



Holiday Craft Faire, 2021

By Heidi Webber

In July, the county gave the PNC the go-ahead to have our annual fund-raiser, the Holiday Craft Faire. We were all quite happy to hear this and plans were made to go through our supplies and start ordering wreaths and whatever else we needed. Then the Covid numbers started rising again.

Mari Carbajal, the chairperson for this event, Glenda Perl, Bill and I started talking about logistics on how to pull off a safe and profitable Holiday Craft Faire. Mari had some great ideas about making kits of the craft, (we have two that could be done), buying a wreath or yule log and then having X amount of time to gather greens, a pre-made ribbon by Traci, and then leave, so the next person or two could then gather their greens. All this would be on the patio.

Then we started thinking about how this could be done within potential county mandates, keeping in mind the awareness of public gatherings. Questionnaires about exposure or how you feel? (Think going into many public areas right now). Waivers? Mask mandates? Lines out the parking lot of patrons standing six feet apart? What if someone attended and at some point became ill, would Placerita be held liable? Publicity fallout? After several big family or group-oriented holidays, would the numbers rise again? Would the county change course and forbid any gatherings over a certain number again? Any of the above scenarios are possible.

When all this was taken into consideration the consensus among the team is that this was way beyond our comfort level and Bill took this to the September board meeting and told them we wanted to cancel this year's event. Hopefully we can be closer to normal by next year and can have a fantastic Holiday Craft Faire in 2022.



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 2021

Editor: Evelyn Vandersande Publisher: Heidi Webber



Dear Nature Friends

Because this issue of the Rattler is for November and December, I will start by extending our best wishes for happiness and joy during the holiday season. Last year was a little bit challenging, to say the least, but we sincerely hope that you will be more content this coming year.

We are disappointed the annual Holiday Craft Fair could not take place, but the Covid restrictions made the logistics impossible to manage.

At this time, the docent training starting in January is still on the calendar. It might require some very creative moves, but everyone will try their best to make it possible. Many of our programs are available, so come out to enjoy the bird walk, botany walk, the family hike or Nature Tots. See the calendar section or check our web page at Placerita.org for detailed info.

Fall is always a beautiful season at Placerita, the temperature is finally cooling off after a long hot summer, and it is a joy to see dew on the grass early in the morning. The foliage might not be as striking as what you'll see on the East coast, but changes do occur. The photo above was taken from the top parking lot, so you do not have to search for long to see lovely color!

The migrating birds are here, and it is always a joy to see the white-crowned sparrow or the yellow-rumped warbler faithfully return in October. If you look carefully on the Botany trail, you can even discover some mushrooms. That is the joy of each season, to find those new little treasures waiting for those who search them out.

Thank you for reading this newsletter, we appreciate your interest, and we hope fall will bring you many joys and discoveries along the way.

It's a great time to come for a hike in Placerita!



*Bill and Graham, Central Park
Showing the inside of a snake mouth*

Did You Know?

By Heidi Webber

For the last 24 or so years, Bill and I have been doing outreaches for Placerita, bringing nature education to schools and community events in the Santa Clarita Valley. As I like to say, we take our program to the schools when they can't come to Placerita. We have also amassed a great team to work with. Glenda Perl, Erica de Poor, Jack Levenberg, Rick Brammer, Sandra Balaram, Sandra Cattell and Irene Heerlein have all been involved with the outreaches for many years.

We have taken Placerita Ambassadors to most of the elementary schools in the SCV, plus to pre-schools like Tutor Time. Community Events like River Rally, the Sheriff's Haunted House, the Sheriff's Chili Cook-off, and Arbor Day weekend at Central Park are just a few of the places we go to give Placerita a face to the public. It is amazing how often we hear "I've lived here for 5 years and never visited Placerita." Or that they have taken their children and now grandchildren to Placerita to hike.

What do we do at the outreaches? Our audience can be anywhere from Pre-K up to 3rd grade as 4th grades can come to Placerita on their field trips. After introductions, we usually start talking about spiders and snakes, showing whatever creatures we brought. Usually, one person talks while the others take the animal around for the kids to be able to see more clearly. After the spiders and snakes, we talk about local mammals, showing the pelts I acquired many years ago. We normally don't have a live mammal to show. Then we

bring out the raptors. If we can do it, I like to show an owl and a hawk. After this, the kids are so excited to be able to touch and examine the pelts and other displays we bring. Nothing alive is allowed to be touched, so we give them this. The program lasts the length of a class, around 50 minutes. If the class is learning something special, like owls, we will emphasize them. We often do four classrooms, sometimes splitting it into 2 different presentations.

A few years ago, Los Angeles City passed a law that animals aren't allowed to be shown or used for any purpose, so we can no longer go to the LAUSD or the libraries. Nowadays, we just do Santa Clarita as we like better staying closer to home.

Things have slowed down to almost a stop the last couple of years because of the pandemic, but we do have a couple events scheduled as things are opening up. We recently were at the River Rally, have an outreach scheduled at Sierra Vista, where we will do our almost annual Creepy Crawly Lunch Bunch outside so we won't be so tightly packed into the library, and are booked for the Arbor Day weekend next spring. There will always be a need to educate in nature, and we are quite happy to help in doing so.



Party Time for the Class of 2020

by Sondra Fox

The Docent Class of 2020 and the senior docents who participated in their docent training met for a potluck at Liz Bastiani's ranch on Saturday, September 11. It was a wonderful evening of reestablishing connections and visiting in a lovely natural setting! We enjoyed delicious food and interesting conversation. As a group we discussed upcoming events at Placerita, and ways to reconnect safely with the park as the pandemic continues.

The class of 2020 received their special recognition graduation certificates and expressed their sincere appreciation for all that the senior docents have done for them. Ron Kraus won the thank-you raffle. He received a comfortable stadium seat as the prize.

Look for him sitting comfortably at the upcoming amphitheater events!



Robbin Lee Day: Rest in Peace

December 7, 1946- October 4, 2021

Robbin was a Placerita docent in the 1980's, and started a puppet theater to explain the circle of life to the kids. Photos of her can be found in our press books. She did book illustrations, and was an avid photographer.

We were happy to see her come back in 2018 to take the Docent training. She told us that she had only great memories from Placerita. She had such a happy and cheerful personality and a huge smile. We will miss her.

Goodbye Sue and Allan Wallander

Sue became a docent in 2004, and Allan a volunteer shortly after. From the very beginning, we were impressed by Sue's work ethic and the passion she transferred from her teaching career to being a docent at Placerita. She was fun, but could still bring a crazy bunch of wild kids to silence and attention in an instant.

We watched with admiration and took notice. Right from the start she got involved in the education process and became one of the pillars supporting and creating our programs at Placerita. She decided to build her own program about the Tataviam, to bring this special education to all the interested schools. She contacted the Southwest Museum, which lent her different artifacts. She built some native American children's toys and weapons, and wove blankets made of rabbit hide. Her collection became quite extensive, and she actively participated in the docent training classes when the Native American classes were given.

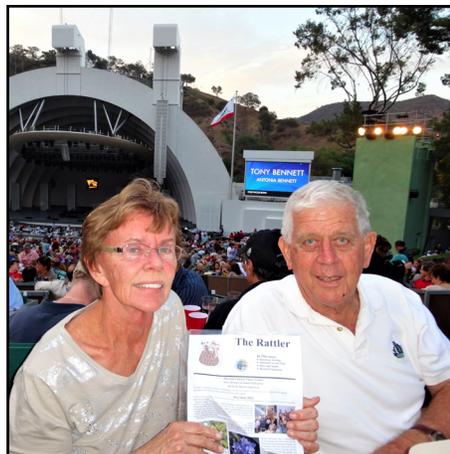
Lately she has been very involved in the Nature Tots program.

Allan enjoyed being a volunteer at Placerita, and for many years he and Johan Vandersande would mind the barbecue for our events. He was always in charge of the two-man saw in front of the cabin during our open house, and his laugh is completely contagious. During Docent training, he would always make huge amounts of food, telling us he always wanted to cook for lots of people, the way he did on the farm when he was young.

Allan's health has been failing for a few years, so they are now moving to Georgia to be close to their daughter.

Sue and Allan have given so much to Placerita, there is no way we can thank them enough for their support, ideas, friendship and time.

It is very hard to see them leave, but we wish them the very best in their new life. We will miss them dearly!



A Few Words from Sue Wallander

I retired 17 years ago, and just about that time there was an article in the Signal about a group of people from Placerita Nature Center called docents. The county was not going to pay the Placerita Superintendent in the next budget, so the park was going to have to close. But those docents had decided to raise enough money to pay the superintendent and keep the park open.

I liked the sound of those docents, and decided I would like to volunteer at Placerita. Then I found out about docent training, and I immediately signed up.

The docents did raise enough money for Placerita to remain open, and they did pay for Ian Swift to continue as superintendent.

Those docents don't tell you about how much money they have, or how much education they have. These

people tell you about what plants or birds they saw on their hike.

We never planned on leaving Placerita or California. But Allan's health is declining. Our daughter and son-in-law moved to Georgia two years ago, and they looked at some senior apartments near them. Our daughter is flying here to help drive to Georgia.

I will miss everything about Placerita. I will keep checking my computer for any news about Placerita.

Dear Friends, keep your love for Placerita and nature to keep this a wonderful spot. Much love to all.



Recognition Ceremony



The Nature Center Associates of Los Angeles County held the annual meeting and badge ceremony on Saturday, September 11, 2021, at the Eaton Canyon Nature Center's outdoor classroom.

We were very honored to have present Kathryn Barger, Supervisor Fifth District, Kim Bosell, Natural Areas Administrator and all Regional Park Superintendents from the 9 Nature Centers.

Badges for years of service were given and special recognition was given to Cindy Gold, Docent of the year for Placerita Canyon Nature Center. Fred Seeley gave the recognition speech about Cindy's achievements.

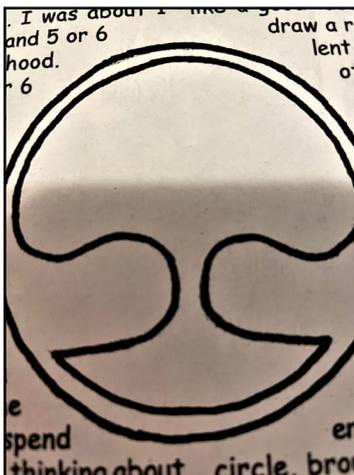
Below is the list of badges earned. We are all very grateful for your commitment and your dedication for so many years. Placerita became a special place because of your work and care, and we are very much aware and grateful for that.

35 years
Evelyne Vandersande

25 years
Heidi Webber
Bill Webber

10 years
Armida Brooks
Vicki Cunningham
Charitha Eragoda
Bill Kahl
Ray Orloff
Carol Rush
Jackie Thomason

5 Years
Randi Andrews
Jim Bloch
Herb Broutt
Andrew Lasken
Alan Nueman
Marie Scherb-Cliff
Lori Wolfe



The Stories Behind the Placerita Logos

It started around 1977, at that time there was no Nature Center Associates of LA County, only independent groups from the different Nature Centers existed. Placerita was in need of restructuring. Important letters were written, agreements were made, and a logo was needed for the next morning!

An oak sounded like a good idea, but Nancy Allen had no artistic training. She found a nickel and a quarter in her purse, proceeded to trace the nickel inside the quarter circle. Then she erased the sides of the nickel circle, brought the top of the tree around the trunk, which curved up at the bottom. The Placerita logo was ready, and the rest is history!

For many years, we also used the NCA logo of a few children looking up at an oak tree. Oaks are an important part of our history.

When did we start using the OJ logo and who was OJ? Owl Junior was a Great-horned owl that spend an unusually long and we hope happy life at Placerita and he became our Logo with the help of Jill Goddard.

The first drawing I have of our new logo is in the March/April 2004 issue of the Rattler. I will let Jill Goddard explain:

"I think the board was looking to update the letterhead/logo and I volunteered to make some samples. Since OJ was our official/unofficial mascot I felt his image and his rescue story would be right for the design. I also wanted to go with a more detailed line drawing which I felt was more timeless (though some people may say was a bit old fashioned) in contrast to something more cartoony. It was always about his eyes and his expression that made him the perfect subject when it came to drawing our Placerita animals.

I know there was talk about changing the logo after he died, but it was decided to keep it in honor of the joy he shared with the visitors and the Nature Center community".

You can find Jill's drawing on all Placerita Canyon Nature Center name tags, tee shirts, letterhead, etc.... Thank you Jill for keeping OJ's memory aliveand now, you know the rest of the story.



Docent Training Placerita Canyon Natural Area



Become a Docent!

- *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 11th, 2022
Classes meet Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9AM to 12 Noon

Docents 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 Docents is 18. Visit our website (placerita.org/docents-volunteers/) for further information regarding the Docent program.

Other volunteer opportunities are also available at Placerita Canyon Natural Area that don't require the 9-week training program—call the Park Office at (661) 259-7721 and ask for the Volunteer Coordinator.

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

Summer Extravaganza



Summer evenings are a delight at Placerita, and since the Covid restrictions are still with us, we meet in the amphitheater with our picnics. It's great being together and taking part in some special celebrations!

Recognition was given to those docents who were very active during the pandemic, and whose hard work was very much appreciated:

Rick Brammer, RuthAnne Murthy, Barbara Marxmiller, Pat Coskran and his son Shawn, Ron Kraus, Linda Jensen, John Whitaker, Jill Goddard, Herb Broutt, Jim Crowley and Cindy Gold's two sons for their help with the video: Aaron is on the right, Nathan is on the left.

Thank you, Gary Freiburger, for this great photo.

We got the chance to open the wingspan banner, and everyone was very impressed. We are used to the artistic work of Jill Goddard but, this time, she outdid herself. This banner will be used for our special events. People can stand in front of it to see the wingspan of different birds, and compare how far their arms can reach.

We were all waiting to see the video "Let's Go On a Hike" and we were so impressed with the very professional result.

Congratulations to all involved, this video made us all so proud to be docents at Placerita. It is very informative, and we hope that schools will be able to use it in their curriculum, during this time that they cannot take a school trip to Placerita. Thank you for making this possible!



**Placerita Canyon Nature Center Associates
present
Let's Go On a Hike**

This 22-minute video is a virtual hike through the park where you'll meet some of our favorite park residents: Sierra, the Great-horned Owl; Aiyana, the Red-tailed Hawk; King Tut, the King snake; and Pearl, the Gopher snake, among others. Explore the Walker Cabin! See a model of a Tataviam Native American camp and learn how they lived! Sit under the shade of the Oak of the Golden Dream and hear the story of how gold was discovered in Placerita Canyon! You can view Let's Go On a Hike free of charge at our website: placerita.org. A Teacher Guide and Lesson Plans are also available. It's a fun and educational film for the whole family.



The Waterfall Trail

The Waterfall trail has been closed since spring of 2017 after a very heavy downpour dislodged large boulders and filled the trail with silt, making it both impassable and dangerous. The CCC has done a lot of work on the trail, and the task is almost finished.

This trail is not easy to access and the repairs were difficult, but we are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. It is not ready quite yet and some passages are still narrow and slippery. However, an adventurous group of docents got special permission to investigate and check the terrain: Maria Elena Franicevich Christensen, Mara Schwartz Cohen, Herb Broutt, Hellen Sweany and Denny Truger made the expedition.

They had some reservations about the safety of the trail, but it is looking so much better than it did previously. We will be glad to let you know as soon as this popular trail is officially open again!





A Different Sort of Outreach (photo)

By Heidi Webber

On September 29, Sandra Balam, Sandra Cattell and Bill and Heidi Webber met in the classroom at Placerita to meet with Farima Kafai, Librarian, and Liza Purdy, Children's Senior Librarian, of the Santa Clarita Public Library to do a short informational video about arachnids. This was perfect as we all were concerned about the logistics of doing a presentation with children. Liza also brought books from the children's section for us to display as we spoke on our different arachnids.

Sandra Cattell did a great introduction and then went into her subject, which was spiders. It was great! Then Sandra Balam spoke about scorpions with great enthusiasm. Bill followed up talking about mites and ticks. Sandra Cattell then did a brief closing statement and we were done!

I think it all went well; it was quite an enjoyable hour. The presentation will run about 20 minutes or so on the library website.

Black Bear in Walker Ranch

A black bear has been spotted in Walker Ranch. It is highly probable that it was a short visit, and that it will move on. Walker Ranch has too many visitors to be a safe area for the bear to stay for long. Bear visits to Placerita are uncommon. In 35 years, we have had only 2 bears "visiting". The previous visitor really enjoyed the picnic area at Placerita after it discovered soda cans have a few drops of sugary liquid left at the bottom of the cans. Our supervisor had a whole collection of cans with bear tooth marks on them.

The black bear does not hibernate in California, so October remains a month of activity for bears and it has been a dry and hot summer. They look for food. It might be a good idea right now to practice the buddy system around Walker Ranch and to keep these few rules in mind.

What do you do if you see a black bear?

Stand and face the bear directly. Never run away from or approach him. Make yourself look as big as possible by spreading your arms or, better yet, a coat. Make as much noise as possible by yelling, banging pots and pans or using other noisemaking devices.



News Briefs

Covid Regulations

Since Friday, October 1st, it is mandated that County Park and Recreation employees be vaccinated.

Masks must be worn inside the building by all, except while eating or drinking.

Because of the Covid pandemic, the County requires schools to sign a special release form before they can schedule school field trips.

The School Outreach program has begun again.]

Waterfall Trail repairs are almost completed, and we expect that it will be reopened very soon.

Walker Ranch campgrounds 1 and 3 are being improved through Eagle Scout Projects.

The benches have been repainted and the campgrounds will be reopened in January. Contact Russ Kimura for group reservations.

Mission Statement for PCNCA

"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."

How did this mission statement come about? Our supervisor was Ian Swift in the 90's, and he wanted PCNCA to become organized in all the projects the docents wanted to do, to have a way to check on the people in charge, and to monitor our progress.

Reg Fear was a docent with a strong business background, and he decided on monthly strategy planning meetings. I remember spread sheets being updated by color and the docents stepping up to the plate, as they checked in on their progress. In 3 years, most of the projects were completed and PCNCA was a stronger organization.

The mission statement was one of the first tasks that was completed. It took a great deal of effort to make it short, clear, and complete, but still covering our few truly key goals.

But the word "passion" had to remain! I have always been very proud of this mission statement, and I have a shiver running down my spine when I read it. It is such a wonderful goal to have, and the docents know that in their hearts and souls.



About Linda Jensen

When I was asked to write a little something about myself for the Rattler, I wondered why my very ordinary life would be of interest to anyone. I procrastinated composing this. In fact, our editor, Evelyne, traveled to Europe and back and had been home for almost two weeks before I sent this article to her.

My life has been a series of good luck. I had no control of where I was born (Pasadena, California), who my parents were (Betty and Ted Dondanville), in what order my four siblings and I were born (turned out to be in the middle of four boys), or where I was raised (Alhambra). I was just lucky to have wonderful parents, a bunch of brothers and to live in Southern California. I was born in the 1950s, grew up in the 1960s, and was a teenager in the 1970s.

I was also lucky that in my childhood, both sets of grandparents were alive and I even had the golden opportunity to know a set of great grandparents. All of my ancestors immigrated to the United States from Europe ... Germany, France, Czechoslovakia and Austria. From the Northeast, they made their way across the U.S. My great grandfather on my father's side arrived in California in the 1880's. Quite by serendipity, the family homesteaded in Saugus, CA. They were vintners from France. A lack of water made it impossible to grow grapes in Saugus. They then moved to the San Gabriel Valley and that is why my birth and childhood took place there.

I have lived the entirety of my life in either the San Gabriel Valley or the Santa Clarita Valley. I have not traveled to any great extent, and I have never had even 15 minutes of fame.

I'm just a California girl who has always loved to camp, hike, climb trees, marvel at the beauty of nature, plants and animals, ride bicycles, ride motorcycles in the dirt, water ski and snow ski, play and dig in the dirt, swim in the Pacific Ocean, sit in the sand at the beach, jump in lakes, river raft, visit the Mojave Desert, star gaze, walk in the Redwood Forest, take road trips, look at rocks, grow roses, ponder our magnificent planet and I even find earthquakes fascinating.

I met and married my husband, Eric, almost 40 years ago. At that time, we were both working in a Downtown LA law firm where I was a secretary, and he was in litigation support. We have two sons named Reese and Kyle. (For you fans of the movie Terminator, you may know why we were drawn to those names.) Reese teaches high school English. Kyle is a fitness trainer. They both graduated from CSUN.

It is the honor of my life to be Eric's wife and Reese and Kyle's mother. Eric is an IT professional and a musician who still plans to be a rock star someday. Both of our sons have been in bands since their early teens, and they continue to be. Music has been a constant in our home and has brought our family much fun and joy. Unfortunately, I do not have any musical talent and cannot even carry a tune.

In summary, I am happiest when outdoors ... and that is why I became a docent at Placerita Nature Center.



"Get outside every day. Miracles are everywhere."

By Regina Brett



Improvements to the Interpretive Center

by Jim Crowley

After the internal remodel of the PCNC animal and plant displays, it became obvious we needed to offer some sort of signage or additional information about what people were viewing and not just a recording to tell them to keep out of the displays. A multitude of signs was not a good idea. That would alter the experience of being within a particular ecosystem.

Sue Sutton, our Docent Chairperson in charge of displays took charge. She came up with a solution to explain the room contents, the plants, animals, and environments. Her effort was also designed to assist our docents for guidance and education.

Sue enlisted the help of docent Irene Heerlein. Irene painstakingly created a 20-page document titled "Museum Displays." It identifies the key display items and expands to provide detailed information.

Presently, her document is online within the Placerita.org website. Unfortunately, people visiting the center are not generally aware about the site, let alone Irene's document. Sue had originally envisioned the document as a handout. Realizing that was a lot of paper, including occasional updates, another plan was set in action.

Sue and Irene collaborated. Irene photographed the displays and had them uploaded to the PCNC web site. Irene's pictures have labels identifying the key elements in the life size displays. Jim Crowley suggested we have a set of the pictures laminated and placed in a mounted wall pamphlet holder so people could use them when visiting the room and return them to the holder. It gives children an opportunity to be more involved, sort of a hunt.

In addition, Jim suggested we create and mount a QR code picture for people to use with their smartphone. It cleverly links them to the Placerita.org website, automatically opening Irene's detailed information document. So far it seems to be working.

Try it out during your next visit to PCNC!

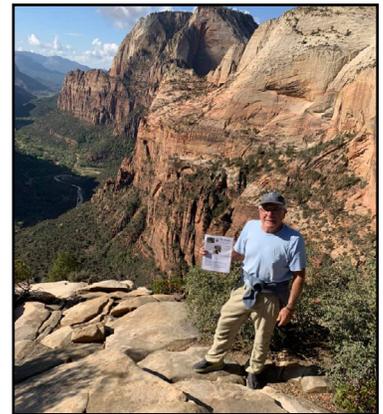
Some people said they wanted to see this feature again.



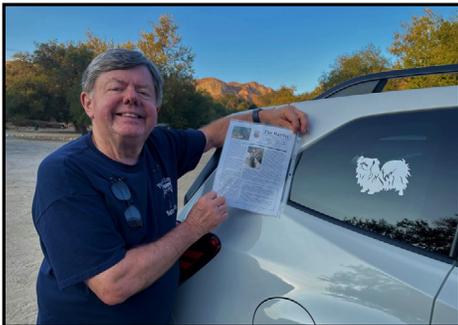
Denny Truger took the Rattler on top of Half Dome



Helen Sweany and Nikki Dail took it all the way to the top of the mountain.



Denny Truger took the Rattler to Zion National Park on Angel's Landing



Ron Kraus was ambushed in the parking lot.



Evelyne Vandersande took the Rattler to the Bristlecone forest.



Linda Jensen sent her greetings from her family cabin at Lake Arrowhead



Linnette and Rick Brammer, Nikki and Corey Dail, Jim and Toni Crowley and Cindy Gold and her family all went to movie night.

Thank you all for playing the game!

What Is That Clown-faced Bird?

By Ken Yasukawa

Photo by Gary Park (www.garyparktookthese.com)

The Acorn Woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*) is a common resident of Placerita Canyon. You can often hear its “waka-waka” call at the Nature Center. This clown-faced, black-and-white woodpecker is well known for two unusual aspects of its biology. Family groups of up to 15 individuals stay together year-round and raise young cooperatively, and groups store acorns in holes drilled in specialized “granary” trees, a habit that is unique to this species.

Acorn Woodpeckers are “polygynandrous” with 1–8 male co-breeders competing to mate with 1–4 joint-nesting females. Multiple females can lay eggs in a single nest, and one egg in the clutch is often a “runt,” which has no yolk and does not hatch. Both male and female breeders incubate, and both breeding and nonbreeding adults brood and feed nestlings.

A granary can contain as many as 50,000 holes, each of which is typically filled with an acorn in autumn. Groups usually have a primary and one or more secondary granaries. Holes are drilled in dead limbs and in thick bark without penetrating the cambium and phloem layers associated with sap, so that the holes do not hurt living trees. Holes are re-used, accumulate over time, and may eventually occupy almost every available limb of the granary. Large granaries are the sum of dozens of generations, each drilling a few hundred holes per year. Human-made structures such as utility poles, fence posts, wood-sided buildings, undersides of roof tiles, and even automobile radiators may also be used.

Birds store primarily acorns of true oaks (*Quercus*) and tanoaks (*Notholithocarpus*), but almonds, walnuts, hazelnuts, pecans, and pinyon pine seeds are also stored when available. Acorn storage occurs throughout the species’ range, but its extent is variable. Storage is almost universal in California. Granaries allow groups to remain on territories during the winter when few alternative food sources are available and to breed successfully the subsequent spring.

Stored acorns are often infested with insect larvae, especially those of wasps, moths, and weevils, which are almost certainly eaten when found. However, there is no truth to the idea that stored acorns are nurseries for insect larvae, and birds do not appear to select acorns depending on whether they are parasitized by insects or not. Most insect larvae pupate and leave acorns as the acorns dry out, and thus few larvae remain by the time stored acorns are consumed.

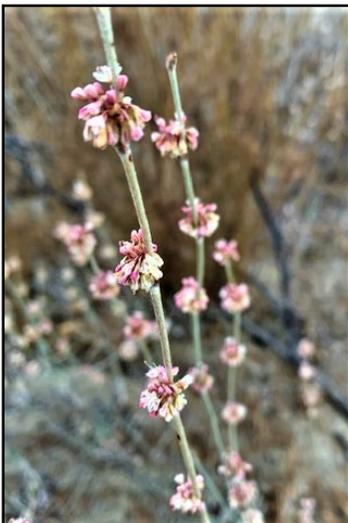
See if you can find the granary on the Heritage Trail across the road from the Walker Cabin.



A Drumming of Woodpeckers

Trail Treasures

By RuthAnne Murthy



Wand buckwheat is one of those plants that it is easy to take for granted because of its gentle nature. But when the wind blows on the stems, they dance, and when the sun shines through its flowers, it is lovely. It grows in the coastal sage scrub and chaparral of western California, the Sierra Nevada foothills and into Oregon. The plant grows from 1 ½ feet to 4 feet tall. It is an erect perennial that prefers dry, rocky or sandy areas. The long tap root helps to anchor the plant and prevents erosion of the area. The long tap root is also important in that it provides nutrients and water to the plant. Wand buckwheat has long, hairy stems and branches that contain chlorophyll that allows photosynthesis to take place in the stems and branches.

The small leaves of the wand buckwheat are light, gray green. They grow around the base of the plant. They are oblong-shaped and have wavy margins. The leaves are usually dried out before the plant blooms.

The flowers are usually white with a pink tint, but they can also be pink or pale yellow. They bloom from July to November. The flowers do not have petals. They are very small, about ¼ inch or less. They whorl around the stem.

Wand buckwheat is a nourishing pollinator. It is a host plant for up to 45 different species including butterflies and bees. Some of the common butterflies that rely on wand buckwheat are the dotted blue, acmon blue, and brown elfin. It also provides for honey bees, bumble bees and native bees.

The Native Californians used the wand buckwheat to make a tincture that stopped hemorrhages.

Next time you are on the trail, slow down and look for the tiny wildflowers that bloom in the late summer and autumn. They are faithful blooms that can delight the eye that is looking for subtle beauty. Wand buckwheat is just one of such Trail Treasures.



Fall Kick-Off

It was a program presented by Ron Kraus and RuthAnne Murthy, to a large group of docents, and it was wonderful to see each other!

What did we learn?

Herb Broutt helped by jotting down this list of topics. Thank you for your help.

We cannot do school tours yet because of County requirements affecting school districts.

Every Body Explores: Tuesday through Friday from 2:30 to 5:50. Any docent can help by showing a nature box, just ask Dave Taylor to coordinate your time.

Judy McClure leads a family hike at 11 am on Saturday, free of charge.

Blooms of the Season led by RuthAnne is held on the 4th Saturday of the month at 9:30 am.

Bird Walks are on the 1st and 2nd Saturday of the month, at 8:00 am

Other things the docents can do:

Water plants: contact Frank Hoffman

Pick up trash and clean up cages: contact Frank

Help in the gift shop: contact Teresa

Help with Nature tots: contact Andrea.

Botany Review:

Ron and RuthAnne did a review of the status of many plants around the Nature Center and on the trails, with information about their adaptation to this hot summer.

Ron gave some information about the status of the different trails regarding erosion, graffiti, signage...and the poison oak forest!

We had a break and snacks in the amphitheater. Thank you so much to Linette and Rick Brammer who brought a few cases of water bottles.

It was lovely to see Sue Wallander who is getting ready to move to Georgia with her husband Allan.

Ron went back on the trail with some of the dedicated docents, while some others decided to stay to talk with each other, enjoying the social contact that we have missed so much.

It was great to see so many of you! Happy fall!

Next Docent enrichment programs for Docents:

November 23: Olivia Miseroy will talk about Tarantulas.



Barbara Marxmiller

I was born and grew up in Monterey Park, CA, and have remained in the San Gabriel Valley. Being near the San Gabriels where I could see undeveloped land and walk to hiking trails has dictated where I lived; first in Pasadena for approximately 40 years and now in Monrovia for the last 6. As a child, our vacations were always to the coast or national parks, and this is where my love of nature began (I always lobbied for a water feature: ocean, river, lake).

After high school, I initially went to work but returned to school after a few years, taking one class at my community college for enrichment. Before I knew it, my credits had accumulated; and it was time to transfer. I attended Pepperdine University obtaining a MA in Clinical Psychology. This led to my working at a small private psychiatric hospital for 16 years. I returned to college in 1989 at CSUN and obtained a MA in School Psychology. I spent the next 23 years (mostly part-time) in this field primarily working with elementary school students and emotionally disturbed students in public and non-public

schools within the Pasadena Unified School District.

Part-time work provided free time, so in 1998, I began volunteering for the Wildlife Waystation. Over the 21 years I was there I participated in many programs and had the good fortune to work with many different native and exotic species, but my main interest was in the birds of prey. They are regal and magnificent! For 17 years I led the Bird of Prey team and in caring for the raptors I engaged in many activities particularly: creating, repairing and cleaning their enclosures; working with each bird (handling and/or enrichment); and presenting the birds to the public. I've had the amazing privilege of handling over 10 species. Two of my most valued memories are of helping with the rehab of a golden eagle and training a red-tail hawk to fly to my fist.

When the Wildlife Waystation closed and animals were placed at new facilities, some of the birds I worked with came to the Placerita Canyon Nature Center. Thus, I followed them and participated in the 2020 docent training. For me, my most important accomplishments to date are being an advocate for the birds and obtaining and spreading new gravel in 3 enclosures. As COVID subsides and docent activities return, I look forward to participating in the varied opportunities available.

I'll leave you with a favorite quote from Ilan Shamir: "Advice from an Owl: Stay focused; Be "whoop" you are; Trust in a wise friend; Live off the land; Glide through the dark times; Be observant; Life's a hoot!"



Fall and Winter Programs

Bird Walks: First Saturday of every month with Rosemarie Regis Second Saturday of every month with Ken Yasukawa
From 8am to 10 am. For all levels of birders. Bring binoculars, water, and field guide.

Blooms of the Season with RuthAnne Murthy: Learn about native plants. Meet in the patio at 9.30 for a one-hour stroll on the 4th Saturday of every month. Bring your camera and questions. For more information about this free program call 661-259-7721 or 259-7832

Family Nature Walk with Judy McClure: Every Saturday from 11.00am to noon. An easy 1-hour walk exploring the area's natural and cultural history

Placerita Nature Tots: Age 3-5. The next program is on November 13th, at 10am. The program is on turkey and turkey vultures. Just on time for Thanksgiving! – registration required, check Placerita.org

Docent Enrichment:

November 23 – Olivia Miseroy will talk about Tarantulas

December 28 – Santa Barbara Botanical Garden

Docents, please check your Trails and Nuggets for more information.

Holiday Party for Docents: Details will be sent when available

For more information, please call 661.259.7721 or visit our website at Placerita.org.