



Santa Susana Mountain Park Association

A Non-Profit 501(c)(4) Organization
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May 2002 Newsletter

I see the beauty of
virescent sage
casting purple shadows
across sienna rocks
in mica gleam
as sun burns the edges
of this Earth.

The pre-dawn's molten
moon, so huge I almost
reach out to feel its roily
surface before its descent
beyond the Santa Susana
Mountains.

I touch the beauty of a
jimson weed, diaphanous
trumpet to honeybees;
recall the life I left and began
and began like bee's
industrious buzzing.

I see the beauty
of a stream gurgling through
peat in the dark forest,
delicate dogwood blossoms
lighting tangled branches
and all I know is this,
this beauty tortures me.

Carla L. Henry



SSMPA General Membership Meeting - Monday, May 20, 2002

SSMPA will hold its election of Board of Directors for 2002 this evening. Candidates will have the opportunity to talk about their qualifications and experience as well as answer questions about their candidacy. Then the election will be held, the votes counted, and the new and incumbent board members will assume office at the conclusion of the meeting. Election shall be by secret ballot. All paid-up SSMPA members can vote for the candidates whose names appear on the ballot, or if you prefer, you can write in the names of the candidates of your choice. Please bring your ballot (see last page) to the meeting. If you do not plan to be at the meeting in person, you may vote by mailing in your ballot.

[Our program speaker will be introduced this evening. As of the date of the mailing of this newsletter, we are waiting for a response. To those of you on-line, look for an e-mail announcing the guest's name and title. To all other members, please come with anticipation and enjoy the evening.]

SSMPA General Membership Program meetings take place every 3rd Monday of the months during the months of September through November and January through May. Program meetings begin at 7:15 p.m. and generally conclude by 9:00 p.m. The venue is the Rockpointe Clubhouse, 22300 Devonshire, Chatsworth, on the south side, 1 block before entering Chatsworth Park South.

Members are invited to attend General Membership Program meetings and Board of Directors meetings. Board of Directors meetings take place at the Chatsworth Park South Visitors Center on the first Monday of the month. Refreshments are served at program meetings. ♠

*Thank you for renewing
your SSMPA membership:
Rodney Harding, Liliana
Haro and Bunny & Budd
Levine. Welcome to our
new members. Sybil
Scotford, Carla L. Henry
and Tim Finch. ♠*

The U.S. Park Service will tear down barriers keeping the endangered fish out of stream in Santa Monicas.

Los Angeles Times - 4/15/02

By Steve Hymon, staff writer

After nearly five years of desperate searching and scraping for money--the usual routine for Malibu real estate--wildlife officials believe they've found a new home for the beleaguered southern steelhead trout. But like a lot of property acquisitions, it involves a tear-down. This week, the National Park Service will begin demolishing one of several small barriers blocking the wily salmon-like fish from swimming up tiny Solstice Creek into the Santa Monica Mountains. It's the first time the shovel will hit dirt to save the endangered fish in Los Angeles County, where thousands of steelhead once traveled from the mountains to the sea and back again in the area's streams and rivers.

There are at least 15 unique populations of steelhead along the West Coast, 11 of which have suffered serious declines in recent decades. The southern steelhead is the worst off--one expert describes the fish's predicament as "grim"--and current estimates are that there are only a few hundred remaining between the Santa Maria River in Santa Barbara County and San Mateo Creek in northern San Diego County. "We know that Solstice Creek by itself isn't going to recover steelhead," said Ray Sauvajot, a resource specialist with the National Park Service. "But this is the kind of project that can serve as a model for similar efforts across Southern California."

Park Service officials said the creek still has all the key ingredients the fish need. There's cool, clean, year-round water in the shady creek, besides plenty of insects for food. And nearly all of Solstice Canyon is protected from development by the surrounding Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. The only thing missing: steelhead.

Southern steelhead are rainbow trout, with a twist. Hatched in coastal streams, steelhead migrate to sea as adults and then, after one to four years, return to freshwater streams to spawn and die--although a few hardy fish manage a second round-trip. Historically, some adults caught in the region have reached lengths of 2 1/2 feet.

The problem with Solstice Creek is that steelhead can't reach it because of a series of obstacles, including two culverts, two small dams and a "concrete apron"--a road that plows through the stream rather than over it. The Park Service is replacing the apron with a bridge and removing parts of the old dams. Between the park boundary and the ocean, Caltrans plans to renovate a culvert under Pacific Coast Highway to make it more fish friendly and to fix a culvert beneath Corral Canyon Road. The project will cost about \$1.5 million and officials hope that it will be completed by December 2003. The popular Solstice Creek trailhead will remain open to hikers, but no parking will be available during construction, which is expected to last the rest of this year. Solstice Canyon also will get a few more parking spaces, new restrooms and an amphitheater for nature programs.

"This is a very, very important project politically," said Jim Edmondson of the Southern California Steelhead Recovery Coalition. "Once the project is done, you have a great place where the public can have a picnic and, hopefully, see steelhead. There has to be a place like Solstice Creek, to be a poster child for the fish." Solstice Creek is only 5 to 10 feet wide and, at best, offers only about a mile of habitat for the fish--enough room for maybe 300 steelhead. But the project has been free of the red tape, controversy and funding problems that have slowed other efforts to restore steelhead runs on larger streams. Those include the removal of two huge, silted-up dams, including one on Malibu Creek and the other on Matilija Creek near Ojai. Taking down either structure--Matilija Dam is the most likely to fall--would open profoundly more habitat than is available at Solstice. But each of those projects would take years. With the large projects moving at a snail's pace, there is a growing emphasis on performing a sort of triage on smaller streams that are home to steelhead. One recent study found that in 25 watersheds in southern Santa Barbara County, at least 400 barriers hindered or blocked steelhead from migrating up creeks.

"These smaller streams offer a lot of hope because a lot of those barriers are easy fixes," said Matt Stoecker, an ecologist working with the Conception Coast Project in Santa Barbara. "If we can get steelhead back in the small streams, that can be a seed population to later repopulate the major rivers."


In the last year, a road crossing has been repaired to allow fish passage up Salsipuedes Creek near Lompoc. An upcoming project will fix nine bad road crossings on Quiota Creek outside Solvang. The California Department of Fish and Game also recently moved two biologists to Los Alamitos, where they will work exclusively on southern steelhead issues.

"It has been hard for the department because, up to now, we haven't had anyone doing restoration down here," said Mary Larson, a Fish and Game biologist. "Now we do and, hopefully, I can come in and help."

But will the steelhead find their way back to Solstice Creek? Biologists think the answer is yes, because of a neat evolutionary trick the fish use. Unlike salmon, southern steelhead do not show an undying fidelity to their native spawning grounds. The reason is that in arid Southern California, their native streams often dry up. As a result, steelhead are inclined to take what they can get. One line of thought is that steelhead swim along the coast until they sense a change in water chemistry signaling fresh water is nearby. Using that mechanism, biologists said, the fish may stumble onto Solstice Creek and then recolonize it. If that doesn't work, there is talk of relocating a few steelhead from some other stream.

The Park Service's Sauvajot said he's like many Southern Californians in that he never heard of steelhead while growing up in San Diego. Now he plans to be one of many on the Solstice Creek banks in two years looking for the fish.

"In my nine years [with the park service], we've done nothing of this scale, trying to bring something back that's been gone," he said. "But the most exciting part about this project is you can actually see an end point. We know if we do this and do that, it's done."

Then, he says, it's all up to the fish. 

EARTH DAY 2002 AT THE CHATSWORTH NATURE PRESERVE

The weather report said rain, the skies were gray, and mist was falling at 7 am, when volunteers began arriving with tables and banners. Joey Magic, from the community of Chatsworth, began the business of setting up a "traffic control" station in front of the main gate on Valley Circle Boulevard, making sure that the list of VIPs was complete. His wife, Joan, was organized with a list of local agencies in charge of policing the area; she had alerted them all. As more volunteers arrived, the visitor sign-in table began to look official, with Tish Gillensen from the Canada Goose Project in charge. Tish had made green armbands and told everyone to be prepared for all sorts of questions from the public. Handouts on the History of the Chatsworth Reservoir and the new Chatsworth Nature Preserve were available to study. Two new volunteers from the community strung natural twine in front of old oak trees, protecting the new young seedlings underneath their spreading branches. Hanging from the twine at intervals were "Environmental Notes," telling about the living inhabitants of the oak grove. Cars pulled up and families flowed out into this lovely natural wonder, which, misty-green and just awake, welcomed humans without fear.

Among the dignitaries attending were Greig Smith, Chief Deputy to Councilmember Hal Bernson, and Dorothy Green and her husband. Dorothy heads the San Gabriel/Los Angeles River Watershed Council. The Environmental agencies participating this year were the SANTA SUSANA MOUNTAIN PARK ASSOCIATION with Susan Gerke and Teena Takata representing the group; SIERRA CLUB, with the Chair of the Sierra Singles, Larry Whitney; SOUTHWESTERN HERPETOLOGISTS SOCIETY, with several of their members (John, Spider, Jarron who was wearing two hats that day as Past President of SHS and as Director of CGP); CANADA GOOSE PROJECT with various members helping out. All tables had information on local as well as citywide issues.

The WISHTOYO FOUNDATION, headed by Mati Waiya and the Chumash Tribe, continues to be an important part of the Annual Celebration in honor of Earth Day. Most people who attended were drawn to see the Chumash dancing and hear the storytelling. This year, Mati introduced an Elder, who greeted us with much dignity and who was accorded a seat of honor beside the Ceremonial Circle. Young children, sitting with their parents, were invited to come into the circle and participate in a dance. Watching this happen, one was struck by how gentle and peaceful the gift of welcome is, and how much we all need that feeling of inclusion. After the dancing, many tours around the ecology pond were led by Dennis Kroepelin (CGP) and new docents from all of the participating agencies. Some people started off on their own and walked enjoying the lovely weather which had turned sunny but not hot. Guests were encouraged to bring picnics and blankets, and some groups did eat under the shade of the old oak trees.

The day ended with a sense that it was another important happening for the Nature Preserve. Guests who attended were very enthusiastic and many volunteered to help out next year. As new experiences are added and the continuing ones enhanced, what is needed is perhaps an *Earth Day Celebration Committee*, to include representatives from all groups wanting to participate. The Canada Goose Project has already identified a list of changes for next year, and we invite interested parties to contact us and begin the process of planning EARTHDAY 2003!

Rosemarie White, President, Canada Goose Project
canadagooseproj@aol.com



SSMPA VISITOR CENTER NEWS!

Our Oak Tree event on April 28th at the Visitors Center was well received by the community, picnickers and out of town visitors. A steady stream of adults and children came through to enjoy our displays. The California Natural History Museum loaned us some exhibits, and we had some interactive displays for children that were popular. There was much interest in the Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park and its wildlife. Many visitors were not aware that the park existed! It is evident that people love oak trees and want them protected. An enjoyable day for all!

We plan to open the Visitors Center (located at Chatsworth Park South in the Recreation Building) on Saturdays and Sundays from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m. twice a month. Be among the first -- come take the Stagecoach Trail hike with Judy Garris on **Sun. May 19th (see Hikes Page)**, then visit the Center. We have available a few baby oaks trees with planting and maintenance instructions, left over from our Oak Tree event, and will give them to good homes.

Would you like to be a volunteer in the Visitors Center? You will be trained in the history of the Stagecoach Trail, Native American life and Natural History, when you sign up. Also needed: a Spanish-speaking volunteer to translate display captions into Spanish for children at the Visitors Center. Call Judy @ (818) 346-7654 to volunteer or if you have questions. 📞

The Foundation for the Preservation of the Santa Susana Mountains

invites everyone to join in our

Spring Cleaning Event

WHEN: Saturday June 1, 2002, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

WHERE: 22280 Devonshire Street (corner of Devonshire and Valley Circle). Dr. Marilyn Luckey, the owner of Santa Susana School, is once again allowing us the use of her school's driveway to hold a driveway sale of used and in-good-condition items. Please bring your donations to 22280 Devonshire Street on May 31st between 6-8 pm., or bring them on the day of the event.





UPCOMING HIKES

Hikers: Wear lugsoles & hat. Bring water, sunscreen and snack or lunch.

Sierra Club Hikes

Sun. 5/19 & 6/16 Stagecoach Trail Hike: Interpretative hike into history in our Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. Meet at 9 am for a 4 mi (700' gain) loop up the Stagecoach Trail. From Topanga Cyn Blvd, turn west on Devonshire and drive into Chatsworth Pk South to the 2nd parking lot by the Rec Bldg. Call Judy Garris at (818) 346-7654 for further info.

Sierra Club/Santa Susana Mountains Task Force, Natural Science Section Hike

Sat. 6/22 Devil Canyon Nature Walk: Easy-paced 3 1/2 mile, 200' gain naturalist led walk through wind and water carved canyon. Learn how early Native Americans used the native plants for food, shelter, medicine and ceremony. Join us for stream hopping fun. Meet 9 am at the north end of Topanga Canyon Blvd. by the 118 Fwy. At the end of Topanga, turn left and park on Poema Pl. Wear sturdy, wettable shoes with good tread and bring water. Leader: Judy Garris. Co-leader: Bob Galletly.

Rancho Simi Trail Blazers Hikes

Sat. 5/25 Solstice Canyon: Part easy, part steep 6 MRT with 600' elevation gain/loss with a great view of Point Dume and the ocean from the ridge of the canyon. This hike is not within the jurisdiction of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District. Bring snack and 2-3 qts. of water. Wear boots. Meet 8 am near Donut Delite at corner of Madera and Royal in Simi Valley. NOTE: The creek in this canyon is targeted as an ideal steelhead trout habitat and the U.S. Park Service will be removing the barriers to ensure its survival.

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.

Every Sunday Rocky Peak Trail: Strenuous, 5 mi, approximately 1000' gain. Meet at 5 pm at trailhead. Directions - take 118 Fwy to Rocky Peak exit. Trailhead is North of Fwy.

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

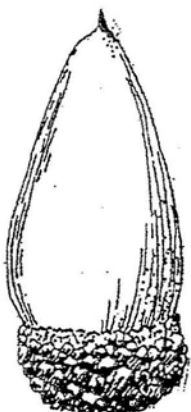
AN INVITATION FROM CHATSWORTH LAND PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION (CLPA)

If you are interested in attending a Magic Castle night (with proceeds benefiting the Chatsworth Land Preservation Association) please RSVP to Rayne VanEmden at (818) 882-0488 at your earliest convenience. CLPA really needs your help! So, please grab a couple of your closest friends or neighbors and treat them (and yourselves) to a wonderful and glamorous evening with all who love Chatsworth!



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: _____