

Dear Nature Friends,

All our best wishes for 2021, we hope that you will be happy and healthy.

A few board members made a special request that we create a Recognition Edition of the Rattler, and we are happy to make this happen. We were disappointed that we were not to be able to have a recognition ceremony because of the restrictions of Covid-19. It is important to recognize the participation of all our volunteers, and especially those who reached a milestone at Placerita. Thank you to all for all your efforts – you make Placerita a better place. We noticed, and we are very grateful.

Docent Training 2021

by Ron Kraus

Because of the ongoing shutdown of the Nature Center caused by Covid-19, we will not be doing docent training starting in January 2021. We are hopeful that the restrictions will be lifted as the pandemic subsides and will continue to monitor the situation with the County Parks Department. If it is possible to have a 2021 docent class, we will certainly try!



Placerita Canyon Productions

By Cindy Gold

The camera will be rolling along the trails and in the Nature Center as we shoot our first Virtual Fieldtrip video. The 20 to 30-minute video will be offered to schools and the Sierra Club to give children a chance to experience the joys of the Placerita Canyon Nature Center online. It will include hiking a few areas of the Ecology and Heritage trails, seeing and learning about some of our birds and reptiles, and exploring the taxidermy displays in the classroom and Interpretive Center. We will be casting a few docents to lead the hike, show the animals, and explore the Nature Center. It will be a labor of love, because we miss all the children and school groups who enlivened and explored our trails. Lights! Camera! Action!



The Rattler

Sponsored by the Placerita Canyon Nature Center Associates
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www.placerita.org (661) 259-7721

Placerita Canyon Nature Center
Over 50 Years of Nature Education
January-February 2021

Editor: Evelyne Vandersande Publisher: Heidi Webber

New Closing Time for Placerita

Effective Wednesday, December 2nd, 2020, I have changed our park gate closing sign to 5:00 pm (from 6:00 pm). Thanks and have a safe Holiday Season!!

Frank Hoffman
Recreation Services Supervisor



Trail Treasures

By RuthAnne Murthy



Big Berry Manzanita
Arctostaphylos glauca

Big berry manzanita is an evergreen shrub/tree that is common to the chaparral below 4,500 feet. It is part of the heath family, and it is found from the Bay area to Baja California. They can grow up to 25 feet tall and sometime live for as long as 1,000 years. They often do not recover after a fire, but fire is necessary for the seeds to germinate.

The red-brown branches are smooth and twisted into sculptural shapes. The bark tends to peel which adds to the plant's beauty. The shrub/tree grows very slowly and produces a very hard wood.

The ovate (oval) leaves are a light gray-green and are 1-2 inches in length. The leaves are attached to the branches vertically so the leaves never have direct sun on them which helps them to get through the hot summers. The new leaves have smooth margins (edges) whereas the older leaves have toothed margins. The leaves are attached to the branches on ¼ inch long stalks.

Big berry manzanitas flower from December through March. They are white with pinkish undertones. The 3/8-inch flowers look like little lanterns in clusters called panicles. The flowers attract carpenter bees and bumble bees. In turn, the bees pollinate the manzanita.

The flowers then produce drupes (fruit) that look like little apples hence the name manzanita which means little apple in Spanish. They are about ½ inch in diameter and spherical with a sticky exterior. The drupes start as a dull green, then ripen to a red-brown, and on to a dark brown. The drupes are edible and quite delicious.

Native Californians used several of the parts of the manzanita. The berries were used to make a sweet drink and were also eaten fresh. The Indians would crush the seeds to make flour that they utilized to make a mush or thin cakes. The leaves were made into a wash or lotion that was smoothed onto poison oak rash. They also used the leaves to make a tincture to relieve stomachaches. The hard wood of the branches was perfect to use as skewers for roasting fish and other meats.

The Mountain Manzanita Trail at Placerita Canyon Natural Area is named after this plant. There hikers can see the plant, and there is also some manzanita on Canyon Trail. Once you stop and admire the beauty of manzanita, it will be a trail treasure you will always cherish.



Big Thunder

by Jim Crowley

History... When the Acorn Amphitheater was completed PCNCA rented costly audio/visual equipment and enjoyed several events in the new venue. After analysis, our Board of Directors approved the purchase of the system on Feb 4, 2020 and agreed we could save money by purchasing our own Audio/Visual equipment comparing costs over a five-year period. The cost included Jim Crowley constructing a storage box and it would provide a safe method of transport from the nature center to the amphitheater. However, it was a challenge to understand what we needed.

Enter the evil virus. This put the brakes on the Boom Box construction effort. Our original plan was to have a movie in May 2020...LOL... Time suddenly was a problem and then it reversed itself.

The bulk of the Audio/Visual components arrived by April 2020 and construction ended by July. Quarantine was another term for solitary confinement...remain home! So, I was cut off from my other home, Home Depot. Materials became a challenge. I relied on my own supply of wood inventory and I renewed my childhood skills. I digress.... Back then I especially enjoyed trash day in our L.A. neighborhood. What an adventure to hunt for new treasures. I recall claiming an auto transmission, a lawn mower and a diamond ring in a can of ashes (In LA people burned trash in the past. The city collected the ashes) go figure.... My youth was renewed as I exercised now walking around my neighborhood while maintaining a quarantine from the world. It was amazing to see what people were trashing Err, clearing out. The result was about 25% of the Boom Box was from reclaimed/repurposed "stuff" People giving away tables, shelves, and other assorted wooden challenges. Eventually I gained enough courage to enter my other Home to obtain needed materials and a variety of their best "oops" paint at bargain prices. The challenge was to fit everything into the storage Boom Box while making use of my renewed treasure supply while in solitary confinement. And stay on budget. Which I did.

My father taught me tool skills and how to "make" and "fix" things. "If I can't fix it...it isn't broke." He encouraged me to participate in the Soap Box Derby. I had to build my own wooden car, sort of a Flintstone upgrade. Woodworking has continued to be fun.

The photos show the result. I am thankful for computer technology and a drawing program to draw, draw, and re-draw without cutting any wood and to fit all the pieces snugly inside a box. BTW, if you should encounter a nuclear blast or earthquake, this box would be a good place to hunker into.

We all look forward to reopening of the park, the school kids, teaching within the buildings and all other Docent duties. In the Acorn Amphitheater we can again offer entertainment and watch movies such as your all-time favorites "Destiny Rides Again" or "My Darling Clementine." Perhaps we can get a live group to sing, dance...or do something. Anyone playing "Lady of Spain" or "turn on the Bubble Machine" on an accordion will probably be removed. And yes, perhaps an open mike amateur Capella singing night. You could be discovered. How about a picnic dinner night at PCNC with kids telling ...? kid jokes? Endless possibilities.

In a way I am thankful for the quarantine, forcing time to read books and project time, hence a means to keep one's sanity while in confinement.

I am looking for a few individuals to work together and develop a team that will eventually set up and operate the equipment. A back-up team.

BTW, the box is safely hidden away being guarded by two rattle snakes and an angry Badger.





Volunteer of the Year and the

Junior Volunteers of the Year

Robert Grzesiak and the Junior volunteers of the year, Lillian Jade Hon and her sister Sophia Belle Hon would have gotten special recognition at the annual awards at Eaton Canyon. Because of the state-wide isolation mandates, the awards were unable to be held. The next couple of pages will try to step into that gap just a little bit, honoring our Five-Ten-Fifteen years and the wonderful Class of 2020.



Five Years



Erica de Poor



Sandra Cattell



Mark Hershey



Kathie Hovore



Koreen O'Connell



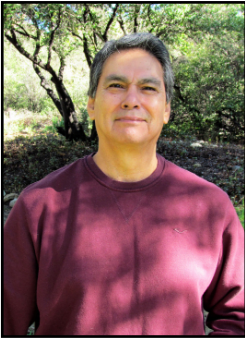
Glenda Perl



Robert Starks



Ten Years



Marc Alva



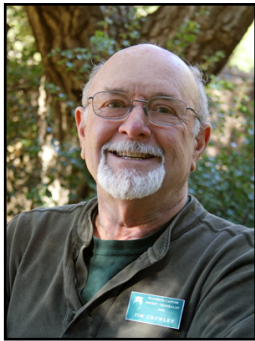
Sandra Balaram



Ingrid Brown



Maria Elena Christensen



Jim Crowley



Joan Fincutter



Teresa Jacobs



Kathryn Kazmer



Dan Kott



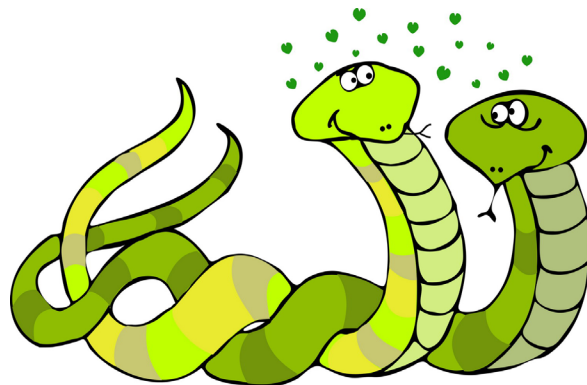
Jack Levenberg



Don Regis



Fred Seeley



Fifteen Years

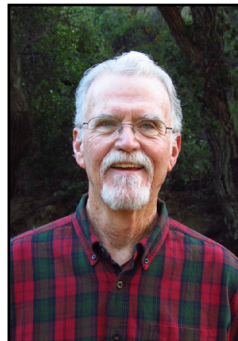


Rosemarie Regis

**2020 Docent Class
Congratulations!**



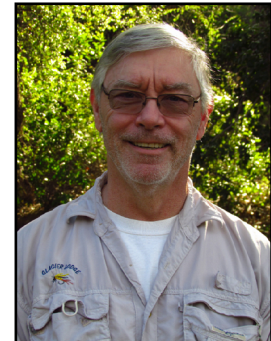
Liz Bastiani



Pat Coskran



Sondra Fox



Fred Heiser



Linda Jensen



Sue Ann Looper



Barbara Marxmiller



Chelsea Morel



Joe Morelli



Sue Murachanian



Angela Myers



Daniel Peck



Kelly Ramnarine



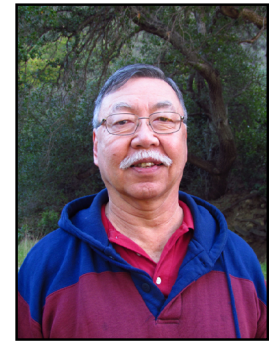
Laura Skorich



Gayle Tietjens



Suzanna Wood



Ken Yasukawa

A couple of our new docents added a few words to their photos so we can get to know them a bit better. Hopefully soon, we will get to know all of the Class of 2020 a whole lot better!

Ken Yasukawa

I am an ornithologist and retired professor of biology. My wife Sondra Fox and I did docent training shortly after moving to Valencia in June 2019.

Sondra Fox

I am a retired teacher specializing in development of young children. I love spending time with family and friends, reading, and enjoying the plants and wildflowers of this lovely area of the country.

Pat Coskran

As a Special Education Teacher, I am loving seeing Placerita Canyon through the eyes of my students with their unfiltered, wonder-filled appreciation

Liz Bastiani

I love my llamas and also planting and digging in the dirt.

Sue Murachanian

I am from SCV and Placerita Canyon has always been one of my favorite places to spend time outdoors!

Linda Jensen

I am fascinated with all aspects of our magnificent planet Earth, both above and below the surface. I am happiest when outdoors and that is why the Placerita Nature Center is the ideal place for me to volunteer.



Placerita Nature Tots

Exploring Nature with Young Children

Placerita Nature Tots is a free program.

Registration opens the 1st of each month and ends 2 days before the actual program.

Please email your registration to: nature_tots@placerita.org

Please include your child's and your name and email address.

You will receive a confirmation and on the day of the program you will get a Zoom invitation

Nature Tots meets on the second Saturday of each month at 10:00.

There is no age limit, but it is appropriate for young children

This program is online using Zoom during the Covid-19 pandemic.

January 9: California Quail

February 13: Woodrat

March 13: Birds of Placerita