



FRIENDS OF
LOS PEÑASQUITOS
CANYON PRESERVE

Summer 2023

Wildlife Corridor Restoration Darkwood Canyon Grant Project

by Mike Kelly

This spring and early summer the Friends launched a major invasive plant control project in the Darkwood Canyon of Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve. This corridor parallels Darkwood St. in Rancho Peñasquitos in a finger canyon off Peñasquitos Canyon. It runs from Park Village Drive, next to Park Village Elementary School, all the way up to Sundance Ave and north of there where it ends. But, along the way, it has a branch that leads from the finger canyon to the northwest where it connects to the Del Mar Mesa Preserve.



Canchalagua (Centaurium exaltatum), an annual herb native and widespread in California. Big patches in Darkwood Canyon. Photo by Mike Kelly

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A Virtual Springtime Bird Walk in Peñasquitos Preserve

By Jeanie Anderson

Please join me for a virtual bird stroll with all your senses – slower paced and quieter than a hike through Peñasquitos Preserve. This actually happened on the morning of May 11, 2023. We met at 7:45 am and began our bird adventure with 2 veteran birders, Cindy and her dad Dave, along with Pam Davis, a newly minted bird lover and amazing photographer, who took the photos used in the article.



Ash-throated Flycatcher

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An Exceptional Wildflower Spring

Mary Lueking

Due to the higher-than-normal rainfall early this year, the wildflowers have been putting on an exceptional display. The uniqueness is not only in the number of species blooming simultaneously, but in the sheer numbers of any one species that is blooming at one time.

On a recent hike (May 6) that I led for the Friends of Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve from the west end of Park Village Drive, down to the waterfall area and then up to the duck pond, I generated a list of 27 different species that were in bloom (and I could have missed a few!)



Indian Pink (*Silene laciniata*)

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Gopher Snake



Gopher snake seen curled up on Cara Knott Way at the east end of PQ Preserve, next to the east side of I-15. I was over flagging oak trees for GSOB treatments when I saw this beauty on the pavement down by the Oak Memorial Grove for Victims of Violence. I stopped to both avoid running it over and to photograph it. When I did, two other vehicles, a minute or two apart, left the lower memorial and came up the way. I flagged each to slow down and to avoid running over it. They did. I thought at first it was a rattler, but upon closer inspection realized it wasn't. The head was not diamond shaped and the tail wasn't thick and with rattles, but thin and pointed. Gopher snakes, however, are good at imitating rattlesnakes. They will curl up, hiss, and rattle their tails in brush to sound like a rattler. Story and photo by Mike Kelly

Restoring Nesting Opportunities on Harrier Hill

Grant from POPs makes a Difference

By Mike Kelly

Ten to twenty years ago we had Northern harriers, a.k.a. Marsh hawks (*Circus cyaneus*) nesting in two places in Peñasquitos Preserve. One place was a grassland slope up Lopez Canyon. The other was another grassland slope on the western end of the Preserve on the south side just east of where the trail entering the Preserve comes in from the parking-staging area. This nesting area was no secret. A sign identifying the nesting area asked people to stay off it. A historically permitted use for the slope was a beginner's site for paragliders to learn how to fly. The City withheld this permit to prevent disruption to this nesting site. The training shifted to "little" Black (Black Mtn. Park).



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Feathers

By Les Braund

For me, the most enjoyable event of the year in Los Penasquitos Canyon is the Arch in the Park. Each year, archaeologists, colleges, government agencies, and businesses gather to display the findings from in and around San Diego County. On their tables are artifacts such as pottery shards, bones, stone tools, books and more. Several years ago, one of the vendors had a book titled *Bird Feathers: A Guide to North American Species*. The book was written by Casey McFarland and S. David Scott. Both are experienced trackers. Soon I obtained a copy.



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Spring 2023 – White-Tailed Kites of Peñasquitos – Successful Brood!!

By Jeanie Anderson

With our very wet Spring, there was an opportunity for the Peñasquitos White-tailed Kites to breed – as they rely on meadow voles which rely on the grasses and seeds for food. In the past drought years, it has been a challenge for them.



© Jeanie Anderson

Kite perched on a sycamore branch

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I Look Down When I Walk

By Brian Swanson

I have been fascinated with the outdoors since I was a young boy. I look up and down, but find the ground most interesting. Initially I would watch for lizards and snakes. I became quite good at catching them, and still have the touch. Now, rather than catching them for pets, I am their guardian. I catch them to briefly observe or to move them to safety. Think rattlesnakes in a neighbor's yard or in the street, or a fence lizard trapped in a bucket inadvertently left beside a fence or wall.



18 karat gold ring found in Anza Borrego desert

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Rare Plant Numbers Up

By Mike Kelly, Conservation Chair

On June 2 of this year, the Friends of Penasquitos Canyon Preserve joined with the City of San Diego Multiple Species Conservation Program to survey one of our most endangered plants, the beautiful, dainty Thread-leaved Brodiaea (*Brodiaea filifolia*). It's located in Black Mountain Open Space Park. According to City Senior Biologist Sara Allen we found and GPSed 152 clumps and counted 1,868 scapes. Scapes are the bloom stalks sporting a bloom or bud.



Brodiaea filifolia

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Protecting our Coastal Live Oaks from the Gold Spotted Oak Borer

By Les Braund and Mike Kelly

[Editor's note: This article is an updated version of our Winter 2022 article on this problem.]

In June 2023, the Friends and the City Parks and Recreation Dept. partnered once again to treat hundreds of our biggest Coast live oak trees against a dangerous predator from another region: the Gold Spotted Oak Borer (GSOB). After learning the GSOB was killing tens of thousands of mature Coast live oaks in the Julian area, concern for our oak trees increased. Thea's when both the City and the Friends mobilized to treat the oldest trees (it doesn't seem to attack those 8" dbh (diameter at breast height) and below.



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