



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

May-June 2022

Editor: Evelyne Vandersande Publisher: Heidi Webber

Hello Friends,

We are living in a time of privilege. It is Spring, and we have been delighted by an abundance of wildflowers that we did not expect because of the few rain showers we had this winter.

All the Covid restrictions have been lifted. Omicron is almost over and BA2 has not yet started to spread. As we have seen before, that can all change in a few weeks but for now, we can see our friends on the trail, have meetings, eat together, participate in an animal show, and enjoy all the activities at the Nature Center. Right now, we are all very enthusiastic about the Open House on May 14. It has been so long ...we missed all this interaction – it was difficult not being able to do all we love the best for more than 2 years. We enjoy our new freedom and do not take it for granted.

Check the summer programs and make sure to participate, there is something happening every week. The attendance of visitors to the park has been phenomenal and the parking lot is often full. Hikers, families, equestrians, and bicycles meet on the trail and enjoy the outdoors. The park is so green, fresh and beautiful --there is even still water in the stream here and there. The frogs have been heard at night. Enjoy Spring and Summer!

This Rattler is for May - June, and we take a break during the summer while many docents escape on their vacations. Be safe and enjoy, nature is a precious gift.



Open House Planning Meeting

Cindy Gold is in charge of these meetings, and she is wonderful at handling this very enthusiastic, but sometimes unruly group. She put together a very detailed Docent Activities List and as she goes down the list, each docent gets a chance to explain what will be done at their display, what is required, where will the activity take place and what kind of help they need. Contacts are being made and problems are solved on the spot.

Rick and Linette Brammer are in charge of logistics, giving each exhibit the best placement and checking on all what is needed for each display.

Frank Hoffman is supervising every detail, planning the parking, and getting in touch with many organizations. The docents are full of new ideas and ready for implementation, which is very exciting. Many of the organizations coming to share a display are also very generous in their participation.

It seems that the severe restrictions that we have all endured during those last two and a half years, gave way to a feeling of celebration and enthusiasm rarely matched before. Finally, docents and organization have a place to share what they believe in and enjoy doing! This Open House is going to be a great success!

Mark your calendars now, to reserve May 14 from 10:00am to 2:00pm.



Local Veterans Visit Placerita

by Glenda Perl

Today, longtime SCV City Councilwoman Marsha McLean brought a small group of local veterans to visit Placerita Canyon Nature Center. A large group of seasoned docents welcomed them with open arms (and no masks)! None of the veterans was up for a hike, but we did put on a first-class animal presentation!

Jack Levenberg talked about Sierra, the Great Horned Owl. Denny Truger wowed the crowd with beautiful Aiyana, the Red-tailed hawk. Bill Kahl walked around with the Alligator lizard (it bites!). Jim Crowley showed a tarantula. Dave Taylor talked about our nocturnal skunks, while holding a skunk in his arms. What? Everyone laughed when they realized they had been "skunked" by the puppet pelt! We didn't have any snakes to share, as they had been fed recently. (They get cranky if interrupted while digesting their meal!) Instead, Herb Broutt showed the rattlesnake skeleton, and I let everyone feel the snake shed. Marietta Ewing showed Stevie the crow.

Our local paper The Signal was there, scribbling notes and taking photos. Maybe we'll be immortalized in the newspaper! Good job, docents!



Our Placerita Canyon Nature Center Associates (PCNCA)

Board of Directors Voting Season is Upon Us!

by Jim Crowley

PCNCA members will conduct the Board of Directors election the first week of June.

It is time for people interested in running for the Board to seriously consider it. The board of directors are always wanting new people and new ideas. You have a chance to express your thoughts on how we can improve the park and our programs. Hurry!!! Covid-19 is declining and hopefully we can have a gathering in June....still to be determined.

In the April/May 2022 time frame, all members will receive voting instructions. If you are at all interested, you can be added to the ballot by letting one of the board members. You can also contact one of the election committee members: Jim Crowley, Mara Cohen, or Jackie Thomason. They can answer questions about responsibilities involved in being on the Board.

Here are some Board of Director (BoD) basics: Elected board members serve a two-year term, with half the BoD up for re-election each year (six positions this year). Additionally, two alternate directors are elected to a one-year term. Consider running for a board position and participate making decisions and plans for our Docent organization. Eligibility requirements are easy...be a member in good standing (paid dues) and willing to attend a monthly board meeting.

The board of directors up for re-election in June are as follows: Rick Brammer, Herb Broutt, Erica de Poor, Ron Kraus, Jack Levenberg, Chuck Lingo, Fred Seeley and Bill Webber.

The voting process.... You will receive detailed voting information, including a ballot, in the April/May time period.

Lastly, you have an ongoing open invitation to attend any or all Board of Directors meetings on the first Tuesday of the month, at 1:00 pm. You are welcome to watch, and see how it all works. We highly encourage this. The next board meetings are April 5, and May 3. Mark your calendar.

Thank You



Once again Lights! Camera! Action!

by Cindy Gold

Placerita birds are the stars in our newest video in production. We've begun shooting "Let's Go Birdwatching!" It also stars our two resident bird experts who lead the Saturday Bird walks, veteran docent Rosemarie Regis and docent Ken Fox, a retired professor of Ornithology. We've already shot footage of ten of the most common birds in Placerita Canyon: Anna's Hummingbird, Acorn Woodpecker, California Scrub Jay, Lesser Goldfinch, Western Bluebird, California Towhee, Mourning Dove, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk and Turkey Vulture. The video will be shown in our new video information center that will be housed in the Observation Building. This project is funded by a grant awarded by the City of Santa Clarita. We're hoping the video and center will be finished in time for our Open House on May 14th. It promises to be a wonderful addition to our educational programs.

Almost a School Fieldtrip

By RuthAnne Murthy

I know we are all excited about the idea of school fieldtrips resuming. We miss those smiling faces and the students' eagerness to learn and experience nature. So, I had the next best: a Zoom fieldtrip! The students were from the Los Angeles Unified School District. They were 5th graders with special needs.

We started by watching the brilliant Let's Go for a Hike video and afterward had a time for questions. The students were intrigued with all the animals just like they are when they visit the Nature Center.

Then I used the flannel board from the Reptile and Amphibian Nature Box to teach them about the food web, much like we use the whiteboard on fieldtrips. I was impressed by how much they learned and the depth of questions they asked.

It was a wonderful experience for both the students and for me. It felt so good to have a little taste of "normal".

Potluck Dinner and Board Election Result: June 4th

All the Covid restrictions have been lifted at Placerita, so it is time to have some fun again! On Saturday, June 4th, we will have our first indoor potluck dinner and the results of the board elections will be revealed. Many of you might not have participated in our potluck dinners before, since we could not have them for two and a half years because of Covid. So let's review what does happen, where and when.

We start at 6:00pm at Placerita. Linette Brammer has graciously accepted to be in charge of the event again. All the docents and their significant others are invited. In the docent room, the buffet table will be set up. It is a potluck dinner, so everyone brings a dish to share. It can be a main dish, a salad, a dessert, or a combination of those. If you enjoy your dish, we surely will too!

In the classroom, tables and chairs will be set up, and this is where we will have our sit-down dinner.

PCNCA provides paper goods and drinks. The party usually ends around 8:30 to 9:00pm. If some docents can come a little bit early to help set up, that is always appreciated.

There is usually a little ceremony to celebrate the new board members, and many photos are taken.

If you have questions, please contact Linette. Put this date on your calendar and try to come. It is always lots of fun, and will be a great way to socialize with each other (finally!) before the summer takes many of us away on vacation.



Rudi Pavini 1937-2022

We were very sorry to hear that Rudi Pavini passed away. He was the artist who designed and painted the history mural at Placerita. In a sad coincidence, he passed away one day after the 180th anniversary of the gold discovery in Placerita.

Rudi Pavini came with some of his students in the mid 1970's to design and help paint the mural on the side of the tunnel, under Placerita Canyon Road. Placerita staff joined the effort, particularly Frank Hovore, Superintendent at the time. The tunnel opens to the Oak of the Golden Dream and it is a perfect location because the last part of the painting is the illustration of Francisco Lopez falling asleep under the oak, waking up from his nap, pulling wild onions from the ground and being very excited when he found a large gold nugget caught in the roots. It is a wonderful legend that many of our visitors know and that the school children learn, and it is always a treat to see the story and turn around and see the tree where it all took place!

Rudi Pavini was always an artist at heart, but he first joined the Navy. By the 1970's, he, his wife Kathy and their four children moved to Santa Clarita. At that point Pavini revisited his childhood dream of pursuing a career in art by beginning to teach painting, music and drama. He took his students on a few field trips to Placerita and this is how the idea of a mural happened.

The mural is very nicely done with many interesting details and bright colors. It remains to this day a source of pleasure and information for our visitors.

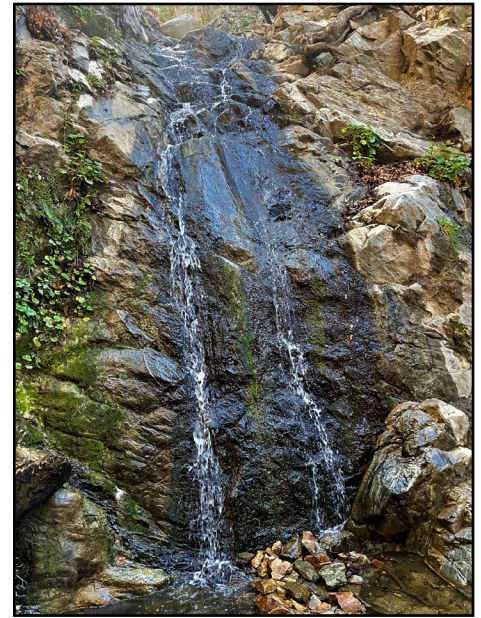
It follows the natural History of the area. First nature was left alone, animals and plants cohabited in the Canyon. Then the Native Americans came in the area, they used the stream and came to gather and process the acorns. The Europeans found the valley and the missions were formed, then in the last part of the mural, close to the Oak of the Golden Dream, Rudi painted the legend of Francisco Lopez.

Rudi was an enthusiastic and fun artist, with a great zest for life. and a good heart. He came back a few years ago to do some touch up to the mural and we became reacquainted with great pleasure and interest.

Thank you for this wonderful mural that we keep on enjoying so often. RIP, Rudi. Part of your legacy is at Placerita and we are grateful for it.

RIP -Joe Morelli's father

We were very sorry to hear that the father of Joe Morelli (Docent class of 2020) passed away recently. PCNCA sent flowers to honor his memory. Our condolences, Joe.



The Waterfall Trail in 2022

Let's look back at 2016. First there was a fire, then a terrible flood. The huge rocks that were piled up close to the base of the waterfall were carried away like small pebbles, blocking the canyon. Silt filled up the stream bed. Charitha Eragoda went on an investigatory hike, and came back rather somber. The trail was totally impassable and quite dangerous. Since 2016, the Waterfall trail has remained closed, to the deep disappointment of many hikers. This is one of the prettiest trails in Placerita and they wanted it back to enjoy.

The CCC made that possible. They had a very difficult job in a tight canyon. The terrain made it impossible to use large bulldozers, but they managed to do a really nice job. If you knew the trail before, you can tell where many huge boulders were gathered to clear the way. You can see where the landslides happened.

The Waterfall trail has changed a little bit from before 2016, but it is still very pretty and wild, which is a great relief. The trail can be slippery and muddy, so hiking boots are recommended. A walking stick comes handy when you must jump from one rock to the next, but if you go slowly and pay attention, it is not a difficult trail. Take your time, the waterfall is at the end but the journey going there is truly lovely in the spring. The stream is shining, the wildflowers are blooming, and the waterfall is falling gently. You are in the shade most of the way. What more could you wish for?

Placerita Canyon Nature Center

Open House

May 14, 2022

10AM to 2PM

- Free Admission & Parking
- Family Hikes
- Crafts & Games
- Panning for "Fools" Gold
- Animal Presentations
- Caricatures by Jill
- Musical Entertainment
- Displays by Local Nature Clubs & Organizations
- Gift Shop (Cash only)
- Guitar & Ukulele Raffle

Many more fun activities for the whole family! Bring a lunch & enjoy our picnic grounds. Activities & displays are subject to change at any time.

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Who is Sandra Balaram, Class of 2010 ?.

My happiest days as a child revolved around our family's camp in the Adirondack Mountains in Upstate New York. The camp was remote, primitive and the scenery so pristine and wild that it could take your breath away. My first love. Moving from the Eastern US to Los Angeles was a shock...the crazy traffic, cramped living (my parents live on three acres surrounded by forest), the extreme heat and dryness, but most of all it was the lack of green on the hillsides that made me yearn for my old home. I couldn't identify anything growing here in the wild. My maples, birch and oaks (very different from the ones back East), cattails, goldenrod and Queen Anne's Lace were replaced by nameless strangers in a hot and dry land.

When my children were small, I discovered Placerita. Still a strange landscape to my senses, but cooling and soothing, reminiscent of my old home. An oasis. We enjoyed wandering the trails, having picnics under the oaks and venturing inside the old museum to look at the displays. Time passed, too quickly, and my children grew up. I needed something to do, so I took classes at COC in Early Childhood Development and earned a certificate in Preschool curriculum. My previous degrees, A BA in Anthropology and a Masters in Folklore and Mythology, really did not give me many employment opportunities without leaving the Santa Clarita Valley. I worked in preschools for a time but felt that the children were spending too much time indoors, playing with man-made objects, when they should be exploring and learning from Nature.

One day, I was driving along Railroad Ave and saw a sign hanging on the fence at Green Nursery - Placerita Nature Center

Docent training. Intrigued, I decided to join and it was one of the best decisions of my life. I discovered so many like-minded people who had a real joy of Nature. I learned the names and characteristics of the plants around me and suddenly, I was surrounded by friends again! The Sycamores, Mule Fat, sages and Ceanothus, even the Poison Oak were identifiable, and I learned about their lives and how everything interacted. I finally felt at home.

Since that day in 2010, I have become deeply involved in the Nature Center. I have been on the Board, worked with the animals and given tours to many visitors. For several years, I was part of the committee to organize the Open House. The Cabin area is my favorite, and I have added corn doll making and butter churning to our usual list of activities.

My hobbies are traveling, gardening, cooking (ethnic cuisines), baking, weaving and spinning. I am a confessed cookbook addict (way too many shelves filled with them) and, now that I have taken up spinning and weaving, bags of wool fill my craft room and I seem to have started a collection of spinning wheels (much to my husband's dismay). Hopefully, my children never have to move back home because there just isn't any room for them.



Where's the Cow?

by RuthAnne Murthy

This was the question of winter 2022. Where is the Cow? We sent out two Trails and Nuggets asking about the Cow's whereabouts. There have been discussions at board meetings. We didn't find the Cow in the storage shed. We couldn't find the Cow in the docent room. There have been discussions on hikes, in restaurants and on phone calls.

For those who don't know, Jill Goddard, our resident artist, created a plywood cow that visitors at Open House could "milk," once the "udder" of plastic gloves and a low stool were added. Kids of all ages loved that cow. So where could it be? Did someone steal it? Was it thrown out?

So I thought to myself, where could it be? How can we possibly lose a 6-foot-long cow? There are only so many places that it could be, and the last possible place anyone could think of was the Walker Cabin. So Jack Levenberg, Jim Crowley and I went right over there, opened the door, and found our Cow in the bedroom of the cabin. Who knew? May 14th the Cow will be ready to be "milked." The mystery is solved, and we can move on to the next mystery or whatever is to come.

As a result of this detective work, Agatha Murthy, and her team Jack Sherlock Holmes and Jim Dr. Watsons have saved Open House again!



The Downhill Sliders.

Join friends who want to hike Canyon Trail every month, going only downhill.

When: the third Wednesday of the month at 10:00am (time will change with the seasons)

Where: Meet at the Nature Center, and then we will drive up to the Walker Ranch parking lot.

Who: Docents and friends.

Maybe: Lunch afterwards.

The first downhill sliders event had 10 hikers who really enjoyed themselves. The weather was beautiful, it was nice to take our time, stop to check the many wildflowers along the way and talk with each other. Everything was so green, fresh, and beautiful. It is a wonderful new program.

Thank you so much RuthAnne Murthy, Jack Levenberg and Fred Seeley for starting this new hike. It's a great idea and it will be interesting to observe the change of the seasons along the Canyon Trail.





Deerweed (*Acemison glaber*)
(formerly *Lotus scroparius*)

photo by Susan White

Trail Treasures

By RuthAnne Murthy

Also known as California Broom, deerweed is a bushy perennial sub-scrub that grows up to 4 feet tall. It grows on the coastal sage scrub and chaparral in elevations from 2,000-5,000 feet. It is a fire-follower that has the ability to convert nitrogen gas into nitrates in the soil. It is one of about 40 lotus species in California. It is a “cousin” of the lupines, both being in the pea family. The green stems are able to photosynthesize which is important when the leaves fall in the heat of the summer. Being a fire-follower, it is also important to curtail erosion after a burn.

The tiny oblong leaves are alternately grown on the stems. The leaves are between 1/8 inch and 3/8 inch long and are scattered along the stems.

The flowers are pea-shaped and turn from yellow to orange to red as the weather warms. Some botanists are testing a hypothesis that the flowers turn red after pollination, but this has not been proven. The flowers bloom from January to August in inland areas and beyond in cooler places where they can bloom all year long. The flowers produce a seed pod just like the pea pods we buy in the grocery store.

Deerweed branches were used by Native Californians for brooms to sweep the encampments and later to sweep out the mission ovens. The plants were used to produce black dye for juncus fibers used in basketry. It was also used as thatching for sweatshouses where it was

placed over a framework of willow branches.

It is very easy to overlook this interesting plant. It is not a showy plant with its tiny leaves and flowers, but if you take the time to take a careful look, you will be amazed! The detail in the tiny flowers is amazing. Deerweed a true trail treasure!



Historic Walker Family Farm Equipment to Return to Santa Clarita

by Ron Kraus

In October of 2019 several members of the Walker Family visited Placerita Canyon and dropped in on the PCNCA Board Meeting. We had a nice conversation with the visitors and got their contact information for future conversations.

Over the next few months we received photos, documents and other memorabilia from the family members which

shed a lot of light on what life was like in the canyon in the early decades of the 20th century. As the conversations continued we discovered that one of individuals, Bob Walker (the son of Frank Walker Jr.), had some of the original farm equipment that was used by the Walker's on the Placerita Canyon property which eventually became the park. The equipment was being stored on Bob's avocado ranch in Ojai.

Of particular interest was a 1935 Ford flatbed truck and a vintage Fordson tractor. The truck was purchased new by Frank Walker in Santa Paula and used at Placerita for many years. After Frank sold the land to the State for the park, the truck was moved to his Sand Canyon property. Eventually it ended up on Bob Walker's Ojai ranch.

Bob has decided to sell his ranch and was looking for a home for the truck and tractor so he contacted a small group of docents to see if we could accommodate the items at the nature center. After a lot of discussion, we determined that it would be impractical (and very expensive) to display the equipment at the park.

We looked at a number of alternatives, and what emerged as the best was to have the truck and tractor donated to the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society. They would fit into the displays of historic structures and enhance the old-time atmosphere at Heritage Junction in Hart Park.

We are currently working with both Bob Walker and the Historical Society to accomplish the return of the equipment to Santa Clarita. Updates to follow!



René Rojas,

Grounds Maintenance Worker II
at Placerita.

Welcome to the team!

Before coming to Placerita, Rene worked at Whittier Narrows and Eaton Canyon, so he is used to Natural Areas. He is extremely competent both in the field and behind a computer, so it is a joy to work with him and see him in action at Placerita.

He started his position here in January, and in just a few months, we have been very impressed by the many projects he completed. We look forward working together for many years.



Docent Enrichment to Tejon Ranch Conservancy

by Linette Brammer

On Friday March 25, 17 docents and guests took the tour: Rick and Linette Brammer, Maria Elena Christensen, Mike Maloney, Don Regis, Rosemarie Sanchez Fraser, Marie Scherb, Glenda Perl, Chuck Lingo, Sandra Cattell, Paula Parr, Liz Bastiani, Mara Cohen, Linda Jensen, Melissa Rocha, Glen Daugherty and Linda Cummings.

To paraphrase Mike Charters: "I feel incredibly fortunate to have been able to visit this fantastic place."

It is a majestic landscape of canyons and mountains, 90% of which will be preserved in perpetuity because of the agreement made between ranch and environmental groups.

The sheer scale of the ranch's size almost boggles the imagination, with its 270,000 acres stretching from the San Joaquin Valley to the Antelope Valley and crisscrossed by two thousand miles of ranch roads. It is the largest land grant in the state that is kept for conservation. An elevational gradient of 6,000', a dizzying complexity of soil types and substrates, innumerable and varied habitats, and the fortuitous conjunction of four floristic regions, allow for the presence of around 1,000 species of plants, new taxa of which continue to be found and recorded, and many of which are rare.

Our tour guides, Reema and Mitchell, were knowledgeable and enthusiastic. We saw cattle being rounded up by cowboys on horseback. The cows and calves looked very content grazing under the oak trees in the lush grass. We also saw a wild pig, a meadowlark, a red-tailed hawk, a gopher snake as well as a vineyard, a lake and a stream. The green grass, oak trees and flowers gave us a chance to enjoy pristine California as it must have been back in the day. Flowers like fiddleneck, lupin, popcorn flower and red-maids, pineapple plant, gooseberry, phacelia, lotus and more covered the hills for miles. We made a special stop to see the rare Calico Monkeyflower



Raffle Tickets for Fantastic Prizes!

By Sue Murachanian

The Gift Shop is excited to announce that we will be raffling off three Fender® instruments at the PCNCA Open House on Saturday, May 14th.

A big THANK YOU to my son-in-law Billy Martinez at Fender Musical Instruments for the very generous donation of two Fender guitars and a Ukulele.

These prizes have retail value of \$3000, and will be raffled off separately at the Open House.

We are preselling raffle tickets on Saturday and Sunday from 10am to 4pm in the gift shop, for \$10.00 each.

Tickets will also be available for sale on the day of the event. The drawing will be held at 2:00pm on May 14th. All proceeds will go towards our animal care program.

Spread the word, purchase a raffle ticket, and show your support! See you in the gift shop!

The Animal Show is Back

by Glenda Perl

The Animal Shows have returned to Placerita Canyon Nature Center, after a 2-year hiatus! They are on the first and third Saturdays of each month, starting at 10.00am and lasting about one hour. The visitors enjoy hearing about our local spiders, Alligator lizard, California king snake, Wheely the Harris's hawk, Stevie the crow, Katori the barn owl, and Sierra, the great horned owl.

Here are a few comments from some of the animal handlers:

Sandra Cattell: I showed a local brown tarantula and talked about spiders. I included a bit about webs: the artistry of orb spiders, and the tangled webs of black widows, as well as how beneficial spiders are for the environment.

Bill Kahl: "I showed our new alligator lizard, Bubba, and talked about its characteristics and food sources. Also unintentionally showed the audience that even when its teeth are firmly implanted in your thumb.....life is still "okey-dokey"!"

Rick Brammer: Wheely is a Harris's Hawk that was found in the wheel well of a UPS airplane at the Mojave Airport. Dave Stives went up and took it out. It was starving. It weighed less than 1 pound. It was about 5 years old then and is now 25 years old. It cannot be released, due to a breathing problem that it had from the beginning.

Herb Broutt: The crowd of visitors at the Animal Shows is getting larger each time. Denny Truger showed Ayana. Jack Levenberg and Marietta Ewing showed owls together. The hit of the day was Dave Taylor bringing out the Bear Poop which all the kids had to touch. Dave also brought out his skunk puppet which of course everyone thought was real. Everyone had a great time, and the donation box was filled up at the end of the animal presentation.





Placerita Canyon Nature Center Open House

19152 Placerita Canyon Road, Newhall, 91321

***May 14, 2022
10:00 am - 2:00 pm***

Fender Guitar Raffle

\$10.00 per ticket! Cash only!

Tickets are available at the Nature Center's Gift Shop Weekends from 10:00-4:00

Three separate raffles for Three great prizes!

Do not have to be present to win! All proceeds go towards Animal Care

Fender American Acoustasonic Telecaster

MSRP \$1999.99

Cutting Edge Acoustic-Electric Guitar in Black

Fender California Redondo Special

MSRP \$749.99

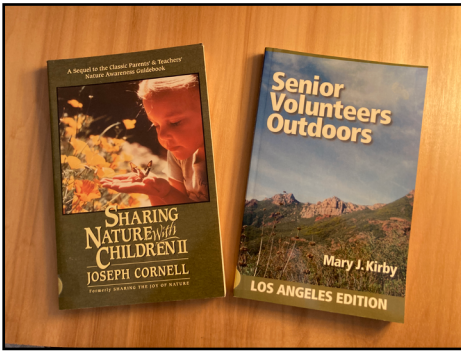
All solid Mahogany Traditional Acoustic-Electric guitar

Fender Fullerton Telecaster Ukulele

MSRP \$219.99 Iconic Telecaster shaped Acoustic-Electric Ukulele in Butternut Blonde



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The Placerita Library

by Gary Freiburger

We have two interesting additions to the docent library.

Sharing Nature with Children II by Joseph Cornell might need to be required reading for all docents! This excellent paperback presents the author's methods of getting children's attention, keeping them engaged, and fostering a life-long love of nature. Cornell presents his ideas of "Flow Learning" that consists of four steps: Awaken Enthusiasm, Focus Attention, Direct Experience, Share Inspiration. You can find this title in the General Interest section of the library, with the gold dots on the spines.

Mary Kirby's Senior Volunteers Outdoors presents short biographical sketches of volunteers in the Los Angeles area that can inspire all of us. Best of all, the book features sections on folks familiar to us all: Ron Kraus, Jim Southwell, and Roger McClure. Check it out in the General Interest section of the library, with the gold dots on the spines.

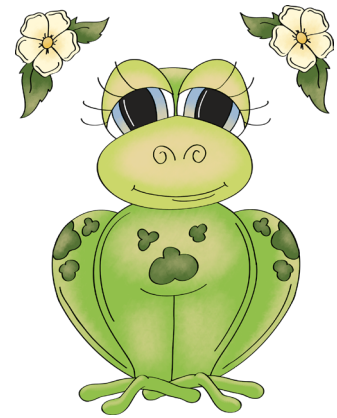
The Unmasked Rattler!

The Covid pandemic was upsetting and sad, but we have a wonderful Publisher, Heidi Webber, with a great sense of humor. She decided to have some fun with the rattlesnake on our cover page.

Since the November-December 2020 issue, it has been wearing a mask. Heidi adjusted it carefully with Marie Carbajal's help, to make it snug. She does a fantastic job finding clip art to illustrate the different seasons and there again, she rose to the challenge.

On the March-April issue she removed the mask, and you cannot imagine how happy I was to see that. We

were out of the woods for sure! Indeed, all the Covid restrictions have been lifted at the Nature Center, which will make having the Craft Faire on May 14 so much easier. Of course, the next Covid variant BA2 is starting to make its' way around the world, but let's still enjoy each day as it comes!



Poison Oak –

Leaves of Three, Let It Be!

Look carefully at the photo, and remember this plant so you recognize it when you are on the trail. This plant is not poisonous, in spite of the name. That said, Poison Oak can cause a very unpleasant rash if you even brush lightly against it.

Early in the spring, this plant is covered by tiny, very shiny reddish buds, and it is hard to imagine they will become the infamous poison oak. The shiny part on those buds is the problem, it is an oil called urushiol that causes the allergic reaction if it comes in contact with your skin. Keep in mind that the leaves can be tricky to recognize. In a moist and shady environment, they will be a little bit larger. In the fall, they will turn a red or rusty color and are easier to recognize. In the winter, when all the leaves are gone, even the dry stems can have some of the urushiol oil on them, so people who are sensitive to poison oak should be careful even in winter.



Now that you know what poison oak looks like, you will safe... but what if you take your dog on a hike? Its coat or feet will probably brush against poison oak. The dog won't suffer from it (deer eat plenty of poison oak without problems) but you will if you pet your dog or if it climbs on your car seat. Be aware that if you walk on poison oak with walking boots or if it brushes against your pants, you need to remove your clothing carefully (maybe wearing plastic gloves?) and wash them.

If your skin came in contact with poison oak, you need to wash with warm water and soap. You can use a rag covered with dishwashing soap. Imagine you are trying to remove crude oil, pushing the oil away in one direction. Do it as soon as possible. If you are on the trail, you could use some of the rubbing alcohol wipes, if you took them with you as precaution, but follow up with soap and warm water as soon as possible. Poison oak rash is not contagious but the oil that remains on skin, clothes or shoes can be spread to another person and cause a rash.

Be safe on the trail and enjoy your hike!

Summer Programs

Animal Show: First and third Saturdays of each month at 10.00am.

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 661-259-7832

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.

Hike with the Downhill Sliders: Canyon trail hike going downhill. The third Wednesday of the month at 10.00am. (Time will change with the seasons). Meet at the Nature Center, then we will drive to the Walker Ranch parking lot. Program for docents and friends. Please bring water and poles for water crossing.

Placerita Nature Tots: On hold, will be back in the fall.

Docent Enrichment: Read your Trails and Nuggets for future Docent Enrichment programs.

OPEN HOUSE: SATURDAY, MAY 14 10.00am to 2.00pm

June 4th: First potluck dinner for all the docents and results of Board Members' election. Starts at 6.00pm. Read article for more details. Linette Brammer is in charge.

Bus Trip in June: Docents check your Trails and Nuggets. The County will graciously provide a bus and a chauffeur to bring us to visit La Brea Tar Pits and Museum.

Movie night in the amphitheater: One movie each month is planned to be shown during the summer months. Dates and topics will be announced by Trails and Nuggets.

Have a great summer!

