



the griffith reporter

the newsletter of friends of griffith park/spring 2018



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The lawsuit filed against the City by Friends of Griffith Park to reopen the Beachwood Gate was heard on March 22. Our attorneys argued that the City Charter establishes the Board of Recreation and Park Commissioners as head of the Department of Recreation and Parks. The decision to close the gate at Beachwood should have gone to the Board where there would have been an opportunity for public comment on the decision. Unfortunately Judge Chalfant interpreted the Charter differently. In denying our petition, he ruled that the decision to close the gate was an operational one and that the General Manager makes operational decisions. Friends argued that since the gate has been closed for a year, which seems to be permanent, it was a policy decision not an operational one.

Given the importance of the adverse ruling by the judge and the importance of preserving the role of the Board of Commissioners to oversee Rec and Parks, FoGP is appealing the decision of Judge Chalfant. Our focus has not been entirely on legal matters; we are actively working on planting more trees, repairing the Fern Dell Bridge, and restoring water to Fern Dell creek, but public access to public parks is too important an issue to ignore.

In response to Councilmember Ryu's Comprehensive Strategies Report (*see p. 3*), we continue to push for the adoption of the Alternative Access Plan. This simple plan would satisfy both requirements in Judge Feffer's ruling in the Sunset Ranch lawsuit.

Meanwhile Friends has accomplished much in Griffith Park. Last year we paid for the removal of an abandoned water tank and challenged Rec and Parks to remove the others. This spring they followed through and removed three tanks. The fourth tank, which is not as accessible, is in progress. Five huge graffiti magnets and public safety hazards will finally be removed from the Park. Hurray!

The long-awaited repair of the Fern Dell pedestrian bridge is on the horizon. Friends paid for the preservation studies, engineering, and drawings for the bridge that will not only allow visitors to walk over the bridge (instead of in the narrow road) but will also bring back many of the historical elements of the beautiful bridge that had been lost during previous repairs. Friends is supplementing Rec and Parks funds to implement construction by this summer.

Our fantastic volunteers continue to do numerous projects in the Park. (*see p. 4*) Working with such groups as Immaculate Heart High School and local Scout troops, we are planting, mulching, and watering more trees to compensate for the loss of trees due to the drought. Friends donated \$10,000 to Rec and Parks to purchase native trees.

Friends' scientific studies continue to develop comprehensive research of the Park's rich flora and fauna. Last year's Raptor Nesting Study was such a success that participation has doubled this year. (*see p. 6*) Many results of the scientific studies and surveys are available on our website.

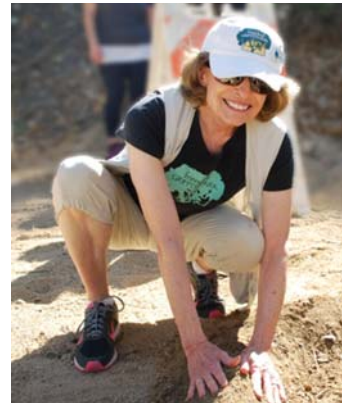
Another goal of FoGP is education. We continue to help people understand the hazards of using rodenticides (*see p. 10*) and support legislation to ban these poisons.

We are expanding our outreach to the Sierra Club's Inspiring Connections Outdoors program which brings inner-city school children into the park. Our members who hiked with Jorge Ochoa learned how Mother Nature repairs fire damage. (*see p. 5*) This summer we will again host three interesting talks on the Park at the Los Feliz Library.

We hope you will join us.

Marian Dodge

~Marian Dodge



on the cover: An NPS biologist recently set a motion-triggered camera on one of P-22's deer kills in Griffith Park. While P-22 didn't return, it was interesting to see which critters showed up to feed on his leftovers.

FoGP's 2018 Summer Lectures

Mark your calendars! These lectures take place at the Los Feliz Branch Library at 6:45 pm, and offer history, horticulture, nature and more. Expand your mind, learn something and meet new friends. No reservations are necessary. See you there!

1

June 14 "The 2007 Griffith Park Fire – Then and Now"

Jorge Ochoa, Chair, Horticulture Department at Long Beach City College and former LA Rec and Parks employee, presents an overview of the major fire that engulfed 817 acres in the Park in 2007. While signs of that devastating fire are still visible today, Ochoa describes how nature is rebounding in the Park.

2

July 19 "Los Angeles' First Residents"

FoGP boardmembers Richard Stanley and Brenda Rees discuss what anthropologists and historians know about the first humans who lived in the Los Angeles area. They'll outline how local native cultures originated, where they settled and how they interacted with the landscape as well as what happened when Europeans arrived.

August 16 "Raptors in Griffith Park and LA"

Biologist and Raptor Survey Coordinator Courtney McCammon gives a wrap-up of FoGP's second Raptor Survey sharing insights from this community science project that includes not just Griffith Park, but much of the greater Los Angeles region.

3

SAVE THE DATE!

**P-22 Day
on Sat.
Oct. 27th**

Hope to see y'all at my special event! Bring the whole family and stay for the festivities.
friendsofgriffithpark.org



The Dixon Report and its Implications for Griffith Park

~Carol Henning

Driving to the Griffith Park Advisory Board (GPAB) meeting on March 8, I remembered that, whenever an issue involving the park arises, the last “stakeholders” to be considered are the plants and animals that live in Griffith Park. They are often forgotten, and that seems largely to be the case with the Dixon Resources Unlimited’s “Comprehensive Strategies Report on Improving Access, Safety and Mobility Around Griffith Park and the Hollywood Sign.”

L.A. City Councilmember David Ryu commissioned the 64-page report that cost \$120,000, and primarily addresses the growing number of visitors, 48.3 million last year, who flock to L.A. each year. City officials and business want to lure 50 million tourists hither by 2020.

The Dixon Report was created after two meetings with community “stakeholders.” These included the Beachwood Canyon Neighborhood Association, Friends of Griffith Park, Hollywood Chamber of Commerce, Hollywood Hills West Neighborhood Council, Hollywood Knolls Community Club, Hollywood Sign Trust, Hollywood United Neighborhood Council, Hollywoodland Homeowners Association, Lake Hollywood Homeowners Association, Los Feliz Improvement Association, Los Feliz Neighborhood Council, The Oaks Homeowners Association and the Griffith Park Advisory Board. I was disappointed that the Sierra Club was not invited to participate.

The report contains 29 suggestions for improving access to Griffith Park trailheads, facilitating emergency vehicle access, expanding transit options, enhancing pedestrian safety, hastening traffic flow, increasing parking efficiency and compliance and proactively managing visitors to the park and Hollywood Sign.

As Friends of Griffith Park points out: “One of the most important ideas proposed is a small electric shuttle to take visitors from the Metro stations in Hollywood up Beachwood Canyon through the gate to the Hollyridge Trail. This proposal could be implemented relatively quickly and would reduce the number of vehicles significantly by providing easy public transit. From the trailhead, visitors would have a very short, safe hike on a wide trail to the park’s premier vista for Hollywood Sign viewing.”

Other suggestions – a sidewalk along Canyon Drive leading toward Bronson Gate, speed humps in certain areas, striping on crosswalks, painting “SLOW” on roadways, walkability signage, extending DASH lines or shuttle routes to and from congested areas – seem worthy of serious consideration.

Implementing the Beachwood Alternative Access Trail Plan proposed by GPAB and other stakeholder groups would permit hikers to bypass the existing gate to Sunset Ranch, now closed to pedestrians, and access the Hollyridge Trail via a new, nearby gate. The Dixon report claims that creating an alternative trail would re-

quire “a significant amount of engineering and construction work and would require environmental review to ensure compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).”

Dixon’s Strategy #3 is to “supplement the Griffith Park circulation system with an aerial tram.” Like the undead, this idea rises from its grave at least once every decade.

GPAB member Lucinda Phillips wondered why the Dixon report did not include locations in Hollywood for sign viewing. Certainly the roof or the top floor of one of the high-rise hotels or office buildings could offer a Hollywood Sign viewing area where, for a small fee, selfies could be taken without the photographers having to hike, find parking, block traffic, search in vain for a porta-potty or get hit by a car.

Many residents of Beachwood Canyon and other Hollywood Hills communities told of the problems brought to their neighborhoods by sign-seeking tourists. The residents admonished the city and the Dixon report for placing emphasis on the promotion of tourism and valuing the convenience of tourists over the safety and comfort of local residents.

Some speakers advocated re-opening Mount Hollywood Drive to private vehicular traffic. This was attempted not all that long ago and resulted in a combination parking lot, traffic jam, trash dump and Hollywood Sign customer service center. Over 800 cars per hour were clocked at peak evening hours. Roads used by motor vehicles cause habitat fragmentation and result in animals becoming road kill.

L.A. City Council District 4 has attempted to make consideration of the Dixon report a truly public process. Why does it seem necessary constantly to reiterate the fact that the park is a public trust that should be preserved and protected for the people of Los Angeles and for the wildlife and plants that call the park home?

Carol Henning has served on the Verdugo Hills Executive Committee since 2004 as the Chapter Ex Comm representative. She writes articles for the Verdugo View and the Southern Sierran and has held various positions on the Griffith Park Task Force, the Political Committee, Griffith Park Section, Chapter Foundation and participated on the Verdugo Hills Conservation Round Table. She leads historical walks for the Chapter too. Conservation campaigns she has worked on include the opposition of Toyon-2, another trash dump slated for Griffith Park, and a housing plan called Oakmont 5 in the Verdugo Hills.

(This is an abridged version of the article originally published in the Spring issue of the Griffith Park Guardian, the Sierra Club Los Angeles Chapter newsletter. To see the article in its entirety, visit our website friendsofgriffithpark.org.)



On a recent ICO hike, Felix enthralled a couple of kids with his extensive knowledge of Griffith Park. To date, he's introduced nearly 3,000 youngsters to the benefits of recreating in the Park.

Felix Martinez, a founding FoGP board member, currently leads local elementary students on nature walks in Griffith Park. A Navy vet and retiree from L.A. Department of Public Works, Felix has been a longtime Sierra Club hike leader, reining in as many as 80 hikers on evening hikes throughout the Park. As an ICO hike leader, Felix has, since 2011, led 2,850 school children on hikes on 80 different outings in the Park.

Since turning 80 years old, Felix prefers daytime hikes and, when he's not introducing first and second graders to the charms of Fern Canyon or Fern Dell, he continues trekking on familiar Park trails.

Felix shares one of his many favorite hikes in the Park: Mt. Hollywood at dusk

A favorite of mine is an evening hike and if you go just before sundown, you'll see the sunset from Mt. Hollywood with an almost 360-degree view of Los Angeles all the way to the ocean to the west and Burbank, Glendale and the Verdugo Mountains to the north. After sunset, all the lights from these cities come on and every one should experience the unique panorama that takes place every night.

The shortest, fastest way to get to Mt. Hollywood is park at the Griffith Observatory (or take the DASH bus) and find the beginning of the Charlie Turner trail from the parking lot. As you head north, you'll go over the top of the Vermont Tunnel; only one mile up you're at 1,620 feet elevation with inspiring views.

Another way to get to Mt. Hollywood is to start at the Griffith Park Merry-go-Round. On this side of the Park, there is free parking and no congestion as you'll find at the Observatory – but it is a longer hike.

The trail is Fern Canyon Trail, a fire road that leads to 5 Points (juncture of five trails) from there you go toward the paved road (Vista del Valle) and walk past Vista View Point (helicopter pad) and walk to the bridge, which is the beginning of Razor Back Ridge. The Hogback Trail ends at Dante's View Garden; 100 yards further up you are at Mt. Hollywood which is the spot that Mr. Griffith originally selected to build the Observatory, but that is another story.

This alternative hike to Mt. Hollywood is three times longer and harder than the one from the Observatory where you can be there in 45 minutes – of course, that's depending on your conditioning, which is everything when it comes to hiking.

Volunteer Spotlight Ross Arnold

If you recently volunteered at a FoGP's tree planting or mulching, weeding and/or maintenance events, chances are you've met Ross Arnold, FoGP's new assistant volunteer coordinator. Ross started helping volunteer coordinator Laura Howe this year, but he has hit the ground running and has proven invaluable working with Friends of Griffith Park, high schools, other volunteer groups and Recreation and Parks!

"We needed more help coordinating with schools and larger groups interested in volunteering," explains Laura. "Ross has helped tremendously in growing our volunteer program through his commitment and organization."

Ross was instrumental in organizing Marshall High students for various plantings at the Bird Sanctuary and at Captain's Roost. During the summer, these students will be watering plants in Fern Canyon.

Ross also helped coordinate with the Zoo Magnet School which had two tree mulching days in Park Center and Crystal Springs where they also planted trees. Additionally, Ross invited Immaculate Heart students to help weed and water in Fern Dell and Cedar Grove; Immaculate Heart students and staff also got their hands dirty at a recent tree planting in Cedar Grove.

Scout Troop 10 from the Wilshire area has also helped with mulching and watering in Fern Dell and they will be watering these trees throughout the summer.

Ross is happy to be giving back to Griffith Park through his volunteer efforts. As a L.A. native, his first exposure to the outdoors was as a young boy hiking with friends on the trails of Griffith Park; he's been hiking these trails for almost 60 years.

Fire Recovery Hike with Jorge Ochoa ~Gerry Hans

Thirty members of Friends of Griffith Park were treated to an enlightening morning on April 15 in the Fern Canyon area of the Park when, Jorge Ochoa, head of Long Beach City College Horticultural Department, led us on a fascinating walk. Jorge is passionate about the flora in the Park, and his enthusiasm is contagious.

The three-mile hike featured over a dozen “learning lessons” along the trail, stops to comment on how nature is recovering from the May 2007 fire. Jorge shared several photographs which were taken immediately post-fire to illustrate how the habitat has and is reviving over the past 11 years. Bonus: the hike was perfectly timed to view a fine display of blooming spring flowers.

The brush fire broke out on May 8, 2007 and consumed over 800 acres of park land. Chaparral and shrub plants were devastated and native oaks and sycamores suffered severe damage. However, the following year an abundance of “fire-following” wildflowers covered the burn zone. Laurel sumac and ceanothus led the way in re-sprouting to fill the void at the chaparral level.

After the initial panic and overreaction by the media in 2007, the Department of Recreation and Parks met with the Bureau of Engineering staff and other agency representatives to develop a Fire Recovery Plan. They assembled a team of technical experts to advise Rec and Parks how to move forward with erosion mitigation and burn area restoration.

Calls for seeding and massive re-plantings after the fire came from the public who love the Park; however, experts wisely decided the best plan was to allow nature to recover on its own. In areas where the soil experienced very high burn severity, the fire may have killed many seeds and nutrients in the soil which could delay regeneration of plants. But seeding would have introduced damaging competition to native plants. Re-plantings were also deemed unnecessary with the exception of various “folk” gardens, such as Dante’s View and Amir’s Garden.

Just ahead of the rainy season that fall, hydro-mulching over burn areas helped reduce vulnerability to erosion. A slurry of a sticky wood-fiber material was applied from helicopters, a short-term measure to prevent runoff and to increase absorption. As it turned out, we had a very dry winter.

The biggest take-away from Jorge: “Mother Nature does a fine job on her own. The best we can do is leave her alone, and not interfere.” After spending a few hours with Jorge and witnessing the recovery with our own eyes, we know this to be true.

**DON'T FORGET
SAVE THE DATE**

Thurs., June 14
Jorge's lecture on the
Griffith Park Fire Recovery
at the Los Feliz Library
friendsofgriffithpark.org



His love of the outdoors led him to the Boy Scouts where he has been a member for 55 years. He earned his Eagle Scout Award in 1968 and has been a Scoutmaster, Cub Master and District Chair. He currently is a member of the Board of Directors of Greater Los Angeles Area Council.

A classroom teacher, school administrator for LAUSD and GUSD and a former administrator for the L.A. County Office of Education, Ross is currently an adjunct professor at Cal State Long Beach teaching in the School of Education.

Thank you Ross for all that you do! You truly are a friend of Griffith Park!

The community profits when everyone is willing to pitch in on various projects in the Park. Some of the recent activities included Griffith Park Magnet School students, and inset photo: volunteers at the Cedar Grove planting.

Celebrating 2018 as the Year of the Bird

Audubon has deemed that **2018 be known as the Year of the Bird** in honor of the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), which has saved thousands of birds for over a century.

This year, Audubon has teamed up with *National Geographic*, BirdLife International and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to celebrate, educate and advocate for birds with special events, screenings and activities.

Friends of Griffith Park will continue to celebrate and advocate for all birds – migratory and resident, songbirds and raptors – not only in the Park, but across Los Angeles, California and the world. Birds matter and we welcome what our feathered friends can give us.



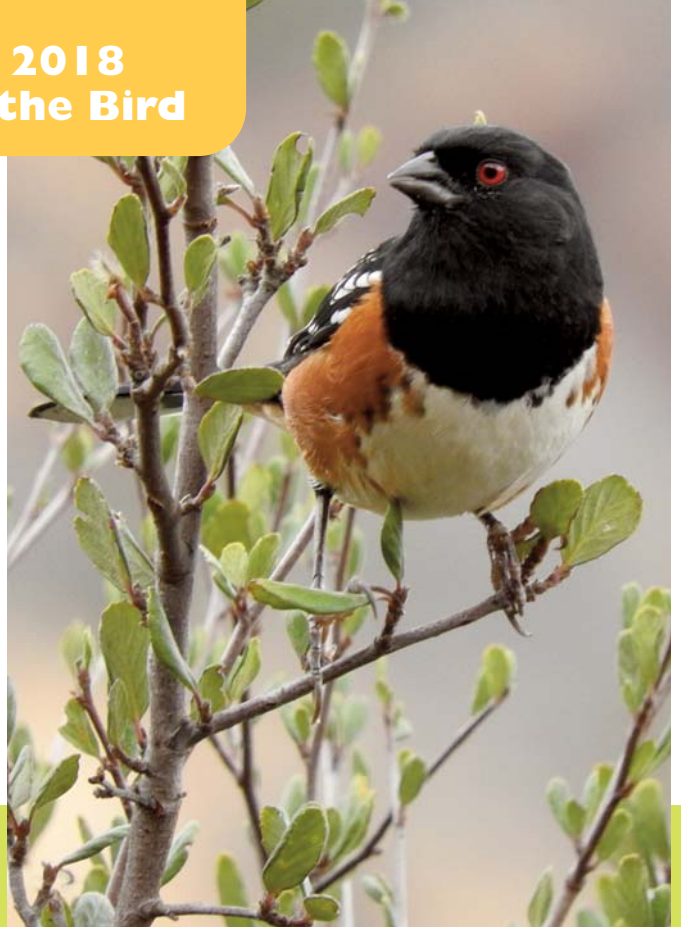
Birding Basics

~Courtney McCammon, biologist

The best part about birding is that it can be done anywhere, in the most urban part of Los Angeles or in the most secluded park in California. It's a great way to get people into nature, even in their own backyards. Birding can be a fun and interactive activity for people of all ages because of the versatility of it. Beginners can learn a lot using binoculars for the first time while more advanced birders learn about bird behavior and patterns. No matter your age or skill level, these tips can help you achieve your birding goals:



- **RECOGNIZE BIRD BEHAVIOR:** A vital part of birding and bird surveys is understanding bird behavior. Looking for signs of feeding, courting, nesting and distress will help in your birding. Watching an adult bird return to one tree or bush several times with food reveals that there is a nest with chicks. Birds will show the observer the story when you pay attention.
- **LOOK AND LISTEN:** Many people think that birding is strictly using our eyes but often we can get the same, if not better information, when we listen to the birds around us. Loud crows could lead you to a perched hawk or owl that you may have otherwise not seen.
- **BE PATIENT:** Wildlife will seldom do what you want it to do. However, having patience when birding will help you to key into your surroundings and notice more activity than if you rushed through the activity.
- **ATTEND A LOCAL BIRD EVENT:** A great way to get more information about birds in your area is to attend a local event. Friends of Griffith Park hold many great, educational birding events throughout the year with local experts.
- **PICK UP A LOCAL GUIDE:** Think of this as a cheat sheet. Parks usually have the most common local bird species listed in a free guide that can help to narrow down species you'll see when you're out birding. Friends has one for Griffith Park on their website.



Griffith Park Raptor Survey Takes Flight!

~Gerry Hans

In its second year running, the Friends-funded Griffith Park Raptor Survey has grown beyond all expectations. When volunteers become engaged as community scientists, the army of eyes and ears becomes limitless – along with an expanding geographic coverage. The survey started last year with a focus on Griffith Park and the immediate surrounding areas. Now, the raptor nesting survey has reached outward to Debs Park, Elysian Park, Silver Lake, Echo Park, Hollywood, the Valley and more communities!

In two training workshops conducted this past January and

February, about 100 volunteers learned about our local raptor species and were trained on the protocols for participating in the survey. Now, the spreadsheet of nest locations is over 170. Not all nests are active, but they stay on the spreadsheet because they may become active again in the future.

Volunteers are assigned known nests and also help find new ones. They record and report data during the nesting stages for their assigned nests. Rearing behavior stages include: nest building, incu-



bating, chick feeding (counting them, too), branching and fledging. Periodic visitations, binoculars and a bit of Mother Nature curiosity are the main requirements of our volunteers.

As of this writing for the 2018 season, volunteers are observing active nests of these species: 40 red-tailed hawks, 6 red-shouldered hawks, 25 Cooper's hawks, and 7 great-horned owls.

Friends' scientific advisor Dan Cooper of Cooper Ecological Monitoring and Courtney McCammon are lead biologists for the nesting survey. Both bring extraordinary birding experience to the table, along with love and enthusiasm for Griffith Park.

During the training sessions earlier in the year, many interesting questions were asked about our raptor species' place and trends in our urban environment. Most were unanswered. Do some species prefer non-native trees over native? How are the increased num-

bers of ravens affecting raptors? What species has the highest chick mortality? How often does one species take over the nest of another the following year? With eager community scientists reporting to the database, we are learning more.

Dan and Courtney will present the 2018 Raptor Survey final results and findings at the Los Feliz Branch Library on August 16. Please check our website for more details.



Bird LA Day in Fern Dell

An overcast, drizzly day greeted early morning birders coming into Fern Dell for the annual Bird LA Day hike. As we waited for others to arrive, leader Don White took us behind Trails Café to check out a few birds high on the wire, pointing out sounds emanating from tree tops in the area. It turned into a fine day for birdwatching as juncos, spotted towhees, California thrashers, phainopepla, wrentits, oak titmouses, a couple of Cooper's hawks, Allen and Anna hummingbirds, scrub jays, mockingbirds, band-tailed pigeons and Nuttall and acorn woodpeckers could be seen and heard swooping high in the branches, or searching for bugs down on the ground.



The Los Angeles Breakfast Club

A 93-year Testimony to the Endurance of Friendship and Fun

~Mary Proteau

The Los Angeles Breakfast Club (LABC) is one of the city's – and Griffith Park's – most enduring hidden treasures. “The Shrine of Friendship, the Temple of Sentiment and Idealism, where real people meet to get better acquainted and start the day off right” is celebrating its unbroken 93-year-old history. After years of decline, it's putting itself back on the map.

From a group of friends, the LABC grew into an organization whose success is inherently tied to the city's history. “It's a secret bubble of magic,” says current President Lily Holleman. “I was inexplicably drawn in by the warm camaraderie, and a spirit of fun and optimism. It is a place full of friendship, fun and outright silliness.”

Described as “Prairie Home Companion directed by David Lynch,” the Club had its beginnings in Griffith Park in the fall of 1924 when a group of prominent businessmen would mount up at Al Meyer's Griffith Park Riding Academy for their weekly morning ride. A breakfast, compliments of fellow horseman, Marco Hellman's personal (!) chuck wagon, followed. When a Chicago banker visited, Hellman hired a troupe of musicians to entertain and, as fate would have it, the visitor was a first-rate storyteller.

Out of this serendipity, merchant Maurice De Mond suggested they form an organization. Word spread and notables like writer Edgar Rice Burroughs, famed “Tarzan” creator, oil magnate Edward L. Doheny, and film industry leaders Louis B. Mayer, Darryl Zanuck and Cecil B. De Mille joined. On March 6, 1925, the first program took place at the Griffith Park Riding Academy and De Mond was elected president.

Rapid Rise of the LABC

The Club bought the Crosetti Dairy property at 3213 Riverside Drive, just south of Griffith Park, and converted it into a clubhouse that included showers for the horsemen. And “the world's first Breakfast Club was on its way,” wrote Harold B. Link in his booklet, “The Los Angeles Breakfast Club, The Shrine of Friendship.” In 1927 entrance fees were increased from \$100 to \$500 and memberships climbed, enabling construction of the Pavilion of Friendship's breakfast hall.

The press took notice; in March 1927 Warner Brothers' radio station KFWB began broadcasting the weekly programs, many of them nationwide. Before long, the LABC had become a cornerstone of the city's civic and social life. Those attracted to the Democracy of Ham & Eggs were, among others, *Los Angeles Times* publisher Harry Chandler, Babe Ruth, Bebe Daniels, Boys Town founder Father Flanagan, Sophie Tucker, Governor-elect Earl Warren, Billy Graham, Claire Booth Luce; Fathema Ismael, woman founder of the Society for Rehabilitation of Crippled Children in Bombay; Olympic swimming champion, Duke Kahanamoku; Sister Elizabeth Kenny, polio treatment originator; and Jeff Davis, self-proclaimed King of the Hobos.

Story has it that when Amelia Earhart showed up for the First National Women's Air Derby she made an extravagant arrival by landing her plane in the nearby Los Angeles River bed.

The Club was also renowned for its range of enlightening and entertaining weekly talks given by prestigious educators, comedians, scientists, literary figures and public officials.

Early rituals, like the wiggly, “flip-the-eggs” handshake, singing silly songs and a rambunctious recitation of the famed cryptogram, remain to this day. (When you attend, you'll discover the secret.) The goofy membership ceremony involves a blindfold, a wooden hobbyhorse and a plate of sunny-side up eggs.

True then, as now, pretension, politics and religion were left at the door. Even newspaper tycoons and staunch enemies Harry Chandler and William Randolph Hearst smiled and shook hands at a meeting, personifying one of the Club's golden rules to bury the hatchet.

But as with any organization, there's bound to be a spot of bother. Financial troubles arose with the sudden death in 1931 of De Mond, when directors shockingly learned that the Club was \$83,000 in debt. Universal Studios founder Carl Laemmle was made president, but the Club was forced to leave the Pavilion of Friendship, and meetings were held at an interim site at the Ambassador Hotel for four years.



In 1934, the Club was granted nonprofit status, and a tract of land along the Los Angeles River on Los Feliz Boulevard was purchased. The new clubhouse included a breakfast hall and stage, a spacious lounge, kitchen, bar and pool. Hundreds attended the grand opening on December 29, 1937.

But with economic changes, hard times came again. The site was sold in the early 1960s and the money was used to build the current clubhouse on the original site, just south of the entrance to Griffith Park. The new Shrine of Friendship was dedicated November 3, 1965.

During the late 1950s membership and attendance waned. Once drawing 600+ members, the Club was down to a faithful few and again in danger of disappearing.

Fate intervened when actress Lily Holleman arrived in 2013 and was immediately hooked on the LABC. Holleman's youthful energy and commitment apparent, she was invited to become its president. She incrementally introduced social media and bolstered the guest speaker roster, efforts that today point toward a continuing increase in membership and attendance.

"The tone of the Club is responding now in a way it didn't during its near demise, and has recaptured its original tone," says Phil Leirness, board member and vice president of the LABC Foundation. Leirness also produces and hosts "Breakfast Club on the Air" podcasts, a merry mix of vintage broadcasts, music, current goings-on and engaging speakers.

Ongoing Wednesday Traditions

Doors open at 6:30 a.m. Inside Friendship Hall, everyone smiles and exchanges the ritual "Good Morning Ham," "Good Morning Egg" at the breakfast buffet. Perhaps old-fashioned to some, the Club's weekly program, "Restores us to basic truth and disregards the pretentiousness of life," says music director Don Snyder.

At 7:30 a.m. Snyder plays "Hail to the Chief" and Holleman leads the Pledge of Allegiance and a sing-along of a patriotic song and vintage oldie. A table-thumping rendition of "Ham an' Eggs" rouses any remaining sleepyheads. The room thrums with gaiety and chatter.

The Roosters, a handful of "trouble-makers" said to have been established by Will Rogers, call out heckles *du jour*. Reverend Barbara Adams

shares thoughtful items in her ongoing "Adventures in Friendship." In a kind of mid-morning stretch, everyone lines up, sort-of, to exchange the ritual handshake and wend their way to the greet those at the speaker's table.

Sporting his ham an' eggs tie and a rakishly tilted cap, the octogenarian Master of Ceremonies Richard Gilson is the personification of a favorite uncle. With a wry smile and twinkle in his eye, he merrily stumbles through names and announcements in a slow, halting stammer reminiscent of Jimmy Stewart.

As in the past, guest speakers are a draw. Recent among them are American Film Institute President Jean Picker Firstenberg, LA District 13 Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell, and Candace Frazee and husband Steve Lubanski, owners of Altadena's Bunny Museum.

Throughout its undisturbed longevity, the LABC has welcomed persons of all stripes, colors, backgrounds and religions. Times will change, but let's hope The Shrine of Friendship, The Temple of Sentiment and Idealism where real people meet every Wednesday morning to get to know one another and start the day right, will be around for decades to come.

For more information visit labreakfastclub.com. An extended version of this article with additional photos can be found at friendsofgriffithpark.org



Some LA Breakfast Club luminaries include, from left: Amelia Earhart (fourth from right), movie moguls Carl Laemmle (left) and Sid Grauman (far right), baseball great, Joe DiMaggio, actor Ed Wynn, *LA Times*' Harry Chandler and *LA Herald Examiner*'s William Hearst, and upper right photo: legendary race horse, Seabiscuit.



Anticoagulant Exposure in Bobcats Can Have Surprising Effects

~Dr. Laurel Serieys, PhD

Rat poisons don't just kill rats; they kill wildlife too. Wildlife species are exposed to anticoagulant rat poisons when poisons are used in urban and agricultural areas to target species such as rodents. But animals do not die immediately of the internal bleeding these poisons cause. It can take more than a week for a poisoned rodent to die. In the meantime, the poisoned animal may be vulnerable to predators, and if a predator such as a bobcat preys on the poisoned rodent, the bobcat becomes poisoned too.

Thus poisons enter local food webs and become especially harmful to top predators. Through a process called bioaccumulation, animals at the top of the food chain absorb toxins from eating lots of different prey animals but their organs cannot filter out the toxins, so poisons accumulate in their systems. As a result, some of the most iconic species in California – bobcats, coyotes, foxes, mountain lions, owls – are the most vulnerable to this form of indirect poisoning.

The potential consequences of rat poison exposure on carnivores in the Santa Monica Mountains have been the foremost question of researchers working at the National Park Service (NPS) and UCLA since 2002. I have been a part of this team of biologists since 2006 when I began as a wildlife intern with the NPS. As an intern, I had firsthand experience with poisoned wildlife in the Santa Monica Mountains when I recovered my first dead bobcat. Later that year, I jumped at the opportunity to do a PhD investigating the effect of rat poisons on bobcats. I could see even then that biologists and conservationists alike had no grasp of just how our indiscriminate use of rat poisons is dangerous for wildlife.

At the time I came on board, we knew very little. For example, the effect of the anticoagulant rat poison chemicals could vary widely among different animal species that may ingest the poisons. Domestic dogs are 100 times more vulnerable to the toxic effects of these poisons than domestic cats. Would the same trend hold for wild dog species (coyotes, foxes) compared to wild cat species such as bobcats and mountain lions? Data suggested the trend was the

same: anticoagulant poisoning was a leading cause of death in coyotes in the Los Angeles area, but NPS biologists documented only one bobcat and two mountain lion deaths directly due to poisoning.

Another important trend was emerging for bobcats. Bobcats were dying at unprecedented rates due to uncontrollable outbreaks of mange. It was beginning to look like the population might not survive. Mange is a common skin parasite that was previously rarely fatal to bobcats because their immune systems can suppress the infection. Something was preventing the bobcats' immune systems from doing its job effectively. Interestingly, veterinary pathologists discovered

that every bobcat that died of mange had high levels of anticoagulant exposure. The pathologists suggested that mange and anticoagulants may be linked, but they could not explain how rat poisons would cause a common infection such as mange to become fatal.

NPS biologists and I proposed a hypothesis. Like domestic cats, bobcats may be tolerant to the anticoagulant effects of the rat poisons, but low-level chronic exposure to the poisons had other weakening effects in bobcats, specifically in the way their immune systems functioned. These invisible effects likely increased their susceptibility to mange. To test this hypothesis, we would need to know how many bobcats were actually being exposed to the poisons across the Santa Monica Mountains. Then we needed to know if there were measurable health effects that explained the link between anticoagulant rodenticides and fatal mange infections.

We faced two problems. First, we needed to test the immune systems of enough bobcats to understand how their immune systems work before and after they are exposed to rat poisons. That meant spending months capturing animals all over the Santa Monica Mountains and collecting blood and other samples to test in the laboratory. The second problem was more intractable: no one had invented laboratory tests to study the immune function of bobcats.

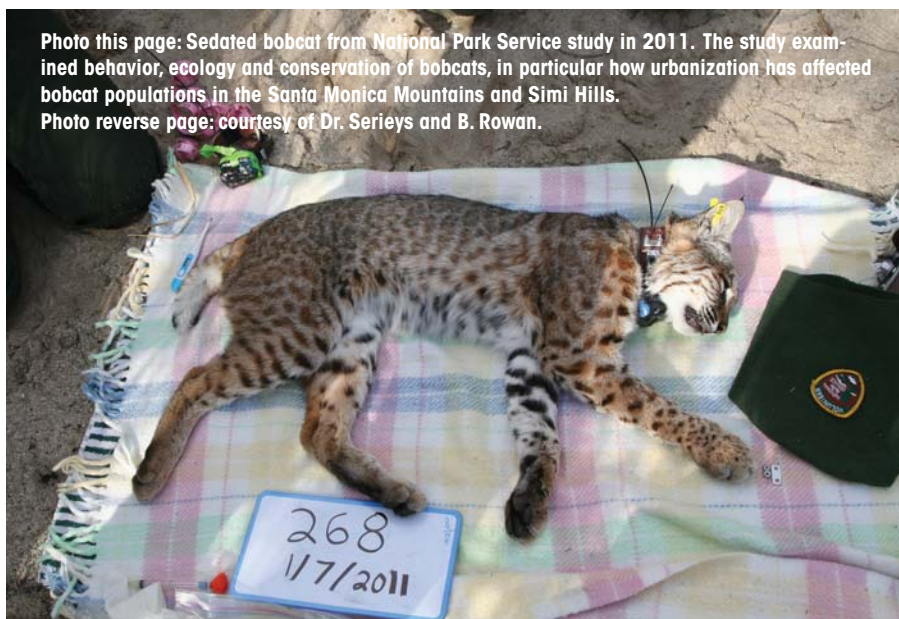


Photo this page: Sedated bobcat from National Park Service study in 2011. The study examined behavior, ecology and conservation of bobcats, in particular how urbanization has affected bobcat populations in the Santa Monica Mountains and Simi Hills. Photo reverse page: courtesy of Dr. Serieys and B. Rowan.

We had to develop our own methods.

The study involved trapping more than 125 bobcats from across the Santa Monica Mountains, including Griffith Park. I worked with researchers from all over the country to devise new ways of measuring bobcat immune function. With these new methods, we generated detailed health and genetic profiles of each bobcat we captured. With help from the NPS and US Geological Survey biologists, I also collected 172 bobcats that died of mange or vehicle collision so that I could collect liver samples which are the preferred samples for anticoagulant rat poison testing (the compounds accumulate in the liver over time). With these samples, I then assessed prevalence of and risk factors for anticoagulant exposure in bobcats.

The findings confirmed my worst fears. We detected that 89% of bobcats were exposed to the poisons when we used liver samples! By comparison, we detected only 34% exposure using blood samples from the live-trapped animals (we can't take liver samples of live animals without harming them). This difference in exposure detection reflects that the poisons are in the blood of an animal for a considerably short period of time before it is filtered from the blood stream by the liver, where the compounds can then persist for more than a year! I also discovered how close a bobcat lived to residential and other urban development was the single best predictor of whether that bobcat had been exposed to rat poison. This finding indicated that poison use around residential areas was the primary contributor to environmental contamination.

Next, we used health profile data generated from live-trapped animals that were both exposed, and unexposed, to the poisons. We wanted to discover any evidence of the poisons altering immune function such that bobcats may become more vulnerable to deadly mange infection. Unexpectedly, we found explicit evidence that the poisons suppress certain types of immune cells, while stimulating others! In other words, their immune system has to work harder but cannot work as effectively as the immune system of unexposed bobcats.

More recently, UCLA colleagues used some of the blood samples I collected to probe whether this immune dysfunction was expressed on a genetic level. The work supported my initial findings; anticoagulants promote immune dysfunction in bobcats. They also discovered other compelling links; anticoagulants change the level of expression of genes associated with skin maintenance. Overall, it is becoming increasingly clear that even when these poisons don't kill wildlife directly, they still have consequences that may indirectly kill animals by making them vulnerable to other stressors such as disease.

This new understanding of the indirect effects of rat poisons raised another question. How else does exposure indirectly endanger bob-

cats? Bobcats were also being hit by vehicles at alarming rates. Could anticoagulant rat poisons increase bobcat vulnerability to being hit by cars? The poisons might make animals sluggish, or weaken their senses. Crossing roads would then become a much riskier venture.

Since we used all our resources on analyzing immune function, we lacked the means to investigate this new hypothesis. FoGP stepped in and supported our preliminary analysis of bobcats hit by vehicles. Next, we needed to find bobcats "freshly" hit by cars to collect blood samples, and, if possible, then test them for anticoagulant exposure. It can be difficult to collect blood from dead animals, and so it has taken a lot of work and patience to build our sample set, and even after years of working in this population, samples were limited.

In the end, we managed to scrape together samples from 18 bobcats hit by cars, and from those blood samples, we detected 50% anticoagulant exposure. We compared these findings to the much larger dataset of 185 captured bobcats tested for anticoagulant exposure. Within the capture dataset, 34% of bobcats were found recently exposed to anticoagulants even though they were apparently healthy at the time of capture. After statistical analysis, we did not find a relationship between recent exposure to rat poisons and to being hit by cars.

While the newest work funded by FoGP disproved our hypothesis that recent anticoagulant exposure increases bobcats' vulnerability to being hit by cars, our work overall has shown the unexpected, indirectly lethal effects of anticoagulant exposure in bobcats. The work FoGP funded also taught us something much more important. It isn't just one challenge these animals face. Living close to humans brings lots of dangers and if these populations are to survive in urban landscapes, we must find ways to contain these risks.

We appreciate FoGP's continued support and interest to help us tackle these important conservation issues.

Currently Dr. Serieys is working on two new urban carnivore projects. She created and coordinates the first urban carnivore study in Cape Town through the University of Cape Town, South Africa. The Urban Caracal Project is assessing the effects of urbanization on a wild cat species, the caracal, in Cape Town.

Dr. Serieys is also coordinating the Coyote Valley bobcat study through UC Santa Cruz where she's documenting mange and anticoagulants affecting bobcats in the San Jose, CA region.

For more information on either of these projects, go to UrbanCaracal.org or UrbanCarnivores.com.



PLEASE NOTE:

Recently California Assembly Bill 2422 designed to restrict rodenticide usage in California was not heard in a committee hearing and missed its opportunity to become legislation in 2018.

In the meantime, Friends of Griffith Park is demanding that Rec and Parks adhere to its stated rodenticides use policy. We're also asking LA residents not to use rat poison!

**Support FoGP's Efforts
to Protect the Park**

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Wonderful Volunteers

FoGP has many tree planting and tree care projects around Griffith Park — and we couldn't do them without our wonderful volunteers! We hope you will join us on an upcoming volunteer opportunity. Volunteers for events throughout the year are notified by email. You can sign up to be a volunteer by going to our website.



UPCOMING VOLUNTEER EVENTS:

Saturday, June 9
Fern Canyon Watering

Saturday, July 14
Fern Canyon Watering

Saturday, August 11
Fern Canyon Watering

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