

# The Rattler

Sponsored by the Placerita Canyon Nature Center Associates  
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**Placerita Canyon Nature Center**  
**Over 50 Years of Nature Education**

**September-October 2022**

Editor: Evelyn Vandersande Publisher: Heidi Webber

## Dear Nature Friends,

If you are reading this newsletter, there is a pretty good chance that you love Placerita Canyon Nature Center. This park has many assets, but we all fall in love with a special view, a tree along the trail, the stream in springtime, a bench where we rested. Many areas of this park have burned at different times, and we had to get adjusted to our special places looking very different but recovering as the years went by.

Robin Baerg is a photographer who specializes in taking photos of the natural areas in Santa Clarita and her photos from Walker Ranch express beautifully what Walker Ranch looks like at the end of the summer, when the sun starts going down and all becomes golden. Thank you for catching this glimpse of perfect beauty Robin.

Fall is on its way; it can be difficult to notice in Southern California so start looking at the clues around you. Acorns are falling! Enjoy this new season.



## A Visit from College of the Canyons Ecology Class

by RuthAnne Murthy

Our docent/naturalists are well prepared to welcome elementary school students to the Center, but in May, a group of about 20 students from COC came to learn about the habitats of Placerita Canyon. RuthAnne and Herb were there to greet them.

We started in the Interpretive Center where we explained about the three habitats in the park. We then took them on a hike designed to help them complete a worksheet that their teacher had designed.

We collected soil samples, compared plant communities, and discussed adaptations to the Mediterranean climate. Several of the students had never been on a hike, and another group lived in the area but didn't know about the park. I think that some of the students will be back to visit.

It was a challenging day, but I feel that it was a big success.



## Board of Directors Election Results

by Jim Crowley

Your election committee is pleased to provide the results of the PCNCA Board of Directors Election.

Votes were cast on or before June 4, 2022.

Several people asked about the process of the Board of Directors election. The board consists of 12 members and two alternates. Each year in June, half of the directors are subject to an election process in accordance with our PCNCA bylaws. They serve a two-year term; alternates serve a one-year term.

The election was conducted electronically through an e-mail process, ballot box, or vote submittal via the US Mail. The membership votes were accumulated from 41 members out of 99 eligible members, a slight decrease from 2021. We had 11 brave and willing candidates. THANK YOU!!! The Election Committee conducted an in-person meeting on June 3-4, 2022, sorted and tallied 283 vote choices, and the results were reported at the Board of Directors meeting on June 7, 2022.

2022 Board of Directors voting results:

Voted as Directors for a two-year term through May 2024 are Rick Brammer, Jack Levenberg, Ron Kraus, Fred Seeley, Herb Broutt and Sue Marachanian. Bill Webber and Linda Jensen were elected as Alternate Directors for a one-year term through May 2023.

Continuing Board members previously voted through May 2023 are as follows: Joan Fincutter, Gary Freiburger, Cindy Gold, Sue Sutton, Denny Truger, Ken Yasakawa.

A special shout-out goes to our election committee consisting of Mara Cohen, Jim Crowley, and Jackie Thomason, with behind-the-scenes IT support from Bill Freiburger. They arranged the system and conducted the election. We salute those voting members with a big Thank You!

Also, we must salute two new members from the class of 2020, Linda Jensen and Sue Marachanian who have stepped into our normal routine (if there is such a thing) and were elected. Congratulations to both!



### **Herb Broutt- Docent of the Year for Placerita Canyon**

In 2015 I retired, and had to make a decision about what I wanted to do next. I have always enjoyed nature and hiking, and had wanted to become a docent. Luckily, my wife (who reads the Signal) told me that Placerita Nature Center was giving a class in docent training. I was elated and came to the class. Unfortunately, I had missed the first class. I came to the second class where they discussed County Regulations and Emergency Procedures for 3 hours! I thought, "What am I getting myself into?" But I decided to go to the next class and see how things went. I was so glad I did! The next class was about Herpetology, which was interesting, and so was the Mammal class. The teacher was amazing and I really started enjoying the training.

When I graduated, the best part of being a docent was leading the school tours. I enjoyed showing animals, especially the snakes (even though my family thinks I am crazy)! But taking the kids on the hikes was the most fulfilling. I got to share with them the things I learned about nature, animals and the history of Placerita Canyon. It amazed me

how some of the kids had never been on a hike, and how much they enjoyed it. In fact, I had many kids tell me "This is the best day I ever had!" What could be better than that?

After my second year of being a docent, I was asked to run for the board. I was intrigued and was elected as an alternate. For those of you who don't know me, I like to talk and to get things done, so this was a perfect job for me. In my previous life I was a finance director, and know how to tackle problems and come up with solutions. The next time around I was elected as a voting board member. This was when my career at Placerita took off. I volunteered for many committees. This includes the Amphitheatre committee, in which my daughter helped. We were able to get the first dance troupe from COC to perform at the new Acorn Amphitheater. I was also a member of the Education Committee, the Awards Committee and the Open House Committee.

I was in charge of the Walker Cabin Centennial Committee. We were going to celebrate the 100-year anniversary of the Walker family living in Placerita Canyon. We had restored the cabin and planned a barbeque. Unfortunately, we had to cancel it due to Covid, but I was able to contact Bob Walker, who was Frank Walker's grandson.

This began a relationship with Bob. He invited us to his home in Ojai to show us items he had collected over the years. There were pictures of the family, tools and other treasures. The most impressive item was Frank's 1935 Ford Flatbed truck that he used at Placerita. Bob graciously offered to donate the vehicle, which is now at Hart Park.

One of the things I am most proud of is that when I went through docent training, I did a report on the mural by the Oak of the Golden Dream. In order to get information about the mural, I interviewed Rudy Pavini, who painted the mural in 1976. Rudy told me about how hard it was to paint and how long it took him to complete it. I found his story very interesting and thought it would be great if he could come to Placerita to share it with the other docents. I was able to set up a Rudy Pavini day. All the docents were there, as well as the local newspaper and SCTV. Rudy came and gave his talk and he was so proud. I was glad I was able to do that for him.

Since we were not able to do school tours during Covid, it was decided we would make a video about Placerita Canyon and take people on a virtual hike. A script was written and volunteers were requested. I was asked if I would participate in the video. I agreed, but I did not realize I would be the main character taking the viewers on the hike. Even though I do like to talk, this was out of my comfort zone - but I did it! We spent three weeks filming, and I had to learn many pages of dialogue. I knew how important this was, and I was able to push myself to do something I didn't think I could do.

We are now able to bring back some of the programs that we had before Covid. We have an animal show on the first and third Saturdays of the month. I am the Master of Ceremonies, introducing the different animals with their handlers. Most importantly, I explain to the audience that we are all volunteers and take care of these animals who couldn't survive on their own.

I have learned many things since I have become a docent, but I think one of the best parts of being at the Placerita Nature Center is the people. I have made many friends, and I really enjoy the camaraderie of being with people who have the same interests as I do. One of my now best friends told me when I started, that the people here will become part of your family. At the time I thought probably not. I know there are many nice people here, but thinking of them as family? Well, he was right. These people are some of my best friends and are now part of my family. They mean so much to me. We share our happiness and disappointments together.

When I was told that I was selected as Docent of the Year, I was really touched. While I have worked hard over the years to make Placerita Canyon a great place, I am not the only one. There are so many people that work so hard to get things done. I am honored that these people chose me to receive this award.





Open House--A Big Success!  
By Cindy Gold

An estimated 1,000 people visited the Placerita Canyon Nature Center during our Open House in May. Our docents offered over 20 different activities to the public. Around the Walker Cabin, families could take a trip back to the olden days by churning butter, making corn husk dolls, printing fabric, spinning wool and playing pioneer games. In addition, children panned for gold, heard a nature story, wove a basket, took a hike and saw tarantulas, reptiles and birds of prey up close. The LA Fire Station 123 and the Sheriff's Department were on hand to talk about hiking safety and Search & Rescue. A Cub Scout den, the Audubon Society, the Sierra Club and local clubs in hiking, astronomy, rocks, and herpetology shared information and hands-on activities. We raffled off a Fender electric guitar, ukulele, and acoustic guitar as prizes. Ticket sales raised over \$3,000 to be used for animal care. Local musicians played and families cooled down from the summer heat with icy snow cones. It was a great day for families and friends to gather and spend time outdoors, learning about and loving nature.





**Heath Edmondson,  
Junior Volunteer of the Year**

by Frank Hoffman, Recreation Services Supervisor at Placerita.

Heath Edmondson has been a regular volunteer at Placerita for over 5 years (an estimate of 200+ hours), and has contributed immensely to the care and husbandry of many of our wild animals. He has completed tasks such as food/diet preparation, cleaning of their enclosures, crates and vivariums, and contributing to their overall health and well-being by accomplishing this work.

Heath works very hard at assignments given him at our Center. He is incredibly helpful, reliable, self-motivated, meticulous in his attention to details, generous with his time and kind to other volunteers, visitors and park staff while working very hard with minimum instructions. Other assignments have included light building and ground maintenance projects, light office and clerical work, aiding and supporting our volunteer operated Gift shop, helping with the annual Craft Fair, training and mentoring new youth and adult volunteers as they come to perform their tasks. With these responsibilities and others, he has met or exceeded my expectations in all ways possible.

Therefore, I am glad to endorse Heath Edmondson's nomination for Junior Volunteer of the Year for Placerita Canyon Nature Center. All my warmest congratulations, Heath. It has been a joy working with you.



**Bench Repair**

by RuthAnne Murthy

If you have walked around the park recently, you may have noticed that two of our old wooden benches needed repair. The one on Ecology Trail was hit by a falling branch BC (before Covid). The top slat was splintered and broken, it was an eyesore and dangerous. The bench by the Lyon's Oak had a broken top slat. Enters Ashok Murthy who repaired both of them. They are now ready for paint which Frank Hoffman will coordinate. Teamwork keeps our park beautiful and safe.



**Docent Enrichment Annual Bus Tour**

**La Brea Tar Pits**

by RuthAnne Murthy

Monday, May 23rd was the day of our trip to the La Brea Tar Pits on a bus provided by the office of Kathryn Barger. A big thank you to her. About 30 of our docent/naturalists met at the Nature Center and boarded the bus. Several of us had never been to the tar pits and many more hadn't been there for decades. The museum has been redone and was quite impressive. The huge skeletons were featured throughout the museum, and it was quite remarkable to see staff sifting through microscopic remains to find the tiniest fossils. The outdoor pits were interesting as well.

Most of us found local restaurants where we enjoyed lunch and each other's company. I wonder where we will go next year. Any ideas?







## Two Docent enrichment Field Trips

by Glenda Perl

At the end of June, a small cadre of PCNC docents carpooled our way up the coast to Santa Barbara. The group was split in two, to visit two different locations.

Four docents (Melissa Rocha, me, Kara Franklin, Fred Seeley), plus Kara's friend Lisa) visited the Santa Barbara Sea Center, located on historic Stearns Wharf. We all got up close and personal with some sharks, sting rays, sea anemones, crabs, sea stars (not starfish), snails, and other marine life. It was a gorgeous day to hang out at the ocean! Melissa and I wandered around the pier and had a great lunch overlooking the ocean.

Seven docents went to visit the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, where they enjoyed the different pavilions with so much to see: Bird Hall, Chumash life, Earth and Marine sciences, and Mammals. The museum is in a lovely and wooded location, and they also enjoyed the garden. They were very lucky to be able to visit the butterfly display, which happens only every other year. Rick Brammer has lots of training as an animal handler, so he sat very still and was quickly covered with a few butterflies.

Linette and Rick Brammer. RuthAnne Murthy, Sandra Balaram, Joan Fincutter, Teresa Jacobs and Sue Sutton were there.

Thank you so much RuthAnne Murthy for planning this trip.



## The Walker Legacy Lives on at Placerita Canyon

By Ron Kraus

As many of you know, the property that is now Placerita Canyon Park was owned by the Walker family of Newhall before it was purchased by the California State Park Department in 1949. The patriarch of the family was Frank Evans Walker, who acquired most of the land in the early 1900's. Frank married the neighbor's daughter, Hortense Reynier, and went on to raise a family of 12, comprised of 7 boys and 5 girls.

Unfortunately, several of the children died relatively early in life but most grew up, married and had families of their own. The last of Frank and Hortense Walker's children, Richard Walker, passed away in 2020 at the age of 92. But fortunately for the history buffs among us, several of the Walker grandchildren and great grandchildren remain interested in the family homestead. They come by occasionally and share stories and memorabilia with our docents.

Last year one of the Walker grandchildren, Bob Walker, contacted us regarding donating his grandfather's 1935 Ford truck to the PCNCA. Frank Walker bought the truck new in Santa Paula and used it for many years at Placerita to support his ranching, farming and other activities. It passed through several hands and several places before it ended up on Bob's avocado ranch in Ojai. Although we were unable to find an appropriate place for it at Placerita Canyon, our friends at the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society accepted it and it is now on display at Heritage Junction in Hart Park. Additionally, Bob donated the family's antique Fordson Tractor (which was used at Placerita) to the Historical Society and it is also now located at Heritage Junction.

Bob has been a great resource for Walker family information, including photos, letters and other documents. He invited several docents to his Ojai ranch last December and gave us a good look at some of the family treasures he has acquired over the years. One of the items prominently displayed in his living room is the marriage license issued to Frank and Hortense in 1907. It is a large, beautifully decorated document unlike the utilitarian government paperwork of today. When we expressed interest in getting a copy, Bob agreed to get it copied and framed for donation to the PCNCA.

A few weeks went by and we learned that Placerita Canyon would be able to hold its annual Open House in May of this year. One conversation led to another and the informal docent committee that had been working with Bob on the truck donation decided to invite Walker family members to attend the Open House where we would have a donation ceremony for the marriage license. We asked Bob if he would extend the invitation to the family and he enthusiastically said yes.

On the day of the Open House, we welcomed 10 Walker family descendants to the donation ceremony. They are, from left to right in the attached photo: Mavis Shafer, Walt Fisher, Alvin Shafer, Teri Walker Caldwell, Sharon Shafer, Sabrina Henderson, Regina Henderson, Lisa Lynn, Carrie Walker and Bob Walker. Everyone had a great time, sharing stories, memories and lunch.

It was great to see the interest and love the Walker family still has for Placerita Canyon. We will continue to build on the relationships we have established with the family to further our knowledge of this wonderful place!

P.S.: To watch an interview with Bob Walker regarding the truck donation go to this link: <https://www.facebook.com/scvleon/videos/347214974160582>





### Eaton Canyon Docent/Naturalists Visit to Placerita Canyon

by RuthAnne Murthy

Perhaps you were one of the lucky ones to participate in Diane Lang's Oak Tree presentation last fall. It was so much fun with a lot of hands-on activities. As Diane was leaving, I invited the Eaton Canyon Docent/Naturalists for a VIP tour of our beautiful natural area.

So, on Sunday, May 22, a group of 13 arrived eager to learn about Placerita Canyon. First, we took them on a hike of about 45 minutes. After a water and snack break, we helped them learn about the historical significance of the canyon. Then a few of our "animal people" presented some of our menagerie. It was all topped off with a potluck lunch under the oaks.

We so enjoyed their company and their enthusiasm. A big thank you to all of our wonderful cadre for helping with the day's events: Fred, Jack, Sandra C, Glenda, Lori, Linette, Rick, Sandy, and Dan D. I am sorry if I forgot anyone. Thank you for always being ready to help.



### Docent Enrichment Along the Coast!

by Glenda Perl

A large pod of Placerita Canyon Nature Center docents (21 of them!) carpooled our way up the California coast to visit the Carpinteria Harbor Seal Rookery. A huge thank-you to RuthAnne Murthy for arranging for us to be greeted by a rookery docent, who told us everything we could ever want to know about the resident harbor seals lying on the beach. It's a lovely walk-through spring wildflowers from the parking area to the cliff above the protected animals. Note that if anyone disturbs the seals, it's a \$1,000 per animal fine, but visitors are respectful of the animals, so it's typically not a problem.

We also saw pelicans and turkey vultures soaring overhead. We walked back to our cars and drove a few miles to see the salt marsh nature park. The weather was perfect. It was a gorgeous day at the beach (isn't it always?). We had all worked up a hearty appetite by this time, so we invaded the Padaro Beach Grill on Santa Claus Lane for lunch.

Another awe-inspiring Docent Enrichment experience!



*Our bird experts and movie stars, Prof. Ken Yasukawa and Rosemarie Regis.*

### New Nature Videos Coming Soon!

By Cindy Gold

Two new nature videos are in production: Let's Go Birdwatching! and Wild About Wildflowers.

Let's Go Birdwatching! is a 10-minute video highlighting ten birds that live in Placerita Canyon and can be seen in the park.

Wild About Wildflowers is a 5-minute video showing the wildflowers that bloom along our trails in the spring and summer. Their purpose is to enhance public appreciation and educate our park visitors about the flora and fauna they may encounter in the park.

Other short videos about the park's history, its trails, and bees and butterflies are also in the planning stages. These videos are produced by the Placerita Canyon Nature Center Associates. They will be shown at our future video information center to be installed in the fall. More info to come!



### Downhill Sliders

by RuthAnne Murthy

For the past several months an excited group of hikers have been hitting Canyon Trail on the 3rd Wednesday of each month. We meet at the Nature Center and head for the parking lot at Walker Ranch. We have been fortunate to have hitched a ride in the County van on two of our adventures, thanks to Russ and staff.

We only hike downhill about 2 miles. It has allowed some of our docent/naturalists to hike Canyon Trail, since hiking both ways can be challenging, but mainly we enjoy each other's company while drinking in the wildflowers, birds, deer, and the water in the creek.

We change times depending on the season. For now, we will be meeting at 8.00am.

Keep an eye out for your Trails and Nuggets to remind you of our next date. We would love to see you on our slide downhill. Even the mightiest of hikers is welcome to join us.







### **Docent Recognitions**

by Cindy Gold and Ron Kraus

At our Potluck dinner in June we acknowledged six docents who have gone past the extra mile, putting their time, energy and love into our Placerita Canyon Nature Center. To show our gratitude we gave out Recognition Awards to these dedicated volunteers:

Linda Jensen, class of 2020. Linda has helped in several of the activities at the Nature Center, including the Nature Boxes and the Nature Tots programs. At the Open House she delighted children by giving them the opportunity to play pioneer games. She is very skillful at providing craft activities for kids. She also attended Board Meetings as a guest and this year was elected to the Board as an Alternate Member.

Sue Murachanian, class of 2020. Sue has been very active in the gift shop operations. In addition, she arranged for the donation of several valuable guitars and organized a very successful raffle for our Open House. She was elected to the PCNCA Board of Directors this year.

Teresa Jacobs, class of 2010. Teresa has done a wonderful job for many years overseeing the operation of our Gift Shop. She tirelessly orders the supplies, schedules volunteers to work in the shop, as well as consistently puts in many hours herself. She also served for many years as the NCA Vice President.

Sandra Cattell, class of 2015, is an effective force behind the scenes. She is currently our PCNCA rep for the Nature Center Association. She frequently does impromptu “clean up” hikes around the park. She was instrumental in getting the County to pay for the food we provide to our rescue animals. She organized the Sierra Club table at the Open House. For years she has attended our Board meetings and has offered suggestions and help as projects and problems arise.

Rosemarie Regis, class of 2005: She shares her love and knowledge of birds, enriching the lives of docents and park visitors alike. For years she has led the monthly Bird walk hikes on Saturday mornings. Soon you’ll see her leading a virtual Bird walk in our upcoming video Let’s Go Birdwatching! As one of our resident bird experts, she was an advisor during the scriptwriting process and appears in the video.

Ken Yasukawa, class of 2020, a former professor of Ornithology, also leads monthly Bird walks on alternate Saturday mornings. He can also be seen in our soon to be released Let’s Go Birdwatching! video, sharing his knowledge (and a few jokes) about the birds that live in Placerita Canyon. He has created a study guide for the public to go along with the video.

### **Arbor Day/Earth Day Home and Garden Outreach**

by Heidi Webber and Glenda Perl

Oh, happy day! Placerita Canyon Nature Center made its regular appearance at the Arbor Day/Earth Day/Home and Garden Show/Animal Adoption in April at Central Park.

It’s been two years since the last event (thanks to Covid). Hundreds of gleeful families thronged through the rows of arts and crafts and food items for sale.

There was face painting for the kids, a petting zoo, dog and cat adoptions, numerous food trucks, and plant giveaways for anyone to take home.

It was totally packed. Our booth was swamped most of both days. Our neighbors on both sides thanked us because they got a lot of side business plus, they learned a lot from listening to us for two days.

Heidi and Bill Webber and Glenda Perl were there for both days; Irene Heerlein came to help on Sunday.

Everybody had a terrific time!



Note: Since this event, Heidi has spoken with Carl Goldman—owner of KHTS radio and the promoter of the Home and Garden/Earth-Arbor Day events. He informed her that going forward, the Earth-Arbor Day celebration will be connected with the River Rally, which Placerita also helps to promote. Placerita will still have a presence at the Home and Garden Show.



## Why Do the Names of Birds Change?

By Ken Yasukawa

Do you remember seeing Rufous-sided Towhees, Oregon Juncos, Western Scrub-Jays, and Red-shafted Flickers? These names, along with Marsh Hawk and Sparrow Hawk, are no longer found in current field guides. What happened to them?

Ornithology (the study of birds) is constantly yielding new information about birds. This information can cause one species to be “split” into two or more, or cause two or more species to be “lumped” into one, or cause a species to be given a new name. To avoid confusion, the American Ornithologists Society (AOS) assigns official scientific and common names to each species of bird. AOS tries to make these names fitting, consistent, and universally accepted. Here is what happened in the examples mentioned above.

**Splitting.** The Rufous-sided Towhee was found across North America. I learned this bird when I was a graduate student at Indiana University in the early 1970s. Differences in plumage, songs, and genetics between the western and eastern forms brought an official split into two distinct species: the Spotted Towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*) in the West and the Eastern Towhee (*P. erythrophthalmus*) in the East. Birders who keep life lists appreciate splits because they can lengthen their life lists.

**Lumping.** The Red-shafted and Yellow-shafted Flicker were lumped because hybrids were so common. Now, they are all Northern Flickers (*Colaptes auratus*) with the yellow-shafted (*C. a. auratus*) subspecies in eastern North America and the red-shafted subspecies (*C. a. cafer*) in western North America.

**The Dark-eyed Junco** (*Junco hyemalis*) is another, even more complicated, example of lumping. The Dark-eyed Junco was originally five distinct species (including our Oregon Junco, *J. h. oregonus*) that differed in plumage, bill color, migratory behavior, and body size. This variation was responsible for a “turbulent” taxonomic history and a reputation as a “nightmare” for earlier ornithologists. Even today, not all systematists agree with the Dark-eyed Junco classification. As a grad student and post-doctoral fellow, I studied Slate-colored Juncos (*J. h. hyemalis*, also called “snowbirds”) in Wisconsin and New York. As you might guess, life listers don't like lumping because they lose species on their lists.

**Renaming.** What about the Marsh Hawk and Sparrow Hawk? The Marsh Hawk was one of about a dozen species of harriers in the world, but it was the only one not named a harrier, so it is now called the Northern Harrier (*Circus hudsonius*). The Sparrow Hawk became the American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) because it is a falcon, not a true (*Accipiter*) hawk, and is closely related to the Eurasian Kestrel (*F. tinnunculus*). The new name also avoids confusion with sparrowhawks, which are found in Europe, Asia, and Africa. The AOS is also considering ways to change harmful and exclusionary English bird names.

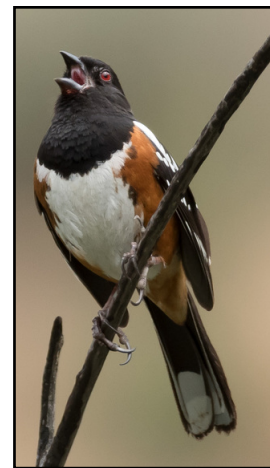


Photo by Gary Park  
garyparktookthese.com



### First School Group After Two and a Half Years

The Covid situation has prevented school groups from taking field trips to Placerita for two and a half years. The docents have missed the interaction with the children tremendously, as well as the opportunity to give the education that they have been trained to provide.

From the financial point of view, it has been very difficult. We rely on school donations to be able to feed our animals and to pay for their medical care. We were not able to conduct our only yearly fund raiser, the Craft Fair, last December.

We had a wonderful raffle during Open House so that will help the situation for the time being, and

we have received some very necessary donations.

We hope the situation will get better when school starts again, and hope to get some clarifications around the difficult paperwork requirements for authorization to conduct field trips at Placerita.

All that said, we were very glad to welcome our first school tour, from a home-schooling organization. They were wonderful students, attentive and interested. The docents were a little bit nervous and were wondering if they remembered anything. It all quickly fell back into place, and everyone had a great time



### Botany Class

by Pat Coskran

My Saturday Challenger hiking group took a short hike last Saturday (heat!), and then we got together in the classroom with its very welcome A/C. The group matched native plant names with samples I had collected.

Ron Kraus, you would have been proud of them identifying the Placerita 16. Love these guys





California Fuchsia  
*Epilobium canum*

### Trail Treasures

By RuthAnne Murthy

California fuchsia is a perennial sub-scrub that grows in the mountains and deserts below 10,000 feet. It prefers dry rocky slopes and cliffs. The plant is in the evening primrose family. It grows up to 3 feet tall. Several woody branches grow from the base of the plant. It is often winter dormant, especially in higher elevations.

The lance-shaped one-inch-long leaves are a gray-green. Margins are usually smooth, but can be finely toothed. The wooly surface of the leaves and stems redistributes wind as it hits the leaves reducing evaporation through the leaves.

The bright red to orange-red flowers are tubular, perfect for hummingbirds as they seek nectar with their long beaks. The four petals are fused (connected) from the sepals. Occasionally, white California fuchsias are found. The 1 1/2 inch flowers are connected to the stems by short axillary stems much like poison oak. The flowers bloom from July

to November well after many wildflowers have done dormant. Because of this, the flowers are an important nectar source for hummingbirds into the fall. The fluffy seeds are distributed by the wind.

California native people found the leaves of California fuchsia useful. The leaves were dried and applied directly to cuts and wounds on people as well as horses and other livestock. The dried leaves were also used as soap. The leaves were made into a tea for treating tuberculosis and kidney and bladder infections.

The bright red flowers decorate the trail when most of California has gone golden. California fuchsia cannot be overlooked in that sea of gold and that is why it is a much-loved trail treasure.

### 2022 NCA Annual Recognition Event

All the docents and volunteers from Placerita Canyon are invited to join the members from the other Nature Centers to attend the Annual Recognition and General Meeting to be held at Eaton Canyon Nature Center on Saturday, September 10.

The meeting will start at 10.00am. a light lunch will be served afterward around 11.00am.

We ask that you call Sandra Cattell at 661 259 0433 (please leave a message) with your RSVP to confirm you will be attending lunch so food can be ordered accordingly.

Business Casual dress is suggested. Please bring your mask to the event.

The location is:

Eaton Canyon Nature Center  
1750 N. Altadena Drive  
Pasadena, CA 91107

The parking lot is tight, so we recommend that you carpool from Placerita, leaving at 9.00am.

Special recognition will be given to Herb Broutt, Docent of the year for Placerita as well as to Heath Edmondson, Youth volunteer of the year for Placerita.

Gold name tags and special certificates will be given to the PCNCA docents who have had 5, 10, 15 and 20 years of service.

#### Five Years

Kara Franklin  
Mike Maloney  
Carole Mercado  
Mary Oien  
Omar Pena  
Dave Taylor

#### Ten Years

Lanita Algeyer  
Andrea Donner  
Robert Grzesiak  
Irene Heerlein  
Laura Skorich  
Denny Truger

#### Fifteen Years

Paula Parr

#### Twenty Years

Ron Kraus



### Why do We have a Western Yellow Jacket Problem?

Here is Frank Hoffman standing with many of the traps used to capture Western Yellow Jackets in the bird enclosure. We need to trap them because they bother the raptors in their cage.

Why are they in the enclosures? Like every animal, they are looking for food and water. The raptors eat meat, and they have plenty of water. The yellow jackets eat meat too, so they find the raptor enclosure to be a great place to survive and thrive in great numbers.

The Western Yellow Jackets seem to have a 2-year cycle. They were not seen in large numbers last year, but they sure are plentiful this year.

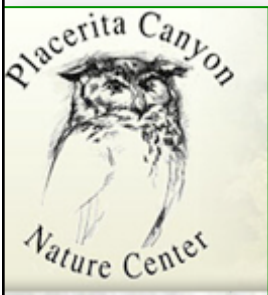


### Movie Nights in the Acorn Amphitheater

Summer nights are so special. It is the time when the air starts to cool off and it is time to meet your friends at Placerita for movie night. You can bring a dessert to share. If you are lucky, you might even have to wear a light jacket, and that is the utmost luxury during our hot summers. You came well prepared with a cushion to sit comfortably on the concrete benches, and a flashlight.

Jack Levenberg oversees this program with the support of many docents forming the technical team. They make sure that sound and light are always at their best, bringing the equipment to the Acorn Amphitheater and storing it safely after the show...which is the difficult part to do in the dark.

The next movie will be on September 17 at 6.00 pm and it will be for docents and friends from Placerita. Title TBD.



*Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation  
Placerita Canyon Nature Center Docents*



# **PLACERITA CANYON NATURE TOTS**

In person at the Placerita Canyon Nature Center  
Starting back September 10, 2022

For 3 to 6 year olds

Second Saturday of the Month

9:30 a.m.

**FREE!!**

To register please email:  
[Nature\\_tots@placerita.org](mailto:Nature_tots@placerita.org)

Join the Placerita Nature Docents in this 45 min to 1-hour program as they present a variety of nature activities for young children.

**Educational, Environmental and Fun!**







## SUMMER AND FALL 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.

**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 8.00am (Time might change in October). 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.

### **Placerita Nature Tots; Placerita Canyon Nature Tots**

For 3 to 6 year olds. Meets second Saturday of the month at 9:30 a.m. Program lasts 45 min to an hour and will involve learning about the environment. To register: [nature\\_tots@placerita.org](mailto:nature_tots@placerita.org)

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

**Breakfast of the Champions:** August 20 (see flyer)

**2022 NCA Annual Recognition Event** at Eaton Canyon Nature Center on September 10 at 10 am – RSVP to Sandra Cattell at 661 259 0433 (see article for more details)

**Movie Night:** Saturday, September 17 at 6.00pm. Bring a dessert to share, a pillow and a flashlight. Title TBD

**Fall Kick Off:** September 20 from 9am until noon. A great way for the docents to review their knowledge and get ready for the new season.

For more information about those programs, call Placerita Canyon Nature Center at 661-259-7721





The PCNCA Breakfast of Champions  
Returns After a Two-year Hiatus!  
Welcome Back!!!

The Breakfast of Champions was started over a decade ago as an opportunity for the docents to get together in mid-summer to make sure we all kept in touch during the slow season for PCNCA activities. It has grown over the years to include a potluck breakfast and a team trivia quiz entitled “Are you Smarter than a Placerita 5th Grader,” the winners of which receive custom nature-themed hats made by Jill Goddard, wife of Ron Kraus.

Saturday, August 20, from 9AM until approximately 11:30AM.

No RSVP is required, just bring a breakfast dish to share with the group at the potluck.

The use of face masks is optional but not required for this event.