

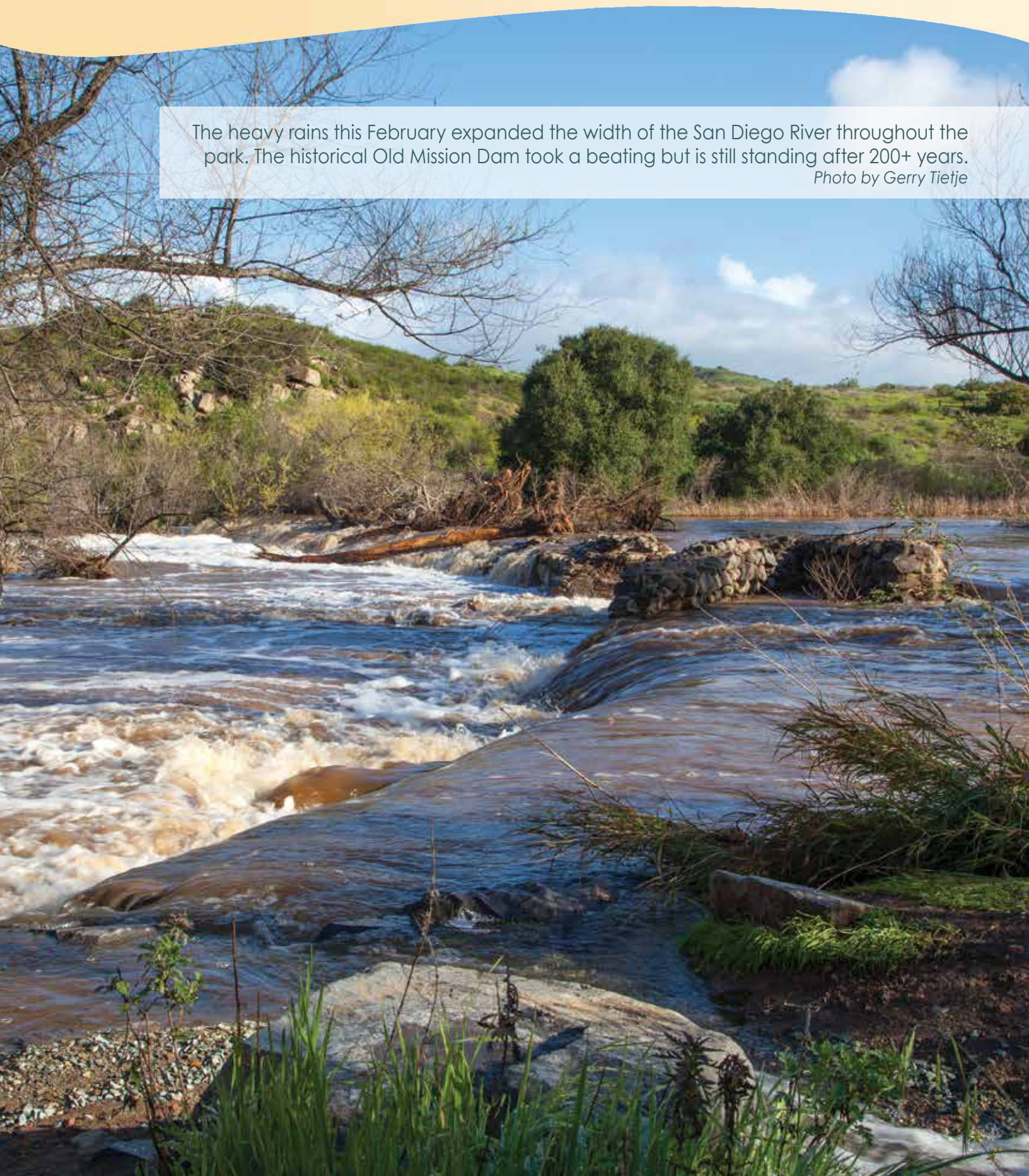


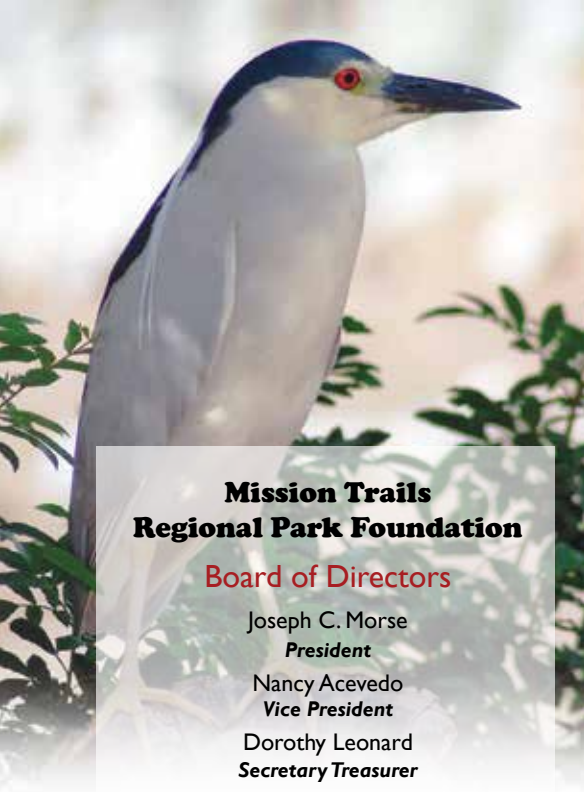
A PUBLICATION OF THE MISSION TRAILS REGIONAL PARK FOUNDATION • VOL 28 • NO 2 • SPRING 2017

Mission Trails Regional Park News

The heavy rains this February expanded the width of the San Diego River throughout the park. The historical Old Mission Dam took a beating but is still standing after 200+ years.

Photo by Gerry Tietje





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A Message from MTRP Foundation Executive Director Jay Wilson



Spring is definitely in the air at Mission Trails. The wildflower bloom was outstanding and the park is still a lush green from all the fall and winter rains. Now is certainly an ideal time to enjoy all the wonders of Mission Trails!

Throughout the year, several Eagle Scout projects are always in progress at Mission Trails. Under the guidance and supervision of Ranger Mel Naidas or Ranger Levi Dean, the Eagle Scout candidate selects a project and undertakes the challenges of all aspects of initiating and completing his project. One such scout was Daniel Cox. Last year he completed his project that was the design, building and installation of a Foot Puncheon Bridge on Beeler Canyon Trail in the new West Sycamore area of Mission Trails, at the east end of Stonebridge Parkway in Scripps Ranch.

One component of his project was to raise the funds required to build the bridge. Daniel recently sent a letter to Ranger Naidas thanking him for helping with his Eagle Scout project and he included a check in the amount of \$98 as a donation to the MTRP Foundation. The \$98 was the funds left over from his project. Soon Daniel is to have a Court of Honor which will officially award him the rank of Eagle Scout. This is quite an honor, as only about 5% of Boy Scouts achieve the rank of Eagle Scout.

Mark your calendar for Saturday, May 20, when Mission Trails will celebrate the 15th annual Explore Mission Trails Day. The theme is "Connecting with Nature," and this year the entire event will be at the East Fortuna Staging Area located at the west end of Mast Blvd. Look for more information about this event in this newsletter and on our website homepage. It is always a fun event with activities for the whole family. Our sponsors, to date, are the City and County of San Diego, Republic Services, Superior Ready Mix and REI.

The opportunity to enter the 25th annual Amateur Photo Contest runs through May 31. This year's contest is sponsored by *San Diego Family Magazine*. There is more information about the contest in this newsletter and on our homepage. You may enter by submitting entries digitally on-line or delivering mounted prints to the Visitor Center. Deadline for all entries is May 31, 2017. Remember, all entries must be photographed in Mission Trails.

There is always an adventure waiting for you at Mission Trails. □

Interested in being a part of the discussions that shape the future of MTRP?

MTRP Task Force and Citizens Advisory Committee meetings are open to the public and meet every other month at the MTRP Visitor Center.

MTRP CAC next meeting: May 2, 2017 at 6:30 PM

MTRP Task Force next meeting: May 18, 2017 at 10 AM

For future dates and agendas visit mtrp.org

Volunteers of the Year for 2016

By Executive Director Jay Wilson

Nearly 100 people attended the 21st Annual Mission Trails Regional Park Volunteer Awards on Saturday evening, February 4th. Following a dinner provided by the MTRP Foundation, Joseph Morse, President of the Foundation, welcomed everyone. He emphasized that the success of MTRP is the result of three entities working hand-in-hand: the City Rangers and Staff, the MTRP Foundation, and specifically the volunteers who donated over 13,000 hours of their time and expertise in 2016.

Senior Ranger Ryan Robertson addressed the volunteers and reiterated how important volunteers are to the success of the park and that our volunteers are the most dedicated in the city.

Councilmember Scott Sherman also addressed the volunteers and reconfirmed how important volunteers are to the park. He stated that as a youngster he used to hike the trails and ride a bicycle all over the area that now is Mission Trails.

2016 Volunteer Awards Presented:

Volunteer of the Year: **Steve Haiman**

Habitat Restoration: **Bob Graham**

Trail Restoration: **Jerry Bierman**

Park Beautification: **Vance Mills**

West Sycamore Crew: **Roy DeRego**

Trail Guide: **Nancy Conyers**

Park Patrol: **Daryel Stager**

Gift Shop: **Mary Wagner**

Visitor Center: **Dianne Hill**

As Executive Director of the MTRP Foundation, I acknowledged the success of the more than 100 free concerts presented over the past six seasons and thanked **Chuck Carter** for coordinating each of the concerts. I also thanked **Carolyn Brakow**, the new Visitor Center Librarian, for her countless hours of coordinating the collection and updating the digital file for the public.

Ranger Julie Aeilts thanked the Kumeyaay Lake Campground Hosts, **John and Debbie Gates** and **Aglie and Marnie Hassler**, for their never-ending service to the campground and the park in general. □

Guests' Memorable Moments



Above and Beyond the 5-Peak Challenge

By Visitor Bridgett Ross

Over Thanksgiving weekend, my 4-year-old son Emmitt and I completed the 5-Peak Challenge. When we finished the challenge, I showed him the list of recommended hikes on the back of the Mission Trails Regional Park map. I asked "what if we did all of these hikes?" He responded, "Yeah! Let's do it."

Every weekend for the next two-and-a-half months, Emmitt and I hiked at least one of the 24 hikes on that list. We saw two deer around sunset on Father Junipero Serra Trail and spotted a lone coyote on our way to Shepherd Pond. Over time, we witnessed the effects of the rain as the hills became greener and water filled the San Diego River.

On February 11, 2017, we waded across the waterfall at the San Diego River Crossing and completed our 24th hike. Emmitt said that his favorite hike was the last because "I got to take off my shoes."

Just three days shy of his 5th birthday, Emmitt had completed all 24 of the recommended hikes, ranging from 1 to 7 miles. I was (and am) so proud of him! To make the day even more special, I had a trophy engraved and asked Ranger Heidi to present it to Emmitt. Thank you for the wonderful memories, Mission Trails! □

Calling All Nature Photographers!

Mission Trails Regional Park's 25th Annual Amateur Photo Contest is on through May 31, 2017



You are encouraged to enjoy the park and pause to take that special picture to be entered into our contest. Take advantage of all the spectacular wildflower blooms and spring growth provided by the winter rains and warming weather. Children 12 and under are encouraged to participate.

This year there are two ways to enter the contest. (1) Deliver mounted photos to the Visitor Center or (2) submit digital photos online. Deadline: May 31, 2017

Reception and awards will be held at the Visitor Center Sunday, June 25, 2017. The photos will be displayed June 17 until July 14. This year's sponsor is San Diego Family Magazine.

More info and entry form at mtrp.org

SAN DIEGO
family

Mission Trails' Spring Animal Birthday Calendar

By Audrey F. Baker, Trail Guide

Catching a glimpse of an animal in its natural habitat is always a memorable and exhilarating experience. At Mission Trails Regional Park, spring months not only renew the landscape, they also generate new populations of wildlife that sustain our rich biodiversity and enliven the park's scenic backdrops. Here's a sampling of springtime animal action.



Our Mule Deer herd will be enhanced with May-June births of 5.5 to 8-pound, lightly spotted fawns. There can be up to 3 per calving doe, and there are often twins! These regal animals rarely vocalize, and fawns only occasionally bleat. Weaning will be completed in time to begin fall consumption of herbs and twiggy shrubs.

Cat-sized, Striped Skunks welcome up to 10 offspring in April and May. Each will carry the familiar black-and-white pattern at birth. Be advised, those musk glands are fully functional at 5-6 weeks. Birthdays for its smaller 1-2 lb. cousin, the seldom-seen Western Spotted Skunk, occur in May and June, and can be delayed until food is plentiful. Pups wean at six and eight weeks respectively, and both species remain as a family unit for many months, foraging together.

Then there's those "year-long" critter reproduction schedules that seem to support the whole food chain. Under ideal habitat conditions, after an 18-19 day gestation period, Botta's Pocket Gopher keeps the production lines running with litters of 6. In San Diego new populations of Pocket Mice arrive throughout the year, with the peak months being March-May. A featherweight at 1½ -3½ oz. and a favorite menu item of owls, the California Vole wisely manages survival rates by curtailing production of its 1-9 offspring in periods of drought.

For many of us, spring triggers an association with rabbit and hare populations. Our Audubon (or Desert) Cottontail has broods of 2-6 newborns throughout the year. Mirroring the same family size, the smaller Brush Rabbit, produces 3 or 4 litters, achieved in January-June.

Those 40-mile-per-hour Black-tailed Jackrabbits can also produce four times a year. From January-August, baby jacks (leverets) are born wide-eyed and fully furred. Just hours after birth, they are ready to run. They'll nurse for a mere 2-3 days and are "range ready" in 14-21 days!

Rabbits, hares, and rodents beware! Though usually 3, April/May brings litters of up to 7 agile, stealthy Bobcat kittens. Ranging throughout the Chaparral and preferring Riparian areas, young bobs can sustain themselves at the tender age of three-to-five months. Mom bobcat lessons include "good cat manners" – bury your scat.



MTRP's wild canines are always ready to assist in maintaining the balance of nature. Both the coyote and his smaller cousin, the Common Gray Fox, have April births. Coyote dens serve litters of 3-10, while the fox provides for 1-7 new arrivals. Grasslands and open landscapes are Coyote's hunting grounds, while areas flush with trees and ground cover compliment the life-style of the Gray Fox.

At 3 weeks, young coyotes are introduced to their hunting grounds, while young foxes have a longer in-den nurturing period. Fox hunting skills are honed by 4 months and include lessons in tree climbing.

It's all part of the rhythm of life in nature. We invite you to view from the trail any animal encounters, large or small, keeping a safe and respectful distance from wildlife. □

Helping Nesting Birds since 2001

Paraphrased from the Nest Box Monitor's Handbook, history written by Daniece Moden, Co-Coordinator

The Nest Box Project was started at Mission Trails Regional Park in 2001 by volunteer Gordon Patty. Gordon wrote a proposal for a Nest Box Project in the Park, presented it to the Rangers, and it was approved. He then set out to locate and inspect the existing boxes, repair them and build new ones. He recruited Richard Griebe to build new boxes and organized a group of monitors to check them and record the number of fledglings for each box. His goals for this project was three-fold: to furnish information to the public on birds and bats in Mission Trails Regional Park; to expand bird and bat populations in the park and elsewhere; and to inform the public about the life cycles of birds and bats and their importance in the scheme of nature. Today, Richard Griebe and Wendy Esterly are Co-Coordinators of the Nest Box Project.

The species of birds that typically use the small bird nest boxes in the Park are House Wrens, Bewick's Wrens, Ash-throated Flycatchers, Western Bluebirds and Tree Swallows. We've also had Wood Ducks and Barn Owls use the boxes that are made to accommodate them. American Kestrels have not used the kestrel nest boxes and, so far, we haven't had any bats use the bat nest boxes.

Historical data reports that some nest boxes may not be used while others may have more than one clutch in a nesting season. Occasionally different species compete for the same nest box and monitors find two or more nests on top of each other at the end of the season. Beginning in 2001, with 45 boxes, it was reported that 88 birds fledged. In 2016, with 110 boxes, it was reported that 140 birds fledged. Typically, one-third to one-half of the boxes successfully fledge young. We believe that the decrease in the number of fledglings between 2012 and 2015 was due to the drought.



This season (2017), there are sixteen volunteers monitoring twelve areas in the Park. Nest box monitoring begins at the end of February and continues through June, with monitors checking their boxes weekly. One such volunteer's report is stated here at the right. □



Knock, Knock, Who's there?

By MTRP Volunteer Ann Sixtus

Every year in spring, I look forward to nesting season here in MTRP. I am one of the volunteer monitors who check the nest boxes to see who's in the family way among the birds in the park.

On March 15th, I found that six of the nine boxes on my route were still empty. Two boxes had sticks stacked up to the opening, which indicated male house wrens were trying to attract a female to the box.

I was happy to see one box had a house wren nest with one speckled, off-white egg. The female lays one egg per day until she has six or seven. Then she starts incubating them so they all hatch at the same time. It takes 16-17 days after hatching for the house wren hatchlings to fledge (fly off on their own). It's fun to see them growing every week and I'm always happy when "my birds" are ready for the big adventure. □

It's Spring. Here Come the Babies!

By Gift Shop Manager Patty O'Reilly

Our winter rains actually came this year and now the wildflowers have returned to the desert, and all our hillsides are green and vibrant. As Mother Nature brings her bounty of new growth so, too, new life returns to the animal world with the birth of new babies of all kinds. For us at Mission Trails Regional Park Gift Shop, that means PUPPETS, lots and lots of puppets!

Puppets are not only cuddly and soft, they are great fun to play with and give children the opportunity to express themselves through creative play. They are also educational and can provide a link to research on various animals and their lives and habitats.

To celebrate the arrival of spring, we now have dozens and dozens of new finger puppets in stock. Baby birds aplenty, Monarch butterflies, chipmunks, brilliantly colored hummingbirds, and little brown mice. We even have the mysterious-looking praying mantis, as well as others a bit less scary. Stop by the gift shop and add to your collection. □



Take a Closer Look - Father Junipero Serra Trail's Secrets

By MTRP Volunteer Trail Guide Daryel Stager

Leaving Snake Head Rock, one secret discussed in the last newsletter, we venture down Father Junipero Serra Trail (FJST) toward Old Mission Dam. Nine-tenths of a mile from the Visitor Center, hardly noticed by the vast multitude of MTRP visitors that walk the FJST regularly, is "The Horse Coffin," a landmark which is as much a part of Mission Trails as the Grinding Rocks and the Old Mission Dam itself. This relic of the past rests under a Coast Live Oak and is a mere 15 feet off FJST on the left-hand side.

Once believed to be a grave, this rectangular stone and concrete platform is 10 feet long and 4 feet wide. Decorating the top of "the coffin" are brass shell casings pushed into the cement in the shape of a horseshoe. Dates stamped on the bottom of the shell casings range for 1926 to 1930, but are somewhat difficult to read.



This mysterious landmark's secret was revealed to us by MTRP Trail Guide and local historian Bill White. Bill explained that the "coffin" was actually designed and built by an elderly cowboy, named Bill Aikens, who frequently used this portion of MTRP back in the 1930's for target practice. His shooting bench (aka" The Coffin") was simply used to lay out his firearms, ammunition and other shooting supplies for the day's leisurely activity.

So as you pass through the gorge on your next visit to Mission Trails, see if you can spy new secrets by really looking at your surroundings. □

Sharing the Trail with the Most Deadly Animal on Earth

By MTRP Ranger Julie Aeilts

Aside from the fact that mosquitos transmits diseases like dengue fever, malaria, West Nile Virus and cause the deaths of millions of people annually, these blood-suckers are also downright annoying. If a female mosquito is successful in her dining endeavors, with a single bite, she can provide enough nutrients to develop hundreds of eggs. A mosquito will enjoy two to three bloody meals in her approximately two-week-long lifespan.

There are ways to reduce one's chances of becoming a mosquito's main course out on the trail. The most obvious being to minimize exposed skin and prevent a bite altogether. Some outdoor apparel is manufactured and sold already coated with an insect repellent called Permethrin, though spray bottles of the chemical can also be purchased and applied to clothing as needed. Insect repellents containing DEET and Picaridin are very effective but can cause irritation to the skin, so apply sparingly. For a more natural, chemical-free alternative, the oil of lemon eucalyptus, aka citronella, is an adequate repellent.

In the park, stagnant bodies of water are unavoidable. To counter this, the County of San Diego has implemented the Vector Control Program to monitor and decrease mosquito populations. Once a month during the insects' peak breeding season, a helicopter strategically drops batches of larvicide into 48 San Diego waterways, including the neighboring Santee Lakes and MTRP's own Kumeyaay Lake. The pesticide is not a threat to human or animal life, and only affects mosquitoes in the larval stage. Mosquito populations in San Diego County have decreased. With a little preparedness, recreationists can still enjoy a hike or ride through the spring glory of Mission Trails, without playing host to a mosquito's near-insatiable appetite. □



Notable Donations January 1 - March 31, 2017

Sponsor - \$10,000 - \$24,999

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Steward - \$5000 - \$9,999

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Become a Friend of Mission Trails Regional Park

Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation provides opportunities for individuals, businesses, community organizations, and foundations to support a variety of programs and projects within the park. Community support is important to ensure adequate funding to maintain the award-winning Mission Trails Regional Park Visitor and Interpretive Center and the multiple amenities the park has to offer.

Special event and project sponsorships are also available. Bench and table sponsorships range from \$1,500 to \$4,000, depending on the item and its location in the park. Contact Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation at 619-668-3280 or mholloway@mtrp.org for additional information.

Our Funds...

- Friends of Mission Trails
- Trail Maintenance
- Tree and Habitat Maintenance
- Education Programs
- Library Books and Supplies
- Lake Murray
- Endowment Funds
 - General
 - Library

Other ways you may donate....

- Memorial or In Honor Of Gifts
- Matching Funds
- Gifts of Securities
- Remember MTRP Foundation in your will
- Charitable Remainder Trusts
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- \$25 Individual
- \$50 Family
- \$100 Pathfinder
- \$500 Trailblazer
- \$1,000 Founder
- \$2,500 Patron
- \$5,000 Steward
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- \$25,000 Benefactor's Circle
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Names of contributors of \$1,000 or more will be displayed on the donor board at the Visitor and Interpretive Center. Yearly donations are accumulated from year-to-year for donor recognition purposes.

Name _____

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You may designate your donation for one or more of the following funds. Please indicate the amount.

\$ _____ Friends of Mission Trails - General support for all MTRP programs and projects.

_____ MTRP Foundation Endowment Fund - Earnings used for programs and projects

Special Funds

_____ Education Program Fund - Funds used for education programs

_____ Library Fund - Books and supplies for the library

_____ Library Endowment Fund - Earnings used for library books and supplies

_____ Trail Maintenance - Trail maintenance and improvement projects.

_____ Tree and Habitat Maintenance - To help maintain the park's habitat

_____ Lake Murray - Special projects at Lake Murray

\$ _____ **Total Donation**

Make check payable to MTRP Foundation and mail to:

Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation, One Father Junipero Serra Trail, San Diego, CA 92119-1008

To donate securely online, visit our website at mtrp.org

or charge my donation to VISA _____ MC _____

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Visitor and Interpretive Center

619-668-3281

MTRP Foundation: 619-668-3280

Email: mtrp@mtrp.org

Web Site: mtrp.org

Mission Trails Regional Park News

Vol. 28, Number 2, Spring 2017

Mission Trails Regional Park News is funded in part by the City of San Diego Special Promotional Program.

Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation, Inc., established Jan. 1988, is a non-profit public benefit corporation organized for the purpose of preserving, improving and maintaining Mission Trails Regional Park.

Mission Trails Regional Park News is a publication of the Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation, Inc.

Maggie Holloway, Editor

Special thanks to our volunteer photographers Nancy Varga, Wendy Esterly, George Varga, Gerry Tietje, and David Cooksy.



Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation

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Offered every month. No reservations. Check website, mtrp.org, for upcoming dates and more information.

Guided Walks in the Park

Nature Workshops at Visitor Center

Mountain Biking with a Ranger Series

Astronomy at Kumeyaay Campground Day Use Lot & West Sycamore

Music & Art at Visitor Center

More Free Family Fun:

Explore Mission Trails Day

Saturday May 20, 9AM-2PM

East Fortuna Staging Area at Mast Blvd. & SR52

- Hands-On Discovery Stations
- Mini Mountain Bike Track
- Guided Family Nature Walks
- Climbing Wall
- Famous Pony Rides
(last pony ride at 12:30PM)

Presented by the City of San Diego Park & Rec. Dept. & Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation

