of Penasquitos Canyon. Find out how they were used for food and medicine by Native Americans, Spanish, and Anglo American settlers and end up with a grasp of the native flora. Meet at 4206 Sorrento Valley Blvd. Thomas Guide p. 1208 (C/D 5)



Please be aware of where you are stepping or riding when out in the canyons. Snakes, lizards, and other wildlife are increasingly abundant as the weather warms.

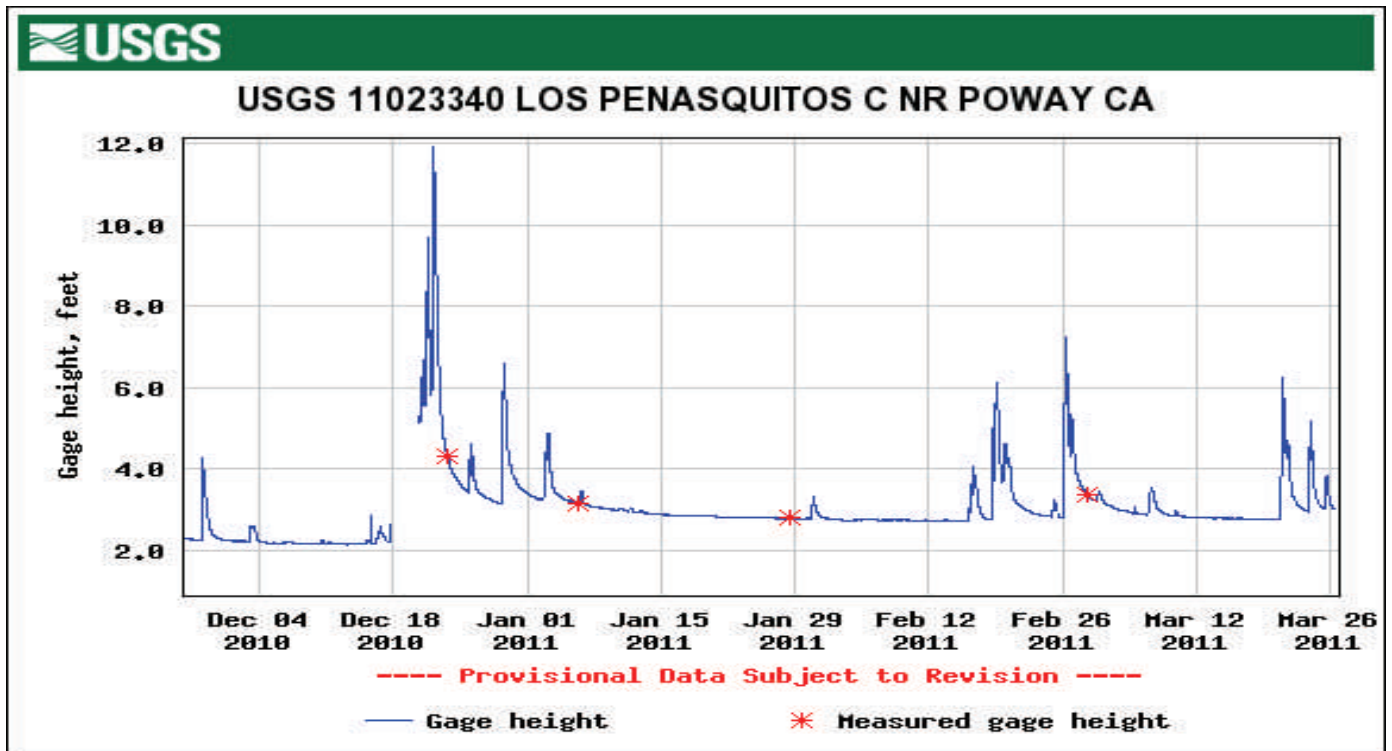
A Wild Winter in the Preserve



**Canyonside Park Flooding
December, 2010**

Penasquitos Creek reached a new historic high on December 22 reaching 11.93 feet according to the USGS real time data gathered at a flow station on the creek about a 1/4 mile east of Black Mtn. Rd. on the southern side of the creek.

The creek also crested at over six feet on five additional occasions between October, 2010 and March 2011 causing the Preserve to be closed for extended periods and creating massive amounts of clean-up and repairs that are still on-going.



Tick Tests Positive for Tularemia in Lopez Canyon

County Vector Control officials announced on February 4, 2011 that a Pacific Coast tick found in Lopez Canyon during routine monitoring has tested positive for tularemia, also known as rabbit fever.

Tularemia is a bacterial disease spread to humans through the bite of infected ticks or through direct contact with an infected animal such as rabbits and other rodents according to Jack Miller, Director of the County Department of Environmental Health.

Ticks get tularemia by biting infected rabbits, rodents or other animals.

In people, tularemia can cause swelling at the point of the bite, fever, chills, nausea and in some cases death, though it is easily treatable with antibiotics if detected early. Tularemia cannot be transmitted from person-to-person.

To avoid tick bites:

1. Stay on designated pathways, choose wide trails and walk in the center. Avoid grassy or brushy areas and do not handle wild rodents.
2. Wear light-colored, long-sleeved clothing; tuck shirts into pants and pants into socks. A wide brimmed hat will help keep ticks off the back of the neck and head.
3. Apply insect repellent to clothing and footwear.
4. Avoid rubbing against brush or tall grass when possible. Check clothing, body and companions for ticks frequently. If a tick is found, just flick it off.
5. After being out, wash and dry your clothes at high temperature and inspect carefully for ticks. Take a shower and lather up really well all over then wait a minute or two before rinsing off. Run fingers through hair to check the scalp. Ticks will detach due to all the soap suffocating them.
6. Leave pets at home or keep them on a leash. If they have not been already treated with a tick and flea regimen, use insecticide powders or sprays labeled for tick control.
7. Carefully remove attached ticks immediately. Remove embedded ticks by grabbing them with tweezers or gloved fingers as close to their head as possible and pull out steadily and firmly. Avoid crushing the body and make sure the whole head comes out. Putting a glob of soft soap on the tick first could make removal easier.

Ticks are close relatives of spiders and mites, not insects. There are three different types of ticks, however hard ticks from the family *Ixodidae* are most likely to parasitize humans. The adult hard tick has eight legs and a hard plate on its upper surface. They look fairly flat (before feasting) and they appear to scuttle when they move. An engorged tick looks like a distended sack or blister with legs.

County Vector control began conducting tick surveillance in 1991 to determine what species of ticks occur in San

Diego County, their hosts, and their geographic and seasonal abundance.

What they found was that the Western Black Legged tick, *Ixodes pacificus*, and the Pacific Coast tick, *Dermacentor occidentalis*, are the two most common ticks in the county. The Western Black Legged tick is the primary carrier of Lyme disease. The Pacific Coast tick (more common in our area) can carry Colorado Tick Fever, Q Fever, and Rock Mountain Spotted Fever along with tularemia.

Findings regarding seasonal abundance for ticks infesting humans indicated that both species are more common during the cooler months from October to as late as June with peak numbers from January through March. This may be due to the lack of availability of smaller hosts that are mostly in hibernation during this time.

Ticks can be found on the tips of tall grasses and low bushes along animal trails waiting for a host to brush against them. Once engorged, they drop off and await the next meal. Ticks can sometimes wait for months or years, even decades for the next host.

When in the nymph stage, ticks are most likely to transmit disease because they are so small they go unnoticed (less than 2mm). Ticks are most likely to transmit infection after approximately 2 days or more. So if one does attach, don't panic. If you are good about checking frequently for them, it probably won't have been on you long enough to transmit anything.

If you develop symptoms within three weeks after visiting a tick-infested area, seek medical attention. Tell your doctor that you have recently been in a tick-infested area.

For more information about tularemia surveillance, call the Vector Control Program at (858) 694-2888 or visit <http://www.SDVector.com>.



A Loss at the Old Lopez Orchard

Will Bowen, PhD

The Old Lopez Orchard was planted in about 1890 by Ramon Lopez, Sr. in fulfillment of one of the conditions for his US Government Land Grant of 160 acres. Originally, there were at least 30 trees--a mixture of quince, pear, and apricot-- as is seen on an aerial photograph from 1928. Most of the trees died from 1928 to 1945, either due to neglect or natural forces. An aerial photograph from 1945 shows only six trees remaining.

Dairy cattle were of greater concern to the Lopez family than fruit trees and during the dry years water can become very scarce in Lopez Canyon.

When I first started walking Lopez Canyon a little over 20 years ago, there were two quince trees at the western edge of the orchard. One was on each side of the trail. Recently, the quince tree on the south side of the trail died. The one on the north side is very old but it produces fruits every year. We also still have an apricot tree and two pear trees in the orchard. All produce fruit each season. One of the pear trees is standing. The other has fallen, but it sprouts new branches and leaves every spring from the fallen trunk.



The last remaining quince tree.
Photo supplied by Will Bowen

Cactus Wren Project Update



Dozens of volunteers helped the Friends weed, de-thatch, plant and water hundreds of native plants at our Cactus wren site. The site needs only a little more weeding and planting to be completed, then it will go into a maintenance mode of continued watering and weeding for another two years. It takes about 5 years of establishment for such a site to become suitable habitat for the endangered Coastal Cactus wren. California gnatcatchers, already established nearby, will utilize the site as soon as the second season.

Photos by Janet Nelson

2010-2011 Fund Appeal

Pat Watkins, Treasurer

This year our annual fund drive was for the stewardship and outreach efforts involved in the Friends' recent acquisition of eight orphaned open space parcels located in Rancho Peñasquitos. We received grants to begin habitat restoration activities for these parcels, but as a condition of these grants we must also raise funds and contribute volunteer hours.

Forty-two Friends members answered the call to donate, contributing a total of \$2,635. A big thanks to all those who participated this year:

- * Susanna Ball
- Barbara Bartley
- Judith Bayer
- Howard and Cheryl Berkey
- * David and Edith Bilak
- Mary Brown
- * Yunhui Chae-Banks
- Charles Cochran
- * Jeffrey and Christine Codling
- * Carolyn Cooper
- James and Patricia Daley
- * Meryl Faulkner
- * Marvin Gerst
- Gail Hanna
- Ed and Janelle Harris
- William Pattee and Adrienne Heinzelman
- * Leo and Patricia Holland
- Linda Johnson
- * John and Peggy Keating
- * Mike Kelly
- Alison Lawrence
- * Bill Lawrence
- * Robert and Linda Leiter
- * Steven Lister
- Imelda and James Maniquis
- Barry and Marti Martin
- Neil and Jill Meyer
- * Nancy Nenow
- James and Louise O'Neill
- Carole and Scott Rieker
- Alan and Michaela Sakoi
- Jane (Carrie) Schneider
- Harry Schnepf
- Donald Steele
- Jeffry and Pam Stevens
- Michael and Paula Svoboda
- Melvin and Ellen Sweet
- Mary Toomey
- Roger Weber
- Susan Weinberg-Harter
- * Francisco and Antoinette Wong
- * Anthony Wood

(* donated \$100 or more)

Mountain Lion Hit and Killed in Rancho Penasquitos

This is a sad way to answer the often asked question of whether or not there are mountain lions in our local canyons.

A young female adult mountain lion was struck and killed by a vehicle Thursday morning, March 17th, on Carmel Valley Road just east of Winecreek Road near the northern border of Black Mountain Open Space Park. California Department of Fish and Game warden Cyndy Pourroy was dispatched to retrieve the animal and was assisted by SDPD officers to load the 80-100 pound animal in to her truck.

Wardens with Fish and Game estimated that the animal weighed between 80 and 100 pounds and was probably one to two years old.

It was taken to the agency's office in Kearny Mesa and a necropsy was performed.



Photo by John Gibbins, signonsandiego.com

Membership Application

Membership category: (circle 1 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 a committee (call to discuss)
- Hikes
- Indian Culture
- Educational Workshops
- School, Family, Youth Programs
- Environment (Plants, birds, mammals, geology)

Other: _____

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.

Don't be left out!

Want to keep up with all the events sponsored by the Friends of Peñasquitos? Get all the latest information and details by giving us your email address.

Email your contact information to Mike Kelly at mkelly1@san.rr.com or to Pat Watkins at pwatkins2008@gmail.com.

Friends' Directory

Officers

President: Brian Swanson	760.739.5451
Vice-President: Don Albright	619.443.5937
Secretary: Edward DiBella	619.563.0717
Treasurer: Pat Watkins	858.538.2527

Other Members of the Board of Directors

Les Braund, Anne Harvey, Mike Kelly, Mary Lueking, Janet Nelson

Walk Leaders

Don Albright, Will Bowen, Diana Gordon, Arne Johansen, Mike Kelly, Linda King, Mary Lueking, David Robertson, Brian Swanson, Pat Watkins

Committees

Conservation Chair: Mike Kelly, 858.342.8856
 Newsletter: Janet Nelson, 619.519.3150
nelson.janet1@gmail.com
 Tracking Team Coordinator: Rick Botta,
 858.672.0584
 Webmaster: Beth Williams



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Carmel Mountain Creatures

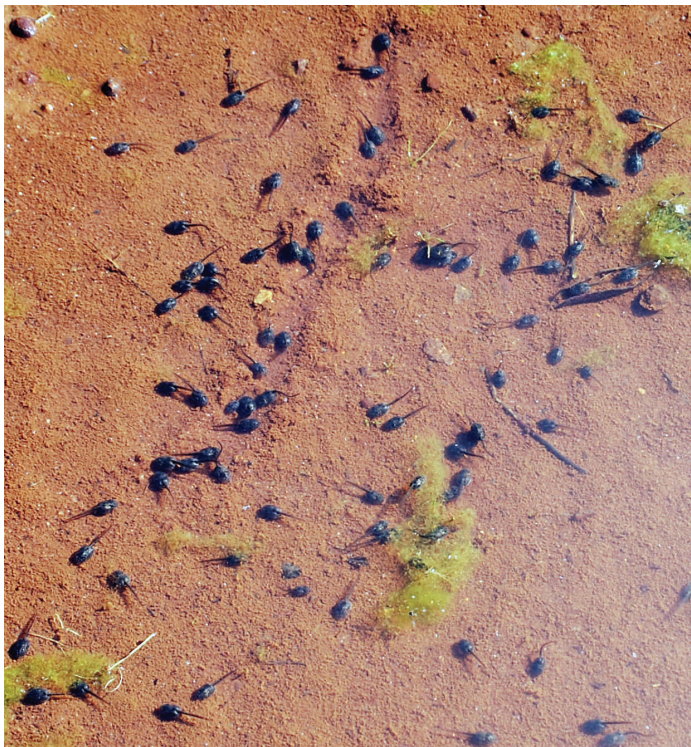


Photo by Janet Nelson



The spider photo above was taken by Page Williams, one of the participants on Brian Swanson's recent Carmel Mountain hike. The trapdoor spider is defending its home by firmly grasping the "trapdoor" as Brian's fingers briefly hold it open. The group also rescued tadpoles (see photo on left) from a nearly dry vernal pool by moving them to a deeper one.