



The Rattler

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

November-December 2023

Editor: Evelyn Vandersande Publisher: Heidi Webber

Hello Nature Friends,

The Holiday Craft Fair is coming up on December 2nd and 3rd. The Nature Center is the only place in this valley where you can make your holiday decorations with fresh greenery, pinecones, seeds and pods, plus have so much fun! You just buy a straw wreath, and we provide all that nature has to offer. The smell is delicious, and the results are spectacular. We will also have crafts for children, so the whole family can have a good time. Mark your calendar.

Let's say you have a love of nature, you have some free time, and you always wanted to become a docent at Placerita Canyon Nature Center. But you just don't know how to start. Now is the time to grab this opportunity: Docent training is starting on January 9, 2024. Check our web site on placerita.org for more details and to sign on.

The holidays are coming, and we want to send you all our best wishes for happiness and health. We hope you will have some good times with family and friends, and that you will be able to enjoy the simple but deep pleasures of the change of seasons.



NCA 2023 Annual Meeting and Volunteer Recognition

by Sandra Cattell

These photos were taken at our Nature Center Associates annual meeting in September. It was extremely well attended, with members from all the Nature Centers and Sanctuaries, plus Supervisor Kathryn Barger and a huge cadre of County officials.

We were delighted to see Sue Murachanian receive the volunteer of the year award for her outstanding contributions to Placerita Canyon Nature Center. Many other docents received their 5-year pins. Eight got a 10-year pin, one for 15 years, and 3 received 20-year pins. All new docents at all the nature centers were recognized. We also had election of new officers. They are Corresponding Secretary Marge Mayotte-Hin, Recording Secretary Marie Scherb, and Vice President Sandra Cattell.

Congratulations to all.





Bob Moss Cup 2023

by Sue Murachanian

It was my honor to choose the recipient of the Bob Moss cup 2023. Although I never had the pleasure of meeting Bob Moss, I am told he was a special man with a generous spirit. The inscription on the Bob Moss Cup reads "Improving PCNCA to a higher level" I gave this a lot of thought and I kept going back to one person, Pat Coskran.

Pat and I were in the docent class of 2020 together and became fast friends. He knew from the start that he wanted to implement a hiking program at PCNC for special needs individuals. And so the challengers were formed. You will find Pat and his group of young Challengers each Saturday morning hiking and exploring throughout the park. Pat is also developing additional programming for clients of Adult Day Programs to enable them to experience PCNC and all it has to offer. He also continues to research and implement ways to make PCNC accessible to all visitors. What a gift to be able to offer these programs to our community!

Beyond creating new programs at the park Pat also participates weekly in invasive plant removal and Native plant replacement. He is credited with relocating native plant signs to their appropriate location and has also put in place QR codes for native plants linking them to the Calscape website description. Pat is always on hand to participate in PCNCA programs and events, and willing to lend his time and talents. And if all that isn't enough! Pat is newly elected to the PCNCA Board of Directors!

Congratulations Pat! You absolutely have earned and deserve this year's Bob Moss award!

Bob Moss Cup and Paul Levine's Cup

We have 2 cups that are given as special recognition to docents who have been outstanding.

What is the difference between these 2 cups?

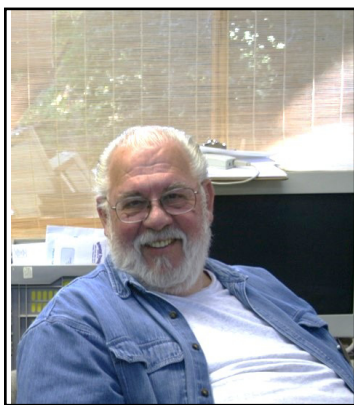
The Bob Moss cup is given to a docent who has shown special initiative, done one or a few creative projects, or started a new program.

The Paul Levine cup is given to a docent who has shown special capacity as a teacher. That can be achieved in many different ways: in classroom presentation, in education, trail interpretation, or animal handling. The sky is the limit because nature education is one of the most important goals at Placerita Canyon.

When docents accept a cup, they keep it for one year. Then they have the responsibility to find another docent who has demonstrated the specific requirements to receive that specific award. That docent usually presents the cup to the candidate of their choice.

The Bob Moss cup is usually given in the summer at a gathering where many docents are present to congratulate the award recipient.

The Paul Levine cup is usually given in the winter, often during the holiday dinner.



Who was Bob Moss?

Bob Moss was called the Dean of the Docents; he was a professional educator and made sure the docents felt at home at Placerita. He had a wonderful sense of humor, and a personality larger than life. He had a real passion for PCNCA, and the docents felt safe trying new ideas and projects because they knew he would men-

tor them, support and help them.

He was our Santa every year and had as much fun as all the kids! His desire to improve Placerita gave the idea to Jim Southwell to create this cup to keep Bob's creativity and memory alive.

Who was Paul Levine?

Paul was a cardiologist, a talented medical inventor. Google his name because the list is impressive and very long. He was an educator, an author, and a leader. He was also a renowned Lepidopterologist, and we learned so much about butterflies and moths under his guidance.

It was important to us to honor his memory by recognizing excellence in interpretation, and creating this award.

To receive Bob Moss 'cup is a recognition for new ideas and projects.

The Paul Levine cup is the recognition of a teacher who taught us well.



I hope this helps to better appreciate the situation when the Paul Levine cup is going to be passed along at the Holiday Dinner. Our warmest congratulations to the next recipient.



Backflow Preventer Piping System

by Denny Truger

A few weeks ago, the California State Parks Dept. replaced our rusted out and ready to leak Backflow Preventer piping system with brand new copper pipe and brass fittings. This also included replacing the main water shut off valve to the lower portion of our park. That valve controls the pond area drinking fountain, fire hydrants in the Oak Woodland picnic area along with the drinking fountain by our "Acorn Amphitheater." It was a much-needed fix.



Nature Education

In September, Nikki Dail, a Placerita Docent and world traveler, presented highlights of her expedition to Svalbard, one of the world's northernmost inhabited areas. It was a fantastic presentation as usual!

Thank you, Nikki, for sharing your adventure with us and thank you Helen Sweany for planning this program...We ended up the presentation with a snowball fight!

The Nature Education programs are free, open to the public and are given every 3rd Sunday of the month, they last about one hour. November program will be Chapparral with Richard Hasley.



New Drinking Fountain with Bottle Filler

By Denny Truger

Two weeks ago, the LA County plumbers surprised us by installing a new drinking fountain with a bottle filler near the park office. Three or four years ago this was a wish of one of our docents and retired board member, Gary Freiburger, to help eliminate plastic water bottles in the park. Gary had also encouraged our gift shop to sell non-plastic water containers.

It's been nice to get so many positive comments from hikers about the new bottle filler drinking fountain.

Denny is very modest, so I will add that he helped with the installation and repainted the whole wall after that so the new installation would be pristine. Thank you all!



Our Founding Mothers Came for a Visit!

By Ron Kraus

We were pleased to host the meeting of the American Association of University Women on September 26 as they celebrated the 55th anniversary of the Santa Clarita Valley Chapter. The San Fernando Valley Chapter was responsible for starting what became the docent program at Placerita Canyon.

I presented the history of the park and led a group hike and Denny showed one of our red-tailed hawks.

Thank you AAUW for starting our nature education programs that have grown into what they are today!

Teamwork is Always Best!

by Ron Kraus

A long time ago, we had a felt board we used to explain the circle of life to the school groups. It was very cute and quaint. But after many years of usage, the different cutouts illustrating the story would not stick to the background any longer, and would fall to the floor. That would disturb the presentation, even if it did make the kids laugh each time...

In 2010, Jill Goddard decided that there had to be a better way. The felt board could not be fixed, and it was her idea to replace the old felt board with the magnetic whiteboard. Jill and I researched the alternatives and decided that the combination of whiteboard on one side and chalkboard on the other side would be ideal. Jill then designed the magnetic stick-on elements (animals, acorns, nests, etc.) and drew the canyon scene on the white board for the background. She then refreshed it every few years as the background faded away from use during the school presentations.

Jim Crowley deserves credit for repairing and reinforcing the white board frame and stand over the years.

Jill found it difficult to redraw the background this year due to some physical limitations, but when Jessica Grosh mentioned during docent training that she could do artwork, I asked her if she could re-do the background. To my delight she said yes. It looks nice and fresh and ready to go. Thank you, Jessica!





The Dark Side of Docenting

by Glenda Perl

As the PCNCA Membership Chairperson (a self-proclaimed title), it is my responsibility to maintain the Phone and Membership rosters with current information for our docents and L.A. County partners in the office. In addition, I gently remind the docents that their annual PCNCA membership dues are to be paid in January.

I also am the go-to contact person when someone is ill, in the hospital, or (sadly) passes away. When that happens, we usually send a lovely flower bouquet to the family, along with messages of condolence.

I have been thinking about this practice for some time. While sending flowers is a thoughtful token of remembrance, the reality is that flowers are expensive and, after a short time, are simply thrown into the trash, which contributes to the pollution of our planet.

There IS a better option, though! My mother, Eleanor, was the “Last of the Mohicans” in her circle of friends. In lieu of sending flowers to the bereaved family, we discovered there are many organizations that plant memorial trees in honor of lost loved ones (just Google it!). Consequently, Mom has virtually “planted” many trees!

At the September board meeting, I brought up this subject for discussion. Everyone in attendance agreed that this was a brilliant idea! So, going forward, PCNCA will purchase trees to be planted in national forests or areas devastated by forest fires. After all, we ARE a Nature Center that wants to preserve our fragile environment!



What Happened in Newhall on August 25, 2011?

It was a big day for the Nature Center. Placerita was part of the time capsule project when the NEW Newhall library was built. This capsule will be opened in August 2061, so let your grandkids know in advance!

City Council members Marsha McLean and Laurene Weste oversaw the ceremony. Ron Kraus and two docents, Eileen Blanchard and Pam Koch, signed their names on the steel frame before it was hoisted to the highest part of the library. They added the following items to the capsule to represent Placerita Canyon Nature Center:



- A cloth patch with the Nature Center logo.
- An envelope with “Rattlesnake Eggs.” It’s a novelty item sold in our gift shop—not real eggs. It buzzes when you open the envelope. Somebody 50 years from now might think it’s funny.
- A field notebook commemorating our 50th anniversary this year.
- Four photos: The Nature Center building, our staff, our 2011 docent class, and our signature landmark--the Oak of the Golden Dream.
- Our newsletter, “The Rattler.”
- The list of our current members.
- A CD containing PDF files of the membership list, the newsletter, a report on the history of Placerita Canyon, and a report on the Walker Family, the pioneer family of Placerita Canyon.
- A DVD movie covering the recent history of Placerita Canyon. Who knows if they will still be able to watch DVDs in 2061.

The time capsule is located near the entrance to the library on the American Legion side (back entrance on the parking lot side).

It is always fun for Placerita to leave a mark on SCV history...Remember, it will be opened in 2061!



Introduction: Dennis Cain

Long family driving and camping adventures during my youth exposed me to a variety of outdoor experiences beyond what could be found in my San Gabriel Valley hometown. Add to that a number of years in Cub and Boy Scouts, an athletic tendency, a love for watersports, and a generally adventurous spirit...and you get a lifetime of recreational exploration and enjoyment of the outdoors.

My wife Debbie and I also raised our son and daughter to enjoy the outdoors, resulting in continued individual and family enjoyment of camping, hiking and international adventure to this day. Our first grandchild is now four years old, and has already been on most of the PCNC trails.

I spent my career as an aerospace engineer and business manager, mostly at what used to be called HR Textron here in the Santa Clarita Valley. I essentially deployed a 'systems engineering mindset' to solve problems and achieve objectives during my working life...and that mindset continues to influence my worldview, which tends to look at how things fit into the 'bigger picture.'

I also spent many years as a youth basketball and soccer coach, recognizing the diverse needs of the children, and the benefits of learning both the technical details and how to work as a team.

Now retired, I aim to pass along my love of an active outdoors life to my grandchildren. I happened to notice an article in the SCV News that announced the Docent Training program, and since one of the highlighted roles was school program leadership, it seemed that this would be a good way to provide my grandson and other kids with a broad introduction to an active lifestyle that includes knowledge of the ecosystems through which one's adventure is progressing.

The proximity of the Nature Center to a large population presents very good opportunities for education and activities of many types - and I'm also very interested in how the Nature Center establishes goals, organizes strategic projects, and then 'markets itself' to the public and administering government agencies. Of primary interest to me is to act as a liaison between subject-matter experts and the general public, especially to interpret nature and encourage observation and inquisition from children with a wider array of personalities and capabilities as part of the school programs.

The interaction with senior docents has been very beneficial. I really appreciate their knowledge, friendliness, and passion for all that the PCNC includes and their willingness to share. I suspect it will be a long time before I can understand even a small portion of that knowledge...but look forward to at least finding out who is interested in what!

It is also obvious that this group of passionate and nature-loving people (both county employees and volunteers) have developed the PCNC into the great public resource that exists today. I look forward to working with all to better understand the vision for the park's future, how it can best benefit users, and how to continue to execute projects to progress towards that vision as the situation changes. I am currently closely involved with the new Books & Hikes club, Nature Tots, and school tours...and just enjoy hiking our trails and interacting with other hikers!



The 2023 SCV River Rally by Glenda Perl

Will Webber and I set up our exhibit tables at the annual SCV River Rally, this time based at the Newhall Community Center.

Hundreds of local folks came out to pick up trash from a section of the Santa Clara River. Santa Clarita City Councilmember and former Mayor Marsha Mc-

Lean stopped by for a photo-op!

There were arts and crafts for the kids (they decorated toy trash bins with cute stickers), and many environmental groups also set up display tables (e.g., Sierra Club, TreePeople, a gardening club).

As usual, everyone wanted to touch the snakes (sorry, not allowed). As an alternative, they could feel the snake shed.

That beautiful hand-painted mural inside the Newhall Community Center was created by/for SPAF (Special Children's Art Foundation) by its very talented founder, Marc Kolodziejczyk. I have a connection to the mural...I helped paint it with a few very special kids!

Gift Shop News

by Sue Murachanian

As we move into the holiday season, please keep the PCNC gift shop in mind for your holiday shopping. As you know the gift shop proceeds help to support our animal care program!

We are offering a new assortment of Folkmanis puppets. Including a Woodland Animals finger puppet set of four. We also have a new selection of Whistle Creek wooden walking sticks in four sizes.

(The new walking sticks have beautiful wood grain designs and a leather hand strap.)

Our hand beaded bracelets are a top seller. They come in adult and child sizes in a variety of beautiful colors and designs.

Other offerings include locally sourced honey from Bennett's Honey Farm, nature journals, a variety of books and more. So come on by!

We hope to see you soon!

Happy Holidays,
The Gift Shop Team



Volunteer of the Year 2023

by Teresa Jacobs

At the NCA Annual Meeting and Volunteer Recognition Ceremony, we honored a woman with many good ideas. She epitomizes what docents do, and enriches Placerita Canyon Nature Center in multiple ways.

She graduated in the class of 2020, and we all know how that year redefined our lives.

Instead of waiting for the pandemic to pass, she kept her fellow docents connected. For those efforts and her new projects, she was the recipient of the Bob Moss cup.

She appeared in the gift shop one day with the idea of participating and being part of the team. The skills she brought were many. She was a schoolteacher, had catered weddings and various events, and also worked in a grocery store and had the skill of ordering supplies. Working with the public and being part of a larger system prepared her to work in the gift shop.

She has been redecorating the gift shop, and we added an electronic payment system.

For Open House, she asked her son-in-law, who works for Fender, to donate three Fender guitars for the Raffle and two more guitars the following year. The Open House benefited greatly from those donations. Her family members volunteered many hours at the drinks and nosh table the whole day!

Aside from the gift shop involvement, Sue is a board member, hospitality chairman



and is on the amphitheater committee.

She was instrumental in getting New York Life to donate a grant to support the Nature Center. They had a display at Open House, and provided a child identification system in case of emergency.

Sue has many wonderful ideas, but perhaps even more importantly, she convinces people to engage and to participate, so that those ideas become reality.

Not only did I gain a wonderful team member in the gift shop, but I have also made a wonderful friend. In case you have not guessed, I am writing about Sue Murachian, Placerita Volunteer of the Year 2023.

Books and Hike Club

by Dennis Cain

The idea for the new PCNCA "Books and Hike Club" arose during the 2023 Docent Training term. We recognized the potential benefit of combining cues from PCNC trails with interesting themes from relevant books. Kind of a moving book club! Our mission statement is: To use books about various aspects of the environment to create, foster, and nurture a love of nature and generate interest in Placerita Canyon.

All of us are Docent Naturalists, and our goal is to inspire you to return to Placerita Canyon so you can enjoy and appreciate the beauty of this magical place. Those who have spent a lot of time in nature know that our personal history and current state of mind can affect the experience. As a result, the books we have chosen for the first year of Books and Hikes have been carefully curated to maximize your interaction and time spent in nature, specifically on one of our Placerita Canyon trails.

The book chosen for the first meeting in August was *The Nature Fix*, by Florence Williams. It turned out to be a great choice because it addressed how spending time, interacting with others, and exercising in nature can benefit everyone. Additionally, *The Nature Fix* also addressed the overlap of our manufactured infrastructure and current reality WITH our natural world. How do we co-exist harmoniously?

Future reading materials were specifically chosen to further highlight these boundaries, but also to show how our diverse Placerita Canyon community tries to balance them. There were about ten participants in the August session, about half of whom were docents. We made several stops along the Hillside and Hidden trails using cues to highlight points from the book, which led to a very insightful discussion!

September's meeting addressed the themes associated with personal quests in the book *The Happiness of Pursuit* by Chris Guillebeau. We hiked parts of the Heritage (gold, oil, Walker quests), Hillside, and Manzanita Mountain trails. There are many types of personal quests, small and large, that can help provide an underlying and long-lasting story into which our daily efforts can fit! We look forward to seeing you at future Books and Hikes sessions.

Book and Hike: 4th Sunday of the month from 9.00 AM to 10:30 AM. A new book will be discussed each month. Please register book-sandhikes@placerita.org





New Video Coming Soon!!

By Cindy Gold

A new PCNCA video called Honeybees! will be released in the fall in our Know Your Nature Center! The mini documentary begins with the introduction of a new colony of bees to our exhibition hive in the classroom. It highlights the importance of honeybees, and the amazing way they organize their hive.

Resident bee aficionado and docent Sue Sutton will talk about these amazing little creatures while we see beautiful nature footage of bees working in the hive and out foraging in the park.

Docent film makers Cindy Gold and Ron Kraus, along with crew Ken Yasukawa and Glenda Perl produced this entertaining introduction to our buzzing friends. Docent artist Jill Goddard created amusing illustrations of the various jobs bees do as they work together. Nathan Gold, a professional Director of Photography, shot the beautiful nature footage.

All park visitors will be able to watch the video, learn about honeybees and then observe these amazing creatures firsthand in our exhibition hive and out in the park. Our aim is to encourage everyone to appreciate and protect these essential, hardworking honeybees!



A Busy Evening at Placerita

Thank you so much for coming in large numbers to the Annual Park Community Meeting. It was great that there was so much interest, the willingness to ask questions and to express a few concerns. The County took notice, we are on their list, answers were given, and they will try to help.

Some people "in charge" were running from the meeting to the amphitheater. Live music welcomed us, thank you Bill Kahl for doing this again, and please thank your brother for us as well. You are so talented, and it added a fun and pleasant touch to the evening while we were enjoying our picnic.

The movie brought lots of kids, and it was fun seeing the families having a good time watching "The Swiss Family Robinson" together. Thank you to all who did the set up and put everything away...it was getting late, but what a fantastic evening!



Downhill Sliders with RuthAnne Murthy

The Downhill Sliders meet on the third Wednesday of the month at 10AM. It is open to docents and friends.

In September, they visited the Demonstration Garden in Bridgeport Park, 23521 Bridgeport Lane Santa Clarita. This new garden is behind the sports field. It was planted in July, so all the plants are very small, but it is an interesting idea. They are trying!

Maria Elena Christensen and RuthAnne gave a lot of information about what was planted, so that was very interesting. One of the designers comes to Blooms of the Season at Placerita regularly to get advice and learn more about Native Plants.

Afterward, the team walked around the lake for about 2.5 miles. The location for the Downhill Sliders event is different each month, and they go out to lunch afterward. The walking pace is moderate, so there's plenty of opportunity to socialize with each other. It's a fun morning every time, so give it a try!

For the Love of Violet

by Glenda Perl

Docent Jack Levenberg educates the public about Violet, the striped skunk! She always makes a big impression! Jack had the wonderful experience of having a descented skunk as a pet in his childhood. They shared many years of happy friendship and he was thrilled to be able to be able to renew those ties with Violet.

He is an expert on the topic, able to share many details about the striped skunk abilities, behavior and adaptation to the great delight of all our visitors.



Have a Seat and Relax!

By Cindy Gold

In the Know Your Nature Center, park visitors can now have a seat while they watch short nature videos in comfort. You are invited to come in, sit down and relax, and learn more about the birds, flowers and trails in the park! And soon new videos will be added to the venue.





Photo by Gary Park garyparktookthese.com

House Wren

By Ken Yasukawa

The House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*) is one of the birds that we can see and hear at Placerita Canyon. It is loquacious and incredibly loud for such a small bird (it only weighs about 0.35 oz)—an effervescent voice in a plain brown wrapper. Songs of males are long bubbling cascades with introductory churrs and comprising 12–16 distinct syllables. Females sing mostly to answer their mates and their songs include high-pitched squeals that males do not produce.

The House Wren has a vast breeding range, from southern Canada to the southernmost parts of South America and into the West Indies. It is also one of the most studied birds of the New World. Although it lacks bold marking or colors, it is easily identified by its distinctive song. It is one of two wren species at Placerita and can be distinguished from the Bewick's Wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*) by its lack of a distinct white eyebrow-stripe. In 1919 J. Burroughs described the House Wren as follows.

Probably we have no other familiar bird keyed up to the same degree of intensity as the House Wren. He seems to be the one bird whose cup of life is always overflowing. The wren is habitually in an ecstasy whether of delight or of rage.... He is so shrilly and overflowingly joyous, or else so sharply and harshly angry and pugnacious— \neg —a lyrical burst one minute, and a volley of chiding, staccato notes the next.

Males are fiercely territorial, but intrusions by other male House Wrens are common, especially when females are fertile. An intruder can evict the territory owner and will then kill the eggs or young of the evicted male. House Wrens breed in cavities but will readily use nest boxes and other human-made cavities. Males begin building nests as soon as they claim their territories. Females then complete the nests when they pair with the territory owners.

Only the female incubates eggs and broods young. The male will guard the nest when the female is away and will sometimes feed the female while she is incubating. Both the male and female feed young. The male sings when he arrives at the nest with food, which causes the young to beg. Parents give alarm calls, reduce feeding rates, and mob nest predators near the nest, but they will increase feeding rates when the predators depart. Young leave the nest about 20 days after they hatch and continue to be fed by the parents for about 2–3 weeks.

Because House Wrens are easy to study and breed in a variety of habitats under a variety of environmental conditions over a wide geographic range, they offer an unparalleled opportunity to assess the effects of various environmental and social factors on the evolution of birds.



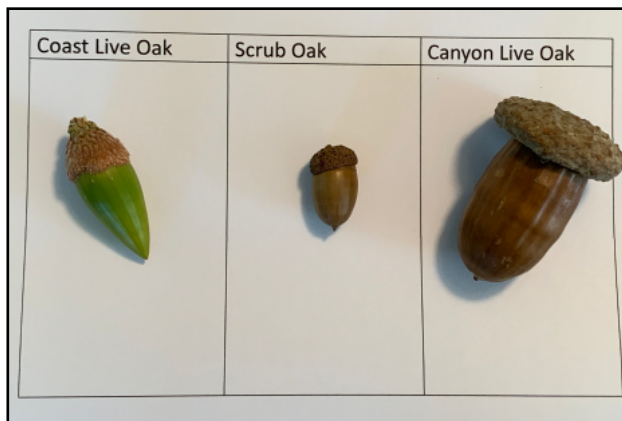


Fall Kickoff

Fall kickoff is always a great opportunity for the docents to get together and get reacquainted after the long summer. We were delighted to have such a large group participating, with many of the new docents and some returning docents that we had not seen for a few years, so it was a nice reunion.

Herb Broutt was in charge of the classroom presentation; he reviewed all the ongoing programs. Many people in charge of specific programs were there and were able to answer questions or give more details of what is in store for the next few months. We learned about the new activities and how to participate, got the school tour update and learned about the future trips for docent enrichment, so it was all pretty exciting.

Then we had a breakfast break. Thank you to all who brought snacks and to the hospitality committee for making coffee, setting up and cleaning up. Ron Kraus took us on the trail so we could refresh our memories about the names of the plants, learn what is currently blooming in the park as well as animals that have been spotted in the area. There was still water in the creek and we crossed carefully, stepping from stone to stone. Thank you all for sharing your information, we learned a lot and we had fun, you cannot beat that!



Trail Treasures

By RuthAnne Murthy

Canyon live oaks are evergreen (live) oaks that have a range from Oregon to Baja California. They live from sea level to 9,000 ft in elevation. They are the most widely distributed oak in California. Their forms vary with the habitat and the types of soil. They are extremely adaptable. In dry, rocky places they are more like shrubs, whereas, in wetter areas they can grow up to 70 feet tall. John Muir said of them, "a tough, rugged mountaineer of a tree". In Southern California, they tend to grow on north facing slopes and along streams.

The toothed, elliptical leaves range from 1- 2 ½ inches long. The holly-like leaves form a dense canopy. The upper surface is bright shiny green. The under surface is bluish-gray and covered by golden hairs especially when the leaves are young.

The acorns of the canyon oaks can be over 2 inches in length, and the cups are larger than the acorn itself. The cups have distinctive corky scales and the body of the acorns are covered with a soft felt. The acorns are a chestnut brown. The catkins form in April-May and take 2 years to mature. They have several nicknames one of which is golden cup oak.

The trunks are relatively slender, often only 1-2 feet in diameter. The bark has a gray tone in smooth shallow strips. The wood is strong and close-grained. They have the hardest wood of all the west coast oaks. Another nickname is 'iron oak' because of its hardness.

Because of the large size of the acorns, Native Californians had a preference for the canyon live oak. Which acorn would you like to process for food: the scrub oak acorn or a canyon live oak? The pioneers used the wood for tools, wagons, furniture and flooring.

Canyon live oaks are not as prevalent as coast live oaks at Placerita Canyon, but are worth the search along Canyon Trail. Their large and unique acorns are a great find. They are truly Trail Treasures.



Check out the New Planting Area Next to the Bridge!

By Pat Coskran

Our very own botanist, Robert Grzesiak, continues leading a group of docents weekly as they remove invasive species, and plant natives to restore the ecology at Placerita.

On a recent Saturday, Robert supervised a pack of cub scouts who transplanted native plants from our nursery to their new home next to the creek bridge. The result is beautiful. You should take a moment to see the result of their efforts. Thank you, Robert, and thank you Sean for installing a sign to discourage visitors from "observing" too closely.

WINTER PROGRAMS

Hours at the park will change in November to 8AM to 5PM.

HOLIDAY CRAFT FAIR: December 2 and 3, 2023 10AM to 3PM – Create and decorate your own holiday wreaths, centerpieces and ornaments using a large assortment of fresh-cut greenery, pinecones, and other natural treasures (see flyer)

Movie Night: The next and probably last one of the year will be October 21st at 6:00 PM. There will be a Bat Presentation first – Title of the movie: Hocus Pocus

Book and Hike: 4th Sunday of the month from 9AM to 10:30AM. A new book will be discussed each month. Please register booksandhikes@placerita.org

Bird Walks: First Saturday of every month with Rosemarie Regis. Second Saturday of every month with Ken Yasukawa. 8:00AM to 10:00 AM in November, 9:00AM to 11:00 AM in December. For all levels of birders. Bring binoculars, water, and a field guide.

Blooms of the Season: Learn about native plants with RuthAnne Murthy. 4th Saturday of every month, meet on the patio at 9:30AM for a one-hour stroll. Bring your camera and questions.

Family Nature Walk: Every Saturday from 11AM to noon with Judy McClure. An easy 1-hour walk exploring the natural and cultural history of the area.

Hike with the Downhill Sliders: The third Wednesday of the month at 10AM. Program for docents and friends. Docents, please check your Trails and Nuggets for the latest information.

Placerita Nature Tots: Second Saturday of the month at 9:30AM. For 3-to-6-year-olds. Program lasts 45 minutes to one hour and will involve learning about the environment. The topic for November will be turkeys. To register: Nature_tots@placerita.org

Nature Education: Every 3rd Sunday of the month at 2PM, PCNCA provides a free educational program open to the public. November program will be Chaparral with Richard Hasley

Native Plant Renewal and Restoration: Every Thursday from 8AM to 10AM, led by Robert Grzesiak.

Twilight Hikes: This program is offered on the 3rd Saturday of each month. This program starts at 6:30 PM in October and 6:00 PM in December and runs for about one hour. Park staff and the Nature Center docents split into groups and courses through the different trails in the dark.

Holiday party for docents and friends: Saturday, December 9 at 6:00 PM – Potluck dinner and recognition.

Docent Enrichment: October 25 : Los Encino adobe trip

November: Visit to the Griffith Observatory



The Placerita Canyon Nature Center
Presents its Annual

Holiday Craft Fair

December 2nd and 3rd, 2023

10:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.

at

Placerita Canyon Nature Center

19152 Placerita Canyon Road, Newhall

1 1/2 miles east of the 14 freeway

Create and decorate your own holiday wreaths, centerpieces and ornaments using a large assortment of fresh-cut greenery, pine cones and other beautiful natural treasures. In addition, our gift shop will be open with lots of holiday items.

Please note that this is a fundraising event for the Placerita Canyon Nature Center Associates (a non-profit corporation) and that there is a charge for all activities (cash, check, credit and debit cards will be accepted.) Make your own Wreath, Yule Log, or other craft as you desire. Children's crafts will also be available. For those with allergy concerns, please note that peanut butter is used on some craft items.

(661) 259-7721 • www.placerita.org

