

The Acorn Gazette

SEPTEMBER—DECEMBER 2008



The Volunteer Newsletter for the Santa Rosa Plateau Ecological Reserve

The Challenge of Change

Special points of interest:

- New Interpretive venue
- VC Improvements
- Docent Training Dates
- P/T to F/T
- Find the hidden paw prints...

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Inside this issue:

Thank You & SRP project Updates	2
RSM Watershed Clean-up	2
Team Stream & Mt. lion research \$	2
Training Program Calendar	5
Saying Goodbye	6

As we've heard all our lives, change is the only constant. It is everywhere. We experience sudden changes around us every day, and gradual ones in the mirror every morning. Like it or not.

Some would argue that we are all accumulations of experiences. As our ancestor's lives have shaped our DNA and our own personal experiences have added to who we are, we are all fantastic combinations of nature and nurture. In essence, we build upon what we were dealt. And since we can often choose the experiences that shape our lives, we change ourselves every day.

On the Reserve, we aim to change people. Outdoor experiences on the Plateau are transformative. No one is the same after seeing a bobcat slink through grasses stalking prey. Who can deny a change in perspective

observing fairy shrimp and learning that those very animals could be many centuries old? Personal experiences with the natural world bring an appreciation for life that remains long after the hike is over. We are never the same following experiences outside.

In our continuing efforts to affect people's lives and creating an admiration for the Plateau, we will be adding new features to the Reserve that will help us reach our goals.

A recent change in the Visitor Center is the new artifact display case. Thanks to grant writer Docent Valerie Zecca and the Santa Rosa Plateau Foundation, the new addition is showcasing items from past human experiences on the Plateau. American Indian artifacts and ranching tools illustrate the impact the area has had on people, and vice versa.

The display case will soon be upgraded to become the Reserve's Audio Visual Presentation Center. With the technical expertise of Docent Leo Au, we are installing equipment to allow the 52 inch TV to be Power-Point compatible. Guest speakers and program presenters will be able to link their laptops to the television in order to transmit their program images directly to the flat screen!

The Park District has also purchased speakers for quality acoustics throughout the Program Room, and a remote control system to allow anyone staffing the front desk to easily start DVD programs for the visiting public to enjoy.

Since the Visitor Center is often the first stop for visitors, and creates an important first impression of the Reserve, we will soon be making capital improvements that support our belief in the

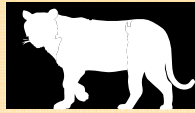
Carole's Reserve Manager Update:

September 27 8am—noon
and alternating Saturdays...

Team Stream meets every other Saturday at the Visitor Center – and then disperses to help to restore habitat, repair erosion and remove exotics on the SRPER. Come out and join the fun and be prepared to get dirty!



October 4 1 pm - 3 pm



**Mt. Lion
Research
Fundraiser**

2 Guest Speakers Visitor Center

Dr. Winston Vickers,

wildlife veterinarian, lead field biologist and

Mr. Mike Puzzo, lead biologist

October 25 8 am - 3 pm

Native Plant Sale SRP Visitor Center

Proceeds help the Mt. Lion \$ Project



November 1 8 am - noon

**Santa Margarita River
Watershed Clean-Up**

8 am meet at SRP Visitor Center to participate in roadside clean-up on the Reserve and in DeLuz Canyon Tee shirt and lunch provided for volunteers. Wear work clothes, sturdy gloves and shoes.



Direct specific questions to :

Carole Bell, Reserve Manager

cbell@tnc.org

677-6951 x223 voice mail

Kevin's Corner



Eileen and I want to send a big thanks to all the contributors for the wonderful wedding gift of a painting by Enwood Thompson. That was way over the top. I was able to take Enwood out and show him some of my favorite spots on the reserve. We will treasure his painting and remember you all.

The hot summer months are a little slow on the Reserve, but we did get some Eagle Scout projects completed. Brandon Wegrowski installed about 20 plaque stands on the native American plant garden near the Adobes.

Tenaja neighbor, Susan Frommer, made beautiful ceramic tiles describing each plant's use which we attached to the stands prepared by the scouts.



Daniel Check constructed and installed four new benches on the Lomas Trail and Sylvan Meadows. He did a great job.

More than 150 Eagle Scout projects on the reserve during my tenure here. The scouts have made a huge contribution, to say the least.



If you have not been in the visitor center lately stop by and check out what Ed and Mary Ruth have done to the interior. It looks nice!

Maintenance volunteers, George, Allan, and Brian, have been busy helping Ed keep up with many different projects on the reserve. Thanks to you guys for keeping things going for us.



By: Kevin Smith

INterp OUTakes



While some people are lucky enough to see a wild animal during an outing, most visitors leave the Reserve without witnessing these secretive creatures. Fortunately, we can share the animals through photographs. Thanks to local photographer Mark Larsen, we have brand new photographs of the Plateau's most charismatic creatures - bobcat, coyote, mule deer, tarantula, raptors, snakes and many more.

Guests may view these images on the latest technological equipment added to the visitor center through a DVD presentation, photos may be used by Docents leading interpretive programs, staffing the front desk, or conducting trail

patrol will be able to share these contemporary "portraits" with visitors with helpful hints to better the chances of experiencing them in person. Since Mark has offered to continually update this collection with new photographs, we will continue to inspire visitors with our local residents.

With our new animal photographs, we will have many new opportunities for interpretive experiences on the trail. Ask the group you are with if they've ever seen television programs about animals. You know, Animal Planet, Discovery Channel, PBS. Ask them if they think the people filming those animals simply walked down the trail with a camera saying, "Ooh! Look at that bobcat!" or "Wow! There's a deer!" While you're saying these words pretend your filming or taking pictures. Hamming it up always grabs

extra attention. Seeing, or filming, animals in the wild, is very difficult.

In order to get those animals filmed for documentaries, filmmakers had to be very quiet and still to get those animals on film so as not to frighten them away. Mark frequently walks quietly down the trail and has had a lot of success taking the photos that you will share. Consistently remind people where they are - a wild place where large creatures (us), and loud noises often signal danger.

The Reserve has many inhabitants. With a little understanding, quiet behavior, and subtle reminders, people can experience and appreciate more, and be touched personally by more than just images.



Continued from front page

importance of a Plateau experience.



Park District planners, Reserve staff and the landscape design firm

David Neault Associates have begun the planning process for a patio and program area to be built behind the Visitor Center. The project, that will begin construction in June 2009, will also include a new front gate, entryway and expansion of the parking lot.



A native plant garden will also allow visitors to walk the grounds and learn about the varied plants and plant communities that make the Plateau unique.

As more people seek quality, and yes, life-altering, experiences, the Reserve becomes an ever more important part of the community and people's lives. While protecting the Plateau's physical qualities through education programs

and rules enforcement, we also continue to impact the lives of all those who visit. Nature nurtures those spending time in the outdoors.

On the Reserve, we have the privilege of sharing a true natural wonder, while positively shaping and improving peoples' lives.



By: Rob Hicks

Docent Training 2008-09

Visitor Center events are boxed.

Murrieta Senior Center are not.

October 4 – Welcome and Orientation: An introduction and synopsis of the Santa Rosa Plateau's natural and cultural features, including a history of the Ecological Reserve, an introduction of site staff, and an outline of the duties and responsibilities of a Volunteer Docent.

October 11 – Rock of the Ages: The geologic history of southern California is a dynamic process having shaped everything around us, docent Tom Chester will illuminate this dramatic story and help us appreciate the Plateau's place in an ancient and ever-changing landscape.

October 25 – Family Wildlife Day: Join us as we host an event for people to visit and enjoy the unique and exciting animals of the Plateau. Guest presenters will share pet animals that have wild relatives on the Plateau while volunteers help run activities and fashion crafts creating a fun and educational experience for all. *Volunteers please sign-up to help 11 am – 5 pm. Shifts available Please email Mary Ruth.*

November 1 – Santa Margarita Watershed Clean-up Day: Since 1996, we have removed trash from the roads through and around the Reserve to prevent garbage from reaching the Santa Margarita River and ocean. Join us from 8 am – noon; we'll meet at the Visitor Center. Please dress in work clothes, sturdy shoes and wear sun protection. A free barbeque lunch for volunteers follows the event. We'll work with Team Stream to accomplish this worthy goal.

November 8 – Conservation on a Regional Scale: The Plateau's Reserve is only a part of the ecological puzzle. Eco-regional Ecologist Zach Principe of The Nature Conservancy will help us appreciate the interdependence of the region's biological systems while Beth Principe will share her research into one of the southern California's most threatened and misunderstood animals – the southwestern pond turtle.

December 6 – A Sea of Chaparral: Chaparral is California's most common yet misunderstood plant community. Richard Halsey of the California Chaparral Institute will illuminate the green mystery that is chaparral, and help us appreciate a habitat that hides tremendous ecological and recreational opportunities.

December 13 – Ethnobotany: An intimate knowledge of plants and their uses enable people to live on the Plateau for thousands of years. A recently co-authored book by James Adams and Cecilia Garcia helps readers learn of local plants, their diverse uses, and particular hazards. Jim is an Associate Professor of Pharmacology at USC, and Cecilia is a Chumash Healer. Together they will share traditional uses of plant species found on the Plateau, including their utilitarian and medicinal characteristics.

January 10 – TARANTULA!: Rosemary Kraft has been observing and recording the behavior of tarantulas on the Plateau since 1994 and is a member of the American and British Tarantula Societies. Besides her intimate knowledge of the area's species, she will be bringing specimens from her collection that includes species from around the world. Come learn about an amazing animal of the Reserve and live to tell about it!

January 17 – A Regional History: The human history of an area changes dramatically over time. The Santa Rosa Plateau is a part of a region that has a long and rich history of human activity. Join us as we travel through time and use pieces of the past to paint a clearer picture of what makes this place unique, yet connected.

February 7 – America's Last, Great Cat: The mountain lion outlasted the American lion and the saber-tooth cat, though the future of this ancient survivor in the Santa Ana Mountains is in doubt. Reserve Manager Carole Bell and Biologist Mike Puzzo will share the most recent data from studies conducted on the Reserve, and how these studies illustrate the needs and importance of this last large carnivore.

February 14 – Final Words and Docent Graduation! As the busy season approaches, we'll prepare ourselves with some important information and activities that will help us professionally serve springtime visitors while protecting the Reserve. We will also hold a graduation ceremony for all of our new docents!

News Updates



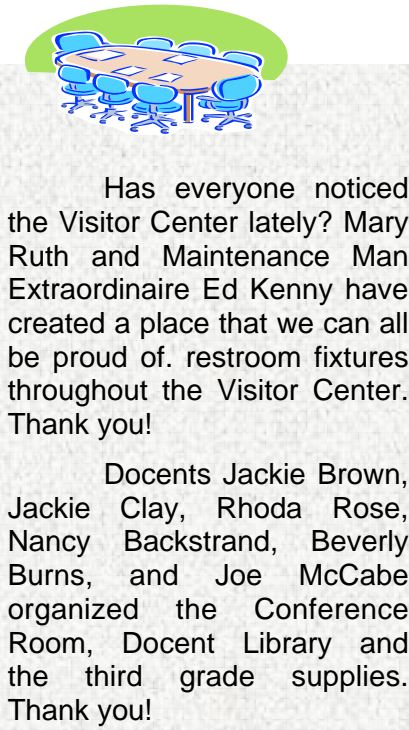
As you have noticed, we have made changes in the docent training described on page 4 of the newsletter.

One reason we are restructuring the way we conduct annual docent training is to create an opportunity for the community to learn more about their neighbors, the wild animals which live near to their neighborhoods. We plan to reach out to the residents who are living so close to animal habitats. The annual training will be offered at the Visitor Center at the new Senior Center in Murrieta. By advertising these programs in the local community and making them available to everyone interested, we hope to raise awareness and appreciation of the Plateau, while creating a stronger connection with the local community. The Plateau is a treasure, and the more people that know about it, the more valuable it becomes.

As we all grow and change together in creating new events, programs, and interpretive displays, we continue our goal of sharing and protecting this place that is like no other. Centuries of time have created its features and inhabitants, and in sharing it with others we promote the change that only it can achieve in the people that visit.

Several aspects of training will remain the same. Classes will still begin at 9:30 am and finish at noon. Fabulous guest speakers and SRP staff will hold enjoyable, educational and stimulating programs. Please join us.

Thank You!



Gardening Volunteers



Full Time Adventure

The Riverside County Park District agreed that as the Reserve continues to grow in visitation and services, we could use more help. Now we will expand more effectively with Mary Ruth as **full-time** Office Assistant II.

Family Wildlife Day

Volunteers are needed to help with the fun community event planned for Saturday, **O c t o b e r 2 5**.

Wild Wonders animal program at 1:30 pm will be a highlight of the day. Park Interpreter, Rob Hicks joins docents as they present creative, hands-on activities to educate and entertain children ages 2 - teen. Volunteers are sought for a variety of tasks. Please join us for several hours; or from 11am - 5 pm.

Volunteers who love to nurture plants are gathering in early winter to trim, bundle, prune and improve the planted areas around the Visitor Center, kiosks, and front gate area.

The group will meet twice a year under the skilled direction of Susan Frommer.

To sign-up please contact:
Mary Ruth, 677-6951

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Saying Goodbye

On September 10, 2008 we said goodbye to a long-time co-worker – the gopher snake named Grandpa. Donated to the Reserve nearly a decade ago, Grandpa helped many people become more familiar and comfortable with those of the slithering kind.

If the family that donated him were correct in their tale that they kept him as a pet for twenty years, then he was a world record holder for longevity in captive gopher snakes. Whatever his actual age, he was a perfect ambassador for all snakes. His mellow disposition and attractive physical features made him a favorite among visitors and docents alike.



Thanks Grandpa.