



# Canyon News

Black Mountain Park • Carmel Mountain Preserve  
Del Mar Mesa Preserve • Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve  
Friends of Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve, Inc.

Summer, 2014  
Volume 28, No. 3

## Fire Recovery Underway in Black Mountain Park

Mike Kelly, conservation chair

I watched with trepidation, with sadness as the "Bernardo Fire" swept through the Santa Luz grasslands part of our Black Mountain Open Space Park. Multiple TV channels were broadcasting live the movement of the fire from east to west, towards the Santa Luz and Rancho Santa Fe houses. It was also obvious it was heading for the Friends' Cactus wren restoration sites, acres of plantings we have worked on for 5 years in two major locations.



Senior Ranger Ed Christenson was nice enough to call me late in the day of the fire to report that our southern site, south of Luzardi Creek and up on a hillside terrace east of where the aqueduct cuts through, looked pretty good. Our newsletter editor, Janet Nelson, went in a day later and took some pictures that seemed to show one of our sites not burned but surrounded on four sides by blackened earth.



sites. But our sites — I liken them to the hole in the (see page 6)

Intrigued, a day or two later I drove through with a friend. The southern site is really 3 sub-sites within 50-100 yards of each other. Some of the pictures I took are shown with this article. The fire obviously swept over the entirety of all 3 sub-

## Ranch House Needs Volunteer Support

The historic Los Peñasquitos Ranch House is seeking docents and volunteers. There is a wide variety of opportunities include giving weekend tours of the adobe ranch house, periodic school tours, outreach in period-attire, maintaining the courtyard plantings, computer work in Past Perfect, adobe and plaster repair, upkeep of the ranch house and open space maintenance. If you'd like to join a fun group of people who contribute to keeping history alive at Los Peñasquitos Adobe and Open Space Preserve, please call the San Diego County Rangers at 858-484-7504.

## Trash Pickup Volunteers Needed

On Sunday, July 20, 2014, between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., the Friends, City Parks Rangers, and local residents will be doing a major trash cleanup in the eastern end of Lopez Canyon. Even a two hour shift would be welcome. Scout groups and soon-to-be high school seniors looking for community service credits are also welcome. Meet at the corner of Blythe and Zapada streets in Mira Mesa (92126). Call Mike Kelly at 858-342-8856 for more details or to RSVP. Walk-ins are also welcome.

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## Activities, Hikes, and Volunteer Opportunities

**Maps** of Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve, Carmel Mountain Preserve and Black Mountain Open Space Park are available at [www.Peñasquitos.org](http://www.Peñasquitos.org)

All of our hikes are free. There is a fee for the Tracking survey classes. See below for details.

Wear good trail sneakers or boots and sun protection (hat, sunscreen or both), and bring plenty of water. Call 858-484-3219 for more information.

### Repeating Events

#### Every Saturday and Sunday:

##### **Historic Adobe Ranch Tour**

San Diego County Park docents lead a free guided tour of San Diego's second oldest standing residence, Rancho Santa María de los Peñasquitos, at 11 a.m. on Saturdays and 1 p.m. on Sundays, lasting 45 minutes. See an historic Mexican era rancho with three foot thick adobe walls, settler and Indian artifacts and tour the grounds. The Ranch House is located on Canyonside Park Driveway off Black Mountain Road between Mira Mesa and Rancho Peñasquitos.

#### Every month:

##### **Introduction to Wildlife Tracking**

**Sat. 8:00-10:00 a.m. July 12, Aug 9, Sept 13, Oct 11, Nov 8, Dec 13**

Join a knowledgeable San Diego Tracking Team instructor for FREE informal "dirt-time" lessons in the art of wildlife tracking. All experience levels are welcome. Learn how to identify the tracks and scat of coyotes, bobcats, raccoon, deer and other wildlife in the area! Information at [www.sdtt.org](http://www.sdtt.org). No reservation necessary. Rain cancels. Meet at the Historic Adobe Ranch House on Canyonside Park Drive and Black Mountain Road, Rancho Peñasquitos.

#### Every two months:

##### **Black Mountain Open Space Park Citizens Advisory Committee**

**Thurs. 6:30 p.m. July 10, Sept 11, Nov 13**

Public is welcome to attend this meeting to plan park activities. Meet in the Canyonside Recreation Center at Black Mountain Road and Canyonside Park Driveway, Rancho Peñasquitos.

##### **Peñasquitos Canyon Citizens Advisory Committee**

**Thurs. 6:30 p.m. July 17, Sept. 18, Nov. 20**

Public is welcome to attend this meeting to plan park activities. Meeting is at the Historic Adobe Ranch House on Canyonside Park Driveway and Black Mountain Road, Rancho Peñasquitos.

##### **Friends of Peñasquitos Canyon Board of Directors**

**Tues. 7 p.m. July 1, Sept. 2, Nov 4**

Members are welcome to attend this business meeting to plan Friends' activities. Meeting is at the historic Adobe Ranch House at Black Mountain Road and Canyonside Park Driveway, Rancho Peñasquitos.

#### San Diego Tracking Team:

##### **Wildlife Survey Volunteer Training**

**Sat., 8 a.m.-2 p.m. July 19, Oct 11**

This FREE class prepares you to participate in surveys that monitor the wildlife in major open space preserves and other critical areas. Learn about basic track and scat identification animal gaits, habitat fragmentation, survey transects, data collection protocols, and conservation. At the end of the class, you can sign up to join experienced trackers on some of SDTT's wildlife surveys throughout the San Diego area; please bring calendars to class. Preregistration is requested to reserve your spot. Dress prepared to spend time outdoors and bring a sack lunch and water. More information and preregistration at [www.sdtt.org](http://www.sdtt.org). Email [info@sdtt.org](mailto:info@sdtt.org) or call 760.715.4102 to register. Meet at the Historic Adobe Ranch House on Canyonside Park Driveway and Black Mountain Road, Rancho Peñasquitos.

##### **Beginning Tracker/Naturalist Class**

**Class: Wed. 7-9 p.m. Sept 17, Oct 15**

**Field: Sat. 8 a.m.- 4 p.m., Sept 20**

**Field: Sun. 8 a.m. - 4 p.m., Oct 19**

The Tracker/Naturalist series of classes provides you with information and skills to identify tracks, scat, and other sign from wildlife that inhabit our local nature preserves. Classes involve one weekday evening of classroom instruction and one Saturday in field for "dirt time" instruction.

Beginning class topics include: levels of tracking, the six arts of tracking, sensory awareness, journaling, the process of track identification, common species encountered locally, and introduction to gaits. Cost \$50. Preregistration required. More information at [www.sdtt.org](http://www.sdtt.org). Email [info@www.sdtt.org](mailto:info@www.sdtt.org) or call 760-715-4102 to register. Meet at the Historic Adobe Ranch House on Canyonside Park Driveway and Black Mountain Road, Rancho Peñasquitos

##### **Intermediate Track/Naturalist Class**

**Class: Wed. 7-9 p.m.. Oct 22**

**Field: Sat. 8 am - 4 pm, Nov 15**

The Tracker/Naturalist series of classes provides information and skills to identify tracks, scat, and other sign from wildlife that inhabit our local nature preserves. Classes involve one weekday evening of classroom instruction and one in the field for "dirt time" instruction.

Intermediate class topics include: beyond the track - connecting the track to the animal, speculative tracking,, advanced aspects of track identification, additional species, and track aging. Cost \$50 (\$10 discount for SDTT members). Preregistration required. More information at [www.sdtt.org](http://www.sdtt.org). Email [info@sdtt.org](mailto:info@sdtt.org) or call 760-715-4102 to register.

##### **Advanced Tracker/Naturalist Class**

**Class: Wed. 7pm - 9 pm, Nov 12**

**Field: 8 am - 4 p.m., Dec 6**

The Tracker/Naturalist series of classes provides information and skills to identify tracks, scat, and other sign from wildlife that inhabit our local nature preserves. Classes involve one weekday evening of classroom instruction and one Saturday in the field for "dirt time" instruction.

Advanced class topics include: advanced gait interpretation, additional species, and further study of track-debris-substrate interaction and track aging.

Cost: \$50 (\$10 discount for SDTT members). Pre-registration required. More information at [www.sdtt.org](http://www.sdtt.org). Email [info@sdtt.org](mailto:info@sdtt.org) or call 760-715-4102 to register.

## Hikes & Volunteer Opportunities

### July

#### **Wildlife Night Hike with naturalist Mike Kelly**

**Sat. July 12, 7:30-9:30 p.m.**

A moderately paced walk on flat ground. Do bring insect repellent and a flashlight. Enjoy the Preserve at night, meet Mule Deer (usually), bats, tarantulas, owls, and more. Meet at kiosk on the corner of Park Village Road and Camino del Sur Rd. in Rancho Peñasquitos, 92129.

#### **Trash Pick-up Volunteers**

**Sun. July 20, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.**

Join the Friends, City Parks Rangers and local residents for a major trash cleanup in the eastern end of Lopez Canyon. Even a two-hour shift would be helpful. Scout groups and soon-to-be high school seniors needing community service credits are welcome. Call Mike Kelly at 858-342-8856 for more details or to RSVP. Walk-ins welcome. Meet at the corner of Blythe and Zapata streets in Mira Mesa (92126).

#### **New Moon Night Walk with Will Bowen**

**Sat. July 26, 7:30 - 9:30 p.m.**

We start at dusk and walk out into the canyon as night falls, hoping to encounter deer, owls, bats; sometimes snakes, scorpions, and various beetles. We look for fragrant night-blooming plants; we listen to the quiet of the nature. There are spider webs to admire; and above, the stars, planets, and the constellations invite contemplation. The canyon is a mysterious and wonderful place at night. Please bring a flashlight, water, and insect repellent. Meet at 4206 Sorrento Valley Blvd .

### August

#### **Wildlife Night Hike with naturalist Mike Kelly**

**Sat. August 2, 7:30-9:30 p.m.**

A moderately paced walk on flat ground. Do bring insect repellent and a flashlight. Enjoy the Preserve at night, meet Mule Deer (usually), bats, tarantulas, owls, and more. Meet at the kiosk on the corner of Park Village Road and Camino del Sur Rd. in Rancho Peñasquitos, 92129.

#### **New Moon Night Walk with Will Bowen**

**Sat. August 9, 7:30 - 9:30 p.m.**

We start at dusk and walk out into the canyon as night falls, hoping to encounter deer, owls, bats; sometimes snakes, scorpions, and various beetles. We look for fragrant night-blooming plants; we listen to the quiet of the nature. There are spider webs to admire; and above, the stars, planets, and the constellations invite contemplation. The canyon is a mysterious and wonderful place at night. Please bring a flashlight, water, and insect repellent. Meet at 4206 Sorrento Valley Blvd .

#### **Owl Walk**

**Saturday August 16 7:30 – 9:15 p.m.**

Hoo goes there? Join naturalist Brian Swanson for a relaxing evening exploring the preserve after dark. We will be searching for western screech owls, but along the way are likely to encounter other denizens of the dark. Bats, toads, spiders, snakes or even a skunk might be encountered. Bring a flashlight and insect repellent. Suitable for all ages, but no pets please. Meet at the kiosk near the west end of Canyonside Park Way (corner of ball fields).

#### **Owl Walk**

**Friday, August 22, 7:30 – 9:15 p.m.**

Hoo goes there? Join naturalist Brian Swanson for a relaxing evening exploring the preserve after dark. We will be searching for western screech owls, but along the way are likely to encounter other denizens of the dark. Bats, toads, spiders, snakes and perhaps even a skunk might be encountered. Bring flashlight and insect repellent. Suitable for all ages, but no pets please. Meet at the kiosk near the west end of Canyonside Park Way (corner of ball fields).

### September

#### **New Moon Night Walk with Will Bowen**

**Sat. Sept. 13, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.**

We start at dusk and walk out into the canyon as night falls, hoping to encounter deer, owls, bats; sometimes snakes, scorpions, and various beetles. We look for fragrant night-blooming plants; we listen to the quiet of the nature. There are spider webs to admire; and above, the stars, planets,

and the constellations invite contemplation. The canyon is a mysterious and wonderful place at night. Please bring a flashlight, water, and insect repellent. Meet at 4206 Sorrento Valley Blvd .

#### **Owl Walk**

**Sat., Sept. 13, 7:00– 9:00 p.m.**

Hoo goes there? Join naturalist Brian Swanson for a relaxing evening exploring the preserve after dark. We will be searching for western screech owls, but along the way are likely to encounter other denizens of the dark. Bats, toads, spiders, snakes or even a skunk might be encountered. Bring a flashlight and insect repellent. Suitable for all ages, but no pets please. Meet at the kiosk near the west end of Canyonside Park Way (corner of ball fields).

#### **Wildlife Night Hike with naturalist Mike Kelly**

**Sat. Sept. 20, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.**

A moderately paced walk on flat ground. Do bring insect repellent and a flashlight. Enjoy the Preserve at night, meet Mule Deer (usually), bats, tarantulas, owls, and more. Meet at kiosk on the corner of Park Village Road and Camino del Sur Rd. in Rancho Peñasquitos, 92129.

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## Hike Leaders Needed

Do you have a passion for birds, plants, or animals? Do you find the history of the Preserve fascinating? Do you enjoy sharing your knowledge with others?

Volunteer to be a hike leader for the Friends of Peñasquitos. The Friends are setting up a training program for new hike leaders. We will bring you up to speed on the history of the Preserve, fill in gaps of your knowledge of the flora and fauna of the area, and show you the ins and outs of leading a hike.

The Friends want to offer more hikes in Peñasquitos Canyon and the surrounding open spaces. We need your help to make that happen. If you are interested, or just looking for more information, please contact Mike Kelly at [mkelly1@san.rr.com](mailto:mkelly1@san.rr.com) or 858-342-8856.

## Mountain Lions

Brian Swanson

Mountain lions, also known as pumas and catamounts, are found wherever there is appropriate habitat and food. That means nearly anywhere from desert to mountains, but they especially like a varied habitat including meadows, bushes and trees, such as in Penasquitos Canyon Preserve. Mountain lions are a top predator and an important component of a healthy ecosystem. Generally, their favorite prey is deer; an adult lion will eat about one mule deer every week. Of course, their diet may vary to include coyotes, rabbits, squirrels and other animals that it encounters.

The biggest threat to mountain lions is man. Both as hunters or, increasingly, through our vehicles. While lion hunting is prohibited in California, San Diego regularly loses mountain lions to car accidents. The larger the animal, the larger their territory, so mountain lions roam a lot. Although Penasquitos Canyon connects to approximately 10,000 acres of open space, there are insufficient wildlife corridors, forcing wildlife to cross roads. When wildlife crosses roads, especially multi-lane highways, the animal often is killed. You may recall hearing of the lion that was killed about a year ago near Carmel Mountain Road. One was killed by a car on Valley Center Road several years ago and one that was killed by a car on Highway 79 near Santa Ysabel two years ago.

While the Preserve is surrounded by homes and roadways, it still has occasional visits from mountain lions. They are to be respected, not feared. Typically they hunt at dawn and dusk, preferring ecotones (the edge of habitats, like where a meadow meets the forest or chaparral) for diverse habitat and wildlife. Mountain lions are typically afraid of humans so most of us have never seen one. If you attend the San Diego Tracking Team hikes or training, you can learn to recognize lion tracks and scat or other signs. One of the other ways to know that mountain lions are around is to happen upon a lion kill. It's nice to know that they are still around. Remember, please keep your dog leashed, with the leash in your hand, while in the preserve.

If you are lucky enough to see one of these magnificent animals, please share that information with one of our rangers. Report the date, time of day, location, and what the lion was doing when you encountered it. Should a lion not run away from you, stand tall, look big, shout and yell; do not run away as that may trigger a chase instinct. Promptly report any encounters to the rangers.

## Descendants of Early San Diego

Will Bowen, PhD

Has your family been in San Diego a long time? If so, you might want to try and trace your lineage back in time. Perhaps you are related to one of the first families that settled San Diego in 1769? The best way to find out is to attend one of the Descendants of Early San Diego (DESD) workshops which are currently held three times a year at the State Park-run McCoy House in Old Town. The last one was held Saturday April 6 of this year.

Georgia Callian heads up the DESD workshops. She will help you look through boxes and boxes of old books, reports, and photographs that she brings to the workshop.

"We have this workshop three times a year here at the McCoy House to help people look up their family genealogy. Then on the last Saturday in June, we have a big celebration, called "Descendants Day", where all the descendants of the people of early San Diego get together and socialize."

"One of the things that you see in looking through all the old records is that in early San Diego everyone was related to everyone, because they all intermarried!"

Callian traces her own ancestry to the Machado Family of Rancho Buena Vista and Rancho El Rosarito—which was a large ranch in Mexico. She is also related to Jose Antonio Yorba, who was one of the Catalonian Volunteers that sailed up from Mexico to San Diego to meet up with Father Sierra who walked from Loreto.

"Working on family history is like being a detective. You have to ferret through a lot of materials to find the true picture of the past," says Callian.

Corey Braun, a San Diego city planner, attends the DESD workshops. He is the great, great, great grandson of Bonafacio Lopez. Bonafacio Lopez built an adobe on the side of Presidio Hill and another in Sorrento Valley in the early middle 1800s. He was the father of Ramon Lopez, Sr. who settled in Lopez Canyon and built the old dairy farm there.

"Bonafacio Lopez was the son of Ignacio Lopez, who was born at the Presidio. Ignacio Lopez, in turn, was the son of Juan Francisco Lopez, a Leather Jacket soldier who marched up from Loreto with Father Sierra and Capitan Portola in 1769 to found the city of San Diego," says Braun.

"Juan Francisco Lopez was married to Feliciano Abarallo. They met and married at Mission San Gabriel in 1775 when Abarallo was traveling with Indian fighter and explorer De Anza who was taking settlers up from the presidio in Tubac, Arizona to found a presidio in San Francisco."

Samuel Ames is a retired art professor who has traced his

lineage back to the Ames/Serrano family of Los Coches Rancho and Rancho Aqua Hedondia.

"I come to the workshops to complete my family's history. What you see is that you are part of something much larger than just your family. You are a part of the history of California," noted Ames.

DESD was founded by Corey Braun and Alexa Luberski in 1980. The idea for it actually first arose in 1969 with the 200th anniversary of the city which was celebrated by the founding of Old Town as a California State Park. Twelve years later, in 1980, Luberski invited all early San Diego descendants to come to the opening of the restoration of the Estudillo Adobe in Old Town, which had finally been completed. Such a large and enthusiastic number of people showed up that Luberski and Braun decided to hold a descendants day every year as an annual event. In 1990, Callian became the chair of DESD and in 1991 started the workshop program.

"Our mission as descendants is to try and keep the real history of early California alive," said Callian. "San Diego has lost a sense of its true history. Most people think California began with the Gold Rush or when Anglos first came here. Many think San Diego began with Alonso Horton. But it goes back much farther than that! We had a Spanish colonial period and the period of "The Californios", when we were a part of Mexico."

"We are here to help people find out about their past and their family's past. We can help them trace their genealogy. People can also bring in their old photographs and we will help them identify them. It has been shown that when adults or children know where they came from, they have more of a sense of purpose and a sense of place and a sense of identity," explained Callian.



For further information email Callian at [geo-call1769@gmail.com](mailto:geo-call1769@gmail.com).

*Maria Josepha Lopez Crosthwaite*  
*-wife of Philip Crosthwaite*  
*(who fought at the Battle of San Pascual)*  
*-daughter of Bonafacio Lopez of Sorrento Valley*  
*-sister of Ramon Lopez, Sr. of Lopez Canyon*  
*-sister-in-law to Don Pedro Bovet of Carrol Canyon*

## Cattleman Norwood Brown Remembered

Will Bowen, PhD

Norwood Brown was the last of the cattlemen of Peñasquitos. Brown rented the right to graze his cattle there for over 40 years (1949-1989); first from fellow Penasquitos cattlemen Sawday and Sexton, then developer Irving Kahn, and finally from the city of San Diego. Brown was also instrumental in helping many young people learn to ride a horse. He operated riding stables on his 8 acre spread in Sorrento Valley.

Susie Arter, currently a paleontologist at the San Diego Natural History Museum in Balboa Park was one of Brown's horse riding students. She participated in one of his big roundups that he held twice a year in Penasquitos Canyon. The corral where he herded his round-up cattle is still standing in the west end of the canyon near the El Cuervo adobe ruins.

"I only went once to help Norwood with his roundup. He castrated a male cow at the round p and that was just too much for me to bear, so I didn't go back!" said Arter.

Carrie Allen also learned to ride horses from Brown and helped him on his Penasquitos roundups. "Norwood would yell at everyone on the roundup," she said. "Except the dogs—because they were the only ones that knew what to do!"

Allen said that Brown would go over to Arizona every year to round up wild mustangs and bring them back to be domesticated at his riding stables in Sorrento Valley. This made some people mad that he would mix wild horses with beginning riders.

The photograph included shows Carrie Allen sitting on Brown's lap at Horse Camp in the Cuyamaca Mountains in 1976. Allen has a live snake around her neck. Norwood was notorious for being a big flirt but everyone loved him because he took the time to help young people learn to ride.



(Fire cont.) donut — looked good. But all around not a blade of grass or a shrub remained. What happened?



Two of our three sub-sites were "clean" as we say in restoration work. We had controlled the weeds between the cactus and coastal sage scrub plants,

which left mostly bare ground. There was no flashy fuel plants such as artichoke, wild oats, mustard, and filaree we had eliminated in the sites, but which were 95% of the surrounding grasslands.

A small number of shrubs showed shriveled, but not burned, leaves. In the third sub-site we had not got-



ten to some wild oats in parts of the site. The fire was able to touch down and ignite them, but still there wasn't enough flashy fuel to allow the fire to touch down long enough to warm the adjacent plants up to the ignition point and burn them down. Overall, out of the thousands of plants we put in the ground — many by volunteers — only 20-30 died or were severely damaged. Not bad at all.

We moved on to our first site, on the north side of Luzardi Creek and right next to the aqueduct, on the west side of the latter. Lo and behold, our site wasn't touched by the fire. The fire came out of the east, but on the south side of the creek because the north side, *east of the aqueduct*, was bare, graded ground for future housing. When the fire jumped Camino del Sur and passed west of the aqueduct, it started to burn to the north, towards our site, as well as to the

west and south. But the fire departments had a big presence there, probably both to protect the aqueduct and in the hope of stopping the fire with the big roadway as a fire barrier. The fire didn't get over the creek to our site there, but did cross over to the north of the creek one hill



over to the west! There was modest damage to the lower part of our site when bulldozers doubled the width of the road/trail at the bottom of our site. They also dozed every single-track trail into a roadway. These are fire lines where they hoped to stop the fire. They don't work in big firestorms like these. These will have to be restored to single track size.

Since the day we did the surveys, the Friends have organized volunteers (Mike Kelly, Beth Mather, Lynne Preisser) to water plants put in the ground recently, or those struggling with the drought and fire. We also trimmed back the shrubs that were singed or dried out. This reduces the damaged surface area where evapotranspiration can suck the remaining water out of the plants. Already, some of these trimmed back plants are resprouting from the roots or crowns.



As for the Santa Luz grasslands as a whole, they are following the normal post-fire trajectory. Both native and non-native perennials (see pictures) are vigorously resprouting from underground tubers, crowns, or

roots. Despite the lack of rain, there is enough moisture and carbohydrates (food) in these underground storage units that when they begin to combine with the nutrient rich ash in the soil, the result is strong growth. Most of the shrubs and trees that burned, but not all, will resprout. Just watch.



Besides restoring bulldozed trails, another challenge the Park Ranger staff will face is erosion. With an El Niño rainfall year looming this year the potential for erosion runoff will be high in some areas of the park (and in other burned areas).

One small positive coming out of this fire for us is that it burned off the weeds on next year's restoration site. It burned them at a time the seed was mostly still on the plant or on the surface of the soil where they burned. This will make our restoration easier by reducing the weed load.

Expect a good wildflower shows in some parts of the grasslands as "fire following" plants will proliferate.



Photos by Janet Nelson and Mike Kelly.

## Lusardi Creek Restoration

Arne Johanson

This year's Bernardo fire burned much of the creek valley along Lusardi Creek. Anyone looking at the charred remains could be forgiven for thinking that restoration could be a monumental, impossible task. That is except for a small band of dedicated volunteers that have dealt with this before. They have already restored two similar areas that burned in 2003. So two weeks after the fire they were out on Lusardi Creek already starting to work.

Beth Mather is the lead here, working with senior ranger Ed Christensen and weed expert Mike Kelly. Arne Johanson, Cindy Burrascano, James Rader, and Antonella Zampolli comprise the rest of the team working to clear the creek of Tamarix, Palms, Pampas Grass or Arondo. These weeds resprouted within a week. The fires also cleared the understory giving us access to these weeds.

The approach is simple. We avoid larger patches of remaining habitat that serve as wildlife shelters. We seek out smaller patches of native vegetation in among the weeds. We remove the weeds from around these natives so the natives can flourish and expand. We work only as much area as we can return to in a three week cycle. Eventually the areas type convert back to just native habitat. We can then move on to the next opportunity.

This team is experienced, having done this before. With little more than persistence and patience coupled with knowledge and a systematic approach, two areas are largely done. The native vegetation and wildlife have returned and the invasive species are largely eliminated.

Blue Sky Ecological Reserve in Poway is 790 acres which burned to the ground in 2007. Our restoration efforts began in March 2008. This was a fairly easy project since it was largely native prior to the fire. Our primary effort was to make sure it didn't convert to a non-native weed patch.

Artesian Creek also burned in the 2007 fires. This is some 500 acres of what was little more than abandoned orchards & degraded grazing lands. We began upstream right after the fires. Work at the other end began in mid 2009. What had been largely a weed patch is now, for the most part, weed free. It is now a new native open space park full of life. Small parts still are yet to be restored but many, many more are wonderful habitat.

Along with this volunteer effort, funds will be sought to also hire professionals to speed the recovery. In the mean time the group will continue to nibble away.

## Monardella Hangs On

Mike Kelly, conservation chair

On Saturday, June 28, 2014, Rachele Melious, Cindy Burrascano, and Mike Kelly conducted the annual survey of the Federally and State listed (as Endangered) Willow monardella (*Monardella viminea*) in Lopez Canyon. Based on my digital and hand written records, I find we're finishing our second decade of surveying, weeding, and planting this wonderful sub-shrub. It's a delicate plant with a beautiful flower that has what many describe as a spearmint odor. Appropriate since it's in the mint family.

As we began the day, we first found a number of tiny, stunted plants, easily a quarter of their size from last year — and none were blooming. Typically they bloom in June. Five or six of the plants probably won't make it through another dry, hot summer; the drought is taking its toll. But, as we moved on to other sites we found more robust plants with glorious blooms and some setting seeds. We calmed down and felt more optimistic. Yes, we'll probably lose a couple more of the 50 odd plants surviving in the canyon, but there's hope that with the projected El Niño year coming that some of the plants now in a marginal state will survive.

We have a combination of "naturally occurring" plants and transplants. Lopez Canyon used to have a much bigger, naturally occurring population in the 1960s. As development began in Mira Mesa, much of the storm water flow of central Mira Mesa was concentrated into a system of storm drains that flowed into upper Lopez Canyon at the Montongo Street Detention Basin. Two processes occurred in the 1970s that began to eliminate much of the naturally occurring Monardella population. On the one hand, more water detained by the detention basin at the headwaters of Lopez Canyon meant the habitat converted from a Monardella friendly sparse seasonal channel of relatively low water presence and persistence to a higher level of water presence that promoted a riparian type of habitat that pushed the Monardella out, i.e. a habitat conversion.

Once the increased storm runoff left the detention basin, it began a scouring process, eroding away the topsoil along an almost 2-mile stretch of the canyon. The bottom of the canyon, once covered with habitat with just a narrow stream channel, is now a soil-less bed of cobble. Many acres of habitat have been lost, taking

the Monardella with it. Until 10 years ago, the number of naturally occurring Monardella was about 10. Now we're down to 5 such plants.

Faced with the possible local extirpation of this beautiful plant, the Friends and the California Native Plant Society received grant monies for two projects. One was to build two erosion barriers, called Ajax, to protect two of the sub-populations in the canyon. We built them. One was successful, while the other was destroyed by flood waters. We saved one and lost the second.

The second project was to collect seed and grow plants for planting in the canyon. We did this, putting our first plants in the ground in January, 2005, almost a decade ago! We planted in a variety of locations, trying to find locations not as subject to erosion. The latter was difficult as the erosion was almost entirely across the canyon bottom in places. About 50 of these plants have survived, in addition to the 5 naturally occurring ones. About 10-15% of these are struggling due to the drought, while half are flourishing as the accompanying picture shows. The Friends hope to repeat the replanting process in coming years.





Logical questions to ask are: aren't the plants seeding themselves and can't the erosion be stopped? We've never found seedlings in Lopez Canyon. I have personally surveyed all but one of the County's populations, including the biggest on MCAS Miramar for many years and only once found seedlings. These were on MCAS Miramar, out in Sycamore Canyon. I know of only one other person that has positively found seedlings in the past 20 years! The plants are all producing viable seed, that's been tested and reported, and is not the problem. It readily germinates at high rates. Besides erosion, competition with invasive weeds, especially annuals, which are much more prevalent now than 30 years ago, probably accounts for the lack of seedlings in some places. Some of us think there may be a combination of temperature, amount and spacing of rainfall that only occurs occasionally that is needed for the seed to germinate. There are a number of rare plant species known to only germinate once every 30 years or so. Perhaps we'll have this question answered in our next decade of working with this species.



## Membership Application

Membership category: (circle 1 below)

Senior (62) or Student \$10	Individual \$15
Family \$20	Sponsor \$30 Patron \$100
Corporate \$250	Life \$1000
Contribution \$ _____	

I/We are interested in the following:

- Volunteer to help a committee (call to discuss)
- Hikes
- Indian Culture
- Educational Workshops
- School, Family, Youth Programs
- Environment (Plants, birds, mammals, geology)

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City State Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

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Thank you for your support! Your donation is tax deductible.  
Call **858.484.3219** or **858.342.8856** for more information.

## Friends' Directory

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### Other Members of the Board of Directors

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