

Hello Nature Friends Fall is here! Even if the

days are quite warm, the nights are getting cooler. The length of the days are becoming shorter, so the leaves

are starting to get golden.

You have to watch carefully around you in Southern California to notice the first signs of fall, but they are happening all around you.

The Nature Center is going through many exciting changes: this year, the school groups started early and many outreaches were booked in advance.

Docents, you are doing a great job and our guests are taking notice!

The amphitheater is finished and so is the first phase of the Braille Trail. Phase 2 will bring educational panels along the trails, and the first one should be installed very soon.

Come to Placerita and enjoy the new season. Happy Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas to all.



What About the Little Ones?

You know the very little children who have such a short attention span and who do not understand big words? How do you make them fall in love with Nature? So very often, it is an interest throughout life, starting at an early age. I have seen those big eyes, the first time I told them not to step on the ant but rather to see if it is carrying something. They get it, they are interested right away... but somebody has to show them that the world around them is interesting and full of secrets worth discovering.

Andrea Donner knows that, and she is starting a Pre-School committee. Docents are going to get special training with Lauren Bergh who teaches "Growing up Wild." The plan is to start a pre-school program on the 2nd Saturday of the month, starting in January, from 9.30AM to 10.30AM.

It would be a wonderful hour of songs, stories, crafts, a short animal show and short hikes or whatever they can fit in one hour. We send our best wishes to all involved with this new program, and we will be delighted to welcome the little ones to the Nature Center.



The Rattler

Sponsored by the Placerita Canyon Nature Center Associates 19152 Placerita Canyon Road, Newhall, CA 91321 www.placerita.org (661) 259-7721 *Placerita Canyon Nature Center* **Over 50 Years of Nature Education** November-December, 2017





Our Yearly Tradition at the Hollywood Bowl

There are many advantages to being a docent at Placerita. We get a strong nature education, but music education would not be one of the advantages that come to your mind.

However, as a non-profit organization, the County sends us each year some tickets for one evening at the Hollywood Bowl and we are very grateful for that. This year, we enjoyed "An Evening with Mozart" music, and the violin Concerto No. 5 was the great favorite because of the fantastic violinist Kristof Barati.



Docent Enrichment *by Sue Wallander*

Placerita Docents held another of their monthly enrichment classes and the topic was Trees.

RuthAnn Murthy asked Sue Wallander to teach a class on Trees after Sue posted a review on FaceBook about a book she had read called "The Hidden Life of Trees" by Peter Wohlleben.

The book causes you to look at trees in a new way. The book has been on the best seller list for eight months. The German forester who wrote the book tells about how his life changed and how he looks at trees differently after he had worked with trees for decades.

He tells stories about how trees communicate through roots and fungus underground.

RuthAnn had also found a video about how trees communicate. It was called "Invisible Trees".

We were honored to host two of Santa Clarita's Urban Foresters, Robert Sartain and Fernando Mendoza. They talked about the job they do for the city especially working with Oak Trees.

Santa Clarita became a city just 30 years ago. The Oak Tree is on the city seal. Also, the first ordinance enacted by the city council was to protect the Oak Trees in Santa Clarita.

Robert and Fernando left brochures about the Oaks and the pests that attack them. They answered numerous questions from the docents.

It was a great educational experience and a great big Thank-You to everyone who participated.



The Amphitheater - Final Chapter by Fred Seeley

The new PCNC amphitheater is virtually complete. We were very excited to partner with the County Parks and Recreation to make this ADA compliant facility happen. Thanks to a wonderful donation we were able to pay for all the materials and the County graciously provided design and project management, labor and equipment, and overall supervisory services for the project.

The amphitheater has 52 7-foot benches which should seat about 250 attendees. They weight about 750 pounds each so don't anticipate a theft problem! The benches up front are arranged to leave space for wheelchairs to be parked next them so friends and family can sit together.

The stage needs a few days of carpenter time and we are also planning to put a big wide concrete sidewalk from the handicap parking to the kiosk at the start of the Braille trail.

We decided to put a seating bench all across the back of the seating area to keep water from washing away the rock dust base.

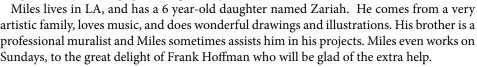
Please stop by the bridge and take a look at it. You will be pleasantly surprised! We look forward to putting it to good use in the near future.



Meet Miles Butcher

Miles is our new Grounds Maintenance Worker II, and we are so glad to welcome him to Placerita. Miles used to work at Whittier Narrows, so he knows what a Nature Center is all about. He has a lot of experience in trails and plants. His family used to own a nursery in the 1980's, right here in Santa Clarita.

He worked for 5 years in Chimayo Youth Conservation Corps where he did a lot of trail work and maintenance. He has an Associate degree in Audio. You can be sure that Ron Kraus was delighted to hear that, and he showed Miles how to operate the video equipment right away.



Welcome Miles, we hope you will feel at home at Placerita very soon.





Irene Heerlein is Our Little Mountain Goat

Irene is getting to be quite the professional mountain climber, and she sends us the most incredible photos from her expeditions all over the United States and Europe. We are always in awe of a docent taking it to the extra level and sharing her adventures - but then we were deeply concerned when we received this message from Irene: "Yesterday started great but ended in a disaster.... Tried for the second time to summit Middle Palisade in the Sierra, but a large boulder hit my big toe

at 12,500ft. Still managed to hike back the 6 miles to the car, but when I took off my shoe, all was bloody. Today I learned I have multiple fractures in my big toe with two of them being open."

Irene, you walked 6 miles like this! She added "Yes, I could feel something in my shoe and thought it was a stone, but it was my bone sticking out!"

You will be relieved to know that Irene had surgery very quickly after that, and is healing nicely. We send her our very best wishes for a prompt recovery.



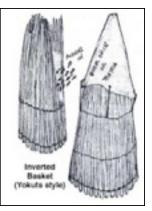
A New Granary by Denny Truger

"Last week while on a trip to Yosemite, I visited the Piute Native American display and saw their granary. This gave me the idea to ask the board of directors if I can put a granary in our Tataviam display, which the board of directors

approved.

Because I couldn't find an example of a Tataviam granary I chose one from the Central Valley Yokuts Indians from the Bakersfield area. I believe their style would be similar to the ones the Tataviam would have used because they used materials that we have in abundance in Placerita and are very easy to construct."

Keep an eye on the Tataviam display as Denny will be in the process very soon of building his granary. Little bit by little bit, the display around the Tataviam dwelling is becoming one of the most interesting and complete Tataviam displays in existence.





An Interview with Lori Wolfe



Where did you grow up? I was born in Santa Monica and moved to Acton in 1972. I went to Palmdale High School and moved away to Costa Mesa until I married and had children and then moved back to Acton for 14 years and then moved to Santa Clarita in 2003.

What was your education? I feel like I am still being educated all the time and always need more. After high school I moved to Costa Mesa and went to Orange Coast College and studied photography. That led to a job taking pictures of houses for a while for realtors in Newport Beach. Then I went to Whitley College of Court Reporting in Garden Grove. In 2003 I started taking all the interesting classes at College of the Canyons and still attend off and on. In January 2018 I will be taking the Wilderness Training Course with the Sierra Club. And who knows

what after that, but it will be interesting and probably involve a lot of hiking and or the outdoors.

What was your work experience? After I retired from court reporting I volunteered with Special Olympics of Santa Clarita. I was a bowling coach at first and then I coached the bicycling team in the summer and skiing team in the winter for seven years. I participated in fundraising for various organizations and took care of my family. In 2012 I became certified at College of the Canyons to lead evidence-based classes in Healthier Living and falls prevention classes at our local senior center in Santa Clarita, Kaiser facilities and various other senior centers nearby and did that for a few years. Now I am a docent at Placerita Nature Center.

What is your family life? Married 36 years to my Larry. Two grown sons. I am going to be a grandmother in November of 2017. She will have a daypack and boots a.s.a.p.

How did your love of nature get started? I have always been riding bikes, hiking, skiing - you name it. Hiking Towsley Canyon daily got me really looking at the plants and animals because I just spent so much time there. Then I met people on the trails that knew so much more than I did and I wanted to learn more.

When did you come to Placerita for the first time? 2015 - Docent Training.

Hobbies? Hiking, camping, making the most of every day. I like to climb mountains.

Pets? Baxter. He is a great dog. I want a snake but I will have to do some more convincing with my husband.

Favorite aspects of being a docent? I love sharing the wonders of the outdoors with the kids who come to the nature center. The messages I seek to convey - you need nature as much as nature needs you. That is not just a bush, it is food and shelter for animals and maybe even you. Every plant, animal, rock and person has a role to play, so be responsible and respectful always to everyone and everything.

The benefits of being a docent? So many. The friends I have made at Placerita, the feeling of purpose when sharing our docent messages to the school kids, knowing that I have spent my time in a meaningful way helping out, these are some of the benefits.

Funniest question by a parent: Looking at chainsaw-cut logs -- "Do those logs break like that?"



What is a Craft Fair?

I know Jill Goddard and Ron Kraus designed a beautiful flyer to explain the event, but each year when we ask the docents of that year to help with the craft fair, we always see this look of panic on their faces: "I have never been to a craft fair. What happens there?" I will try to explain in a few words. It is our only fund raiser of the year but it is a lot of fun with only a gentle pressure to make a profit.

The major attraction is the holiday decorations that the guests will make. Those who know about this great opportunity from previous years will be waiting at the door before we are open! The docent room will be filled with all kinds of branches, seeds and pods and the smell is wonderful! Wreaths, wood logs and ribbons are sold and people assemble all the greenery on those bases, with the help of glue guns and floral pins.

They make the most spectacular holiday decorations. People help each other and are very proud of their results; such a friendly cooperation is a true joy to see. While the parents are busy, the children are having the time of their lives making special crafts involving glue, paint and sparkles! There is bird feeder pine cone making that is always a huge success. You roll a pine cone in a secret mixture of peanut butter that you then cover with bird seeds. People roll up their sleeves and enjoy the messy accomplishment.

Mari Carbajal very graciously accepted the management role for the craft fair again this year, and she has introduced many new ideas. Thank you so much Mari, it is a heavy load to take on your shoulders and we are grateful for your leadership.

Fred Seeley, one of the very active docents at Placerita, will be Santa again this year and we thank him in advance. Children can be a little shy at first when they see this tall Santa, but Fred has a lot of experience, as he used to be Santa for his company before his retirement. He is gentle and soft spoken and the candy canes in his bag make fear melt away.

Do not forget a visit to the gift shop where you can finish your holiday shopping. We hope all the docents will have a chance to help or to participate at the craft fair. It is a wonderful event where generation after generation gathers and has the opportunity to start the holiday season in a real family atmosphere.(Please check the flyer for dates and time of the event)



Breakfast of Champions



A few years ago, Phil Rizzo, a docent at Placerita who is not with us any longer, decided the summer was too long without his docent friends - so he planned a pot luck breakfast. We thought it was such a great idea that we have carried on the tradition ever since.

Much of the preparation for this event falls on Ron Kraus and Jill Goddard's shoulders. Ron brushes up on our nature education and Jill makes fantastic caps which are real works of art.

This year the caps were about bats, and were covered with close to 15 coats of paint. Thank you so much, Jill.

We started the morning with a great pot luck: thank you to the many docents who came to help set up the day before, and thank you to all the great cooks who made such a delicious buffet.

Ron put 2 new twists this year on the game "Are You Smarter than a Fifth-grader?" It was an electronic version, and took him many hours of preparation to get to this result. It was also a Museum challenge. All the questions had to do with what is inside the museum, and what can be found on our web page about the museum. I will say that it was challenging but we learned a lot!

The team "The Optimists" won first prize and the runner up was "The Trail Blazers". Congratulations to all. The winning team won of Jill's wonderful bat hats.

Roger Gibson could not attend the ceremony at Eaton Canyon in September, and we were delighted to do a little impromptu ceremony to give him his new name tag, celebrating 15 years of service at Placerita. Ron Kraus and Roger Gibson are the last 2 members from the class of 2002. Thank you, Roger, for 15 years of dedication and hard work. We notice and we appreciate.

Fall Kick-Off September 25

There are so many new projects at Placerita, that I won't even try to make a full list here for fear of overwhelming you. But I will touch lightly on some changes. Come check inside the museum, there is a new display showing what the Tataviam used, and comparing that to what we use now to do a similar job. Sue Wallander, Sue Sutton and RuthAnne Murthy planned this fun display that is going to change on a regular basis.

Ron Kraus explained about stream clearance to prevent flooding getting to the Walker cabin. He mentioned that Turkey mullein and cattail in the butterfly garden are abundant, and he thanked Sandra Balaram for keeping the cabin clean. He told us the Braille Trail's interpretive exhibits are in the planning stage.

We all went to sit for the very first time in the amphitheater, and Fred Seeley explained what has been done so far, and what the plans are for the future. It was an impressive and emotional moment for

many of us to see all that has been accomplished already. It is a fantastic addition to Placerita. Thank you, Fred Seeley, for your dedication to this project.

We went on the loop of the Hidden trail, which has recently been cleared, and the daring docents started to munch on the very abundant Hollyleaf cherries (while being careful not to chew on the poisonous pits).

There was a very large attendance to this fall kickoff, and it was wonderful to see so many eager docents at the start of the season. After a delicious snack, Lanita Algeyer reviewed the rules for taking the school groups on the trails.

Thank you all for your commitment to Placerita, and have a great fall!



Populus fremontii Fremont Cottonwood

Trail Treasures

By RuthAnne Murthy

Fremont Cottonwoods are deciduous trees that grow up to 100 feet tall. They were named after one of California's early explorers, John C. Fremont, the "Path Finder of the West." They are called "The Water Tree" because they grow in alluvial bottomlands and streambeds. They are one of the few fall color plants in the Santa Clarita Valley. They lose their green color as the chlorophyll concentrations drop as the hours of daylight decline. The leaves do not just fall off, on the contrary, the leaves are pushed off the trees in a process called abscission. Two hormones, auxin and ethylene, are sent to the cells near the petiole, the stem that hold the leaves to the branches, and that causes the leaves to "Get Off Me". Abscission conserves resources for the tree during the winter.

In the spring, catkins appear on the branches before the new leaves. There are separate male and female trees that need to cross pollinate. Then the heart-shaped leaves, delta shaped, form. They have flat petioles that allow the leaves to twist in the wind. The leaves are bright green and saw-toothed on the margins. The seeds are attached to fine cottony hairs that are wind dispersed. The tree produces up to 25 million seeds each year. The seeds are food for birds and small rodents.

Native Californians used the bark of Fremont Cottonwoods as an anti-inflammatory. We know now that the bark contains salicylic acid that is an ingredient in aspirin. They also used the wood for tools and saplings were

used for house poles.

So next time someone tells you they miss the fall colors, educate them about this Trail Treasure.



So YouThink Bird Watching is Boring!

By Rosemarie Regis



Well, this may surprise you but so did I at one time. Yes, I put up a hummingbird feeder just because I thought the beautiful little birds would be better viewed out of my window and I could see their many luminous colors up close. I then found there were different species of hummingbirds with many different colors and markings. Soon I was surprised by a much larger and colorful bird trying to slurp the sweet nectar from the feeder, I discovered it was a Hooded Oriole and then, a Bullock Oriole came to the feeder. So I bought an Oriole feeder. And eventually that is how I became a Birder and my interest in these amazing creatures led me on to Placerita Canyon Nature Center to become a docent. Now I lead The Bird Walk,

once a month, and we meet other Birders from all over the country and abroad! We learn from each other and enjoy sharing our knowledge of our local and migrating birds.

Recently, I was asked if there have been any unusual experiences during the bird walks, and I thought about the many times we had the excitement of viewing different birds that are not normally seen in our area. Last year one of our participants spotted a Northern Saw-whet Owl, which has never been docu-

mented as being seen in our area. It was being harassed by the local birds and I'm sure was frightened by them, but that was how it was discovered.

Also, on another walk we heard a chipmunk loudly scolding away. Several minutes later as we walked past a tall Sycamore tree, we again heard its chattering and there it was, being held tightly by a Red-shoulder Hawk.

Another time we witnessed a Red-tail Hawk, flying away carrying a Rattlesnake.

So you see, bird walks are not at all boring! Hope you will soon join us on a new adventure, bring your binoculars and water and join us on the 2nd Saturday of each month at Placerita Canyon Nature Center, 8 A.M



Eaton Canyon Ceremony and Placerita Recognition

RuthAnne Murthy received her official recognition as Volunteer of the Year for Placerita Canyon.

Ron Kraus was recognized for his 15 year dedication to PCNC. He says his time at the nature center has been a very satisfying experience.

"Besides providing a valuable service to the public by leading nature hikes and participating in other docent activities, you get to meet a lot of nice people and make friends with similar-minded folks," Ron Kraus said. "Plus, there is always something new going on at the nature center. You find something different everyday you show up to volunteer – different animals, maybe some wildflowers you didn't see last time you were there and a lot of fresh new faces eager to learn about nature."

Docent badges were also handed out to the following PCNC volunteers for their years of service:

- 15 years: Roger Gibson (received badge last month).
- 10 years: Linda Ioerger and Paula Parr.
- 5 years: Lanita Algeyer, Jim DeLill, Andrea Donner, Michael Elling, Robert Grzesiak Irene Heerlein, Laura Skorich and Denny Truger. Lunch was served and it was a great opportunity to meet the docents from the other Nature Center.

Jack Levenberg was Master of Ceremony. Lanita Algeyer was in charge of ordering the food and Teresa Jacobs was in charge of the preparation for the ceremony.

Thank you all for making this a success and a very special day.

Volunteer-Naturalist Training Placerita Canyon Natural Area



Become a Volunteer-Naturalist!

- . Learn about the natural environment
- · Teach children about nature
- Make a difference in your community

No special background needed, just a willingness to attend training and to volunteer at least twice a month.

Training Starts Tuesday, January 9th, 2018 Classes meet Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9AM to 12 Noon

Volunteer-Naturalists attend a 9-week training program. Topics include native plants, ecology, insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals, geology, history, and interpretive techniques. Instructors include noted professionals in the various fields. The cost of the training is \$45, which includes all training materials (instruction manual, field guide, T-shirt, and related items.) Minimum age for Volunteer-Naturalists is 18. Visit our website (placerita.org) for further information regarding the Volunteer-Naturalist program.

Other volunteer opportunities are also available at Placerita Canyon Natural Area that don't require the 9-week training program, such as office helper and trail maintenance team member. Bilingual (English/Spanish) volunteers are needed.

For further information call Placerita Canyon Natural Area, (661) 259-7721 or Email ron@placerita.org



1st Meeting of 3rd Year of Invasive Plants Removal/Restoration by Robert Grzesiak

Folks hadn't forgotten. Ingrid B, Maria Elena C, Sylvia A, Vicky C, Dan K, Mark H, Robert J, Robert G, and Omar P showed up to start the 3rd year of weeding. We focused on the Braille/Oak of Golden Dream Trail.

Starting from the entrance and working toward the bridge before the Oil Drilling display,

we pulled weeds all the way to the creek bank. Wow! 24 55-gal. bags (18 volunteer hours) were filled to the very top. The victims were giant Black Mustard, giant non-native Goose-foot/Pigweed, Smilo grass, Star Thistle, and a few creek Tamarix. Jeff Crosby said it look good afterwards.

We found juvenile Sugarbush, Coast live-oak, morning glories, deerworts, vervain, a very nice Hairy Ceanothus and a few flowering lotus plants.

For November, we will probably all walk upstream in the stream from the Nature Center toward Walker Ranch all the while pulling juvenile Tamarix before they suck the stream dry - thanks Dan K. for the heads up. It should be a great botany, post fire hike. Come and join us.



Docent Training

Is it a shock to see the flyer for Docent training in mid-October? This is part of the little mystery of publication. As you can see, this Rattler is for the month of November and December.

So, yes indeed, the docent training always starts early in January, and it requires some planning ahead. If you are already a docent, you have to make sure that all your Tuesday and Thursday mornings are free until March. You know how complex and detailed all the information is for this training. I have taken the training 32 times, and I can tell you that there are always some new details to remember, and new teachers who cover the topic in a different way. Sometimes new facts are discovered and sometimes, it is just a question which allows you to learn a new name for the same bird!

If you are not a docent, if you have some time on your hands, if you want to follow a high-level class, if you like Nature and want to make friends, you found the place. Come to the office, get a feel for the Placerita Canyon Nature Center and the people who work there or who are volunteers. You won't regret it!



Southern Alligator Lizard

by Sue Wallander Jeff found this little guy in the tarantula room. It just walked in off the street! Jeff picked it up and

realized it was able to be handled, unlike Jaws. It is also an attractive animal not the usual grey and black but kind of an orange color. When I was holding it I noticed 2 little black spots on its neck. I

Then I saw Dave Stives walk through. I showed him the new lizard and he scraped the 2 little deer



mites off with his fingernail. There is actually an exhibit in the museum showing a lizard with deer https://commons.wikimedia.org mites.

They do not get Lyme Disease from the ticks.

Facts about Alligator lizards:

class - reptilla

family- anguidae

genus- Elgaria (possibly for an Elgar, a pun on alligator)

species-Elgaria multicarinata

The common name "alligator lizard" is a reference to the fact that the back and belly scales of these lizards are reinforced by bone just as they are in an alligator.

tried to scratch it off thinking it was a scab from being bitten.

They range in size from 3-7 inches, snout to vent. Including the tail it can reach a foot.

It has small legs on a round thick body. It has a tail that can be 2x as long as the body. The prehensile tail is used by the lizard for balance when climbing. It can drop its tail if attacked. The tail when detached will continue writhing for 4-5 minutes to detract an attacker. It can grow a new tail. You can tell if it has regrown a new tail. It has a dark line like a scar.

Scales are keeled (think of the construction of a small wooden boat)

The lizard is native to the Pacific Coast from Washington to Baja. It lives in diverse habitats; grassland, chaparral, etc. particularly in oak woodlands.

The diet is small arthropods, slugs, baby birds, bird eggs.

It is notable for vicious self defense, will bite and defecate.

Eggs are usually laid in May and June in decaying wood or plant material to keep the eggs warm. The eggs are the size of Jelly Bellies.



Fall-Winter 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. **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. NATURE EDUCATION An exciting new program at Placerita in conjunction with the Community Hiking Club. Every 3rd Sunday of the month at 2pm the PCNCA and the CHC will provide a free educational program open to the public. Changes may be made, so please call the center at 661.259.7721 to verify. Sunday, October 15 - Taxidermy by Olivia Miseroy. Sunday, November 19 - Bees by Chip Vannoy and Sue Sutton - There is no program in December. This program is offered on the 3rd Saturday of each month. This program begins at 7pm and **TWILIGHT HIKES** runs for about an hour. Park staff and the Nature Center Docents split groups and courses through the different trails in the dark. Come howl at the moon--if there is one that night! Second Saturday of each month from 11:30 to 12:30 for children 6 years and above. Nature JUNIOR RANGERS topics and a small hike, this new program is provided by Ranger Frank Hoffman. **CRAFT FAIR** December 2 and 3, from 10.AM to 3.00 PM. (see flyer and article for details) For PCNCA members only - Saturday, December 9th at 6.00pm. HOLIDAY DINNER