



Canyon News

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

Oct., Nov., Dec., 2012
Volume 26 No. 4

Snakes in My Own Backyard

Melanie Howe

If you live on a canyon like I do, you've probably wondered what sort of wild life is in your yard. My canyon is a side canyon off Peñasquitos Canyon, so what's in my backyard may also be in yours! Sometimes we get lucky and see them.

We've had numerous Southern Pacific rattlesnakes (*Crotalus viridis helleri*) in the yard (and in the house twice!). (Continued on p. 4)

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Crotalus helleri or the Southern Pacific rattlesnake is very common in San Diego County. Up to 40-inches long, color variations are common. The diamond markings can be sharply defined or blotchy and be grey, olive or brown. The tail is a bright yellow-green in the juveniles. It's highly venomous and tends to be nervous and aggressive in defending itself.

Photo by Mike Kelly

Upcoming Hikes and Volunteer Opportunities

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

All of our hikes are free. There is a fee for the Tracking survey classes. See below for details.

Wear good trail sneakers or boots and sun protection (hat, sunscreen or both), and bring water. 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 Park Driveway off Black Mountain Road between Mira Mesa and Rancho Peñasquitos.

Every month:

Wildlife Tracking

Sat. 8 a.m. - 10 a.m. Oct. 13, Nov. 10, Dec. 8

Join a knowledgeable San Diego Tracking team instructor for FREE informal dirt time lessons in the art of wildlife tracking. Learn how to identify the tracks and scat of coyotes, bobcats, raccoons, deer, and other wildlife in our area! No reservations necessary, just show up. Rain cancels. For more information see www.sdt.org. Meet at the Historic Adobe Ranch House on Canyonside Park Drive and Black Mountain Road, Rancho Peñasquitos.

Every two months:

Friends of Peñasquitos Canyon Board of Directors

Tues., 7 p.m. Nov. 6

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 Canyonside Park Driveway, Rancho Peñasquitos

Black Mountain Open Space Park Citizens Advisory Committee

Thurs., 6:30 p.m. Nov 8

Public is welcome to attend this meeting to plan park activities. Meet in the Canyonside Recreation Center at Black Mountain Road and Canyonside Park Driveway, Rancho Peñasquitos.

Peñasquitos Canyon Citizens Advisory Committee

Thurs. 6:30 p.m. Nov. 15

Public is welcome to attend this meeting to plan park activities. Meeting is at the Historic Adobe Ranch House on Canyonside Park Driveway and Black Mountain Road, Rancho Peñasquitos.

Quarterly:

Beginning Tracking Wildlife Surveys

Sat. 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. Oct. 20

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").

This 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.

Also, please bring your calendar to sign up for transects. For more information: 760.715.4102 or www.sdt.org. Meet at the Historic Adobe Ranch House on Canyonside Park Driveway and Black Mountain Road, Rancho Peñasquitos.

Advanced Tracking Wildlife Surveys

Class: Wed. 7-9 p.m. Nov. 14

Field Sat. 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. Nov. 17

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.peñasquitos.org/classes.htm for more information or e-mail lpitt@cox.net to register.

Hike Opportunities

October

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

Saturday, Oct. 20, 9:00 - 11:00 AM

Join naturalist Mike Kelly 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 Peñasquitos.

Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve (Trans-County Trail)

Saturday, Oct. 20, 1:00 - 3:00 PM

Join a Natural History Museum Canyononeer on a short, level walk along Los Peñasquitos Creek through sycamore, willow, and oak trees. (Rancho Peñasquitos) From I-15, exit west on Mercy Rd. Cross Black Mountain Rd. at the signal to enter the preserve parking lot and meet at the large trailhead sign. There is a \$3 parking fee. No facilities.

Sensory Awareness Hike with Will Bowen

Sunday, Oct. 21, 4:00 - 5:30 PM

A hike to explore our sensory experience as a way to know nature better. We will experiment with sight, sound, taste, touch, kinesthetic feeling, and

fragrance in the field, contemplating and sharing our experience of the colors of the grasses or the sky, the song of a bird, the fragrance of a leaf, the taste of a berry, the texture of tree bark, the feeling of a place, etc. This practice can help one have a more profound and rich connection with the natural world. Meet at West End Parking Staging Area.

November

**Carson's Crossing - Sycamore Crossing Loop with Linda King
Saturday, Nov. 10, 8:00 AM**

Join naturalist Linda King on this moderately paced loop walk to the waterfall, Sycamore Crossing and Carson's Crossing. Meet at the kiosk near 7107 Park Village Road at Celome Way, Rancho Peñasquitos.

**Miner's Loop Trail Walk, Black Mountain Open Space Park
Saturday, Nov. 10, 9:00 to 11:00 AM**

Join naturalist Mike Kelly 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 Peñasquitos.

**Shaman's Hike with Will Bowen
Sunday, Nov. 18, 3:00 - 5:00 PM**

A short hike to a power spot where we will explore the shamanic traditions of the Americas. We will learn about saging, calling the directions, creating sacred space, and harnessing the energies of nature for healing, insight, and wisdom. We will do some healing work, sharing and story-telling, and make some shamanic art. This is a good opportunity for self-healing and connection with spirit through nature. Please bring a blanket to sit on and a drum or rattle. Meet at West End Parking Staging Area.

December

**Ranch House Crossing –
Carson's Crossing
Saturday Dec. 8, 8 AM**

Join Naturalist Linda King on this moderately paced loop walk exploring the Ranch House Crossing and Carson's Crossing. Meet at the west end of Can-

yonside Park Driveway, 1 block west of Black Mtn. Rd. at the Preserve sign at the beginning of the white ranch house fence. 12350 Black Mtn. Rd. San Diego

**Miner's Loop Trail Walk, Black Mountain Open Space Park
Saturday, Dec. 15, 9:00 - 11:00 AM**

Join naturalist Mike Kelly 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 Peñasquitos.

ARCH IN THE PARK
October 20, 2012

The **San Diego County Archaeological Society** presents
an educational day of **Archaeology and Fun** at the
Ranch House in Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve
Saturday, October 20, 2012 • 10:00 am to 3:00 pm
**Celebrating California Archaeology Month
and National Archaeology Day**

- ➔ Find out what archaeology is all about; dig in a mock excavation; play games
- ➔ Discover the history of the Ranch House on a tour of the adobe
- ➔ Be there at 11:30 a.m. to meet Running Grunion, a Kumeyaay Indian, and learn about his people
- ➔ Speak to local archaeologists and see archaeology exhibits, demos on stone tool making and basket making, raffles, games, and more!

Bring a picnic lunch to enjoy in the shade. Fry bread, snacks, and sodas will be available for purchase.

For more information, call: 858-538-0935
visit our website: www.sdcas.org
or e-mail us at: info@sdcas.org

NATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGY DAY
OCTOBER 20, 2012
www.nationalarchaeologyday.org

Directions: From I-15 take Mercy Rd. west, turn right (north) onto Black Mountain Rd. and then take the first left into Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve. Follow the road all the way to the back (past Canyonside Community Park ball fields), and park in the designated parking area in the field.

**Shaman's Hike with Will Bowen
Sunday, Dec. 16, 3:00 - 5:00 PM**

A short hike to a power spot where we will explore the shamanic traditions of the Americas. We will learn about saging, calling the directions, creating sacred space, and harnessing the energies of nature for healing, insight, and wisdom. We will do some healing work, sharing and story-telling, and make some shamanic art. This is a good opportunity for self-healing and connection with spirit through nature. Please bring a blanket to sit on and a drum or rattle. Meet at West End Parking Staging Area.

Snakes (from p. 1)

One afternoon the big dog alerted me to a Common kingsnake (*Lampropeltis getula*). I caught it and very luckily Brian Swanson came by to drop off/pick up something and he took pictures. Then I let the snake go on its way.

But things have been even more exciting recently. One afternoon I found a Ring-necked snake (*Diadophis punctatus*) out by the driveway. These snakes are not often seen and in my excitement, I tried to catch it but it slipped away and burrowed into the pile of red lava rock between the driveway and the canyon. What a thrill that was! But wait, there's more!!

One late night when I took my little senior dog out to visit the front yard, I found an adult

Night snake (*Hypsiglena torquata*) on the walk. Having decided by porch light that it wasn't a rattler, I quickly caught it and put it in my trusty bucket so I could show it around the next morning. Everyone was duly impressed with the beautiful little snake. Then one afternoon some weeks later, I found a hatchling Night snake in the back yard. It was only about the length of my hand. You guessed it — I was smitten! I put the little fellow back under cover and wished it good luck.

What's in **your** backyard?



Lampropeltis getula or the California Kingsnake can be up to 43.87 inches long. It's considered a polymorphic species, which means it comes in a wide range of colors and patterns, from bands in a ring formation from head to tail or stripes from head to tail. This photographer has seen black and white, black and yellow, brown and white brown and yellow combinations. Other colors have been reported. It does eat other snake species, including rattlesnakes.

Photos by Mike Kelly.



Diadophis punctatus or the Western Ringneck snake is small, up to 16.1 inches long, is slender and can have a range of body colors, especially the underbelly, including olive, blue-grey, green, brownish and swaths of yellow-orange, coral, red colors at times. All have a conspicuous yellow or orange neck band. This is a gentle, easy to handle species.

Photo by U.S. Geological Survey.

Hypsiglena ochrorhyncha or the Coast Nightsnake is another small snake, up to 13.8 inches long and slender. It tends to be a pale grey beige or light brown in color, usually with three large black blotches on the neck. Another gentle, easy to handle species as Melanie reports.

Photo by U.S. Geological Survey.



Friends Attend Mira Mesa Street Fair

Brian Swanson

The Mira Mesa Community's signature event was held on Saturday September 15, and the Friends of Los Penasquitos Canyon Preserve staffed a booth to share our love of the preserve with visitors. Board member Janet Nelson has done a wonderful and creative job of designing our booth so that it is both visually appealing and resistant to the breezes that we often encounter at the fairs.

Our star attraction, "Penasquitos Bob", was again in attendance, and generated considerable interest. Some visitors wondered whether he was real, or alive. This gave us an opportunity to talk about the impacts of wildlife crossing streets, and to use some big words like "taxidermy". At times the Friend's booth was jammed with interested visitors.

Lorie Zapf (shown here with Friends' President Les Braund) was one of those curious street fair visitors to stop by our booth. Lorie is a City Councilmember who lives in Clairemont with her family, and is interested in a variety of issues that are important to her constituents. Now that the City Council districts have been adjusted, starting in

January Mira Mesa will be one of the communities that Lorie represents. Lorie is energetic, engaged and looking forward to being a part of our community.



Your picture could be here! Manning our booth at one of the local street fairs is fun and rewarding. You get to talk to a variety of interesting people, from pre-schoolers to seniors. Each volunteer typically takes a shift of 2 to 3 hours, and they are usually with another volunteer. If you'd like to get more involved with the Friends, please come to one of our Board meetings, or email one of the Board members.



It is not so much for its beauty that the forest makes a claim upon men's hearts, as for that subtle something, that quality of air that emanates from old trees, that so wonderfully changes and renews a weary spirit.

- Robert Louis Stevenson

We must protect the forests for our children, grandchildren and children yet to be born. We must protect the forests for those who can't speak for themselves such as the birds, animals, fish and trees.

- Chief Edward Moody, Qwatsinas, Nuxalk Nation

Governor Signs Land Dedication Bill

Mike Kelly

Governor Jerry Brown signed into law this month SB 1169 (Senate Bill). SB 1169 was brought through the California Legislature by Senator Christine Kehoe. Kehoe is a former member of the San Diego City Council and a long-time champion of conservation causes in San Diego.

As we reported earlier (*Canyon News* January 2012, April 2012), this bill paves the way on the state level for the dedication of more than 10,000 acres of open space land in the City of San Diego. Although these acres, more than a thousand in the northern part of the city, are already designated as open space, they aren't **dedicated**.

This is an important legal distinction. When land is just **designated** open space, it only takes a majority vote, five votes, of the San Diego City Council to change the land use from open space to residential or industrial use. When open space land is formally dedicated, it takes a vote of the people, not the city council, to change its land use from open space to something else. The only exceptions to this process is if the city wants to build a public utility such as a sewer line in the open space.

This state action on SB 1169 is not the final step in this process. It clears the way for the final discussion and vote on the matter by our City Council. San Diego Canyonlands, led by Eric Bowlby, which has spearheaded this great dedication campaign hopes the Council will take a final vote on this issue before the end of the year.

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 Canyon? 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

Friends' Directory

Officers

President: Les Braund	858-566-3958
Vice-President: Don Albright	619.443.5937
Treasurer: Pat Watkins	858.538.2527
Secretary: Edward DiBella	619.563.0717

Members of the Board of Directors

Jeanie Anderson, Anne Harvey, Mike Kelly, Mary Lueking, Janet Nelson, Brian Swanson

Walk Leaders

Don Albright, Jeanie Anderson, 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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If your expiration date is close or has come and gone, please take the time to send in a renewal check for your membership dues and save us the postage for reminder mailings!

More Canyon Wildlife

Photos by Jess Lacher



Above: California Quail chicks



Left: An excellent example of our elusive bobcats.