



Santa Susana Mountain Park Association

Volume 30, Issue 11

A Non-Profit 501(c)(4) Organization
Incorporated August 31, 1971

June/July 2001 Newsletter

BEAUTIFUL BOX CANYON

is located at the eastern terminus of the Simi Hills, at the eastern end of Ventura County. The Box Canyon area is sparsely developed, mostly within two distinct communities, Chatsworth Lake Manor and Box Canyon (also referred to as West Hills). There are approximately 308 residents in Box Canyon living in approximately 134 single-family residences. The Box Canyon area of Ventura County contains approximately 500 legal lots, varying in size from 1 acre to 118 acres, as well as numerous nonconforming lots as small as .03 acre.

The area currently provides habitat for several special-status species (e.g. Santa Susana Tarplant, Southern Goldenrod, Pale Yellow Mariposa Lily, Southwestern Pond Turtle, Cooper's Hawk, California Condor, Peregrine Falcon, San Diego Desert Woodrat and possibly the Red-legged Frog) and for several large mammals, including the Mountain Lion. Population densities for large mammals are low, as a result of habitat fragmentation and degradation due to unwise past development and land use practices. The habitat fragmentation and degradation has reduced the carrying capacity of the Mountain Lion to two individual animals in the Simi Hills. Additional degradation and fragmentation of the remaining habitat in the Box Canyon area will likely result in the localized extinction of the Mountain Lion, as well as other species.

The analysis of the biological resources of the Box Canyon area finds that the area represents a regionally significant island of diverse and relatively undisturbed natural biological resources, situated between the urbanized San Fernando and Simi Valleys. The Box Canyon area is an important part of one of the remaining wildlife migration corridors linking the Santa Monica Mountains and the Santa Susana Mountains, and as such is vitally important to sustaining viable populations of the Mountain Lion and other large mammals in National Recreation Area lands. Further degradation of this corridor could result in a crash of the existing populations in the Santa Monica Mountains and Simi Hills.

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SSMPA General Membership Meeting

Monday, 6/18/01 - What's happening on the home front? Various individuals will present news and views about the upcoming big changes in our area that are sure to impact us all. (Note: this will be our last general meeting until we reconvene after the summer on September 17.)

General Membership Program Meetings take place every 3rd Monday of the months September through November and January through May--and sometimes June. Program meetings start at 7:15 p.m. and generally conclude by 9:00 p.m. The venue is the meeting room at the Rockpointe Recreation Center, 22300 Devonshire St., Chatsworth, on the south side, one block before entering Chatsworth Park South.

All SSMPA members are invited to attend both General Membership Program meetings and Board of Directors meetings, which take place at the Chatsworth Park South Visitors Center on the first Monday of the month. Refreshments are served at program meetings.

Do you have an idea for a future program? Call our program chair, Dorian Keyser, at (818) 345-3795.

THE GREAT HORNED OWL

"It is during the placid serenity of a beautiful summer night, when the current of the waters moves silently along, reflecting from its smooth surface the silver radiance of the moon, and when all else of animated nature seems sunk in repose, that the Great Horned Owl, one of the Nimrods of the feathered tribes of our forests, may be seen sailing silently and yet rapidly on, intent on the destruction of the objects destined to form his food."

-- John James Audubon (Birds of America, 1840)

If you live anywhere near tall trees here in North America, most likely your evening silence has often been broken with a deep-pitched resonant "hoo, hoo, hooooo, hoo" (with emphasis on one or more notes), and perhaps in the moonlight you have seen an impressively large bird perched on a branch, waiting for prey to appear.

Hooting is often communications relating to territory and announces to other owls that a piece of property is in one owl's possession and trespassing is not welcomed. Hooting may also be used by a male owl to attract females.

Owls represent one of the more specialized hunters in the animal kingdom. With eyes and ears highly adapted to identify and locate prey, and feathers that generate no

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Box Canyon Creek provides a year-round fresh water resource for wildlife, and may support the federally listed endangered Red-legged Frog. Any changes to habitat in and adjacent to the creek may result in take of this endangered species, and may result in destruction of habitat necessary for its life cycle.

Finding the balance between protecting wildlife and new development projects is sometimes difficult. It is important to keep in mind that wildlife in riparian areas is sensitive; ensuring the minimum impacts during preconstruction planning is essential. Mitigation for impacts to habitat is extremely difficult, especially when attempting to mitigate for impacts resulting in habitat fragmentation. Single-family residences contribute cumulatively to habitat fragmentation. The degree of habitat degradation or fragmentation depends on how parcels are developed and managed. Development of rural parcels typically results in significant habitat degradation, if not total habitat destruction, as the land is cleared for landscaping, for fire protection, for access roads, and for corrals for horses or other animals. Each parcel developed fragments and degrades the habitats in the area surrounding the parcel being developed.

Box Canyon presently offers opportunities for sensitive species to continue to thrive; however, construction of additional residences in Box Canyon in areas that are not already developed will incrementally degrade and fragment habitat in the Box Canyon area, which will lead to reductions in the area's ability to support wildlife such as the Mountain Lion. If the connection between the open space habitats of the Santa Monica Mountains and the Santa Susana Mountains is lost, wildlife populations in those areas are also at risk.

Editor's Note: Recent proposed developments in the Box Canyon area of the Simi Hills have raised concerns about the potential impacts various developments would have on the environment, especially impacts on important biological resources. These concerns prompted the Box Canyon Neighborhood Association to request David Magney Environmental Consulting, P.O. Box 1346, Ojai, CA 93024-1346; (805) 646-6045, to determine whether the Box Canyon area is important as a wildlife corridor, especially for large mammals such as the Mountain Lion, resulting in the above report, reprinted in part.

Thanks for renewing your membership!
James & Donna Swavelly, Richard Klotz,
Sherwin Lovett, Elizabeth & Andrew
DeSosa, Bert & Bunny Levine and Marilyn &
Tom Stout.

A special thanks to members Jack & Barbara
Levin, Dorian & Dalia Keyser and Audrey
Hedlund for their great help last month at our
mailing party, and Bob Galletly, for the June
Hikes page.

About this newsletter: If you have comments
or would like to submit an article for
publication in this newsletter, write to SSMPA,
Attn: Newsletter Editor, P.O. Box 4831,
Chatsworth, CA 91313-4831.

Susan Gerke, Editor

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noise in flight, they have been largely successful in finding supportive habitats in almost every ecosystem on the planet. Here in the western part of the San Fernando Valley, where populations of small rodents, birds, and other small creatures thrive, Great Horned Owls fill a niche at the top of the food chain.

Because its ears are extraordinarily sensitive, it doesn't take much sound to attract an owl. Much of the noise generated by small rodents is created as they scurry through groundcover.

The Great Horned Owl is noted for its aggressive territorial defense. No other owls of any species are tolerated in the general vicinity of a Great Horned Owl nest, although its overall hunting territory--which may cover more than 1,000 acres--may overlap that of other, non-competing owl species. But the Great Horned Owl also seems tolerant of other raptors, as long as they aren't owls. Most likely because their normal cycles of activity are opposite, Great Horned Owls are often found nesting close to raptors such as hawks, in some cases even in the same tree. During the beginning of the breeding season, however, Great Horned Owls are not shy about attacking hawks in order to steal their nests.

Owls have remarkably flexible necks. They can rotate their heads about 270 degrees, a necessary function when spotting or tracking prey, because their eyes cannot move in their heads. Owls may also turn their heads almost completely upside down. They do this in reaction to something that is spotted high in their field of vision. The sharpest zone in an owl's field of vision is directly in front of its eyes but below normal eye level. By turning its head upside down, the owl can focus most clearly on what is above it.

Owls are built more for lift than speed. Their wings are larger in proportion to their body size than most birds--along with a skeleton that is extremely lightweight--and give these birds the ability to carry prey animals through the air.

In the San Fernando Valley, the steady toll of open space lost to subdivisions and shopping malls has pushed many owls out of their traditional homes, which comes at great expense to the natural balance of life, as owls have long provided a necessary limit to overpopulation by many of the animals they feed upon. However, a brighter future may await these magnificent feathered predators as a wider audience develops an awareness that, as elsewhere in nature, form, function, and beauty are usually found in the same package.



SSMPA Executive Board 2001-2002

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Dorian Keyser, Vice President & Program Chairman
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Jim Shirley, Member at Large
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Endangered Toad Found on Newhall Project Site

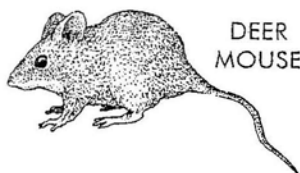
Although the owner of the land where 4,300 houses are proposed to be built along the Santa Clara River and its tributary San Francisquito Creek, said the Southwestern Arroyo Toad didn't exist on the land, a biologist hired by the Friends of the Santa Clara River found 4 on the property in April. The discovery of the toads heightens concerns about habitat protection. As a result, the Army Corps of Engineers will review a permit it had issued to the Newhall Land & Farming Co. for erosion control construction in about 10 miles of river channel. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and Army Corps of Engineers officials will hold a meeting at the river to discuss the discovery on Newhall Land's permit to alter the riverbed.



Southwestern arroyo toad

Coast Tie to Los Padres Forest to be Preserved

Bringing under public ownership one of the most significant swaths of undeveloped coastline in Southern California, the nonprofit Trust for Public Land announced this month that it has signed an agreement to purchase 2,500 acres of the sprawling El Capitan Ranch just west of Santa Barbara. The ranch is home to a range of native plants and animals. One of the key elements of the sale is that the ranch will link El Capitan State Beach to the Los Padres National Forest.



DEER
MOUSE

Kudos for Monrovia

When California cities or counties need money to create or improve parks and recreation areas, they often go to Sacramento in search of "park barrel" doled out by senators and Assembly members in their districts. The City of Monrovia is doing it differently; it is using a bootstrap approach. In July 2000, Monrovia residents voted by a 3/4 margin to assess a \$10-million property tax to buy hillside land abutting the Angeles National Forest for a wilderness preserve. The planned purchase area, 600 acres of San Gabriel Mountains wilderness, is threatened by private development. The property, just 20 miles northeast of downtown LA, includes wildlife corridors for bear, mountain lion, bobcats, gray foxes, coyotes and deer. With its \$10 million in hand, Monrovia needs \$11 million more to make the purchase. The City is submitting an application to the state Wildlife Conservation Board for an \$11 million grant. Action on the bid is expected by August.

Monrovia deserves special consideration for its willingness to put up its own share of funds before going to Sacramento to help to preserve every possible patch of wild mountain land near the city as development and sprawl chip away at the remainder.

End of Hibernation Period

It's rattlesnake season again and a reminder is in order to be careful when outdoors. Officials advise hikers who use trails in the Simi Hills and Santa Susana Mountains to wear boots and long pants and to carry a stick to beat the brush when finding a place to sit or camp. "Watch your feet and the bushes. Teach children to respect rattlesnakes: they aren't bad; they have a role to play; just keep out of their way."

GOOSE TALES



On Monday, May 14, the Water Quality Manager of the Sepulveda Basin Recreation Area received a telephone call in his office near the Woodley Golf Course. It was 11:00 a.m. The caller, a maintenance worker tending the park grounds near the Japanese Gardens, was frantic. "Steve, you have to come. There's a family of Canada Geese trying to cross Woodley Avenue from the wildlife area to the golf course side. They're going to be killed!"

Steve raced to his truck and took off along the short distance to the busy street. Sure enough, there they were, the proud, beautiful parents and fine, brand-new daffodil yellow goslings lined up behind them, about to get crushed by the rushing traffic.

Steve positioned his truck sideways across the street, lights flashing. Leaping out, he stopped traffic going in the other direction. With the help of the relieved maintenance worker, he gave the goose family the space they needed. To the clapping cheers from the dozens of cars lined up along Woodley Avenue, the geese calmly paraded across the pavement to the golf course side.

But that wasn't the end of the adventure. Faced with a 4-inch curb, the goslings couldn't jump up and the parents couldn't help them. Steve approached the baby geese while the male goose attacked what he thought was a predator about to hurt his young offspring. Hissing and screaming, both parents flew at Steve who was gently picking up each yellow ball of fluff and depositing it on top of the curb. Quickly, the parents gathered their young and directed them under a chain link fence; the larger birds flew over it. Finally, they disappeared into the creek running beside the golf course, presumably to join the other resident Canada Geese who had nested in the small lakes dotting the green fairway. Again, cheers from the sidelines, and dozens of people were late to work that morning with a very unusual excuse!

An adventure for sure... but it is the tip of the iceberg-of-a-problem that the Pacific Northwest area, specifically Washington State, has been grappling with for some years now. And the solution they came to last June was to shoot and slaughter 4,000 geese who were "littering the parks and golf courses" of Seattle.

Why is this happening to flocks of migratory birds who become residents in places that humans have claimed for their own? We all know the answer: over-building, over-development, and unthinking deliberate sprawl.

The National Wildlife Federation and the University of Southern California, independent of each other, have recently published their reports on our vanishing wildlife and the extinction of species both plant and animal. Both studies detected the same problem: urban sprawl is the leading cause of depleting animal species.

The Canada Goose Project, in collaboration with the Endangered Species Task Force of the Sierra Club, the Sustainable Cities Program of U.S.C. and the National Wildlife Federation, will present a conference in September called "Re-enchanting the City: Where the Wild Things Are." Bill Lishman, the man who taught the orphaned Canada Geese to migrate from Canada to south of the U.S. border (the "Fly Away Home" movie) will be here. The conference will be for children, youth, the community of teachers and activists who have something to say to the urban planners and the politicians of LA and California. Plan to join us. We need you!

Rosemarie White, Ph.D.

Editor's Note: Check our August newsletter for the details of this conference.

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A Public Skateboard Park at Chatsworth Park South?

Some parents in Chatsworth are promoting an idea to use Proposition K funds to build a skateboard park--modeled after the Encino Skateboard Park, an 8,500-sq. ft. concrete facility located on Victory Blvd. near Birmingham High School--in Chatsworth Park South. (The Encino Skateboard Park was sponsored by the City Council and built with funds from the 1996 voter-passed Prop K bond measure funds.)

Some concerns that need to be addressed regarding the wisdom of transforming 8,500 sq. ft. of park land into a concrete skateboarding area are: Chatsworth Park South is a rural park near a wildlife corridor, containing many trees and used for picnics and other types of recreation. Would the addition of a skateboard park change the rural setting? Many equestrians use the trails surrounding the park. What would be the impact of increased use and traffic? There is no sidewalk from Devonshire Street into the park, and the driveway leading to the parking areas is narrow. What about safety and liability? Who will be watching the skateboarders (children)? And, is this a good use of Prop K funds?

Who to contact about this?

Write: Councilman Hal Bernson
18917 Nordhorf St., #18
Northridge, CA 91324-3789

Call: Mr. Bernson's deputy: Sandy Clydesdale
(818) 886-5210



San Fernando Valley History Comes to Life

Soon a schoolboy in Dayton, Ohio, or a teenage girl in Little Rock, Arkansas, wanting to learn about the early inhabitants of what is now known as Chatsworth, California--how they lived, what they built, etc.--will be able to log onto a website and see photos and descriptions of this area and others in the San Fernando Valley. The "San Fernando Valley History Digital Library Project" is funded through a Library Sciences Technology Act grant awarded to the University Library at CSU, Northridge. The Project Archivist Charla Bench, M.A., explained the project through the use of slides at the May 15th meeting of the Chatsworth Historical Society. The SFV is growing so fast most of us don't know our own local history, making this a valuable tool. Dianne De Sha, the technician on the project, scans photographs and written artifacts into a special database designed for the project. Next, a description and details are added, and history comes to life! Interesting facts of the SFV, through this cutting edge technology, will be able to be shared around the world. Local historical societies, forming the San Fernando Valley Heritage Network, by the end of the project will have helped to gather over 2,400 pieces of community history. Additional artifacts are welcome at the end of the first phase of this project. Charla can be contacted at CSUN at (818) 677-2706; Email charla.bench@csun.edu. The project, which will be completed around Sept. 30, is getting national attention.

Editor's Note: The Santa Susana Mountain Park Association's archives are at CSUN, some of which will be included in this project.



Hikers need water, sunscreen, socks, lugsoles, hat and snack or lunch.

JUNE HIKES

Wed. 6/6 Mission Peak Moonlight Conditioning Hike: Moderate 5 mi, 1200' gain to view lights of San Fernando Valley. Meet 7 pm at trailhead (Take 405 Fwy to 118 Fwy, W to Balboa, N 2 mi to Sesnon, W 1 mi to Neon Way, right to end of street).

Thur. 6/14 Towsley Canyon, Santa Clarita Woodlands Park: Moderately paced 6 mi (optional 8 mi), 100' gain (optional 1333' gain) hike with great vistas, a chilly narrows, diverse plant life and tar seeps. Meet 8:30 am Ed Davis Park, 244255 The Old Road, Newhall (Take Calgrove exit from 5 Fwy. Turn west (R) back under Fwy and take The Old Road south. Go .5 mi to entrance on the right. Drive on the dirt road to Nature Center parking lot).

Rancho Simi Trail Blazers

Every Thursday Chumash Trail: Moderate paced 5 mi, approximately 1000' gain. Meet at 6 pm at trailhead. Directions - take 118 Fwy to Yosemite exit. Go north on Yosemite, turn right on Flanagan Dr. Trailhead is at the end of Flanagan Dr.

Most Sundays Hummingbird Creek Trail: Strenuous, 4.6 mi, approximately 1000' gain. Meet at 5 pm at trailhead. Directions - take 118 Fwy to Kuehner exit. Meet north of Fwy on Kuehner.

For more information on hikes contact the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District at (805) 584-4400.

Santa Susana Mountains Task Force (SSMTF)

Sun. 6/17 Devil Canyon Hike: Moderately paced 3.5 mi, 300' gain, stream crossings. Meet at 9:30 am at trailhead (Take 118 Fwy to Topanga Canyon exit, go north about 50 yds to end and park).

Sun. 6/24 Stage Coach Trail Hike: Interpretative hike into history in our Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. Meet at 9:00 am for a 4 mi (700' gain) loop up the Stage Coach Trail. From Topanga Canyon Blvd., turn west on Devonshire and drive into Chatsworth Park S to the 2nd parking lot by the Recreation Building. Lee Baum (818) 341-1850.

Senate Bill No. 196, As Of February 8, 2001

SB 196, as introduced by State Senator Chesbro, would enact the "Safe Parks, Coastal Protection, and Historical Preservation Bond Act of 2002" which, if adopted, would authorize, for the purpose of financing a program for the acquisition, development, improvement, rehabilitation, restoration, enhancement, and protection of park, coastal, and historical resources via the issuance of California state general obligation bonds in the amount of \$2,275,000,000 if approved by the voters at the March 5, 2002 primary election. Provisions include:

1. \$700,000,000 to the California State Parks to acquire and maintain units of the state park system.

2. \$925,000,000 for grants as follows:

a) \$400,000,000 based upon population for the acquisition, development, rehabilitation, restoration, enhancement, and interpretation of local parks and recreational lands and facilities.

b) \$200,000,000 to cities, counties, and districts for the acquisition, development, rehabilitation, and restoration of park and recreational areas and facilities pursuant to the Roberti-Z'berg-Harris Open Space and Recreation Program Act.

c) \$200,000,000 for grants to be distributed by the State Office of Historical Preservation on a competitive basis to cities, counties, districts, and

local agencies funded for park purposes.

d) \$25,000,000 to local agencies administering units of the state park system.

e) \$100,000,000 for grants to urban recreational and cultural centers (e.g., zoos, museums, aquariums, etc.)

3. \$650,000,000 for open space and habitat protection as follows:

a) \$300,000,000 to the Wildlife Conservation Board.

b) \$300,000,000 to the State Coastal Commission.

c) \$25,000,000 to the Santa Monica Mountain Conservancy.

d) \$25,000,000 to the California Tahoe Conservancy.

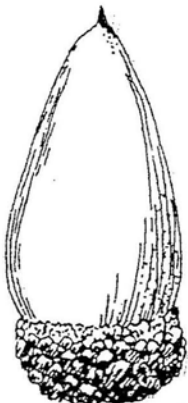
It should be noted that the above may be modified as SB 196 proceeds through the legislative process. Hopefully, the competition for funds will result in significantly more for the Santa Monica Mountain Conservancy projects and state parks projects in the Santa Susana Mountains and Simi Hills. We need to be strong advocates for our areas! We also need to work hard for the passage of the proposed bond issue in the 2002 primary elections.

--Dorian Keyser



SANTA SUSANA MOUNTAIN PARK ASSOCIATION

WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN / RENEW / REJOIN S.S.M.P.A. (Please circle one.)



valley oak

Investing in the future of our communities and its resources is probably one of the best expenditures of our time and efforts. Return this cutoff with your contributions to help ensure our futures. Please make checks payable to SSMPA and send to SSMPA, P.O. Box 4831, Chatsworth, CA 91313-4831.

- Senior or Student (\$5.00) Individual (\$10.00) Family (\$15.00)
 Business or Organization (\$25.00) Life Member (\$100.00)

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ Fax: _____

City/State/Zip Code: _____ Email: _____

Special Interest/Expertise: _____

We encourage any member who lives in or near the Santa Susana Mtns. or Simi Hills to become an active member in SSMPA's effort to protect these area's wildlife corridors. Speaking at City Planning hearings to educate about our wildlife corridors would be great, yet any type and amount of voluntary service is always appreciated. You may be able to contribute an article to the newsletter, represent SSMPA at a booth at a local event, participate in a committee. To find out how you can volunteer for SSMPA, call Judy Garris, Pres., at 818-346-7654 or Susan Gerke, Newsltr. Editor, at 818-704-9304.

June 4, 2001, 7:30 PM Board of Director's Meeting: Chatsworth Park Visitor's Center
June 18, 2001, 7:15 PM Program Meeting: Rockpointe Recreation Center
September 3, 2001, 7:30 PM Board of Director's Meeting: Chatsworth Park Visitor's Center
September 17, 2001, 7:15 PM Program Meeting: Rockpointe Recreation Center



If the expiration date on your label is marked in **pink**, your SSMPA dues have expired. Please send in your dues if you wish to continue your SSMPA membership and to receive our newsletters. If it's already paid, kindly disregard this notice.
If the expiration date on your label is marked in **blue**, payment of your SSMPA membership dues is due this month.
Finally, if the expiration date is marked in **green**, payment of your dues is requested next month.

Santa Susana Mountain Park Association &
Foundation for the Preservation of the Santa Susana Mountains
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