



Santa Susana Mountain Park Association

Volume 30, Issue 35

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

February 2004 Newsletter



Fairy shrimp, basins and dudleya, Oh My!

A phone message from a hiking neighbor reporting that a regularly used trail on the way up to the Twelve Apostles* was soon to be blocked off drew six interested hikers out early on a recent Saturday morning to check it out and have some exploring fun, too.

Taking time to pause while hiking up the mountain, we studied some ancient outcroppings, noting the natural process where layers of interspersed mud and sand erode, allowing boulders to fall when gravity dictates.**

At the place where a property owner is developing his land and has placed fence poles on the trail, we saw where the trail could be easily re-routed.

Seeing what the locals call "Zorro's cabin" at the mountain's crest was our next objective. A great horned owl marked the way for us and then flew off. We passed some gigantic dudleya, then found the old adobe cabin wide open and decorated inside with blue spray paint. Its large fireplace was unpainted and intact. *[Was this cabin built by a*

(continued on next page)

General Membership Program Meeting Monday, February 16, 2004:

Paula Schiffman, Professor, Dept. of Biology, CSUN, and a popular speaker on the San Fernando Valley groups circuit, will be our program speaker. She is an ecologist and is particularly interested in California's prairie ecosystems. She does research locally and at Carrizo Plain National Monument in San Luis Obispo County. At CSUN she teaches courses on plants, ecology, and conservation biology. Dr. Schiffman will give a PowerPoint presentation on the subject described below. We look forward to having you join us!

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 conclude at 9:00 p.m. at the Rockpointe Clubhouse, 22300 Devonshire, Chatsworth, on the south side, 1 block before entering Chatsworth Park South. Refreshments will be served.



HISTORICAL ECOLOGY OF THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY:

WHAT WAS IT LIKE BEFORE ORANGE GROVES, HOUSES AND MINI-MALLS?

The San Fernando Valley once supported a subtle and yet complex mosaic of natural ecosystems. The largely treeless plain on the valley floor was covered by a unique prairie of wildflowers and scattered grasses. Trees were restricted to washes, streamsides and the floodplain of El Rio Porciuncula (the Los Angeles River). Hillsides were covered with chaparral and coastal sage scrub. This ecological landscape supported a great diversity of animal life. For example, grizzly bears roamed throughout the region and bands of grazing pronghorn antelope were common. The landscape was also habitat to many "lower profile" animals including badgers, black-tailed jack rabbits, desert cottontails,

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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.



photo by Reid Bogert

"Zorro's Cabin"

[Fairy Shrimp ... continued]

movie company and used in the filming of "The Mark of Zorro"? Has anyone ever lived here? If anyone knows the answers to these questions, please drop us a line.] Pitifully neglected now, it is upstaged by a beautiful backyard garden of climber-friendly rocks, where we began our basin-finding quest with Jan Miller's promise to show us a 20-foot long giant hollow in a rock. During our rock scrambling fun we encountered many natural, smoothly formed concavities of various sizes containing rainwater. We were fascinated to find some basins inhabited by tiny green plants and tiny fairy shrimp!

Up there with the red-tailed hawks gliding overhead, from different spots one can view parts of the Chatsworth Nature Preserve, Box and Woolsey Canyons and Simi Valley. It is a place to count one's blessings, knowing there simply is no other place like this on earth.

Susan Gerke

* *The Twelve Apostles is a unique vertical stand of rock formation on the southerly facing Simi Hills between Chatsworth Lake Manor and the 118. The area was used for filming movies and TV series in the '40s and '50s.*

** *Next month this newsletter will feature Mike Kuhn's interesting article about the Chatsworth Formation of this area, i.e., its age, how it was formed and how it is moving north as part of the North Pacific Plate.*

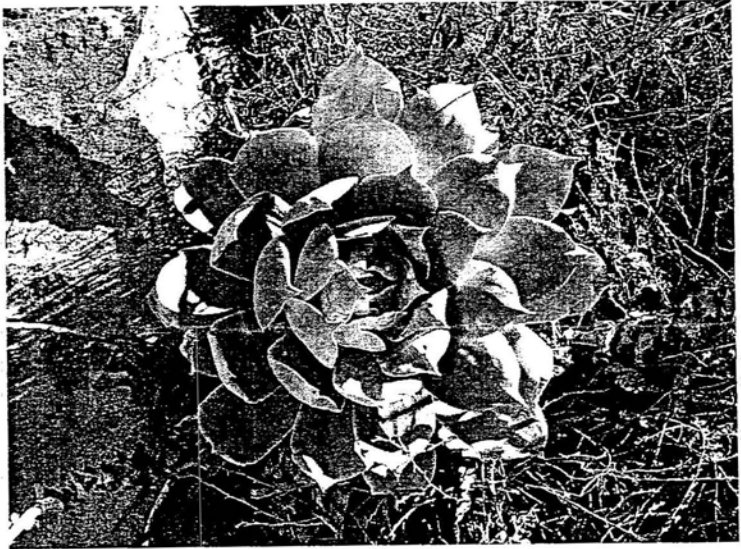
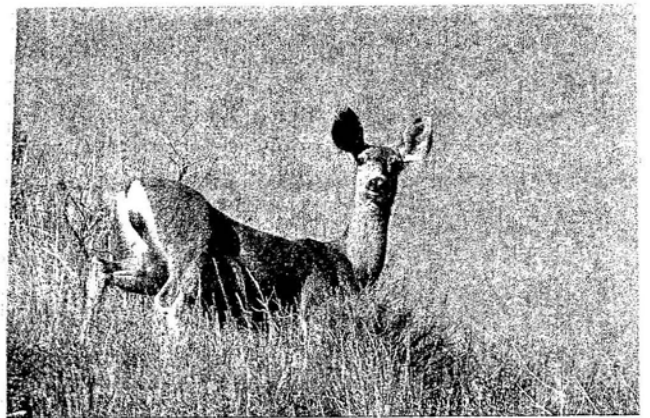


photo by Teena Takata

Dudleya or "chalk liveforever"

When mule deer droppings were found a few months ago on the DWP-owned property behind Chatsworth Oaks Park, a few people exchanged emails about the local deer. Here is a compelling contribution from Judy Garris, *Naturalist*: "I don't see as much evidence of mule deer in the Simi Hills and Southern parts of the Santa Susanas as I do in the Santa Monica Mountains. About five years ago, while looking for property markers on land being considered for purchase in the wildlife corridor near Rocky Peak, I came across a narrow trail moving up toward a ridge line. Curious, I followed it. The trail was lined with wild cherry trees. There were many piles of deer scat droppings. After a few hundred feet or so the trail widened into a clearing protected on three sides by rising slopes of large sandstone boulders. The clearing was trampled down into circles and appeared to be a large deer bedroom. In awe and wonder but also feeling I was trespassing, I silently backed away. I returned to the beaten paths of man with a sense of having just received a special gift, a glimpse of the deer's day as it nibbled on wild cherry before it settled down for the night."



If you have not yet done so, please take a look at SSMPA's internet group (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SSMPA/>) where you will find many documents and resources relevant to the issues of concern to SSMPA and its members. If you have any questions regarding the website, feel free to call Reid Bogert at (323) 661-4686.

Thank you for renewing your SSMPA membership: Marillyn H. Holmes; D. Gene Clark; Beverly Cervini; Ed Embree; Kira Fuchs & Robert Redecker; Dalia & Dorian Keyser; Nancy Krupa. Welcome new members: Andrea & Lon Deyoung; Clara, Marty & Eric Woll. New life member: Sally Parry of Sentinel Investigations.

[Paula Schiffman article ... continued]

kangaroo rats and numerous rodent species. Similarly, a great diversity of now uncommon birds inhabited the valley. It is probable that huge flocks of sandhill cranes stopped over during migration, roosting in the meanders of the river at night and feeding in the surrounding prairie during the day. In addition, golden eagles, prairie falcons, northern harriers, short-eared owls and other avian predators fed on the abundant prairie rodents. Meadowlarks, horned larks plus numerous songbirds would have been common as well. And, of course, the gruesome and majestic California condor soared overhead.

My presentation will focus on the beauty and ecological diversity of the San Fernando Valley's now extinct prairie landscape. The potential uses of this historical information for conservation and restoration will also be discussed.

Paula Schiffman

FEBRUARY / MARCH HIKE SCHEDULE

Saturday, 2/14 - Ahmanson Ranch - 9:45 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.: Join a fun and easy day hike on the newly acquired Ahmanson Ranch in Calabasas. Only one trailhead is open at this time. Trailhead is 850' elevation. We will walk 2.1 miles to Lasky Mesa, which is at 1,400'. Bring water, camera, snack. You can take side trips on the dirt roads around the ranch if you want; it is fairly hard to get lost there. Dogs must be leashed. www.ahmanson.org and www.rallyfortheranch.com.

Sunday, 2/15 - Stagecoach Trail: Interpretative hike into history in our Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. Meet 9:00 am for a 4 mi (700' gain) loop up the Stage Coach Trail. From Topanga Cyn Blvd., turn W on Devonshire, drive into Chatsworth Park S to the 2nd parking lot. Wear long pants, lugsoles are preferred, bring water & snack. Serious rain cancels. Leader: Lee Baum. (818) 341-1850.

Sunday, 3/28 - Chumash Trail: (Provisional Sierra Club Leader Hike): 9:00 a.m. Very easy-paced, 5-mile round trip, 1000' gain through beautiful coastal sage scrub, chaparral and sandstone rock formations overlooking Simi Valley. Take 118 Fwy to Yosemite North, pass stop sign and turn onto Flanagan Drive East; go to the end. Park on the east side of street. Provisional hike leader, Collette Bertrand: (818) 349-8415; Asst. Leader, Judy Garris: (818) 346-7654.



photo by Teena Takata

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR YOUR CALENDAR

- Come celebrate **Earth Day** on **Sunday, April 4th**, at the **Chatsworth Nature Preserve**, a 1,400-acre site of a decommissioned reservoir, with coyotes, bobcats, deer and nearly 200 species of birds flying in and around the wildlife lake. Chumash Indian Tribal Dancers traditionally join us for a day of honoring Mother Earth and the living beings who depend on her bounty. For reservations contact Rosemarie White at (818) 769-1521.
- Show your support for your park! On **Saturday, April 24th**, **Chatsworth Park South** will be the site of an **Earth Day** event sponsored by several local organizations. The focus of the event will be our **Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park**. We're starting at 8:00 a.m. with a presentation by the State Park Foundation followed by a park clean-up project and refreshments. Come and have some fun!
- The Agriculture Dept. @ L.A. Pierce College announces their **Annual Farmwalk** will take place on **Sunday, April 18th**, 9:30 am - 4:00 pm at **Los Angeles Pierce College**, 6201 Winnetka Ave., Woodland Hills. \$5.00 donation; children free. Enter Victory/Mason. **Activities:** Farm animals / Sheep Shearing / Wool Spinning; Large Farm & Plant Equipment / Live Music / Cow Milking; Cow Chip Bingo; Petting Zoo; Live Bee Displays; Exotic Animal Shows; Horse Activities; Fire Dept. & Forestry Div.; BBQ/Chili Cook-Off; Agriculture; Natural Resources; Animal Science Class Information; Nature Canyon Walks; Educational Displays. *Only Physical Assistance Dogs Permitted Due to Livestock.* Website: piercecollege.edu [scroll to 'news @ pierce college']. Vicki Michaelson @ 818-710-4253.



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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| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior or Student (\$5.00) | <input type="checkbox"/> Individual (\$10.00) | <input type="checkbox"/> Family (\$15.00) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life Member (\$100.00) | <input type="checkbox"/> Business / Organization (\$25.00) | |















Name: _____ Phone: _____

Street Address: _____ E-mail: _____

City / State / Zip: _____

Special Interest / Expertise: _____

Animal Tracks in the Snow

 1 Rabbit Medium speed Upper tracks hind feet.	 2 Deer High speed.	 3 Deer Walking	 4 Muskrat. or Skunk (slow lope)	 5 Skunk or Muskrat walking	 6 Mink, Weas- sel, Ermine Jumping. 2 tracks for 7 feet. Medium speed	 7 Squirrel. Medium rate 5 toed hind feet always in front. See N°1	 8 Fox. running fast	 9 Raccoon Slow jump- ing gait.	 10 Raccoon slow walk	 11 Raccoon fast trot	 12 ELK jumping, high speed	 13 ELK walking	 14 Fox walking
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