



Santa Susana Mountain Park Association

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March 2005 Newsletter

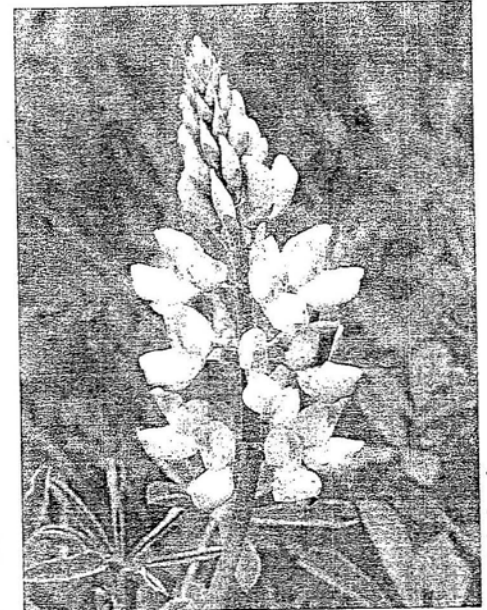
A Non-Profit 501(c)(4) Organization
Incorporated August 31, 1971



Prickly Phlox



Vetch



Pale Lupine

Chivo Canyon - From Owls Clover to Peonies, Ancient Shells to Beautiful Hills

Our informal exploration and reporting team ventured out yet again, to Chivo Canyon in northeastern Simi Valley. Chivo Canyon is accessed from the Yosemite exit of the 118 freeway; travel north about two miles, just past the large oak tree in the middle of the street. The canyon has been dedicated to the Conservancy, the trail generally follows the streambed up the canyon, except for the first mile or so, where the trail rises above the bottomland, providing beautiful vistas of the valley floor. The first mile or two is easy as long as it has not rained recently; you can begin by taking walking northerly through the mudflat near the road.

The flowers are tremendous. The green hills arise from a streambed that snakes through the valley floor. Hawks soar above, quail disturbed by our passage, chirp and cluck, then whirrrr off as they fly awkwardly, farther away from us, the intruders in their environment. Lupine, owls clover, morning glories, fiddlenecks, popcorn flowers and filaree greeted our arrival with constant color. Along the way we made other discoveries; wild pea, spring vetch, Indian paintbrush, wallflowers all competed for attention and notice. We kept our eyes open along the streambed that the trail frequently crossed, and found several pectins (fossilized clam-type shells), ancient oyster shells, and other relics from past ages. One rock showed a whole center that had built around a central rock, and then eroded in an artistic swirl. In addition to an occasional chalk-leafed dudleya, we found its less common cousin, lance-leafed dudleya.

Where the trail totally washed out, we found new paths along the streambed, and found ways to continue our exploration. Although we found a huge variety of flowers, many, many more are growing and are sure to bloom over the next few weeks. We speculated as we traveled, that perhaps the canyon would take us all the way to Santa Clarita, but alas, our "regular" lives continued to call us, and we returned to our mundane every-day lives, none the wiser as to where our feet and hearts could have taken us.

Teena Takata

General Membership Meeting Monday, March 21, 2005

Local history buffs are in for a real treat if they attend our general meeting tonight. The founder of SSMPA, Janice Hinkston, compiled a slide show from the oldest photos and drawings she could find of the San Fernando Valley, piecing together a rich tapestry of local history. Perhaps you have seen the show with Jan, or maybe with Barbara Coffman, who has shown it many times. Tonight, our very own Reid Bogert, SSMPA board member and original Valley resident, will narrate and present this fascinating slide show. Don't miss it!

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

On May 16 at its general membership meeting, SSMPA will hold the annual election for the Board of Directors. If you would like to discuss the possibility of joining our Board to help make things happen, call Jan Miller at (818) 702-0854.

Canada Goose Report

The annual return of the Canada geese to the San Fernando Valley brings out a yearning for wildness in most of us. Seeing the familiar V-formation above our heads is an exhilarating experience. The mountains of the SFV are a magnificent setting for these migrants from the north as they arrive each fall.

Goose numbers have been in decline for many years. Loss of habitat is the primary cause. Lake Balboa in the Sepulveda Basin displaced cornfields where hundreds of geese fed on green shoots after harvesting, though the city's wildlife lake area has helped compensate for the loss. Corn is no longer grown at Pierce College, which used to feed the geese. The simple fact is that there is little open space left in the Valley that would support geese on their winter visits.

Preservation of our remaining goose habitat areas, including the planting of corn in fields, will assure the return of these welcome visitors in the fall as they have returned for thousands of years.

The geese arrived at the Chatsworth Nature Preserve in November last year. Just like the year before, and the year before that, they came to rest nightly on the pond before flying off in the morning to forage at in the grassy fields of Pierce College, the Sepulveda Basin, and the greens of Woodley Lake Golf Course. In the early morning hours of Nov. 3, 12 were counted at the Nature Preserve. On Nov. 17 there were 37; on the 29th there were 40. On December 8th 82 were seen, and on December 15th, 330. Other counts were: Dec. 22: 146; Dec. 29: 220; Jan. 5: 200; Jan. 12: 313; Jan. 19: 376; Jan. 26: 385. In February their numbers starkly decreased: Feb. 3: 34; Feb. 9: 53; Feb. 17: 0. They were gone for the season, returning north to breed and raise their young.

For inquiries about The Canada Goose Project, call Rosemarie White at (818) 769-1521. Email: canadagooseproj@aol.com.



THE AGRICULTURE DEPT. @ LOS ANGELES PIERCE COLLEGE Presents Our **Annual FARMWALK**

DATE/TIME: **Sunday, April 17th** / 9:30 AM to 4:00 PM

PLACE: Pierce College, 6201 Winnetka Ave, Woodland Hills - Victory/Mason Entrance (Free Parking)

COST: \$5.00 Donation Requested Per Adult / Children under 12 **PLAY FREE**

WEBSITE: PIERCECOLLEGE.EDU SCROLL TO 'NEWS @ PIERCE COLLEGE'

ACTIVITIES: Tons of animals / Sheep Shearing / Wool Spinning, A CLYDESDALE HORSE / Live Music / Cow Milking, CowChip Bingo / A Petting Zoo, Live BEE Displays / Exotic Animal Shows / Horse Activities, Hands on activities, Fire Fighters with their Fire Engines, Fire Dept. & Forestry Div. / CA Women for Ag & AG in the Classroom, Large Farm & Plant Equipment / A BBQ @ reasonable prices / Nature Canyon walks overlooking our city, Agriculture & Animal Science Class information / Various Educational Displays, Fun for Toddlers through active seniors. *Only Physical Assistance Dogs Permitted Due to Livestock*

BRING: Sunscreen, Sunglasses, Hats & Cameras with Lots of Film!

JOIN THE FUN!

Vicki Michaelson 818-710-4253/COORDINATOR

The FPSSM Needs You

The Foundation for the Preservation of the Santa Susana Mountains (FPSSM) held its election on Tuesday, February 22, 2005. The new board is as follows: Founder: Janice Hinkston. President: Pearl Turbush. Vice President: Nancy Razanski. Treasurer: Chuck Turbush. Recording Secretary.: Andrea DeYoung. SFV Area Chair: Jon Lauritzen. Simi Valley Area Chair: Janet Lazik. Member-at-Large: Hal Lovett. We still need a corresponding secretary, Santa Clarita Area Chair, and one more member-at-large. The group meets four times a year.

Past accomplishments include placing a \$10,000 down payment on 265 acres in 197, resulting in the first purchase by the State Parks which eventually became part of the Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. We more recently financed all the large and small state historic park signage as well as the four two-sided informational state historic park panels placed along the southern border of Chatsworth Park South.

Our future plans include hiring grant writers to obtain more items for our Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park, as well as money for acquisition of more land in our wildlife corridor area. We discovered some exciting leads for funding sources and are anxious to get started. If you would like to be a part of this dynamic group, leave a message on my answering machine at (818) 341-3512. Thank you.

Nancy Razanski

Resource for SSMPA Members and Friends

We have set up a Yahoo group internet site where we have posted a host of resources (documents and photos and links) of potential interest to SSMPA's members. These include resources relating to the appreciation and conservation of our local natural environment and to the challenges posed by land developers. We've also posted an archive of newsletters and materials relating to SSMPA's history.

If you are not yet included on the group's email list—and would like to be—please send your address to SSMPA@hotmail.com. You'll need to "join" and become a full member of the Yahoo group before you can access the site's resources. If you have not yet joined, please point your browser to this address: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SSMPA/join>

If you have a question, send an email to SSMPA@hotmail.com and we'll try to provide assistance.

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.

Common Name: San Diego horned lizard

Scientific Name: *Phrynosoma coronatum blainvillei*

The Coast Horned Lizard is relatively large and less rounded than other horned lizards. An individual's snout-vent length can reach 4 inches. Numerous pointed scales stick out along the sides of the body and over the back, though only the horns around the head are rigid. The back pattern begins with two large, dark blotches behind the head, followed by three broad bands on the body and several smaller bands on the tail. The general coloration consists of various shades of brown with cream colored accents around the blotches and the outer fringe of scales.

Subspecies:

There have been as many as six subspecies recognized: the San Diego Horned Lizard (*P. c. blainvillii*); the Cape Horned Lizard (*P. c. coronatum*); the California Horned Lizard (*P. c. frontale*); the Central Peninsular Horned Lizard (*P. c. jamesi*); the Northern Peninsular Horned Lizard (*P. c. schmidti*); and the Cedros Island Horned Lizard (*P. c. cerroense*). All intergrade widely and the recent studies indicate that no subspecies should be recognized.

Range and Habitat:

The Coast Horned Lizard's range extends from northern California to the tip of Baja California. The subspecies found in southern California, *blainvillii*, is distributed throughout the foothills and coastal plains from Los Angeles area to northern Baja California. It frequents areas with abundant, open vegetation such as chaparral or coastal sage scrub. A ground dweller, it's never seen climbing into shrubs or trees, or onto the sides of large boulders.

Natural History

Perhaps the horned lizard's best defense mechanism is its disruptive or cryptic coloration, which is so similar to their background they become indistinguishable from it. This is partly due to its ability to change its own color to match its background environment. Its flat profile helps prevent shadows that might be detected by an observant predator, such as a hawk flying overhead or a coyote patrolling the ground. Most predators would have difficulty grabbing these lizards because of their horns. They are known to swivel their head back in attempts to stab the hand which grasps. Ants are the favorite food of horned lizards, making up about 50% of their diet. The lizards also eat honeybees and a variety of other insects. The Coast Horned Lizard produces clutches of 6 to 21 eggs from May to June. Hatching occurs in August and September.

Conservation Status

The Coast Horned lizard is currently a Federal Special Concern species (FSC) and a California Special Concern species (DFG-CSC). California Department of Fish and Game gives them full protection from collecting. A number of factors contribute to the decline of this species. The subspecies *blainvillii* is believed to be extinct in 45% of its original range in southern California. The most serious threat is the destruction of its preferred habitat along the coast. Populations in undisturbed areas seem to fare quite well, although the introduction of Argentine Ants (*Iridomyrmex humilis*) are now replacing the native ant food base. It was heavily exploited at the turn of the century for the curio trade; horned lizards were varnished and sold to visiting tourists from the east coast, or simply sold as pets to take home as a souvenir. Later, biological supply companies and the modern pet trade contributed to their exploitation, until 1981, when commercial collecting was banned.



Observed by hikers in Santa Susana Mountains 2/27/05

Chatsworth Nature Preserve Honors Earth Day

Come visit the Nature Preserve on Sunday, April 3. The event will begin with a Chumash blessing at 10 a.m., followed by native dancers and a tour of a portion of the preserve, including the ecology pond. Certain dignitaries and local politicians have been invited to attend. Bring a blanket to sit on and perhaps a picnic lunch. There will be interesting educational exhibits and fun, too! The event ends at 4 p.m., but come early if you wish to take the tour.

Directions: From Topanga Cyn Blvd, turn west on Plummer and follow the road to the Preserve. Call (818) 769-1521 for further info or if you wish to help with the event.

Earth Day Clean-Up at Chatsworth Park North

This event is sponsored by LA City Rec. & Parks Dept and LA Church of Christ. Join our park rangers and members of your community to volunteer in the clean-up efforts of Chatsworth Park North & South and Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park on Saturday, April 23. The 8:00 a.m. opening ceremony will be held at Chatsworth Park North, located at 22300 Chatsworth St., next to the baseball fields. Suggested items to bring: gloves, drinking water, sunscreen, hat and appropriate footwear.

Directions: Drive to Devonshire St. & Valley Circle Blvd., turn north on Valley Circle and follow it to the park.

Cougar Cubs & Fwy 101...

...is the topic of the upcoming Endangered Species/Wildlife Task Force, Sierra Club, Angeles Chapter meeting on Tuesday, April 19 at 7 p.m. at the Reseda Park Rec. Hall, 18411 Victory Blvd., Reseda. Learn how the fate of 4 tiny mountain lion cubs hangs on one factor: human recognition of the equal right to life for the wild creatures who live beside and among us. Join us to honor wildness and to learn about wildlife activism.

Stop the Push for LNG

The current administration and industry have targeted Ventura County's coast for construction of a huge offshore terminal that would receive Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) from overseas and process the gas offshore for transportation through onshore communities. This project would be the first of its kind, posing new risks to our safety and coastal environment. Fighting these powerful interests is expensive and time-consuming, but it is essential in order to protect our coastal and marine environment and our quality of life. Studies have shown that only 5 to 15% of oil spilled at sea can be recovered, and oil-soaked birds and other marine life rarely survive. Furthermore, an LNG fire could spread for miles.

Your help is needed. Making a contribution to the Environmental Defense Center will help prevent a tragedy. Send your check today to EDC, 906 Garden St., Santa Barbara, CA 93101. Ph. no.: (805) 963-1622. www.edcnet.org

REQUIRED READING FOR THE ENTIRE PLANET

Michael J. Vandeman, Ph.D.

March 10, 2000 (last updated October 1, 2004)

This is a partial list of the most important works I have read to date, so this is a work in progress, not a complete list. I welcome suggestions for other works that should be added. My criterion is that they are foundational works that contribute to understanding the most important realities of life on Earth, and what needs to be done to ensure its survival, i.e., the survival of all life on Earth. What could be more important than that?

Also, I am sure that each author has other writings of equal or greater importance. I suggest that you definitely read these (as soon as possible), but also look for their other works. They are all on the "cutting edge" of their fields.

Please send your comments and suggestions to me at mjvande@pacbell.net.

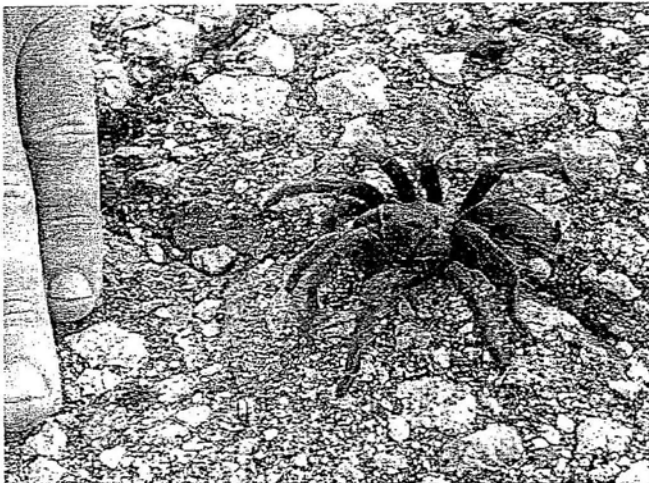
Beattie, Andrew and Paul Ehrlich, Wild Solutions. How Biodiversity Is Money in the Bank. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.

Chang, Iris, The Rape of Nanking. New York: Basic Books, 1997 (about what humans are capable of, both the worst and the best).

De Graaf, John, David Wann, and Thomas H. Naylor, Affluenza. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2001.

Deffeyes, Kenneth S., Hubbert's Peak -- The Impending World Oil Shortage. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001. "In 1956, the geologist M. King Hubbert predicted that U.S. oil production would peak in the early 1970s. Almost everyone, inside and outside the oil industry, rejected Hubbert's analysis. The controversy raged until 1970, when U.S. production of crude oil started to fall. Hubbert was right. Around 1995, several analysts began applying Hubbert's method to world oil production, and most of them estimate that the peak year for world oil will be between 2004 and 2008. These analyses were reported in some of the most widely circulated sources: Nature, Science, and Scientific American.", p.1.

Dubos, Rene', The Wooing of Earth. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980. "Laws may prevent exploitation or permanent occupation of wilderness areas, as in the case of national parks, but they cannot protect them against the damaging effects resulting from the mere presence of innumerable tourists", p.29. "There is no evidence ... that early humans always lived in ecological harmony with Nature out of respect for it", p.63. "The wilderness is being loved to death. The conflict between preservation and recreation is becoming more intense as more people seek the wilderness experience", p.136. "The only solution to the overuse and degradation of wilderness areas is in restriction of visitors", p.138.



Observed by hikers in the Santa Susana Mtns. 2/27/05

Aphonopelma chalcodes

Desert Tarantula

-- the largest spider in the world

Unpopular Fence in the Mountains

In the wilderness above O'Melveny City Park, slightly below and north of the crest of the Santa Susana Mountains and south of the upper half of Bee Canyon, is a tall military-style fence with overhanging barbwire. The fence was erected late last year to keep terrorists out of the Aliso Gas Field. It frequently crosses and blocks the dirt road named the Sunshine-Corral Motorway and removes sections of the road from use by the public. People who have used the area for decades to hike, bicycle and ride their horses don't like the new fence, which is in the line of sight for nearly two miles. Actually, the fence obstructs users on the only public system of backcountry trail roads crossing the Santa Susana Mountains from the San Fernando Valley to the Santa Clarita Valley. Wildlife larger than small rodents cannot penetrate the fence as it zigzags across the road through the woodlands in Significant Ecological Area (SEA) No. 62.

It has been recommended to Sempra Energy (Attn: Debra Reed, CEO, Exec. Office, 101 Ash St., San Diego, CA 92101-3017) that they lower the fence, open the gates, landscape the fence, or move the fence nearer to the ridge top over the gas field.

Note: Sempra is currently forming a committee with a local interest comment group to modify the location and appearance of the fence to better meet the needs of the community and environmentalists.

Per Sierra Club guidelines, it is recommended that hikers wear sturdy shoes with tread or hiking boots and bring a quart of water. Most hikes stop for a snack break. SSMTF Outings Chair phone no.: (818) 346-7654.

U P C O M I N G H I K E S

Sat., 3/19 - Wildflower Walk in Devil Canyon - 9:00 a.m. Slow-paced wildflower walk. Meet at the north end of Topanga Canyon Blvd. Call (818) 346-7654 to confirm. *(California Native Plant Society hike)*

Sun., 3/20 - Johnson Motorway to Rocky Peak Rd: 9:00 a.m. Easy-paced 7 mi, rt, 1000' gain. Meet end of Iverson Rd. From Topanga Cyn Blvd in Chatsworth, go N and R on Santa Susana Pass Rd, ¼ mi to Iverson Rd, just past the Rocky Pk Church, R and follow road to underpass and park on dirt. Ldrs: Gabe Sende & Steffi Schadel. *(Sierra Club hike)*

Tues., 3/22 - Cold Creek Cyn Trail: 8:30 a.m. Moderate 4-6 mi, easy-paced with 800' gain through 2 beautiful canyons in the Santa Monicas. Meet at Stunt Rd parking lot (from 101 Fwy, exit Valley Circle/Mullholland Hwy, 3-1/2 mi to Stunt Rd, L on Stunt Rd for 1 mi, parking on shoulder). Ldrs: Ramona Dunn, Judy Garris, Marcia Harris. *(Sierra Club - Santa Susana Mtns Task Force hike)*

Tuesday, 3/29 - Towsley Cyn./Santa Clarita Woodlands Pk - 8:30 a.m. Easy-paced, moderate, 4-6 mi, 1300' gain hike with great vistas, a chilly narrows, diverse plant life and tar seeps. Meet at Ed Davis Pk, The Old Rd, Newhall (take Calgrove exit from 1-5 Fwy, W back under fwy, take The Old Rd S, R ½ mi to entrance on R, drive on dirt rd to Nature Ctr and parking lot [possible \$3-5 fee]). Ldrs: Ramona Dunn, Judy Garris, Marcia Harris. *(Sierra Club - Santa Susana Mtns Task Force hike)*

Tuesday, 4/5 - Valley to the Sea - 8:00 a.m. Easy-paced, 8 mi, 800' gain hike to the HUB on Fire Rd #30 and continue to Sunset Blvd. Ride 3 buses and return to bottom of Reseda Blvd where cars will take hikers to their cars at top of Reseda Blvd. This is an all-day adventure and lots of fun. Meet at Gateway Pk at top of Reseda Blvd (3 mi S of Ventura Blvd; park along street below white line at beginning of fee area or \$3 to park at top). Be sure to bring 2 qts. water, etc. Ldrs: Ramona Dunn, Judy Garris, Marcia Harris. *(Sierra Club - Santa Susana Mtns Task Force hike)*

Saturday, 4/9 - Dayton Canyon - 9:00 a.m. Easy-paced 3 mi, 400' gain hike near prehistoric burial grounds to rock shelter overlooking the Chatsworth Nature Preserve. Meet at 9 a.m. at gate. From Topanga Canyon Blvd., turn W onto Roscoe, proceed to Valley Circle Blvd., cross intersection and park. Ldrs: Susan Gerke & Bob Galletly. *(Sierra Club - Santa Susana Mtns Task Force hike)*

Saturday, 4/9 - Jupiter Mtn - 9:00 a.m. Moderate, 3 mi, 1000' gain in upper Bouquet Cyn. Great views of northern Angeles Forest. Meet at San Fernando Rd exit off 14 Fwy (take I-5 N to 14 Fwy, exit San Fernando Rd, R to end, park and ride). Ldrs: Mary Ellen Dittimore, Geraldine Lorme. *(Sierra Club - Santa Clarita hike)*

Saturday, 5/21 - Fire-Followers Plant Walk - 9:30am. Hike up "The Old Trail" in Devil Canyon. Discover which flowers are blooming the second spring after last year's wildfire. Easy-paced but there will be some hill climbing as we ascend from riparian into chaparral plant communities. Meet at the north end of Topanga Cyn Blvd just north of the 118 freeway. Call (818) 346-7654 for info. *(California Native Plant Society hike)*



Devil Canyon may be unhikeable until waters recede. Call (818) 346-7654 to confirm.

photo by Teena Takata



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.

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

Name: _____ Phone: _____
 Street Address: _____ E-mail: _____
 City / State / Zip: _____
 Special Interest / Expertise: _____

Chumash Villages

At one time there were many hundreds of separate Chumash villages along the Pacific Coast. The names of two of the villages nearest the Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park were Huwam [Hukxa'oynga] and one further south called Topa'nga. Some villages were as large as towns while others were quite small. The villages were constructed on high ground near lagoons, creek mouths, lakes, or springs. The largest villages were built along the mainland coast near the Santa Barbara Channel. Some other Indian people had similar customs, but no other Native Americans lived in exactly the same way as the Chumash people. Their invention and use of the plank canoe, their extraordinary baskets, tools and bead making, their customs and beliefs, and their craftsmanship are what make the Chumash unique. Various groups spoke distinct languages.

Each Chumash family lived in a house called an 'ap. A village would have many such dwellings. At least one sweathouse, or 'apa'yik, was built in every village, too. The Chumash house, or 'ap, was round and shaped like half an orange. It was made by setting willow poles in the ground in a circle. The poles were bent in at the top, to form a dome. Then smaller saplings or branches were tied on crosswise. To cover the outside, bulrush or cattails were added in layers starting at the bottom, each row overlapping the one below. Like shingles on a roof, this thatched covering kept out rain. For air circulation a hole was left in the top, which was covered with a skin when it rained. In good weather the cooking was done outside, but when it rained a fire could be lit in the fire pit in the center of each house, providing warmth. The houses were 12-20' in diameter. The chief's house was up to 35' across.

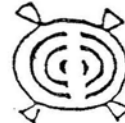


In the Ventura and Santa Barbara areas the Portolá party passed through many villages of Chumash Indians who, with their large canoes, plied the waters between the mainland and the Channel Islands. (Photo of diorama of village near Point Mugu, in Los Angeles County Museum, courtesy History Division, Los Angeles County Museum. This village was about 50 miles north of Santa Monica and was excavated in 1931 by the Museum under the direction of Arthur Woodward.)

Thank you for renewing your SSMPA membership and for the extra donations. They really help to support our efforts! Michael & Lizzy Novotny & Family, Pearl & Chuck Turbush, Ed Embree, Josh Einhorn, Carl Wilkening, Mark & Leslie Bashaar, Barbara Lilley, Nancy Krupa, Willis & Melba Simms and William Hughes.

Subscribers & Members: We appreciate you! Please note the renewal date on your label. If you are a Life Member, we thank you and invite your continued support with periodic donations to help SSMPA meet the costs of producing this newsletter.

Susan Gerke, Editor



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