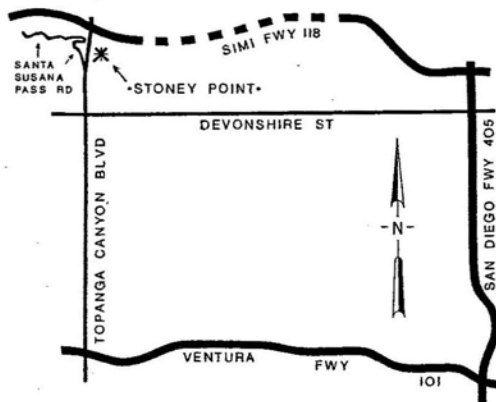




December 2003 Newsletter

Stoney Point

Mysteries Lost in the Passage of Time



Located on the edge of the Santa Susana Mountains in Chatsworth, Stoney Point is famous as the rock climbers' Mecca. Though small (its land area is only 22 acres), it offers a diversified climbing environment. The precise historical background of Stoney, however, is less well known.

The earliest *known* human history of Stoney Point dates back over 700 years, well before the advent of the first Spanish explorers. But stone tools found in burial sites near Stoney Point could possibly date human history back as far as 10,000 years.

Two distinct groups of people have lived in the vicinity of Stoney Point before the arrival of the Spaniards. Almost nothing is known about the first group, the ones who may have been present 10,000 years ago. Scattered burial sites are the evidence of their existence. It is not known if these people used the area as a residence or only as a burial site. All that is known is that they were here: a people lost in the passage of time.

The second group is known today as the Fernandeno Indians, a branch of the much larger Gabrielino group. The names are taken from the names of the Franciscan missions; their own name was lost or suppressed by the padres. More than a dozen Fernandeno archeological sites have been found within a three-mile radius of Stoney Point. All evidence points to the existence of Native Americans on and immediately around Stoney, and a major village site is located just a few thousand feet from it. This village was occupied about four to six months of each year with the residents primarily engaged in hunting game and gathering acorns and seeds.

In August of 1769 explorers from Mexico first set foot in the San Fernando Valley. Soon thereafter the San Fernando Mission was founded. A trail led from the mission to the

Stoney Point village site. This trail was later a part of the main route to the Santa Barbara Mission, and Stoney Point was used as a navigational landmark by mission padres. At a later date, Stoney also served as a landmark for stagecoaches traveling over Santa Susana Pass.

Ownership of the San Fernando Valley has repeatedly changed hands. After being seized from the Native Americans by the Spaniards, it became a part of Mexico in 1822. Then, after the Mexican-American War, it was ceded to the U.S. in 1850. George K. Porter bought a good hunk of the valley in 1874, and subsequently sold Granger Ranch to his cousin, Ben Porter. Granger Ranch included most of the current community of Chatsworth and, of course, Stoney Point.

Since the days of Ben Porter and Granger Ranch, Stoney Point has been sold and resold several times – first to

[continued on next page]

The Foundation for the Preservation of the Santa Susana Mountains periodically assists in the acquisition of land that is being acquired or may be acquired by federal or state agencies that have funding shortfalls. Contributions to the Foundation are tax-deductible; please consider the Foundation while making year end contribution decisions. Donations should be made payable to The Foundation for the Preservation of the Santa Susana Mountains, and sent to P. O. Box 4831, Chatsworth CA 91313-4831.

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Upcoming Election of New SSMPA Board of Directors

At the Board meeting on December 1st, members Susan Gerke and Carla Henry were voted in as new Board members, to serve the remaining year until the next election. The Board selected Jan Miller, Dorian Keyser and Carla Henry to serve as the Nominating Committee for the election in 2004. The purpose of this committee is to ensure that the nomination and election of candidates is in accordance with the SSMPA By-laws.

The SSMPA By-laws require an annual election of the SSMPA Executive Board, which includes the president, vice president, secretary, treasurer and six members-at-large. Typically, this election occurs at the April general membership meeting. Only members of SSMPA whose dues are current as of 14 days prior to the election meeting may vote. Each family is entitled to two votes. Each individual member is entitled to one vote.

Per the By-laws, any SSMPA member in good standing may nominate individuals for board positions, including officers -- after first confirming that said nominees are willing to serve -- by submitting candidate names to the Nominating Committee. Any candidate for Board president must be a current member of the SSMPA Board of Directors or have previously served on the Board.

The January newsletter will contain detailed information defining the voting process. Ballots containing the names of the candidates will be sent to all current SSMPA members in March. It is suggested that members renew well in advance of the 14-day deadline to ensure that they are eligible to vote.

Dorian Keyser



San Fernando Valley Audubon invites you on a Bus Trip to The Cachuma Lake Bald Eagle Boat Tour January 25, 2004

This is a repeat of last year's sell-out bus trip. Last year all the participants had a great time out on the lake and saw many beautiful birds including Osprey, Western Grebes, a Prairie Falcon and a Bald Eagle. Cachuma Lake is the year 'round home of a pair of nesting Bald Eagles and the winter home of many migrating immature Bald Eagles. The lake is located just a half hour's drive north of Santa Barbara. The bus will leave the Pierce College parking lot near Mason and Victory Ave at 7:30 a.m. The two-hour boat tour is given in a 45-passenger, covered pontoon boat with comfortable individual seating. Cachuma Lake Naturalist Hali Prior will once again be our guide on the tour which goes 10:00 a.m. to noon. She will also lead a nature walk down a lovely trail from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. You can either bring a picnic lunch or purchase food at the lake's concession stand. Also plan to visit the interesting displays on the nearby Nature Center Museum which is open until 2:00 p.m. We plan to leave the lake about 2:15 and should be back by about 4:00.

The cost of the tour is \$40, which includes the bus ride, the boat tour and tip for the driver. Lunch is not included. Your check reserves your space. Write your check to **San Fernando Valley Audubon** for \$40 per person and mail to: SFVAS Cachuma Tour, P.O. Box 7769, Van Nuys, CA 91409. Reservations must be received by January 11. Include your phone number and email address if available. Adults only please.

Severe weather may cause a last minute cancellation of the boat trip. Since the bus company does not accept late cancellations, an alternate indoor destination such as the Santa Barbara Mission and Natural History Museum may be substituted. Refunds cannot be made unless a substitute rider is available from our waiting list.

If you have questions, email Carolyn Oppenheimer at Carolopp@AOL.com or call her at 818-885-7493 (before 7:00 p.m., please).

ranchers, later to investors. Dr. and Mrs. Joseph Schurter sold the 22-acre site to the City of LA for \$250,000. It was designated as an Historical-Cultural Monument on November 20, 1974 and became a city recreational park in 1982.

Stoney Point and the surrounding Santa Susana Mountains are part of the transverse mountain ranges, a large mountain system north of the LA area. Transverse ranges were so named because they trend very nearly east-west as compared with the northwest-southeast trend of the adjacent ranges. Stoney is made up of sandstone, a sedimentary rock. This type of rock is formed by sediments accumulating on the ocean floor, where they were melded and cemented together. Over the past several hundred million years, much of North America has dropped below the surface of the sea and then raised again. This happened not once, but several times. And as a result, sandstone is abundant in the Santa Susana and adjacent ranges. Stoney is thus made of rock formed under the sea and uplifted by plate tectonics. But that is not the end of the story. Erosion plays a continuing role in the sculpturing of the sandstone. Wind, rain, and temperature changes have shaped the slopes, canyons, and boulders of Stoney Point.

The area is predominately a coastal sage scrub plant community. But there are also plants present from both the chaparral and southern oak woodland communities. Sagebrush, elderberry, tobacco and laurel sumac are, in conjunction with a variety of grasses, the most abundant plants. The effect of environment on plant communities is readily observed at Stoney -- the area can almost be divided into two separate sections. On the south side you will find yucca, California sagebrush, black mustard, filaree, and other species which require dry, sunny slopes. The opposite is found on the north side, where there grows monkey flower, coast live oak, purple nightshade, poison oak, manroot, and many annuals that require the north side's shade.

On good days, one might see and hear up to 20 different bird species, including the California quail, rock wren, rufous-sided towhee, cliff swallows, and many more. Cliff swallow nests can be seen under many of Stoney Point's overhangs, particularly on the northeastern corner. (Climbers and rappellers should take great care not to disturb these nests.)

When the sun is setting, Stoney Point can be seen from afar, bathed in golden light. Gazing upon it, one can ponder on its first inhabitants and the mysteries they took with them through the passage of time. ❖

The Nature Conservancy - California

The Nature Conservancy believes that humans and nature can coexist, even in greater LA. Through a rigorous planning process, they have identified the private lands and existing wildlife corridors that must be protected, linked to each other, and connected to large national forests to create a viable network that will preserve the area's biological diversity. The Conservancy, through its "LA-Ventura Project" is working to purchase one or more large, critically important private properties in their project area comprised of 450,000 acres in LA and Ventura Counties. In their recent publication, they make the following important statements:

- **The nearby Simi Hills harbor a critical wildlife corridor** linking the Santa Monica Mountains to the Santa Susana Mountains and also providing habitat for bobcats, gray foxes, mountain lions, badgers, and nesting raptors. Most of the land is privately owned and can be developed.
- **The Santa Susana Mountains contain the largest block of intact coastal sage scrub in the project area.** They also serve as a **critical link** between the Santa Monica Mountains and Simi Hills to the south and the large Los Padres and Angeles National Forest farther north. Most of the land is private ranches and oil fields.

If you care to support the Nature Conservancy to do its fine work, please contact them: **The Nature Conservancy - California, 201 Mission St., 4th Fl., San Francisco, CA 94105; (415) 777-0487.**

STAGECOACH TRAIL HIKE SCHEDULE

Sunday, 12/21 & 1/18: 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 South to the 2nd parking lot. Wear long pants, lugsoles are preferred, bring water & snack. Serious rain cancels. Leader: Lee Baum (818) 341-1850.

A Sierra Club (Santa Susana Mountains Task Force) Outing. All participants on Sierra Club outings are required to sign a standard liability waiver. If you wish to read the liability waiver before you chose to participate on an outing, go to: <http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/>, or contact Outings Dept. at (415) 977-5528 for a printed version.



photo by Teena Takata

Along the hike on Nov. 16, Leader Lee Baum explained the odd history of the quarry in the Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park.

Thank you for renewing your SSMPA membership: Jan & Patty Miller, Hal & Marlene Lovett, Patricia Milow, Keith Larson, Amanda Welbourn, Natalie Krah and Christopher Lindelien.
We appreciate your donation! Cynthia A. Fichtner Mayhan.



Santa Susana Mountain Park Association

invites you to **JOIN / RENEW** (circle one).

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 contribution lend your support. Make your check payable to SSMPA and send to SSMPA, P.O. Box 4831, Chatsworth, CA 91313-4831.

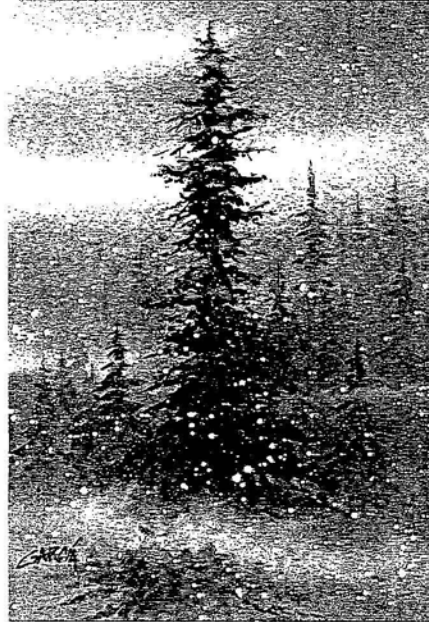
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The purposes of the Santa Susana Mountain Park Association are the protection, preservation, restoration, and enhancement of the Santa Susana Mountains and Simi Hills as open space lands and wildlife corridors linking the Los Padres National Forest and San Gabriel Mountains, including the Angeles National Forest, to the Santa Monica Mountains; as habitats for plants and animals native to the Santa Susana Mountains and the Simi Hills; as locales of unique geologic formations; as sites of ethnological, archaeological and historical interests; to provide passive recreational opportunities and environmental education opportunities; and, to support the acquisition of new public parks, open space and conservation easements, the expansion of existing parks, participate in the planning of park infrastructure and programs, and support said programs. To find out how you can participate, contact Jan Miller at (818) 702-0854.

SSMPA will not be holding a program meeting on December 15th. There will, however, be a notice in the January newsletter with information about our next program meeting, which will be on Monday, January 19, 2004. Until then, please receive our warmest *Seasons Greetings and Best Wishes for a Happy New Year!*

SSMPA Board of Directors



*Peace
on
Earth*



Santa Susana Mountain Park Association &
Foundation for the Preservation of the Santa Susana Mountains
P.O. Box 4831
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