



The Rattler



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Placerita Canyon Nature Center Over 50 Years of Nature Education

PCNCA's Mission Statement

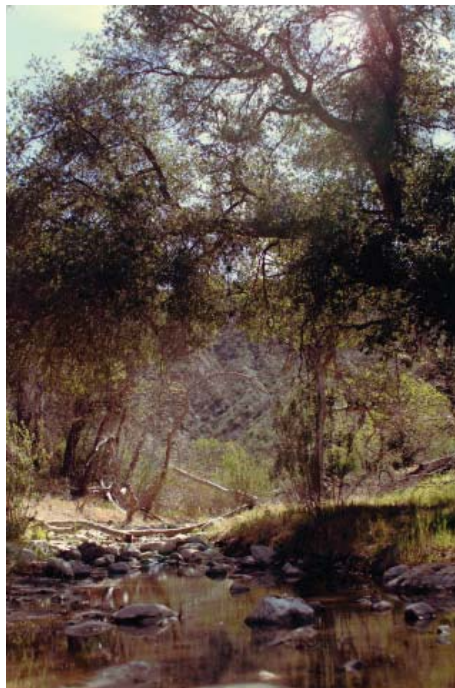
To inspire a passion, awareness and respect for the environment, and to preserve and protect for future generations the history and ecosystem of Placerita Canyon.

May/June 2012

Dear Nature Friends,

The big event coming up at Placerita Canyon Nature Center is Open house on Saturday May 12 from 10am to 3 pm. There will be all kinds of great activities for all ages: guided hikes, animal presentation, panning for fool's gold and we will have, for the first time, a treasure hunt for the children, free parking and admission as always. This is our way to say thank you to the community for their support through the year and we hope you will be able to come for a visit.

This will be the last Rattler until the end of August, we take the summer off! This issue is for May and June, Heidi and I take a rest to start again in August. We wish you a great summer a little early but come to visit the park right now; it is just one of the most beautiful times of the year. Each season has its own beauty but right now is very special indeed. The wild flowers are exploding ev-



Collette Lash took this lovely photo of water in the stream.

erywhere. Right now the ceanothus are like a blue haze along the trails. There is plenty of water in the stream and frogs are calling each other. That is such a typical sound of spring! Birds are in full mating plumage and if you see a western blue bird in the sun, the blue is so vivid right now. Green grass is so fresh and tender looking. Yes, Placerita is a very special place, come and enjoy it.



The Rattler is a bi-monthly publication sponsored by the Placerita Canyon Nature Center Associates to promote the preservation and enjoyment of the Placerita Canyon Natural Area. Please come, enjoy, learn...and volunteer.



Ray Orloff, Class of 2011

Ray became a docent last year at Placerita Canyon Nature Center; he also has another life where he is a carpenter. That was wonderful news to find this and we started to make very simple demands on his expertise. "Ray, we are always losing the keys from the cabin and the cabinets. Could you please make a little key box so they would be kept together in one place?"

Very soon, we have a very pretty and convenient wood key box on the wall. Then Ray started to look around and saw that the base of the Grizzly bear was not very safe. He did not want the bear to tip over so he built a more stable wood base.

Looking at the new bridge on the stream, he noticed that it could use some maintenance and so he offered to restore the bridge. That was quite an undertaking: the bridge had to be sanded and stained. Anybody who has tried to do a piece of furniture knows what a hard job it is...but what about doing a whole bridge! What a job...but with the harsh sun in the summer, the wood needed some protection.

Ray is on a roll now and nothing can stop him. He patrols the trails and tells the staff where maintenance is needed. Any rock slides or fallen tree is quickly reported and he helps with the solution. He also talks to our visitors, telling people to put a leash on their dog or where is the poison oak when they walk too close to the plant.

Another project? Ray is going to give a face lift to the stamp from the Lyons Oak, in the middle of the trail. We used that tree to explain to the children the rings that forms in the tree as the tree grows. The stump had been damaged by the fire and we could not see the rings any more. Ray is planning to cut a fresh slice in the stump and to refinish the cut for protection.

Thank you so much Ray for your hard work and dedication.



The Rattler

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If you have an article you feel would follow the interests of this publication, please feel free to submit it. The deadline is the 10th of every other month. Mail your article to:

Placerita Canyon Nature Center
19152 Placerita Canyon Road
Newhall, CA 91321-3213

or you can email it to Evelyne at evelynvandersande@gmail.com.

Please email your article in MS Word if possible.

Visit our Internet site at www.placerita.org--Ron Kraus is the webmaster.

Moving? Please let us know so you won't miss any issues of the Rattler.



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Disclaimer

Because there is often limited space on various field trips, we find that we need to enforce the following: All trips and dinner celebrations are open only to Placerita Canyon docents and volunteers who have paid their yearly dues. Many trips can be open to family and friends but only with previous authorization from the person planning the trip. Thank you for your understanding.

The Placerita Canyon Nature Center and Natural Area Park are located within the unincorporated area of Los Angeles County in the Supervisorial District of Michael D. Antonovich. The Natural Area and Nature Center are operated by the County of Los Angeles, Department of Parks and Recreation, in partnership with the Placerita Canyon Nature Center Associates

Pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the County of Los Angeles, Department of Parks and Recreation, has designated an ADA Coordinator to carry out this Department's compliance with the non-discriminatory provisions of the ADA. For more information you may contact the ADA Coordinator's Office at TEL 213-738-2970 TDY 213-427-6118 FAX 213-487-0380; Upon 3-day request notice, sign language interpreters and related materials in alternative formats (Braille-transcript, large print, audio-record, video-captioning, live-description) or any other reasonable accommodations are available to the public for County-sponsored activities and events.

Placerita Canyon Nature Center Associates
Thank You!

- Yes! I want to contribute to help fund programs at Placerita
 - \$25 Friend \$50 Donor \$100 Sponsor Wall
 - I can pledge _____ monthly
 - Please contact me about the Adopt-an-Animal Program
-

Your tax-deductible donations are needed to help fund programs provided by volunteers.
Send your donation to:

PCNCA
19152 Placerita Canyon Road
Newhall, CA 91321-3213



Astronomy Night

The Local Group Astronomy Club of Santa Clarita met at Placerita on March 3rd for a business and lecture meeting which was very well attended. We will welcome them again a few times this year; their programs are always very interesting.

ADOPT-AN-ANIMAL

PCNCA gratefully acknowledges docent Susan J. Mayhew for her third yearly adoption of Daisy, the Nature Center's Virginia Opossum.

Adoption packages begin at just \$25.00, and they make great fund-raising efforts (for scouts/schools, etc.) and perfect gifts for the nature lover. We can personalize a package for Mother's Day, Father's Day or a special birthday or anniversary.

Pick up a brochure at the Nature Center or call us at 661-259-7721 for more details. Thank you for your support of our animals.



Western pond turtles at Placerita enjoy the sun with a "smile".

SPRING - SUMMER PROGRAMS

- FAMILY NATURE WALK** Every Saturday from 11 to noon.
An easy 1-hour walk exploring the area's natural and cultural history.
- ANIMAL PRESENTATION** Every Saturday from 1 to 2 pm.
See, learn and ask questions about live native animals of the area.
- BIRD WALK** Second Saturday of the month from 8 to 10am. For all levels of birders. Bring binoculars, water and field guide.
- JUNIOR RANGERS** Third Saturday of every month from 9:30 to 11:00 am, for children between the ages of 6 and 12 years old. Learn about different natural wonders both in our science lab and in the field. Each month explores a different topic and we always hike. Call the park office for more information at [\(661\) 259-7721](tel:661-259-7721).
- MOONLIGHT HIKE** Saturday May 19 at 7pm for a one hour guided hike. We should hear many frogs in the creek.
- BIRD WALK, CASTAIC** The Placerita Canyon Natural Area docents lead a monthly bird walk at **Castaic Lake Recreation Area** on the first Saturday of the month at 8:00AM.
- BLOOMS OF THE SEASON** Learn about native plants and what is blooming along the trails. Meet in the patio at 9:30 for a one-hour stroll on the fourth Saturday of every month. Bring your camera and questions. For more information about this free program, call 661.259.7721 or 259.7832.
- COMMUNITY HIKING CLUB** A non-profit organization that invites all members of the SCV and community at large to: Join weekly planned hikes; Attend monthly nature series educational presentations; Participate in community outreach programs such as Calif Condor micro-trash clean-ups and maintenance of trails and native garden; Partner with groups such as Boys and Girls Club to introduce youth to nature. For more information, go to the website at

Logos from the Past, Present and Future

I like to use the Rattler to keep track of events, recognition and people who made a difference at Placerita through the years. If it is written on those pages, it is always easy to leaf through it and find the name or the place. I started to write the Rattler in 1997 and I have come to realize it was handy to have memories close at hand, if it was needed to do some research as the facts fade away with the years.

The first logo I encountered at Placerita was an oak tree in a circle. How did this come about? As usual, creativity has to come very fast when pressed by a dead line. We were told that we needed a logo for the next morning. What could we do? No artist was part of the small group and we had no time to think very long. Nancy Allen took a dime from her wallet (yes, that was the time where we still carry cash with us!), traced a circle and made a very simple tree outline looking like an oak. That was the first logo for Placerita and it served us very well for many years. The inspiration came in part from the logo that you still can see on the last page of the Rattler from the Nature Center Associates of Los Angeles County. It is very small but there is an adult showing the oak tree to a child and it says "We exist so Children and Oaks can grow together". Cheesy? Maybe but I still find it very moving and true to the message that we try to send to our members and visitors.

In 2004, we decided to adopt OJ (Owl Junior, our great horned owl) as our mascot and Jill Goddard designed a logo to represent OJ's head. She made a great drawing that was engraved on the name tags of the docents, our letter head, flyers, etc. She did another version in 2006 with the name of the Nature Center around it. Placerita was proud to be represented by our great horned owl and even if OJ passed away this year, we will keep this drawing forever as our logo. A new horned owl is part of the center now and we hope one always will be.

2012 was the first year that the docent training included 9 students who were going to become the first class of students to be sent to Vasquez Rocks. Their new building is going to open in the fall and they need docents to welcome their visitors.

In February, I was going to have the name tags engraved for the new students when I suddenly realized that I did not have a logo for Vasquez Rocks. After inquiring, I found out that they use a photo from the famous rocks on their letter head but the engraver needed a simpler outline. Again, it was Jill Goddard to the rescue; very quickly she came up with a beautiful and simple outline that give a true description of the famous rocks that are the trademark for Vasquez Natural Park.

This logo was used for the very first time to design the new name tags for the class of 2012.

I thought it was important to have this recorded in the Rattler so that if people try to remember how it all happened 20 years from now; this will be the proof of the sequence of events.

Congratulations to the class of 2012, Placerita and Vasquez Rocks.



Via a Name Tag

I brought the list of names from the class of 2012 to the engraver to have name tags made. Each new docent was to receive their new name tag, and this year was the class which is going to Vasquez Rocks. The engraver followed our quest for a new logo designed by Jill Goddard for Vasquez Rocks and asked me what kind of park it was. She had never been there in all the many years that she had lived in Santa Clarita. I must have sounded very convincing that it was the most gorgeous place because when I came to pick up the names tags that had been engraved, she was very enthusiastic. She had hiked the whole Sunday there with her husband, got a little lost on the trails but could not believe how beautiful Vasquez Rocks was....When I told her that the astronomy club meets there in the evening a few times a year, I could not leave the store! It is nice to get this kind of reaction about our parks.





A New Trail is Coming

February 21st 2012. We are delighted to see the City of Santa Clarita building the connecting trail from East Walker Ranch through the Golden Valley Open Space and ending up at Walker Ranch. Some serious equipment was used; you can see a D5 caterpillar in action in one of the photos.

In one place the trail goes under Placerita Canyon Road using an old horse passage and emerges on the other side of Placerita. The trail will run along the old Walker Homestead house and will go uphill on a fairly steep incline.

There is plenty of parking at East Walker Ranch and hikers should be encouraged to park there to take off pressure from our little Walker Ranch parking lot.



Recognition Ceremony

April 28, 2012

These docents and volunteers from Placerita Canyon Nature Center are going to receive recognition for years of service.

We deeply thank you for your hard work and we extend our warmest congratulations to all.

5 year badge - Class of 2007

Candace Arney
Linda Ioerger
Paula Parr

10 year badge - Class of 2001

Pamela Koch

15 year badge - Class of 1996

Bill Webber
Heidi Webber

20 year badge - Class of 1991

Eileen Blanchard
Robert Fischer

Volunteers of the Year

Student Volunteer - Megan Smith
Docent - Pamela Koch

Silver certificate Recipients: Class of 2011

Ed Benison
Armida Brooks
Beverly Browe
Deb Clem
Vicki Cunningham
Garret Denise
Charitha Eragoda
Kelly Jester
Bill Kahl
Tyler Knapp
Debra Moutes
Ray Orloff
Carol Rush
Jackie Thomason

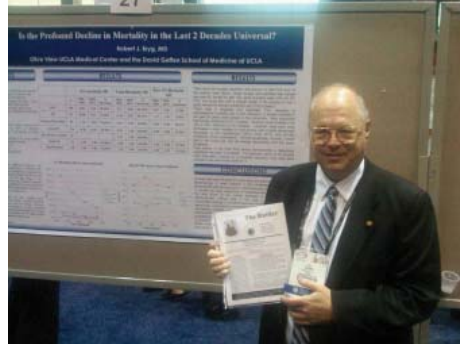
Gold certificate recipients: Class of 2010

Marc Alva
Sandra Balaram
Bess Barber
Ingrid Brown
Maria Elena Christensen
Jim Crowley
Ray Davis
Joan Fincutter
Teresa Jacobs
Kathryn Kazmer
Colleen Kite
Dan Kott

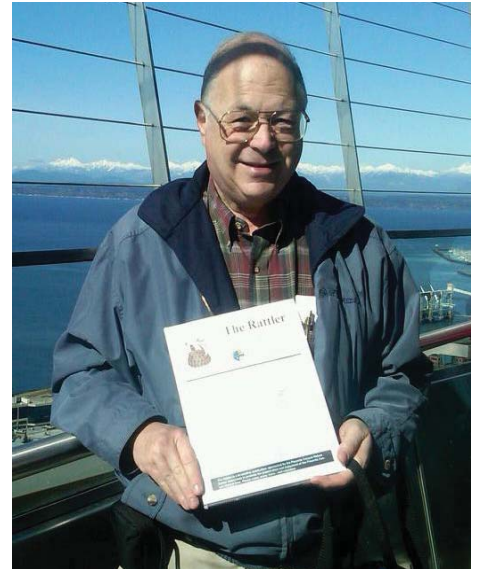
On the Road with the Rattler



Larry Nikolai went to Manchu Picchu. He forgot to take the Rattler so high with him but asked if wearing the Placerita tee shirt could qualify? Thank you so much for thinking about us Larry and we hope you enjoyed your beautiful trip.



Paul Levine went to Chicago at the American College of Cardiology annual scientific session. A copy of The Rattler came with him and this is a picture taken in front of a poster presentation by one of his Associates from UCLA.



Paul Levine and The Rattler visit the Space Needle in Seattle, WA.



Pedra is a new docent from the class of 2012, she is also an Acting Arboretum Gardener for the South Coast Botanic Garden at the Palos Verdes Peninsula. She is offering the Rattler to a wandering grizzly bear.



The Rattler was taken to the happiest place on earth by the Clark family: Disneyland



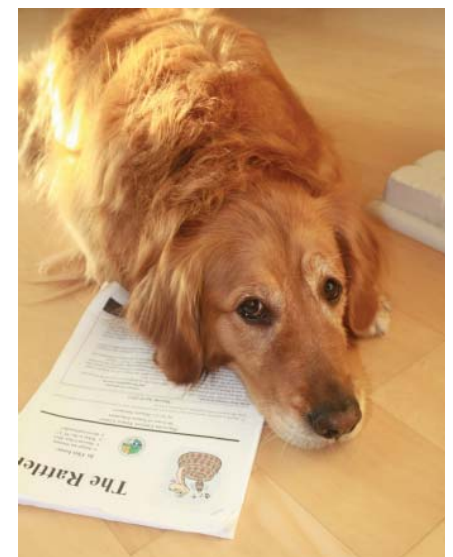
The Rattler in Amsterdam ...or not?



Maria Elena Christensen went to Washington DC and Philadelphia with her daughter Victoria on a school trip and she was kind enough to take the Rattler along.



Paul Levine and The Rattler went to Seattle to be with family for the Passover/Easter weekend. He went to the Butterfly exhibit at the Pacific Science Center and I had to have a picture taken with my new best friend, Mr. Caterpillar.



The Rattler is going to the dogs.



Have You Met Collette Lash?

1. Where were you born and where did you spend your childhood?

Born in San Juan Capistrano, California, spend childhood there with some time in Aiea, Hawaii. We rambled around to parks and forests through the southern US states California to Tennessee.

2. How did your love of Nature start?

I think the love for nature was just there, but I understood it differently. It was just part of life, but when the true “love” of it started, it was just me and my Dad somewhere along Muir trail in Kings Canyon. We had stopped and sat in silence for a while, then he just said something like “it asks nothing of you.” It was incredible, realizing that ALL THIS is here for us without any conditions, and it’s ALWAYS there. What else in life is that giving?

3. What is your work experience?

I have had such a wild assortment of jobs but my first job was changing oil and I’m currently a full time photographer. I wanted to be a Park Ranger (Calif. state or national), but I just have had such a good run, good luck and good time with photography.

4. What is your family life?

I’m married to nature-lover Jon and we have two riff-raff mutts. We are both artists, we love camping, surfing, hiking, kayaking as much as we can. Jon is my best friend, never have had so much fun with anyone in my life, it’s been over 10 years and I still get butterflies just thinking bout him.

5. When did you come to Placerita for the first time and why?

What do you remember about this place? When I moved to Santa Clarita in 1998 I had heard something about the Oak of the Golden Dream, possibly from an episode of California’s Gold? I even have a photo of me at the park the first day I was there. I didn’t frequent the park until ten years later though.

6. What are the titles you have held at the Nature center?

“Docent” and “Misfit”

7. What did or do you like most about your job at the Nature Center?

Sharing the personal stories of what I have seen/experienced there because I think it engages a new visitor a great deal. I believe it’s the fastest way for them to connect to the park. Bless his heart, but Sylvester won’t reach everyone, haha

8. What did you or do you not like about the job?

I can’t spend the night there.

9. At Placerita, is there some special accomplishment that makes you feel proud?

Not so much any personal accomplishment so much as a feeling of being blessed and honored to be a part of such an incredible group of warm-hearted, intelligent, inspiring and hilarious folks. Thanks y’all for being so fantastic.

10. What is your favorite food?

Fresh, organic, local, and seasonal. Particularly, love wild berries.

11. What is your favorite color?

Choosing one would be like choosing a favorite star, but I do love rust, copper, amber, mustard yellow, Dijon-mustard yellow, spicy-mustard yellow, olive, medium greys, crimson, azul, turquoise, slate blue, hookers green,...I could go on all day.

12. What is your favorite TV show? Or music? Or pastime ?

In that order: I like a lot of the programming on History, PBS, National Geographic, but love shows like Justified that are shot across the street from our park. I LOVE football (Go Chargers!)

I love ‘string-band’ music, old stuff like the Delmore Brothers and Uncle Dave Macon and new stuff like Gillian Welch, Dave Rawlings and my favorite Old Crow Medicine Show. Pastimes besides anything outdoors, would be pickin’ banjo best I can and working in the dirt.

13. Is there anything else that describes you that we should know? Is there any passion or special events in your life that you would like to tell us about?

Hmm, to describe me “The greatest oak was once a little nut that held it’s ground.” I’m a “nut” in progress.

A note from Evelyne: Collette is too humble to write about her achievement at Placerita, she recently took photos from every docent, volunteers and staff members because our new county badges are going to include a photo. Using her knowledge as a photographer, she retouched each photo to make sure we would all look our best. It took her many hours of work, first being at the center to take the shots then in her studio to do the final product. Thank you Collette.

Pam Koch, Volunteer of the Year 1012:



Someone has to do the dirty work!

(After successfully completing the annual Sheriff's Department's 5-Mile Mud Run in Castaic.)

This is the highest honor that PCNCA can give and each year a very outstanding docent is chosen and recognized at the ceremony at Eaton Canyon. In 2012 Pam was chosen. When I started to write this article I realized that there was no way for me to recall all the activities and projects that Pam took part in during the last years because no other docent has been so involved and I would miss half of them. So please, read the list that she composed at the end of this article.

How can somebody accomplish so much in her "spare time"? Pam is very smart and quick to grasp a concept. Right away she has ideas how to find solution to any problem. She is intense, focused but at the same time she has a droll sense of humor that makes it a joy to work with her. While she is determined to get result, she is not a bully and I have seen her in situations where her diplomatic sense and her gentle approach brought her attention from her audience. I have observed her in meetings with high-level county supervisors and it was a delight to see how she could exert a gentle pressure while not being too forceful. That takes lots of class and savoir faire and I was deeply impressed.

Those qualities serve her well in meetings of all sorts and she gets the results that she had planned to get at the start. She works hard and well and her co workers copy her behavior and the work gets done.

She is dedicated to the Nature Center and uses her brain and her heart there. She has had health problems which would keep most people home but she just whipped them aside to keep on working. That is easily said but not easily done when you are tired.

Most people get a certain work load and are content to keep going that way. We were upset, sad and kind of scared (who is going to do all this work?) when Pam announced that she was going to leave the board in June.

Then I got some explanation "Pam feels that there are many new people who can take over now at Placerita and she is looking for new challenges!" Pam is looking to get more work? My respect for her went a few notches higher and it was time to show her our appreciation before she leaves the board.

Few docents have made more changes in our organization than Pam. We are all honored to have been working with her and we wish her the only best in her new ventures.

Pam, thank you so much for all what you have done during those years, thank you for having had the chance to walk with you though all those events at the center. You are a very classy lady and a pretty smart one too. We want to show you how grateful we all are by electing you Docent of the Year 2012.

Pam added this to clarify what her future projects will be:

"The real reason I'm leaving the board is to make room for new talent. We have a lot of great docents and everyone should have a chance to contribute to guiding the organization. I'm fascinated with the NCA board and am having fun seeing how I can contribute at that level. I'm interested in a hundred different things and the NCA board is not as busy as the PCNCA board so I can keep a hand in but have more time to pursue my hobbies. When you get cancer for the third time, you finally figure out you're overdue to make some big changes and figure out what is important in your life and everything gets re-prioritized. I'm totally fascinated by the geology of Vasquez Rocks and am following an opportunity to help their docent group gets restarted and I get to learn about "The Rocks" at the same time. I don't know if I will find a niche there, but I need to give it a shot. I'll keep a hand in at Placerita too because it is not only a magical place, it has the most wonderful group of people I have ever had the privilege of hanging out with. Every time I am there I am always struck by the beautiful hearts and souls of the docents, volunteers and staff and when I'm walking on the trails I am captivated by the beauty and spirit of the canyon. I can't walk away from that!"

What I did/do at the Nature Center

2011

Recording Secretary until June
NCA rep
NCA vice pres
Year end report
Open house co chair
Craft fair co chair
Annual membership meeting co chair
Will babysit a misc project to conclusion. (fire hydrants, security alarm)
Helped get board insurance

Helped get all nature center treasurers on the same chart of accounts
proofread the Rattler
Worked on Hovore memorial committee; needs a completion date!
Docent room organization co chair
Read term papers of new docents

Prior years

In years past I also did animal care and all that entails.
Used to spend one day a week answering phones.
Organized camping trip for docents.

Used to lead school groups.
Spent some time researching the history of PCNCA

Also upkeep of the procedure manual and bylaws.
Working on NCA bylaws update, NCA budget, and figuring out how NCA can best help a new nature center group get started.



Placerita Canyon Nature Center

Open House

and Family Festival

May 12, 2012
10AM to 3PM

- Animal Presentations
- Panning for fools gold
- Guided Hikes
- Face Painting
- Food & Drink
- Free Parking & Admission
- **Treasure Hunt!**

Many fun activities for the whole family!

19152 Placerita Canyon Road, Newhall
(661)259-7721
www.placerita.org

sponsored by

Placerita
Canyon
Nature Center
Associates



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Volunteer Service Committee and Volunteer Service Leaders

By Fred Seeley

Not only do we have a wonderfully effective Docent program focused on providing school children with high quality educational experiences, we are also very fortunate to have many enthusiastic volunteers wanting to maintain and improve our beloved PCNC.

In order to bring some organization to volunteer activities not directed at the schools program, a committee of people interested in PCNC's volunteerism was established.

Now called the Volunteer Service Committee, an initial meeting was held to brainstorm and enumerate the specific volunteer opportunities available. After that list was developed, two subsequent meetings addressed finding, confirming or reconfirming Volunteer Leaders for each identified opportunity.

The purpose for establishing Leaders is so that when any docent or other volunteer is interested in helping out, they will know exactly who to contact. It will also help L.A. County staff to direct the offers of non-PCNCA people for volunteer work.

The Volunteer Services Committee plans to meet quarterly to update the Leadership Exhibit and to consider adding other volunteer opportunities to the Exhibit.

If you are interested in volunteering your time and effort in a particular area, please feel free to contact the Leader of that area. If you want to consider volunteer work, and learn more about what you can do, please contact Bob Moss for guidance. Working together, we can continue to improve "The Placerita Canyon Experience"!!!

The VSC (Volunteer Services Committee) is made up of: Ron Kraus, Jack Levenberg, Bob Moss, Ray Orloff, Pam Koch, Joan Fincutter, Sandra Balaram, Janet Kubler, Fred Seeley (Chair), and Russ/Frank representing the Staff,

Thanks to all of you for taking the docents into new directions with their work and offering different leadership.



LAIR at the LOS ANGELES ZOO

By Shirley Morano

On August 8th the LAIR – Living Amphibians, Invertebrates and Reptiles - would open at the Los Angeles Zoo. So, the day before zoo members were invited to preview the LAIR before it opened to the public. I was excited about seeing this new facility. It has been three years since the old Reptile House was destroyed. I learned that this new state-of-the art facility was designed to eventually house some 75 species in 50 exhibits. There are two buildings which have the latest in new technology and life support systems. The roof of each one is sheathed in flowering shrubs. Outside there is a desert tortoise habitat and an hour or two before I visited one of the lizards had given birth to four babies and they were already running around looking for food. There are other outdoor exhibit areas including Crocodile Creek and Arroyo Lagarto. A nice surprise for me was being greeted by Zoo docent Rick Brammer.

My favorite exhibit was the habitat for the four Gray's monitors, a large lizard species native to the Philippines and once thought to be extinct. The zoo acquired the monitors after authorities busted a smuggling ring. It is not known where these particular individuals originated, but they seemed very happy in their new home and willing to pose for pictures.



After the rain



Ron in action

This Place is Jumping

There is a wind of changes at Placerita; we were a small organization but we are growing up now. Many new opportunities are opening up for different kinds of docents.

Not all of us want or can take children on the trail and with the few large classes of docents that we have had in the past years; we have enough manpower now to start all kinds of different programs. Some of these will be happening during the weekend, inside the museum or at the Walker cabin. We will have a new "Trail team" doing trails maintenance and observation, may be even some educational programs for families.

We need people with computer skills and also more people willing to pick up the phone, the staff at Placerita would enjoy some help on a short notice or during the week end and holidays...as you can see, the place is in complete transformation, full of ideas and people who are willing to work at them so they become a reality.

This is a very exciting time when the new docents arrive and are ready to help. We know our visitors do not always realize what is happening behind these doors but I can tell you, we have some movers and shakers around here and it is a total delight to see them in action, full with so much good will.

If you have been a docent in the past and would like to become active again, we have many interesting projects going on or you can even start a new one. Think about it, please contact the Nature Center and ask to be put in touch with Fred Seeley or Bob Moss. You will be joining a fun group!





Student Volunteer of the Year - Megan Smith

You have read her interview in a past Rattler so you are familiar now with this young lady who comes to volunteer at the Nature Center, one of the few places where she volunteers while she is also handling a heavy load as a full time student. She studies Biological and Physical sciences at C.O.C.

Megan volunteers at the feline Conservation in Rosemond and spends much time at the Wildlife Care of Ventura County in Simi Valley where they do rehabilitation.

Megan not only keeps on coming to the center to clean up the cages, feed the animals, prepare the food twice a week but she also managed to find the time to put together four wonderful brochures for our visitors: "Injured and Orphaned Wildlife"

"Rattlesnakes" "Local trail Guide" and "Sites and Trails". Those brochures look very attractive with many color photos and are full of details and information.

This project took hours of research, proof reading and struggle behind the computer while Megan had also to deal with her classes and commitments from her volunteer work. These brochures will be very helpful for our visitors who always have so many questions, especially at this time of the year when baby animals are found. We get many phone calls the center asking how to help the babies birds fallen from the nest or baby rabbits caught by the cat, where can they be brought to and what steps should be taken to take care of them. Those brochures have all those details. Also the rattlesnake season is starting so one of the brochures deals with this topic; they will be perfect teaching tools.

Our visitors unfamiliar with our trails can have maps now with description of the trails, the number of miles they are and the kind of environment they will find so that is very helpful. Beautiful job Megan and very much worth all the efforts and time you put into those fliers.

Thank you very much Megan for all what you do at the center and we hope you will enjoy this moment of recognition at Eaton Canyon where you will be recognized at the Student Volunteer of the year 2012 for Placerita.

County Agrees to Operate Placerita State Park for Next Half-Century

The County has been running State-owned Park on a month to month basis since 1986. Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich announced that the Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a 50-year agreement for the operation, maintenance, development and control of the Placerita Canyon Natural Area in the Santa Clarita Valley.

Home of the famous "Oak of the Golden Dream" where gold was first discovered in California in 1842, Placerita Canyon is a designated state historic landmark with an educational nature center offering nature walks, school programs and live animal presentations Tuesday through Sunday. Also located at the park is the historic Walker Cabin, built by Frank Walker in 1920.

Connecting the Angeles National Forest, the Santa Susana Mountains, the Simi Hills and the Santa Monica Mountains, Placerita Canyon has sandstone formations, seasonal streams and riparian oak woodlands as



Trapdoor Spider



The trapdoor is difficult to see when it is closed because the plant and soil materials effectively camouflage it. The trapdoor is hinged on one side with silk. The spiders, which are usually nocturnal, typically wait for prey while holding on to the underside of the door with the claws on their tarsi. Prey is captured when insects, other arthropods, or small vertebrates disturb the 'trip' lines the spider lays out around its trapdoor, alerting the spider to a meal within reach. The spider detects the prey by vibrations and, when it comes close enough, leaps out of its burrow to make the capture. (ref: Wikipedia)

These great photos of a trap door were taken by Laura Owens, a new docent from the class of 2012, after the only rain we had in March. Maybe the rain disturbed the spider or softened the ground around it so it was easier to see because their camouflage is usually outstanding. Thanks Laura for the great photos.



well as cottonwood and native sycamore groves.

The park offers eight different trails that network over 12 miles for park visitors.

Placerita Canyon was first transferred from the state on November 1, 1949. However, since June 30, 1986, the park has been operating on a month-to-month lease.

Ref: press release Tuesday March 2012 SCV News

Who Receives the Rattler and What is it?

If you received this Rattler for the first time, you might be wondering “This is a thick newsletter and very thorough. Evelyne sure spends a lot of time putting this together but why?” so I thought it was time to explain a few things.

This Rattler is sent to all our members, to the local schools and to some political figures in our valley. In addition to this traditional mailing list, we also have sign-up sheets in the gift store and in the museum where visitors can write down their email addresses to request a Rattler to be sent to them. At this point in time, our mailing list to send the Rattler is up to 900 readers who have asked for it. This is a pretty nice number and you will understand that we are reaching a vast audience.

Education is the reason why the docent organization exists so my point of view is to bring some scientific information that is easy to read, pleasant so that the facts will be absorbed without being boring.

I try to keep track of all the events happening at Placerita to show that we are an active park with much going on. It is also helpful later on when we tried to remember what happened when...

I want to give recognition to our members by interviewing them or showing that they have been involved in a special project, photo, discovery or trip.

I hope this is an incentive to all our readers to come to visit the park. This is why I urge them to come, explaining about the trails, animals and plants that are found around the park where they can also meet our wonderful staff and volunteers and maybe, one day, even become part of our organization. I hope that my efforts combined with our great website bring some enthusiasm to our readers.

I have been the editor from the Rattler since 1998 with the incredible help from Heidi Webber who is the publisher and I hope this will explain why the Rattler is so thick!



Sharon Sorenson

Sharon is a new docent from the class of 2012 but she is already rolling up her sleeves and starting to work.

In addition to volunteering in the Gift Shop on weekends, she is going to enter all the names of visitors who want to receive the rattler in PDF version, she is going to handle those lists and be the backup in case of computer mal function. This is a big responsibility as our mailing list is about 900 readers and increasing by about 30 to 40 a month. We thank her very warmly for her help.



Hello Friends,

Tonight at Placerita was a very fantastic evening, graduation for the largest class that we ever had.

If you were there, I hope these photos will bring back some nice fun part of the evening, if you could not come, we missed you and we wanted you to share those good times. We were able to sit 90 people, a record!

Warmest congratulations to the class of 2012 and to all of you: you made it such a pleasant evening.
Evelyne



Graduation Party for the Class of 2012: March 31.

These are some of the comments after the party:

"A memorable evening, a great wrapup to a great docent training class."

"Nights like this is one of the many reasons I love Placerita. We have so many wonderful people there. I am very proud of our new docents and so proud of Ron Kraus and the training he has developed over the years".

"It was so great having the Vasquez Rock contingent with us this year. So much enthusiasm in this group".

"It was a very emotional evening for me. I just love the center, the people. I am very grateful I had the chance to be part of the class of 2012".

As you can see, the party was a great success and we had record-breaking crowd. The pot uck buffet was delicious. Thank you, all of you for your culinary efforts. You saw how the plates got refilled with much pleasure. Ron entertained us with some fun games after dinner and the crowd enjoyed every minute of it.

Jim Southwell made a speech to let us know that we have great hope that the new interpretative center will be built in the near future.

Janet Kubler received a plaque to thank her for the level of education she brings us with her ecology classes, her inspiration for keeping the earth in better shape and for her help with various committees,

Then it was time for the graduation of the class of 2012. Each new student received their name tags, certificates and the ones with perfect attendance received a new green cap, the first year Ron is doing this little recognition.

The docents from Vasquez Rocks received a beautiful framed photo of the famous rock formation.

Towards the end of the evening Ron was presented by Heidi Webber and Pam Koch, on behalf of PCNCA, with a coupon for one of his favorite restaurant "Sweet Water Café" where he should be able to indulge in one of his favorite foods: bacon! Again congratulations to all who made such a great evening possible.



Many thanks go out to those individuals and organizations who generously thought of Placerita. Our residential creatures appreciate it.

Adat Ari El Day School
Advantage Prep School
Eileen Blanchard
Millie Bonazzoli
Armida Brooks
Renate Colvin
Darby Elementary School
Ray Davis
Bob Fischer
Galt Elementary School
Ella George
Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles
Troop 50172
John Hyde
Linda Janowski
John C Fremont Elementary School

Julie Korenstein Elementary School
Laura Kleigman
Lane Park Preschool
Live Oak Elementary School
Angel MacDonald
Mommy and Me
Shirley Morano
Larry and Nancy Nikolai
North Park Elementary School
Primetime Preschool
Loraine Stewart
Claudia Strock
Barbara Wampole
Wiley Canyon Elementary School

Docent Reports—A Valuable Reference Library

Each year, as part of the requirements for completing docent training, our new docents must prepare a report regarding a nature, history or other topic of relevance to Placerita Canyon. Following is a list and brief description of this year's reports. They are on file in the nature center's docent room, along with reports from previous classes. This is a valuable reference source available for your education and enjoyment, so please take the opportunity to read the reports that may interest you. Thanks to Pam Koch and Fred Seeley for reading all of the reports and writing the summaries.

Algeyer, Lanita – Acorn Woodpeckers

- The Acorn Woodpecker is often seen in Placerita Canyon. This essay includes the gender differences, diet and reproduction details and many beautiful and useful pictures.

Brewer, Sarah – Yucca, Oak, and Juniper A Comparison of common plants used as food by the Tatavium of Vasquez Rocks and Placerita Canyon Parks

- The title says it! This is a well researched and interesting comparison based on the different ecosystems on the two Parks.

DeLill, Jim – Observing One of Nature's Miracles

- Jim takes us through a Quail family's nesting and hatching and rearing of the chicks.

Donner, Andrea – The Common Raven

- This paper gives the description of the Raven, its habitat, and describes its behavior including its diet, breeding, vocalizations, intelligence and its relationship to humans.

Elling, Mike – Poison Oak

- A very useful guide to Poison Oak and how to avoid exposure to it. The photo of the effect of Poison Oak on the skin is a must see.

Ewing, Marietta – Common Ravens In Placerita Canyon

- Raven facts personalized to Placerita Canyon and guidance on how to tell the difference between a raven and a crow.

Grzesiak, Robert – Rattlesnake Safety

- A very useful guide to understanding our local Rattlesnakes, and, most importantly, how to avoid being a victim of a bite.

Harris, James Walton – Ghosts of Placerita Canyon – The Eighth Intelligence

- A unique look at the "Ghosts" (the evolutionary remnants of past experiences hard wired into a species nervous system) and how they relate to man and the need to experience Nature

Heerlein, Irene – Leaf Adaptation to Mediterranean Climate

- A thorough and useful treatment of title topic based on selected indicator species which are found throughout the main plant communities of Placerita Canyon.

Levine, Paul A. – How Do Butterflies Protect Themselves

- This presentation, including DVD's of the report, is a very thorough treatment of the approximately 10 ways that butterflies protect themselves throughout their life cycle. The photos and Appendices provide excellent examples of the title topic.

Merkord, Lisa – Velvet Ants

- Often seen on the Canyon Trail, these interesting creatures are not ants at all but a species of wasp. The report points out many details about this creature including the fact that its sting is extremely painful.

Miller, Bryan – California Buckwheat

- This essay points out taxonomy of Buckwheat and that there are 3 species of Buckwheat in Placerita Canyon and discusses the plants' role in the ecosystem.

Olson, Dolores – A Tree of Dreams

- A story with a personal connection to the oaks in Placerita.

Owens, Laura – Placerita Canyon Resident: The Acorn Woodpecker (*Malanerpes Formicivorus*)

- This essay is a description of the Acorn Woodpecker's habitat, eating, mating, and breeding characteristics.

Pascoe, Scott – *Quercus agrifolia* Coastal Live Oak

- The habitat, lifecycle and uses man made of this tree.

Peatross, Cathy – Turkey Vultures: Roadkill Kings

- Habitat, physical description and characteristics, diet, lifestyle and dangers to these birds.

Ritner, Kathleen – Clara Bell, The Pacific Tree Frog

- Facts about the Pacific Tree Frog are expertly interwoven into a personal quest to find out about this amphibian.

Sage, Pedra – The Difference between Turtles and Tortoises

- A well thought out and easy to read comparison between these two related reptile species.

Schulman, Leah – Red vs White: Oaks in Placerita Canyon

- How to tell apart the 3 different native oaks of Placerita Canyon includes detailed comparisons in size, color, characteristics, and disease resistance.

Skorich, Laura – The Mountains are Calling

- All of the wonderful reasons why we love hiking and a few common sense suggestions to keep it enjoyable.

Smith, Lisa – Soapstone Carving

- A story of soapstone carvings interweaving local native lore with a local 10th generation Native American.

Docent Reports, continued

Sorensen, Sharon – How Bees Make Honey

- As the title suggests, here is where you find out the raw materials used and processes by bees to make honey.

Summers, Marnye – The Secret World of the Lichen

- A complex organism made understandable for the classroom. A terrific essay that can be a valuable reference on lichen.

Sutton, William – Sharp-shinned Hawk

- Excellent pictures accompany a detailed description of this hawk and its hunting skills.

Tratner, Ethan – The Golden Dream

- The story of gold in California during the Mission period interweaves the story of the Del Valle family and discovery of gold in Placerita against the greater story of California history.

Truger, Denny – The Dusky-Footed Woodrat

- A well done treatise on this local native rodent includes description, habitat, lifestyle, and dangers.

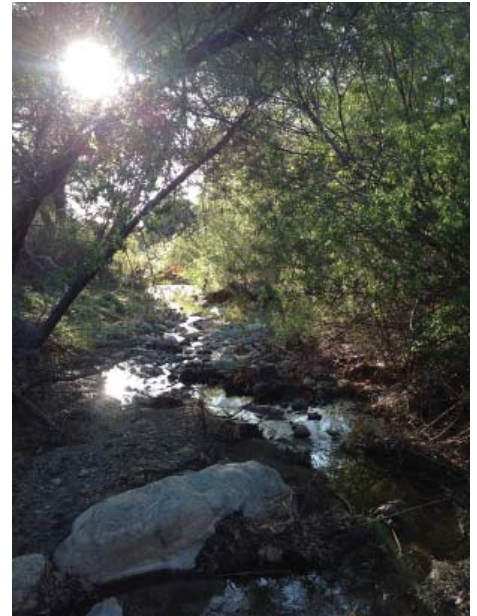


Photo by Ron Kraus

Park Superintendent Russ Kimura is reminding volunteers and park visitors to report all injuries occurring on the trails at Placerita Canyon Natural Areas. Injuries should be reported to the Placerita Canyon Nature Center. As a reminder, the Los Pinetos Trail is the only multiuse trail in the park. This is the only trail that allows for mountain bikers, equestrians and hikers to be on the same trail.



Jerusalem Crickets and Horsehair Worms

There may be weirder-looking bugs than the Jerusalem cricket (*Stenopelmatus fuscus*), but these big (1" to 2" when grown) plastic-looking insects are real eye-catchers. Often you find them when you turn over a rock. Sometimes just the head is visible, shining in a hole. Unless you find your specimen in your potato patch, there isn't any need to kill it (another name is potato bug but there are other things called potato bugs). They aren't found in hordes and they don't do much damage. In Mexico, they are called Children of the Earth, probably because they have an eerie flesh-like look.

So why am I devoting an essay to these things? Partly because I had a heck of a time figuring out what they were and partly because in reading about them I found the answer to a question I had had for a long time: where did those worms in the water trough come from?

One of the Jerusalem cricket sites mentioned that the creatures are sometimes found dead in swimming pools and that sometimes the death can be attributed to drowning but usually the death is due to a parasite: the horsehair worm. This worm is ingested by the host when it is encysted on a piece of plant material and then emerges quickly when it enters the hosts digestive tract and begins to grow within the body cavity.

When the horsehair worm is mature, its presence makes the host extremely thirsty and it goes anywhere it can find water. As soon as it is in the water, the worm explodes out of the abdomen, just like the Alien leaped out of John Hurt. And with the same result to the host. The worms mate in the water and then crawl onto some plant to lay their eggs. Of course, if the body of water is a swimming pool or horse trough, they aren't going anywhere unless you dump them out.

Luckily, horsehair worms (which measure from 4" to 4') are specific to insect hosts such as crickets, grasshoppers, and some dragonflies. They can't hurt you or your pets. Much more information on both creatures is available on line if you do a search. Oh, one more thing....horsehair worms are called horsehair worms because they look like a horsehair that has come to life. Jerusalem crickets are called Jerusalem crickets...well, I can't answer ALL your questions for you.



The Mighty Live Oak - A Tree of Dreams

By Delores Olson

I grew up in the San Fernando Valley. I didn't spend a lot of time here, in what is now known as the Santa Clarita Valley. I had been on driving trips through here before the freeways were established when eucalyptus and oak trees lined the roads. I loved it. Loved how they made me feel interested, curious and wanting to know what was going on in their world. I wondered what creatures lived in those big oak trees and wanted to explore what was around them and in them, but we never did stop. I always dreamt of those trees and what lived in the oak forest. I made up stories (adventures) to tell my brother and sister at night before we went to bed about us living in the oak forest and what adventures we would have in the forest. They really looked forward to those stories. "Tell me another adventure Dee!"

I'm still a dreamer some fifty years later, so when I saw the small tan and brown sign "Oak of the Golden Dream", I was zapped back to the age of seven, but without anyone or anything to hold me back. I made a quick turn to the right up the canyon road and the dreams came back once I hit the first curve. I didn't know of the famous oak tree or the history of Placerita Canyon when I was seven or when I made my recent discovery at fifty-seven years of age. I found the park entrance & rolled into this amazing and beautiful place that had once been a dream and topic for bedtime stories to my brother and sister. I had no idea it was the life and dream of so many others before me.

These oak trees, our oak trees, my "dream" oak trees, the Coast Live Oak, are amazing. They've been the source of food and warmth to people who lived in this area over a thousand years before us. The Tataviam people made excellent use from the seed of the tree. The acorn, a staple food source for the Tataviam, for trade or barter for other items or goods they needed or wanted. I was so impressed to know that the Tataviam women wanted seashells for jewelry so they traded acorns to look hot, or at least make themselves feel pretty. Women after my own heart!

The oaks also have provided a source of food for others who inhabit/cohabit their community. Squirrels, rabbits, birds, deer just to name a few. Those creatures became a food source for them as well, and a food source for other animal/critters who lived in and among the oak forest, chaparral, and riparian areas of Placerita Canyon, but also in later years to come for the ranchers, gold miners and homesteaders.

These trees are beautiful, handsome and a magnificent life form in this canyon. They are a tribute to longevity, strength and adaptability. You have to love and respect these trees. They have survived fires, floods, very cold weather, drought and human invasion. Sun, air, water & soil are definitely a necessity for our survival and the survival of the Coast Live Oak and the "adapted" family that surrounds them, but if the oak tree itself wasn't so strong, if it didn't adapt throughout the thousands of years it's been here, then it wouldn't have been able to provide a major source of energy for all that have lived and now live in this peaceful, tranquil and beautiful community that is Placerita Canyon Park Nature Center, which is full of wonder, life and a continuing source for dreams.

Here I am, living my "Dream," walking amongst the great trees that I had not met until a few months ago. The trees, the oak forest of which I made up bedtime stories for my brother, sister and my children, they are old friends. I didn't find gold, but I found new friends and my dream.





Bryan Miller

1. Where were you born and where did you spend your childhood?

I'm a California native born in Encino, grew up in Mission Hills, spent a year in Burbank after high school, then Lancaster for 20 years, and now have a winery in Acton. I do not move around much. I guess there was never a compelling reason to stray that far.

2. How did your love of Nature start?

My childhood was spent touring national parks throughout the western states and long summer road trips back to Lead, South Dakota. My parents emphasized the natural world wherever we went. Along with the road trips my dad would take me hiking in the local mountains telling me all about the plants

and animals. Probably the most memorable event and one that has an influence on my life was my escape from a bear in Yosemite's high country. I escaped any injury but I cannot say the same for my shoes, which the bear promptly ran off with. We ended up hiking very quickly back to the valley floor. I feel that this encounter was a vision that the bear was to be my spirit guide. Throughout my life I have encountered symbols representing the bear showing up at appropriate time as if I am being guided to a particular destiny.

3. What was your education?

After attending James Monroe High in the Valley I did a stint at Pierce College, trying to decide what I wanted to do for a career. After taking time off to start a career and almost twenty years later I went back to school and completed my bachelors and masters in public administration at Cal State Bakersfield.

4. What is your work experience?

From high school, I always wanted to have a career that allowed me to work outdoors. I tried getting into the forest service or national park system but other events kept me from heading that direction. After jobs in advertising as a traffic manager and aerospace assembling stealth fighters, I landed a job as a financial consultant to local government. I am currently unemployed have started pursuing my original career dream looking into local, state or federal park positions.

I am also heavily involved with the North Valley Family YMCA in Porter Ranch. I have been involved with them for over 45 years, first as a participant in various groups and later as a camp counselor, camp committee member, and division manager for the annual fund raising campaign. I guess that is where my volunteerism started.

5. What did or do you like most about your job at the Nature Center?

I seem to have a strong attraction to the outdoors and natural environment and feel most comfortable when I am outside. I also find that as I tell people about what I know, I learn more myself.

6. What is your favorite TV show? Or music? or pastime ?

My favorite type of TV show tends to be travel or documentary type programs. Anything with an outdoor or western theme. For music, I lean towards classical and opera I am an organist and also play the viola so I really lean towards Bach and others of that genre.

As for my favorite past time it has to be creating and maintaining gardens. Not the vegetable type but extensive gardens such as you would see at an arboretum. My property in Acton has been on the Theodore Payne annual plant tour for two years now and with over 200 different native plants, it is considered the premier high-altitude garden on the tour.

I also have planted and maintain my own vineyard which is a wonderful but exhaustive pastime. Growing grapes, tending the vines, picking and crushing the grapes and being able to produce what I have been told is an excellent wine is one accomplishment that I am extremely proud of. The wine is a Syrah.

7. Is there anything else that describes you that we should know? Is there any passion or special events in your life that you would like to tell us about?

I tend to be someone that hangs around in the background observing the parade of life until I am given a challenge either by someone else or myself. I also very independent often working alone but willing to join a team when necessary. I find that hiking alone (I know that is not a good idea) or just being by myself outdoors is a great reward but that does not mean that someone else cannot join me. You just need to engage me in conversation and I may not shut up.

CPR Class

In March, the county provided a CPR class for docents and volunteers. Many came to learn how to give CPR to adults and infants, bandage a broken limb, help somebody choking on food etc...A great opportunity to learn how to do be able to save a life in learning the best and fastest way to react.



The Amazing Raven by Bob Fischer

There were eight of them. Large black birds wheeling, sailing, diving, soaring and rolling against the strong breeze looking as though they were having the time of their lives and then they disappeared over the hill. I see them and hear them often on our morning walks sometimes very close and at other times sailing over that big hill at the end of our little valley. Ravens truly are amazing birds with endless legends, myths, history and stories as well as facts about them. Google “bird raven” and you get 23,700,000 hits.

The Common Raven (*Corvus corax*) also known as the Northern Raven is the largest perching bird and the most widely distributed of all corvids, (crows, jays and magpies). It is a very intelligent bird, a bird with a sense of humor that plays tricks, a bird found throughout the northern hemisphere from arctic to temperate zones, including deserts, and islands in the Pacific Ocean, and up to 20,000 feet on Mount Everest. Everyone at Placerita Canyon knows the raven for its giant nests in the picnic area and its frequent presence. Ravens average 25 inches in length and weigh a little over 2.5 pounds. Some remarkable feats of problem-solving have been observed in the species, leading to the belief that it is highly intelligent. Over the centuries, it has been the subject of mythology, folklore, art and literature. “Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night’s Plutonian shore! Quoth the raven, ‘Nevermore’.” In many indigenous cultures, including those of Scandinavia, ancient Ireland and Wales, Bhutan, the the northwest coast of North America, Siberia and northeast Asia,



the Common Raven has been revered as a spiritual figure or god. The Common Raven has coexisted with humans for thousands of years and in some areas has been so numerous that it is considered a pest. Part of its success comes from its omnivorous diet; Common Ravens are extremely versatile and opportunistic in finding sources of nutrition, feeding on carrion, insects, cereal grains, berries, fruit, small animals, and food waste.

In recent years, biologists have recognized that birds engage in play. Juvenile Common Ravens are among the most playful of bird species. They have been observed to slide down snowbanks, apparently purely for fun. They even engage in games with other species, such as playing catch-me-if-you-can with wolves and dogs. Common Ravens are known for spectacular aerobatic displays, such as flying in loops or interlocking talons with each other in flight. They are also one of only a few species who make their own toys. They have been observed breaking off twigs to play with socially. Common Ravens have been observed to manipulate others into doing work for them, such as by calling wolves and coyotes to the site of dead animals. The canines open the carcass, making it more accessible to the birds. They watch where other Common Ravens bury their food and remember the locations of each other’s food caches, so they can steal from them. This type of theft occurs so regularly that Common Ravens will fly extra distances from a food source to find better hiding places for food. They have also been observed pretending to make a cache without actually depositing the food, presumably to confuse onlookers. Common Ravens are known to steal and cache shiny objects such as pebbles, pieces of metal, and golf balls. One theory is that they hoard shiny objects to impress other ravens. Other research indicates that juveniles are deeply curious about all new things, and that Common Ravens retain an attraction to bright, round objects based on their similarity to bird eggs. Mature birds lose this intense interest in the unusual.

Juveniles begin to court at a very early age, but may not bond for another two or three years. Aerial acrobatics, demonstrations of intelligence, and ability to provide food are key behaviors of courting. Once paired, they tend to nest together for life, usually in the same location. Instances of non-monogamy have been observed in Common Ravens, by males visiting a female’s nest when her mate is away. Breeding pairs must have a territory of their own before they begin nest-building and reproduction, and thus aggressively defend a territory and its food resources. Nesting territories vary in size according to the density of food resources in the area. The nest is a deep bowl made of large sticks and twigs, bound with an inner layer of roots, mud, and bark and lined with a softer material. The nest is usually placed in a large tree or on a cliff ledge, or less frequently in old buildings or utility poles. Females lay between three to seven pale bluish-green, brown-blotched eggs. Incubation is about 18 to 21 days, by the female only. However, the male may stand or crouch over the young, sheltering but not actually brooding them. Young fledge at 35 to 42 days, and are fed by both parents. They stay with their parents for another six months after fledging.

Like other corvids, crows, jays and magpies, Ravens can mimic sounds from their environment, including human speech. They have a wide range of vocalizations. Fifteen to 30 categories of vocalization have been recorded for this species, most of which are used for social interaction. Calls recorded include alarm calls, chase calls, and flight calls. Non-vocal sounds produced by the Common Raven include wing whistles and bill snapping. Clapping or clicking has been observed more often in females than in males. If a member of a pair is lost, its mate reproduces the calls of its lost partner to encourage its return.



There is so much to say about the raven I might have to write about in chapters.

References for this article include the National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America, The Cornell University Lab of Ornithology web page and Wikipedia and several sources of photos of birds on the internet.

Pacific Tree Frog and Springtime



At this time of the year, there is an added interest in visiting streams, ponds or washes at the end of the day; you will be greeted by a frog chorus. I lived many years along the wash in Valencia and that was always one of the first sounds to tell us spring was here.

Most breeding occurs at night. Males sit near the water's edge and use different types of vocalization to communicate with other males and females. Many people are familiar with the Pacific Frog "advertisement" call, which consists of a two-part : Kreek-eeck" sounds. Because Pacific tree frogs are common in Southern California, the sound of those chorus have been recorded and are in the background of many Hollywood movies.

The primary function of the call is to attract mates. Mate selection for the female is not a random process: the female Pacific Tree frog prefer to mate with males that make calls more frequently than other males (Witney and Krebs 1975) Additionally, large male frogs are more likely to mate with female frogs than smaller males (Benard2007) Nothing new there, I guess survival of the fittest (big muscles, strong voice) still made sense when you breed in a thought environment.

Aggressive encounters between males are common and another call is used: the encounter call which is a trilling sound which serves as a warning when another male gets too close. Sometimes, both males will make encounter calls until one retreats. However, the females are not attracted by the encounter call so the males need to settle their differences fast otherwise the females move on (Brenowitz and Rose 1999)--that might be a fun way to compare with human behavior!

In the mist of all those calls, females find their way to males. When female approaches a male, the male will move onto her back and grasp her under her forelimbs in a position known as "amplexus". The female will then swim out into the water to lay eggs on vegetation or debris. As the female lays eggs, the male will release sperm to fertilize the eggs. A single female frog can lay 500 to 1 250 eggs in a year (Wright and Wright 1947) the eggs are laid in multiple small clumps of 10 to 90. Females usually lay their eggs in shallow, calm water that has little action around it. If they survive, the embryos will hatch into tadpoles within one to three weeks. They feed using a beak-like structure to help scrape vegetation off surfaces.

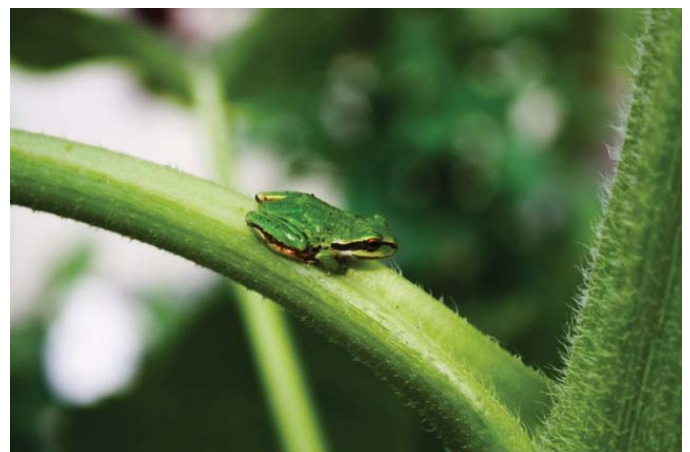
Metamorphosis happens about 2 to 2 ½ months later, however if the conditions are not good, the metamorphosis can be delayed until 5 months after hatching.

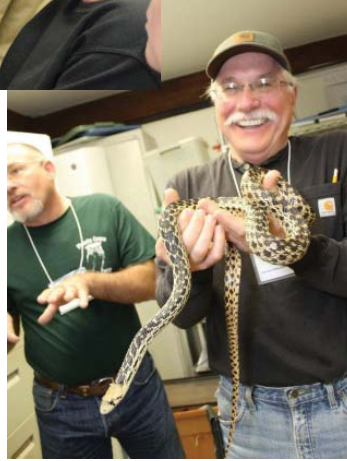
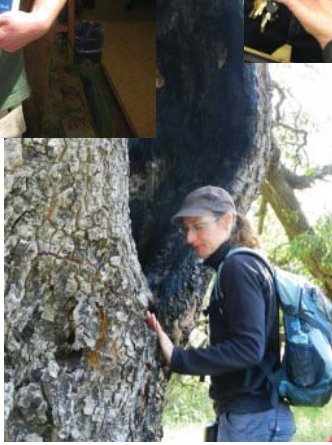
During the last stage of transformation from being a tadpole to becoming a frog, when the tadpoles have 4 limbs and a tail, they stop feeding for a short time while their mouth widens and their digestive system adjusts from herbivorous to carnivorous. When the little frog body is finally ready, they measure less than 1 cm (less than a dime if you are not metric)



Pacific tree frogs can be brown, green, and reddish with pale or white bellies so it is sometimes difficult to recognize them at first glance and they can change color seasonally to better match their environment. Their trademark is an eye stripe that stretches from the nose to the back of the shoulder. Their skin is covered in small bumps and they are slender with long and slightly webbed toes. On the end of each toe, there is a round sticky pad used to climb and sticking to surfaces. And yes, they can climb trees like their name would let you think but not too high, just to get them out of harms way if needed.

Ref: Wikipedia
Mfbenardgmail.com
californiaHeps.com





The Rattler

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*"We exist so children
and oaks
can grow together."*

NATURE CENTER ASSOCIATES OF
LOS ANGELES COUNTY