



# The Rattler

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

**May/June 2024**

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## Hello Nature Friends,

The stream belongs on the front page! From early fall (even mid-summer) to late in the Spring, we have had water flowing in the stream. We are the only park in the Santa Clarita valley where you can park so close to a stream. Here is a perfect environment for many children eager to play in the water, and people who have mobility issues. It is always a joy to share so much beauty with our visitors. The stream is different each day, and there is much to observe. It is a good place to pack a picnic, take photos, go hiking, sit along the stream or even stay inside your car on a cold morning. We have had many weddings enjoying this perfect setting, and during Spring break, the parking was at full capacity with children and their parents playing in the water. The school groups are back, the docent training is over, and the new docents have their hands full of different projects, including the Open House on May 11.

There are so many wonderful opportunities at Placerita, come and enjoy some of them.



## Nature Tots

by John Whitaker

We had 26 kids in attendance with the topic Birds of Prey. We also had four alumni kids taking a hike with each one borrowing a set of binoculars to look for birds.

The Nature Tots program followed our normal format with highlights being Jack Levenberg, Denny Truger, Rick Brammer showing 3 of our birds and Judy McClure taking them to our patio and describing the birds in their home cages.

Other enthusiastic docents involved with the planning and implementation of program activities were Carol, Sandy, Debbie, Linda J, Dave, Maria Elena, Melissa, Abril, and new docents Jennie, Brienne, Catherine, Linda D and Heiny.

We will skip May 11 and support the Open House on that day. June topic will be lizards. I believe our group of Nature Tots docents love the program as much as the kids do and we thank them all for their efforts.



## Cesar Chavez Volunteer Appreciation Day on Saturday March 23.

Russ Kimura, Regional Park Superintendent 1 at Placerita, gave a heartfelt presentation for his group of docents and we felt honored. We appreciate his support and recognition, and we always enjoy the company of our Placerita family. So very nice of the County to have such a lovely event for their volunteers.

Not present were Ron Kraus, Sue Sutton and Teresa Jacobs. Thank you all.

## Rene Rojas, Grounds Maintenance Worker II

PCNCA said farewell to Rene at Docent Training, as he moves to Eaton Canyon Nature Center. We really appreciated his hard work and helpful, positive attitude.

Rene always had a big smile, was always friendly, full of enthusiasm and ready to get on board with every new project. He even took the Docent training to learn more about the park, and the docents were very impressed by his dedication.

After years of working at Placerita, Rene has decided to work at Eaton Canyon so he can have a shorter commute. René has been a joy! Eaton Canyon is lucky to have such a kind and helpful person on their team. Best wishes for a continued great career!







### **"Outside We Learn/Nature Play"**

by Heiny Gutierrez Baron

My name is Heiny Gutiérrez. I am a new Docent from the Class of 2024., I moved to Santa Clarita 3 years ago and since then I've loved to explore the open spaces and natural areas with my family.

A couple of years ago I started hosting nature/play classes following the kindergarten curriculum. Each season we get together, learn about animals, and play outside while we enjoy time outdoors. It's been a wonderful way to connect with Nature and to build community around our shared passion for outdoor activities.

Placerita is a magical place and I'm lucky to be able to share my love for this place with other families.



### **School Tours are Back!**

By Lori Wolf

Rosedell School was our last local public school to have a tour before the pandemic lockdown in March 2020, so it was nice to have them back this year as our first public school group tour since 2020.

On a beautiful spring day, seventy-four eager but polite 1st graders were welcomed to the Center by many of our docents. We had nature boxes in the courtyard and Jim Crowley at the whiteboard, along with hikes and visits to the museum. Our animal handlers are always a big hit, and the stars of the show are the animals themselves.

Many of our docents mentioned they felt a bit rusty after all this time, but from the happy looks on the teachers' and students' faces, I could tell they did a great job!.

Thank you to all who helped.



### **A New Sign and a New Bench**

by Denny Truger

Last year Judy McClure wanted to put a sign up in the hummingbird garden that said "welcome to our Hummingbird Garden" to honor her late husband, Roger McClure. Unfortunately, the sign maker only made a sign that said "Hummingbird Garden."

I knew she was disappointed, so I eventually got the sign maker to make the rest of the sign. We now have a nice welcoming sign for the hummingbird garden.

At the same time, Fred Seeley suggested we install a new bench. So, we now have two benches to view the hummingbirds, one on each side of the fountain.

We are grateful that Judy McClure diligently cleans up and refills the many hummingbird feeders. This garden is becoming quite the destination for many of our visitors.



### **Downhill Sliders in April**

There was a lot of excitement in the group, because we had a great view of the partial eclipse and many new native plants were blooming. The timing of the hike was perfect, 10AM to 11.30AM, and we passed the special glasses around our group, plus anybody we saw on the trail! RuthAnne Murthy did a great job as usual, she does her research well in advance of the hike and we enjoyed many new wildflowers coming up. The Hairy Ceanothus is wonderful.

Thank you all for being there and sharing this fun time and learning experience together.



### **Amphitheater Number One**

This was our previous amphitheater, and it was used for docent training, weekend presentations and special events. At one point, it started as an Eagle Scout project.

This photo was taken during docent training from the class of 2007. Years went by... the benches were not up to code, and it was not ADA compliant, so it is back to its natural state. It is a grassy meadow close to the stream, a very pretty spot to visit.



### **Native Plant Renewal and Restoration**

Every Thursday from 9AM to 11AM.

Here is the new schedule for summertime, we want to keep you cool!

Join Robert Grzesiak for this very satisfying program. The ground is still soft, so it is easy to pull out weeds, fight a winning battle against the mustard and protect the native plants coming up in the spring. All ages work together and enjoy each other's company. Bring your garden gloves, a water bottle and start playing in the dirt!



### A Different Kind of Visit!

By Glenda Perl

The Placerita docents brought nature to Oakmont Senior Assisted Living in Valencia! Will Webber talked about spiders, while Jack Levenberg walked around the room showing everyone our Mexican Red tarantula. Next up were Erica Andrassy and I with the snakes.

Erica shared her knowledge about Clarence, a king snake, and I got to show off the colorful mountain king snake (no name). Then, Jack and Catori, a barn owl, made everybody ooh and aah.

We saved the best for last, of course: Sierra, a great horned owl! She's our most impressive bird ambassador, in my humble opinion.

There were about 25 guests, including children, grandchildren, and caregivers. They all asked questions. Most of the elders enjoyed petting the animal pelts. I elicited lots of laughs with the skunk "arm wrap."

Great job, docents!

### Watershed and Docent Enrichment Program

by Dennis Cain

Many of our intrepid docent explorers have traced the origins of Placerita Creek through canyons and time. The water issued from elevated springs have fed mining aspirations, supported homesteading families, and today continue to allow our trees, plants, and animals to thrive. The watershed that creates our creek is a small part of the Santa Clara River watershed that supports a growing population, along with agriculture and a lingering natural environment.

The Docent Enrichment program held on March 20th explored how the diverse demands of the Santa Clara River Valley populations are met, what challenges we face, and how PCNC fits within the larger picture. The program featured four panelists:

**Amanda Begley**, who works for Tree People as Water Equity Associate Program Manager that includes the role of Watershed Coordinator, Santa Clara River Watershed for the Safe, Clean Water Program

**Sandra Cattell**, PCNC Docent, Group Chair of the Santa Clarita Valley Sierra Club chapter, and Vice Chair of the Santa Clara Watershed Area Steering Committee for the Safe, Clean Water Program

**Julia Grothe**, Water Conservation Specialist for the Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency

**Cristhian Mace**, Natural Areas Biologist for the County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation

The agenda included an overview of the water sources, demands, challenges, and plans for the Upper Santa Clara River area. We also identified key geographic, geologic, and botanical elements tied to our watershed system that are critical to understanding how to protect, preserve, improve, and promote PCNC. To that end, Cristhian Mace provided a peek into her upcoming project to develop a Resource Management Plan for all the L.A. County Natural Areas that will include site assessments of our ecosystems. Cristhian will be leading an effort at PCNC to conduct oak surveys...that could be helped greatly with docent support! More to come on that.

The watershed program was well attended and resulted in many interesting docent observations!



### A Trip to the Devil's Punch Bowl

The Devil's Punchbowl is a deep canyon categorized as a plunging syncline: a v-shaped folding of the earth's strata caused by compression. Those rounded rocks are huge! The size of the bowl is very impressive, and totally unexpected when you drive up.

Superintendents Olivia Miseroy and Jonathan Numer welcomed us to their visitor Center, and we were pleasantly surprised. The Bobcat fire burned through the park in September 2020 and that was a disaster, but things are looking up. The Nature Center is very interesting, they are welcoming school tours and have many visitors hiking the bowl.

Jonathan gave us a detailed tour explaining the many crowns we saw sprouting. This is showing the plant recovery and adaptation after such a fire. As you can imagine, we had many questions. He was very clear and easy to understand. His Dad was the previous Superintendent and Jonathan knows this area in depth, so we enjoyed his knowledge.

Thank you so much RuthAnne Murthy for planning this docent enrichment, it was a very impressive visit.







### Books & Hikes by Ellen Coleman

Books and Hikes featured *As Long as Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice, from Colonization to Standing Rock*, by Dina Gilio-Whitaker, for March 2024. Several B&H members participated in a lively discussion regarding Indian roles during the different historical eras of Placerita Canyon, encouraged by viewing the PCNC mural en route to the Oak of the Golden Dream and hiking parts of the Ecology trail to discuss the Tataviam connection along the way.

More conversation ensued at the Tata-viam "Ki'j" (dome shaped dwelling) and book club members were very engaged. We ended the day with "snack time" (sliced oranges), as usual.

Our book pick for April 28, 2024, was *A Year in the Woods* by Torbjorn Ekelund. For May 26, 2024, we are featuring *The Other Family Doctor - A Veterinarian Explores What Animals Can Teach Us About Love, Life and Mortality* by Karen Fine, DVM.



### Spring Cleaning and More at the Cabin by Marc Alva.

We had many visitors to the cabin, in addition to the bus loads of school children. It was wonderful to see their amazement as they entered the inside of the home.

I want to thank Sandy Corkle, Judie Davis and Jennie Marsh for their help in the cabin clean up. It took a lot of scraping, scrubbing, and disinfecting.

In addition, Beth Braunstein has been there during these past weekends to bring in our visitors. Jennie has also volunteered to welcome our guests into the cabin on the weekends.

We would like to open and display the home to the public during the weekdays and we are trying to put together a team to be able to do that. Docents, think about it!



### We Have a New Ghost at Placerita by Denny Truger

Here is a photo from Ghost, our new Barn owl animal ambassador at the Placerita Nature Center. Unfortunately, Ghost is imprinted on humans, so like all our animal ambassadors, he is not releasable.

Loads of fun to let park visitors interact with Ghost.



### Another Visitor on the Trail

by Docent Trainee Michael Simpson

The Docent Training class took short, guided walks to learn how to guide a walk for visitors and school groups. Along the Botany trail, we noticed a gopher hole. The current resident took time out of his busy routine of gathering nest materials to say hello, and even smiled for a photo. Cheese!



### Honor Society in Junior High

It recognizes and rewards students who have excelled academically, demonstrated leadership qualities, and contributed to their school and community. Those students must not only keep their grades at a high level, but also volunteer in their community. It is not always easy to find a place for that kind of volunteer work.

We are very proud at Placerita, that we have always provided such an opportunity for these great students. Right now, there is a team of 16 who are working hard to finish the number of

hours required before the end of the school year.

On the right is Ryan Ur and on the left is Jayen Cuneta. They had a minimum day at the school, and came right over to Placerita to work with heavy gravel. Thank you so much and congratulations to both of you. You can be proud of all your achievements.

Frank Hoffman finds them a project, supervises them, and signs off their mandatory 10 hours. He has done this for many years...Placerita is definitively a special place.







### Who is Denise Allen?

Hello! My name is Denise (Dee) Allen. I am so excited to be a part of the Docent Training Program! Having been to Placerita Canyon Nature Center over the years, Glenda Perl encouraged me to join this 2024 class. What a life-changing decision! To me, Placerita Canyon Nature Center is a “magical” adventure. Every time I come here is a new, incredible experience.

My background is teaching. I was an elementary school teacher in Burbank, CA and taught fourth through sixth grade at McKinley Elementary School. I can't wait to lead our school tours... it's right up my alley! I'm a mother of two grown daughters who also LOVE the Nature Center. I've been married for thirty-three years to a nature-enthusiastic husband. My love for the great outdoors began as a visitor of National Parks and as an avid hiker and camper--tent camping that is!

I've lived in Santa Clarita for twenty-eight years now. My jobs have included retail at the mall, working with people and being a Jenny Craig weight-loss coach. My latest accomplishment includes publishing a children's book titled “The Dog that Had No Tail”. Anyone who knows me will tell you I love people, learning and teaching! Nature, jewelry making, walking, Classic Rock, writing and tattoos (yes, tattoos!) are my passion.

Placerita Canyon Nature Center has become my newest passion. It truly is an enchanting, powerful respite. The people here are welcoming, enthusiastic and enjoy being part of this wondrous environment.

I look forward to leading school tours, working in the gift shop, Walker Cabin, museum, meeting new people and getting to know all of you. I am so grateful to Glenda Perl for making all this happen and for taking the first step to an awesome journey. After all, “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”

### Library News

by Gary Freiburger

#### Attention Nature Tot Leaders

We've added “Spiders”, a book by noted children's author/illustrator, Gail Gibbons. Large pictures and easy to read text. Keep this in mind when you feature spiders!

#### Placerita Photos

Many of you have probably enjoyed seeing Jayme Thomas' wonderful photos of Placerita Canyon on Facebook. She has gathered some of them into a second collection. Both books are now available in the General Interest category (gold dots on the spine.)

#### Books and Hikes

You've probably heard of the Books and Hikes program. Maybe you thought it sounded interesting but just never “got around to it.” Thanks to a generous contribution from Ellen Coleman the following titles have now been added to the library. As the group continues, the latest title read will be added to the library in the General Interest category. The newly added titles are listed below. Check these out (literally, you can check them out!) at the PCNCA library in the docent lounge.

The Book of Hope, Goodall and Abrams, 2021

Finding the Mother Tree, Simard, 2021

Garbology, Humes, 2012

The Happiness of Pursuit, Guillebeau, 2014

The Mountain in the Sea, Nayler, 2022

The Nature Fix, Williams, 2017



### Hello from Evan Jabbaz

Howdy Placerita folks! My name is Evan Jabbaz, and I am a new Docent from the class of 2024 at our wonderful Nature Center! In all my time thus far, I wouldn't have imagined getting the opportunity to work alongside Placerita Canyon Nature Center and their mission to enlighten and restore the marvelous spectacles nature beholds.

Participating in Placerita's efforts is especially important to me as I grew up around the San Gabriel Mountains residing in Canyon Country. Some of my first encounters with nature were made here at Placerita, hiking the trails as a child and being an obnoxiously nerdy kid begging my parents to take me to the zoo and aquariums every weekend. So that being said, spending time in the great outdoors and recollecting memories had inspired much of my love and appreciation for Mother Nature in my later years to pursue my passions in the life sciences. That igniting of fascination for the natural world in my childhood are some of my wildest dreams today, to hopefully one day plant a seedling of inspiration in others to widen their mycorrhizae networks and extend their branches across the canopy treetops, guiding them a mutualistic interaction with nature.

I'm exuberant to begin adding back into my community here and accessing the library of knowledge within the people at the park! In the meantime, walk good folks and I hope to cross your path here at our hidden gem that is Placerita Canyon.



## The Origin of the Hummingbird Garden

By Ron Kraus

The Hummingbird Garden at Placerita is a quiet, peaceful spot located behind the nature center where you can observe hummingbirds at the feeders or take nectar from the flowers of one of the native plants in the area. It was originally built in January 2005 as an Eagle Scout project using funds from the Bill Goddard memorial.

Bill was my brother-in-law who passed away prematurely at age 50 in 2004. He was a long-term resident of the Santa Clarita Valley and was the owner of Goddard & Son Precision Sheet Metal Fabrication in Sun Valley. Bill was active in the racing scene at Saugus Speedway and helped many local drivers build and improve their cars. In addition, he and his wife Linda Goddard built a custom show car and won many trophies and awards for the 1969 Corvette they restored and customized.

After Bill's death Linda asked that, in lieu of flowers for his memorial service, donations be made to Placerita Canyon Nature Center to establish a native garden that would attract hummingbirds. Bill enjoyed the birds that would frequent his Saugus home, especially the hummingbirds.

The materials and supplies for the garden were bought from the donations that were received. The labor to build the garden was supplied by a team of Boy Scouts led by Eagle Scout candidate Craig Plevack. They installed the pond, drip irrigation, bench, display sign and planted the native plants. The scouts (and some of their dads) completed most of the work on Saturday, January 20, 2005.

My favorite plant in the garden is the Fuchsia-flowered Gooseberry (see picture.) It has beautiful, red tubular flowers in winter that the hummingbirds love. It goes dormant in summer and I'm always worried that someone will think it's dead and cut it down. Fortunately, it's covered with lots of sharp thorns which discourage getting near it.

Over the years that followed, several other Placerita docents refurbished the garden and added new features. Maybe we can have them write a future article?



Nuttall's Woodpecker  
Photo by Gary Park

## Woodpeckers Drumming on Houses

Ken Yasukawa

**Why do woodpeckers drum on houses? Woodpeckers usually drum on houses for one of four reasons.**

1. Because the loud drumming, like the singing of songbirds, proclaims the woodpecker's territory and attracts a mate.
2. Because the woodpecker is making a place to nest or roost. If the woodpeckers are making a nest cavity, the hole will be smoothly rounded and large
3. Because the bird is searching for insects living in the siding of the house. If the birds are looking for insects, the holes will be small and irregular.
4. Because the bird is storing food. Acorn Woodpeckers drill dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of acorn-sized holes in trees, utility poles, and sometimes houses. At Placerita Canyon we have such a "granary" near the footbridge to the Amphitheater.

### What Can I Do About It? What you can do depends on the reason for the drumming.

1. If the birds are drumming for territory defense or mate attraction, they will probably stop once breeding has begun in the spring.
2. Nesting holes are usually built in the beginning of the breeding season between late March and April. If you need to evict breeding woodpeckers, avoid the nesting season.
3. You may have to call an exterminator to get rid of the underlying insect problem.
4. To keep Acorn Woodpeckers away, you could try installing plastic streamers, windsocks, or streamers. You could also plug the holes with wood putty.

Please do not use sticky repellents such as Tanglefoot Pest Control, Roost-No-More, or Bird Stop. These types of products can fatally trap or injure birds and other animals.

From All About Birds, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/>





Narrow-leaf Milkweed  
*Asclepias fascicularis*

## Trail Treasures

By RuthAnne Murthy

Narrow-leaf milkweed is a perennial herb that grows about 3 feet tall. It is a sparse plant that grows in dry grassy meadows and disturbed areas below 6000 ft.

The plants' leaves vary in color from a gray green to a medium green. The leaves are lanceolate (pointed) and grow from 2-5 inches long. The leaves are whorled (arranged in a circle around the stem) and arranged oppositely. The stems produce a white sap when cut.

The flowers bloom from June to September. They are white with a red tint. The individual flowers have 5 petals attached to the main stem by smaller ½ inch stems. Numerous flowers form a cluster called an umbrel. The flowers produce a 3 ½ inch brown sharp-pointed seed pod with fine hairs on them.

Narrow-leaf milkweed is toxic to livestock. But it is the preferred food of Monarch butterfly larvae that often eat the leaves down to the stalk. The reduced population of the Monarchs is declining partly due to the destruction of habitat where the milkweed grows. The Monarchs compete with the milkweed aphids and white and red spotted common milkweed bugs.

Of course, California native people found ways to utilize milkweed. The fibers from the stalk were used to make cordage for nets, belts, cradle bands, and ceremonial feather aprons. The white sap was dried to make chewing gum. All parts of the plants were cooked for food. They had to boil the plant parts about 3 times for reduce the toxins. The seeds were used to make paint and dye.

Many biologists and botanists think that the narrow-leaf milkweed should be put on the protected plant list to help the Monarch butterflies. That is why narrow-leaf milkweed is a trail treasure.



## Honoring Ron Kraus

By Cindy Gold

It all started when Ron Kraus was ten years old. Growing up in Sylmar, he often explored the natural areas of Placerita Canyon. One day he discovered the old stone fireplace at Walker Ranch and was hooked on the fascinating history of the park. Later, his love of nature inspired him to pursue a career in management for the City Recreation and Parks Department, where he worked for 30 years. It was a natural transition for him to become a docent naturalist at Placerita Canyon Nature Center in 2002. Two years later, he took over the docent training program and has been managing it ever since. Over 400 people have completed the docent training program and become Docent Naturalists during his 20-year tenure. Recently, we recognized his dedication and commitment to providing outstanding Docent Training.

Ron's developed the training program over the years by expanding the scope of topics and bringing in dynamic teachers. He finds great satisfaction in teaching and providing opportunities for trainees to pursue their passion of nature and the outdoors. Everyone is inspired by his enthusiasm, as he warmly welcomes new docents into our park community. "I've made many life-long friendships," he says. "It's one of the proudest accomplishments of my life." We are grateful for his leadership and the positive impact he continues to have on our PCNCA community.



## Graduation Party for the Class of 2024

by Glenda Perl.

Congratulations to the newest group of PCNC Docents! All your dedication and hard work these past 9 weeks has paid off BIG-ly! We welcome you to our happy family!

Tonight was the traditional graduation ceremony and potluck party. Each graduate received a certificate, official name badge, and a magnifying glass for their magic bag of tricks. Those who never missed a class received a Perfect Attendance cap!

Ron Kraus received a special plaque for his 20 years as the fearless leader of the Docent Training program. Great job, Ron!

All those in attendance marveled during the world premiere of our latest nature video, Honeybees! Kudos to Cindy Gold, the driving force behind all of the nature videos. It was also Cindy's birthday, and she received a special cake.

Wow! What a night! Everyone had a fantastic time!

Happy  
Mothers Day



### New Video on Honeybees!

By Cindy Gold

There's a new video in our Know Your Nature Center about the amazing life of honeybees. It takes you inside the exhibition hive in the Nature Center. You'll see the Queen laying eggs, worker bees making honey and taking care of developing baby bees, building honeycomb, guarding the hive, and gathering nectar and pollen in the park. You can even watch them dance as they communicate directions to the best flowers.

Did you know that one out of every three bites of food was pollinated by bees? Come in and see why honeybees are some of the most important and fascinating creatures in the park!



### Such a Great Time With the School Groups!

By Glenda Perl

We hosted Meadows School of 54 3rd graders again today (the same school as last week, with different 3rd graders and their teachers). Jack Levenberg shared Sierra, a great horned owl, and also Violet, the skunk. Bill Kahl did a rousing Circle of Life board presentation (ENERGY!!!). Lori Wolfe and I wowed the audience with Clarence the King snake (me) and Rosy the rosy boa (Lori).

Then, it was time to hike! I had six kids and their teacher, and newbie docent Trent was my sweeper. Up the Hillside Trail we trudged, then down from the water tank on the Hidden Trail.

Everyone had a great time. Of course, they did!

### Summer Schedule

**Book and Hikes:** 4th Sunday of the month from 9AM to 10.30AM. Please register [booksandhikes@placerita.org](mailto:booksandhikes@placerita.org)

**Bird Walks:** 1st Saturday of every month with Rosemarie Regis. 2nd Saturday of every month with Ken Yasukawa from 8AM to 10AM 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:** Downhill Sliders is on the 2nd Monday of the month. Program for docents and friends. Docents, please check your Trails and Nuggets for the latest information.

**Placerita Nature Tots:** 2nd 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. To register [Nature\\_tots@placerita.org](mailto:Nature_tots@placerita.org)  
No program in May because of Open House, but the topic for June is lizards. No program in July and August.

**Nature Education:** Every 3rd Sunday of the month at 2PM, PCNCA provides a free educational program open to the public.

**Native Plant Renewal and Restoration:** Every Thursday at 9AM, led by Robert Grzesiak. Bring garden gloves and water.

**Docent Enrichment (for Docents only)**  
May 23, trip to Malibu Creek and Lagoon.

**June** - date TBD – Bus trip to Huntington Gardens and Library  
END OF THE SCHOOL YEAR DINNER and results from the vote for the board will be on Saturday June 1st, at 6PM.

**OPEN HOUSE WILL BE ON SATURDAY, MAY 11 (see flyer).**

Opening and closing times for Placerita are 8AM to 7.30 PM.







### Communication

In “the old days,” the telephone tree was our first weapon, all the docents got a phone call at home (no cell phones) and we would give them the latest news. We were delighted when answering machines were invented!

When computers went into every home, I knew we had to use them to send the news very quickly. “News from Placerita” was a little bit dull and Heidi Webber proposed “Trails and Nuggets”. The Nature Center is famous for its trails, the docents use them all the time with school groups: that seemed a good choice. The Nuggets are those little pieces of news that I was going to send.

Years later, my schedule became unpredictable, and Nikki Dail graciously agreed to take over sending Trails and Nuggets. Nikki is well known at Placerita. She is a docent from the class of 1999,

a world traveler who makes presentations at the Center about her trips, they are always fascinating and a great success. She is an excellent photographer, and a true birder with a life list that is becoming longer every year. She has been the treasurer for NCA for 22 years. She says it well; “Nobody wants that job!”

The class of 2024 was instructed to look for Trails and Nuggets, to be aware of all the events happening at Placerita. Some of them had questions about the name momofparrots appearing in their email. We explained the love of Nikki for her parrot friends, she has shared her home with them for many years and we want to introduce the friendly face of Nikki with her feathered friends.

Thank you, Nikki, for all you do to support Placerita, we are very well aware of your dedication, and we appreciate it so very much!



### I Can Use This Trail in a Wheelchair

by Sue Sutton

The trail to the Hummingbird Garden and Tataviam hut are now accessible to wheelchair and walker users, as well as strollers - and perhaps visitors who are less steady on their feet than they used to be!

Several of my amazing fellow docents made this possible by removing several large rocks that made the trail impassable. After 10 years as a docent at PCNC I can finally see the beautiful garden,

I'm so grateful to my docent friends that made this possible. Now, you can find me reading and bird watching under the oak trees in that enchanting spot.



### Drums at Placerita

by Helen Sweany

We had an incredible time at the drum circle led by Arianna of Remo Drums! The energy was electric, and it left us all feeling uplifted and connected. A big thank you to the docents of the 2023 class: Willie Davis, Jr., Michelle Smith-Davis and Tom Adamian who proposed this new idea to me.

As the session progressed, it became clear that this should be a more frequent occurrence. The positive endorphins they talk about with these activities were certainly present. One remarkable highlight was Zach, a member of the class of 2024 and a docent, who brought his own drum, a beautiful silver darbuka inherited from his grandmother. When the 'conductor' requested a continuation of just his rhythm, Zach's solo performance blew us away. His talent truly shone through.

As participants arrived, we were encouraged to select a percussion instrument that resonated with us. It was fascinating to explore the various drums, each offering distinct notes and octaves. The smaller percussion instruments were like works of art, adding depth and texture to the collective rhythm.

The weather couldn't have been more perfect - dark clouds rolled in without rain, providing comfortable weather for our gathering. As we drummed, we noticed turkey vultures and hawks soaring overhead, perhaps drawn by the rhythmic sounds echoing from the amphitheater. It made me think about music and percussion throughout history - its ability to unite communities and connect us with nature.

Remo's arrival was seamless, thanks to the reserved parking spots and the assistance of the 2024 docents who helped set up the drums, directed overflow parking and greeted guests. Today was a power of collaboration, with everyone coming together to create something truly magical.





# Placerita Canyon Nature Center

## Open House

May 11, 2024

10AM to 2PM

- Free Admission & Parking
- Storytime
- Crafts & Games
- Panning for "Fools" Gold
- Animal Presentations
- Caricatures by Jill
- Displays by Local Nature Clubs & Organizations
- Gift Shop (electronic payment available)
- Fender Guitar Raffle
- Native Plant Sale
- Food Trucks

Activities subject to change. Overflow parking and free shuttle available.

19152 Placerita Canyon Road  
(661) 259-7721  
[www.placerita.org](http://www.placerita.org)



### County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors

Hilda Solis  
First District

Holly Mitchell  
Second District

Lindsay Horvath  
Third District

Janice Hahn  
Fourth District

Kathryn Barger  
Fifth District