



the griffith reporter

the newsletter of friends of griffith park/winter-spring 2021



in this issue...

- ✓ Quite the Quail
- ✓ Save the Bees
- ✓ Fern Dell Restoration
- ✓ Aerial Tram
- ✓ Pioneering Park Rangers
- ✓ The Griffith Charitable Trust
- and more...*



Gerry Hans models his puma mask at the recent P-22 Day.

Photo: Kathryn Louyse

Difficult times challenge us to do even more. We hope 2021 will bring brighter days than what we've experienced since March. Whether or not, there is still plenty of work to do to protect and enrich Griffith Park for its natural and historical values.

Friends of Griffith Park began 2020 with a plethora of volunteer events, mostly tree and native flora restorations in heavily used recreation areas such as the Bird Sanctuary and Fern Dell. Volunteer Director Laura Howe and capable assistant, Ross Arnold, shaped an ambitious volunteer force and had a demanding schedule plotted far into the fall. This energy, after all volunteer events ceased in March, has been converted toward other accomplishments which continue at a swift pace even to this day!

Our expanded newsletter features some of our labors and advocacy during this year and looks with optimism into the next.

FoGP's science work is critical. The arrival of the 5th year for the Griffith Park Raptor

Survey, with "citizen science" training coming up in February 2021, illustrates our commitment to science-based management in this remarkable wilderness Park (page 20). We also hope to delve into further studies of the Park's threatened Western gray squirrel. It's hard to imagine Griffith Park without this magnificent species, so a better understanding of the pressures on this Southern Californian native squirrel may lead to practices which will allow it to persist here.

2020, A YEAR LIKE NONE OTHER

On the same topic of wildlife, California's AB 1788 rodenticide bill finally became law (page 7). While it should soon reduce the problem of unintentional poisoning of wildlife, there is no rest for the weary. We will watch carefully how the pest control industry

responds. Hopefully they will transition to alternatives which will better accommodate the wildlife food chain. P-22 deserves to be safe from man-made poisons, as do all living critters.

We continued our progress in 2020 in historic Fern Dell which now has a restored pedestrian bridge, improved signage, and a new stretch of wrought-iron fencing. Consider these new improvements in Fern Dell as just a sample of the revitalization efforts FoGP plans to achieve (page 9).

In the height of the coronavirus pandemic, FoGP successfully partnered with Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), responsive residents, and Council District 4 to raise funds needed to purchase park-adjacent land. This was a "once in a blue moon" opportunity that couldn't be passed up (page 16).

The Park is lucky to have Stefanie Smith as the newly appointed Superintendent, replacing the big shoes of Joe Salaices, now retired. Stefanie tells us her story in a recent interview (page 8).

FoGP continues to expand alliances with like-minded organizations. When the concept of an aerial tram threatened the very soul of Griffith Park as the great wilderness Park, we sounded the alarm this summer. Fortunately, 25 organizations and many community members have joined us in strong opposition to the proposed aerial tram. It may seem squashed at this time, but we need to remain vigilant. I announced to FoGP's Board of Directors early this year, "the aerial tram could be the fight of the new decade" (page 12).

Friends of Griffith Park hopes to continue making a strong impression on our city leaders who make critical decisions about this treasured urban wilderness. You, our members, continually inspire us to defend the spirit of a great gift to the people of Los Angeles for which we are grateful. ♡

~ Gerry Hans

executive committee

GERRY HANS, president_science & conservation
MARY BUTTON, vp_finance & administration
LAURA HOWE, vp_volunteer coordinator
LINDA OTHENIN-GIRARD, membership coordinator
LUCINDA PHILLIPS, vp_community liaison
KATHRYN LOUYSE, secretary, media coordinator
DORA HERRERA, treasurer

board members

CAROL BRUSHA
MARIAN DODGE
LUCY GONZALEZ
ANNA JOSEPHANS
REX LINK
FELIX MARTINEZ
AL MOGGIA
SARAH NAPIER
MIGUEL ORDEÑANA
ALEX PHILLIPS
IAN PHILLIPS
BRENDA REES
KRIS SULLIVAN

newsletter team

BRENDA REES, editor
brenda@friendsofgriffithpark.org
KATHRYN LOUYSE, newsletter production
kathryn@friendsofgriffithpark.org

contact info

FRIENDS OF GRIFFITH PARK
P.O. Box 27573
Los Angeles, CA 90027-0573
☎ 323-521-9399
friendsofgriffithpark.org



Photo: Kathryn Louyse

on the cover:

Four young California quail in a covey of 16. They're a ground-dwelling bird of rugged shrub-chaparral habitat, but here take advantage of a leaky irrigation pipe. Can you tell their gender? Article on page 3.
Cover photo: Gerry Hans

photo above:

Mounted rangers are still on the job in Griffith Park. They were on hand for the memorial plaque placement honoring 29 workers lost in the 1933 Griffith Park fire. Article on page 14.

Park Rangers respond 24/7 to Park-related emergencies. Keep this number handy!
(323) 644-6661

Quite the Quail

~Gerry Hans, FoGP President

The ground-dwelling California quail (*Callipepla californica*) is often heard, but seldom seen in Griffith Park. They are famous for their unique “Chicago” vocalization, sounding as if they are saying “Chi-ca-go.”

Quail inhabit thick scrub and chaparral zones within the Park where they mostly forage on the ground. Occasionally, they will take flight a short distance in pursuit of berries, such as the succulent berries of the Mexican elderberry tree, unquestionably a “most valuable” habitat species within the Park. They love toyon berries, too, which are plentiful during winter. At night, they often roost in brush and trees where they are better protected.

Young birds adapt behaviorally to tolerate the nearby presence of people along trails and roads, but only if there’s something in it for them! Quail can usually go without water, deriving their liquid needs from vegetation and insects. However, during prolonged hot, low-moisture periods, why not take water from one of the water pipes scattered throughout the Park? After all, it’s easier than searching out a natural seep or stream bottom.

Quail nests are scooped out on the ground under dense cover, where usually 12-16 brown-speckled eggs hatch. The family’s highly social covey can extend to another clutch creating an even larger covey, but this has not been observed in Griffith Park. As good communicators, a whole covey can fly low and move quickly if threatened, a response known as “flushing.” This is just one more reason to keep your dog on-leash.

The distinctive head plumes on quail appear to be one, but are actually comprised of six feathers. They turn black in males and brown in females. Males also develop conspicuous white facial stripes, which are less obvious in youngsters. Such markings combined with the “feather in their cap” give them the presence of self-pride unmatched by any other bird species.

Californians were proud of this species, too, proclaiming it the State Bird in 1931. Long may they thrive in Griffith Park. ♣

Photo: Gerry Hans

Black and white neck markings distinguish a male from a female quail. So which one is this?



Griffith Park is a world of discovery
just waiting for you... Feel free to explore!



Skyline Trail/LA Zoo Overlook/Oak Canyon ~Brenda Rees, FoGP Board member

If I need a quick nature fix, I jump in the car and head over to Travel Town on Griffith's northern side for a hike I can do in an hour that gives far-reaching views on one side, and a shady forest stroll on the other. Hikers generally don't flock to this end of the Park, and many times I'm the only hiker on Skyline Trail, although I usually meet equestrians.

Early mornings, cyclists can fill up the small dirt parking lot adjacent to Travel Town's expansive asphalt lot (currently chained closed during the pandemic). From here, head underneath two oaks and find the opening of an equestrian trail that leads you upward. This is the steepest part of the hike, so if you need to catch your breath, don't worry. The rest of the hike is mostly flat with a few rolling hills.

Reaching the top, you'll be treated with views of Disney Studios and IKEA along with freeway traffic. But as you travel further on, the hum of civilization will slowly disappear. You'll notice bushtits in trees, hear acorn woodpeckers and scrub jays. Scan the tall tops of bare trees for raptors.

At an intersection, head left to stay on Skyline Trail for a view of the LA Zoo



from above. As you travel gentle hills, pay attention to the growth on the southern side. This was the location of the 2018 Condor Canyon Fire that burned 63 acres. Plants, bushes and trees have been rebounding. You know you're at the end of this trail when you reach a chain link fence. Turn around and head back the way you

came, except at the intersection, head left to oversee the action at the Composting Facility as you head downward.

Be sure to look both ways when you cross Griffith Park Drive and continue on Oak Canyon Trail that provides a lovely canopy alongside a creek. Seasons create two different hiking experiences here. In winter the trail is dusty; in spring, be prepared for mud after rain. Likewise, plants hide in the winter but come springtime this trail explodes with wildflowers, lush patches of soft green miner's lettuce, and – if the rains were plentiful – various mushrooms and other erupting fungi.

Take your time along this trail and appreciate the (almost) quiet. Scratching among the sycamore leaves often are California towhees and squirrels – I've only seen fox squirrels here but always keep my eye out for our native Western gray squirrels and their fluffy tails.

Traverse over a few hills and you'll soon find yourself back where you started. Remember how the landscape looks here in winter – and be sure to compare it when you return in the spring, witnessing nature's seasonal changes. ♡

What's the Future for the Griffith Park Merry-go-Round?

~Kathryn Louyse, FoGP Board member

When CoVID-19 forced a shutdown of all venues in Griffith Park – including the Autry, LA Zoo, Griffith Observatory, Greek Theatre, etc. – I contacted Julio Goscinski, the owner/manager of the Griffith Park Merry-go-Round to talk about the long-term ramifications. We met at the ride to share a meal (distanced across a picnic table) and he showed me the steps being taken to ensure kids would be safe on the ride once the merry-go-round reopened.

It's now nearly 2021, and unfortunately many Park venues are still closed to the public, although some are finally reopening; the LA Zoo, for instance, requires guests to wear masks and practice social distancing.

As Los Angeles begins to emerge from a long Rip Van Winkle sleep and moves into less stringent safety restrictions, the Griffith Park Merry-go-Round will remain shuttered; the future of this iconic

family-friendly attraction is in jeopardy.

For the past nine years, Julio was instrumental in keeping this historic 1920s-era art piece in top working condition. Maintenance was never easy, especially on the 68 wooden horses and complicated mechanism that kept the painted ponies moving up and down while spinning guests gently around in the lush Griffith Park greenery.

An employee since he was a teenager, Julio was handed co-ownership of the ride in 2011, a responsibility he took seriously and to heart. The Griffith Park Merry-go-Round has delighted families, first dates and grandparents for decades. Julio knew that and always welcomed everyone with a big smile.



Photo: Kathryn Louyse

When Julio suddenly passed away in early August, the fate of his and OUR beloved Merry-go-Round entered into limbo.

One thing is abundantly clear – the Griffith Park Merry-go-Round is an important feature of Griffith Park, one that brings visitors from around the world just to take a ride and pose for a photo. Now, LA Recreation and Parks must decide how to keep this carousel in the Park, especially now that Julio's smiling face and generous nature will be missing. ♡

Encouraging Kestrels with Nesting Boxes ~Gerry Hans, FoGP President



Photos: Gerry Hans

American Kestrels, the smallest of falcons in North America, are beautiful creatures and amazing hunters. Their preferred meals range from insects to medium-sized rodents. They are as much at home in urban settings as remote wildlands. Unfortunately, like other raptors, kestrels are

very vulnerable to rodenticides. Kestrels are also dependent on cavities for nesting, a dwindling resource as dead, hollow trees are quickly removed for safety. These are viable reasons why kestrel numbers are on a decline in Los Angeles County. In fact, it's estimated their population is half what it was five decades ago.

To the rescue, local Scout Troop 10 and Max Rauchberg, age 18! FoGP hadn't recorded any kestrel nests at all over the four years of its Raptor Survey in and around Griffith Park. Yet, kestrels are occasionally seen by lucky visitors to the Park. When Max asked FoGP how he could earn his wildlife badge, FoGP had a suggestion: build and place kestrel nesting boxes in Griffith Park to attract breeding pairs. He accepted the challenge.

FoGP first needed to convince Rec and Parks to allow the boxes to be installed in Griffith Park. Fortunately, the Golf Division and Manager Laura Bauernfeind were very accommodating. Wilson-Harding Golf Course is an ideal location for several reasons. Kestrels love hunting in open spaces and seem to be most active near water sources such as the LA River. Kestrels are the only raptor that can actually hover, using eyes that are about a thousand times better than ours, dropping down on their prey when it appears. Gone golf course gopher!

According to Max, the building process took place in multiple phases. FoGP recommended a set of building diagrams specific to kestrels. Max and his father, Matt, spent much of a day procuring the required materials, mainly the wood. Next it took them a day to cut the wood into the shapes and sizes needed, taking into account all the cut-angles. After a trial run assembling the first two boxes in a day with a small crew, eight more boxes were assembled by his troop and the full team of volunteers.

Troop 10, founded in 1914, is the oldest continuously-sponsored troop west of the Mississippi River and has produced over 350 Eagle Scouts. This troop has partnered with FoGP for various volunteer and educational activities over the last few years. Rauchberg said, "Griffith Park has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember, so getting to execute a project that could benefit the Park in some way has been very exciting for me."

Five of the boxes were deployed in late February with the help of Rec and Park's Forestry Division, also important partners in the project. These are fairly stout boxes, ideally placed 15-20 feet high, so this is a job for professionals! It was decided that the remaining boxes will be installed for the 2021 nesting season, with locations to be determined.

The boxes didn't attract kestrels during the 2020 nesting season, but getting even one nesting pair in the next five years would be considered a success.



Max is off to attend college at Fordham University in New York soon. FoGP wishes him the best and appreciates his thoughtful and ambitious contribution to Griffith Park and its wildlife. ♣

Max proudly shows off the kestrel nesting box handiwork.

Update: Bluebird Nesting Boxes

~Brenda Rees,
FoGP Board member

Earlier this year, FoGP member Bruce Painter again placed homemade nesting boxes in Griffith Park with the hopes of attracting the colorful Western bluebird, a once regular resident of the Park.

This is the fourth year that Bruce has received approval from RAP to strategically place the nesting boxes in the Park. Bruce keeps FoGP updated regularly on box activity – we are excited about the possibility of welcoming these delightful birds back into the Park!



Photo: courtesy of Bruce Painter

Nesting boxes are important to attract bluebirds; these small cavity-nesters typically carve out space in rotting or dead trees as well as in woodpecker holes to incubate their eggs. Since dead and diseased trees are systematically removed from

Griffith Park, bluebird pairs often look elsewhere to create a nest.

Overall, bluebird success is slowly building – especially considering that flycatchers and wrens often take over nesting boxes, not to mention some boxes in the past have been vandalized.

This year, Bruce reports four bluebird nests occupied his boxes which fledged a total of 12 bluebirds. Other boxes produced 30 wrens and four flycatchers. Compare that to last year when Bruce found only two bluebird nests along with one wren and one flycatcher nest!

Thank you Bruce for tackling this wonderful project – and we can't wait to see what next year brings! ♣

Save California's Bees: All 1,600 species *~Katherine Pakradouni*

We've all heard the popular slogan, "Save the Bees!" Responsible for essential pollination services in the ecosystem, bees are key contributors to the continuation of life on Earth. Without them and other pollinating insects, flowering plants would cease to reproduce themselves, destroying our ability to farm for essential foods, and sending our wild lands into a state of ecological collapse.

Yet, conversations regarding bees tend to center around the ubiquitous European honeybee, a now-naturalized agricultural import, and neglect our numerous wild, indigenous species. In fact, most people are completely unaware that, in the United States, there

a sunny day in Griffith Park, look for wildflowers, black sage, or California buckwheat in full bloom. If you stand very still, you will likely witness a variety of bees of different shapes and sizes darting from flower to flower alongside the more familiar honeybee.

Threats to native bees are similar to the threats to the honeybee in that they are equally harmed by neonicotinoid pesticide use. But native bees have the added threat of food competition and territory displacement from the more aggressive honeybee, as well as the threat of widespread habitat loss. As a result, our native bee populations are at high risk. Luckily, all of us can contribute towards the



Photos, Top Row – left: *Xylocopa sonorina* / courtesy Hartmut Wisch
Center: *Ceratina arizonensis* / courtesy Hartmut Wisch
Right: *Male Hylaeus mesilla* / courtesy Hartmut Wisch
Bottom Row – left: *Andrena fuscicauda* / courtesy Hartmut Wisch
Center: *Agapostemon texanus* / courtesy Hartmut Wisch
Right: *Bombus melanopygus* / courtesy Katherine Pakradouni

are roughly 4,000 species of native bees. Prior to the European introduction of the honeybee in the 17th century, these native bees were responsible for sustaining life for millions of indigenous people, plants, and animals. 1,600 different bee species currently reside in California, with several hundred of those making their home in Griffith Park.

The diversity of our native bees is fascinating. Unlike honeybees, our wild bees do not produce honey. Most are solitary and nest in bare, open ground (e.g. mining bees, sweat bees, digger bees), or in wood and other cavities (e.g. mason bees, carpenter bees, leaf-cutting bees, masked bees). Many are incapable of stinging, and those that can sting, are unlikely to do so, as they do not form large colonies with a queen whose territory they must defend. Their sizes, shapes, and color variations make them efficient pollinators, well-adapted to great variety of flower types. Next time you're hiking on

resurgence of native bee populations through advocacy and bee-friendly urban landscaping practices. ♡

Want to support native bees? Here are a few tips:

- Leave areas of bare open ground in the garden where ground-nesting bees can reproduce.
- Eliminate pesticide use at home and encourage the reduction of agricultural pesticide use.
- Support habitat conservation efforts in local wilderness areas like Griffith Park.
- Consider adding bee-supportive native plants to your home landscape. Check out this guide by the Theodore Payne Foundation for plant species suggestions: <https://theodorepayne.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/BEE-FRIENDLY.pdf>
- Learn more about creating bee habitat in urban gardens by reading this incredible garden resource UCANR: <https://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu/pdf/8518.pdf>

At Long Last: Passage of AB 1788, the California Ecosystems Protection Act

~Kathryn Louyse, FoGP Board member

The long struggle to reduce the use of second generation rodenticides in California reached its final chapter as Gov. Newsom signed AB 1788 on September 29, 2020. This legislation, aimed at protecting wildlife, found itself in jeopardy several times in the lead-up to final passage and when we say it was a struggle, it's an understatement. Friends of Griffith Park's President Gerry Hans noted, "it was a real nail biter" as this legislation was finally passed in the eleventh hour.

FoGP and other environmental activist groups are finally celebrating passage of AB 1788 – groups that worked closely with legislators to advocate for this bill. AB 1788 will ultimately save countless lives and bring more balance back to California ecosystems. In a nutshell, the law sets a moratorium on the most potent anticoagulants, restricting rat poisons routinely used by the pest control industry. It's important to understand there are exceptions, including rodenticide use for declared public health situations, agriculture activities, food storage, and more.

The new legislation goes into effect on Jan. 1, 2021

The bill prohibits use of these agents while the Department of Pesticide Regulation completes its reevaluation of second generation anticoagulant rodenticides. We believe their findings will indicate that use of these rodenticides pose significant, adverse effects to non-target wildlife, so this moratorium would become a ban for the future, an optimistic, expected result.

However, what's *not* included in AB 1788 are the rest of the anticoagulant rodenticides, first generation rodenticides, so there's still much work to be done. First generation agents are also stubbornly apparent in the food web. In fact, Griffith Park's beloved P-22 mountain lion was a victim of this group of poisons. He was lucky; he got treatment, but countless other species do not receive this lifesaving treatment.

The long history of legislative attempts and failures to take anticoagulants off the market underscores how fortunate environmental activists were in getting this legislation passed! One small step at a time is still progress. Here's the broad strokes why it was imperative to get AB 1788 passed. After all, this wasn't the first time the bill made the rounds in the California legislature.

According to studies conducted by various California agencies such as the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the National Park Service and others, 80-90% of our predator species – like owls, raptors, bobcats, coyotes and mountain lions – have been exposed to and/or affected by second generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARS). More disturbing – a single dose of this rodenticide has a half-life of more than

100 days in a rat's liver so when rodents are consumed, these poisons can quickly move up the food chain.

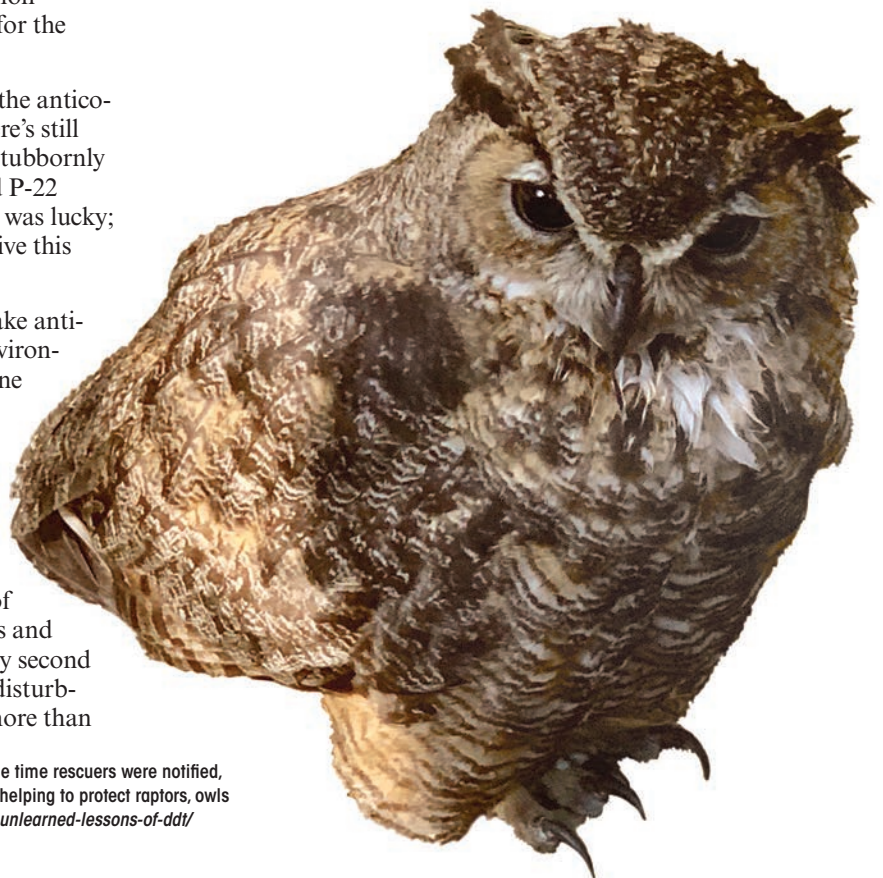
While we know rat poison kills much more than rats, just as significant are the non-lethal impacts weakening populations of various species. As these poisons move through the food chain, effects on wildlife have been devastating. Internal bleeding, mange and other life-threatening reactions are some of the impacts. Even worse, young chicks are inadvertently poisoned in their nests, leading to even greater losses.

We know that large cities in California have a rodent problem – because cities have a garbage problem. Humans create massive amounts of garbage every single day, and where does it go? Into trash cans, dumpsters, city and county dumps, and sometimes onto city streets. And where there's garbage, there will be rats and other pests.

The question then becomes, how do we balance the problem of rodents and trash? In the past, we looked to pesticide companies to create solutions, but solutions generally included the use of harmful rodenticides. Now the challenge will be to create other means of rodent control. In other words, build a better, less destructive to the environment "mouse trap." Think of all the pivoting and adjusting businesses have made because of the pandemic and you know that humans are capable of coming up with workable solutions. And there is one really simple solution – put trash in proper receptacles and keep the lid on, which will lessen the need for rodenticides. Little steps will help tremendously.

Meanwhile, let's coordinate with nature and allow predators to do their job. Owls, hawks and coyote can take care of rats on the edges of cities as well as in parklands.

Restoring the balance lost in nature is the biggest challenge, and passage of AB 1788 is a step in the right direction. Let's hope this important piece of California legislation will become the template for the rest of the country as well. ♻️



This young owl was spotted in the yard of a Beachwood Canyon residence. By the time rescuers were notified, the owl had died from rodenticide poisoning. By eliminating rodenticides, we're helping to protect raptors, owls and other species. More information is available at friendsofgriffithpark.org/the-unlearned-lessons-of-ddt/

Photo: courtesy of Allison Brooker

Like us on FACEBOOK and Instagram... Friends of Griffith Park



Recently I sat down to chat with Stefanie Smith, the newly appointed Superintendent of Griffith Park. We began our conversation with her introduction to LA's Recreation and Parks.

"My mom worked for the city so I've been around the department since I was a child," she explains about her long history with the organization. "I started with the Department of

Recreation and Parks in the summer youth program when I was 15 years old. I worked for the golf course that first summer and enjoyed it. Two years later, I became a Site Supervisor with the summer youth program. I found landscaping and gardening interesting."

Stefanie graduated high school and wanted to go into law enforcement. She took criminal justice classes while working part-time. Her mother suggested she apply for a part-time job with RAP, and she was hired as a gardener. She enjoyed it, and when a position became available for a gardener/caretaker, she was promoted, changed her career path, and started taking horticulture classes. Eventually she became senior gardener, and at age 25 was already a park maintenance supervisor.

Stefanie gradually worked throughout the city – including 10 years in the Valley and time on the Westside including a tour of duty in the Pacific Palisades. Subsequently she came back to Griffith Park as a principal grounds maintenance supervisor. She spent time with the forestry division and the last three years as principal grounds maintenance supervisor in Griffith Park before her recent promotion to superintendent.

"I think it's great that as a female, at the time when maintenance was mostly men, I could put my mind to it, work hard and move up through the ranks," sums up Stefanie. "If you work hard anything's possible. I've been very fortunate. And most of all, I love my job."

Stefanie is very flexible about transitioning her focus from maintenance to superintendent duties. "I think it's important to be open-minded and to listen to your staff," she says. "It becomes more of a management position, which requires my trust in my staff. I try to be transparent with the community and don't make decisions without sharing my ideas with the different community groups."

"I listen to people. I listen to their needs, their wants and I don't judge," she explains about her ability to respond to various agendas and groups that use the Park. "I think it's important to establish personal relationships with people and try to find common ground. My strong area is working with people to solve problems. I don't like the red tape. I just like to move forward, get things done and take care of things."

The ramifications from COVID-19 have presented new challenges for Griffith Park, especially Park closures. "A lot of the concessions in the Park are closed so many of the areas where we used to

generate funds are shut down," Stefanie says, adding that this is difficult because she has to be mindful of how to best utilize her staff. The city has restricted the hiring of additional staff. As more Park venues reopen, the allocation of personnel will be an even greater challenge for Stefanie and her team.

Regarding challenges beyond the pandemic; Stefanie would like to "improve on minimizing the amount of traffic that we see coming into the Park. We have to be creative in continuing to improve the mobility within the Park." She would also like to see improvements for the current restroom buildings, many are neglected, are not ADA accessible, and need to be updated. Some road improvements are necessary, including pothole repairs and re-stripping for safety reasons.

"I think it's important to think about the Park 20 years from now," Stefanie surmises. "When I plant a tree in the Park I think about that tree for my kids and my grandkids. We have to think about the future." Stefanie wants to "continue to work with FoGP with tree planting, tree watering and other volunteer activities when it is safe to do so. FoGP has a very important role as a part of my team. I've worked well with them, I've learned from them, and I look to them for support."

Currently Stefanie is concentrating on making the Park "user-friendly, a place for families to come and enjoy the beauty and open space in a clean and safe environment. I want to continue to make improvements, continue to preserve the wildlife, to plant trees. I want to always work as a team and make the Park a better place for the community." ✨

~Linda Othenin-Girard, FoGP Board member



Spotted on the Beachwood Canyon Community Board (Article on page 12-13).

Repairing and Restoring Fern Dell

~Marian Dodge, FoGP Board member



If Griffith Park is the crown jewel of the city, then Fern Dell must be one of its brightest emeralds. One of the most popular areas of the Park, it is one of the few spots where you can reliably find soothing shade on a hot summer day. It is just a short walk for

residents on the southwest side of the Park or for those visitors coming on the Metro Red line.

FoGP started working in earnest on the repair of the pedestrian bridge in Fern Dell at Red Oak Drive in 2015. The bridge was identified as a high priority project in our comprehensive cultural landscape assessment because with the rotting bridge closed, people were walking in the street. Our goal was also to restore the beautiful lines on the original 1920s bridge which had been lost in earlier repairs.

Then-Superintendent Joe Salaices and RAP General Manager Mike Shull were thrilled with the idea. FoGP met with all RAP planning, construction, and environmental staff. FoGP hired preservation structural engineer Mel Green to verify that the bridge would be sound. Ground-penetrating radar examined the buried portion of the original foundations and revealed they were still structurally sound. Preservation architect Michelle McDonough insured this design complied with the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation. The plans were approved by the City's Office of Historic Preservation. FoGP paid for all permits, architect and engineering fees, an expense RAP cannot afford with its limited budget.

The plans we thought had been approved in the summer of 2017 were finally cleared by the Department of Building and Safety in March, 2019.

In January, 2018 RAP accepted a bid for the construction. Meanwhile Joe Salaices was searching for accounts that could be used for the extra funding needed and getting the project approved by the RAP Commission.

Bridge construction finally began in August, 2019. The special arched glue lam beams were installed in October and the bridge was informally opened to the public in December, 2019. At the same time, new black wrought iron fencing was installed, replacing existing chain link fencing using funds from a generous FoGP donor.

What's next for Fern Dell?

Our current wish list for Fern Dell is replacement of the recirculating water system in the creek. A pump used to pick up water from the creek near Black Oak Drive and send it back up the hill to a point near the upper parking lot.

FoGP has already met with hydrologists and pump specialists to tackle this project. Modern pumps can move the water with much

smaller pipes than the originals. Mike Shull and new Superintendent Stefanie Smith are enthusiastic about the project which would assure a constant flow of water in the Fern Dell creek. A small waterfall just south of the pedestrian bridge has not flowed for decades. It needs to be converted to a recirculating system as well.

We've also been looking at much needed repairs to the *faux bois* railings along the trail in the lower dell. Fortunately, we know of a local *faux bois* expert and hope to engage his special skills soon.

The next time you take a walk through Fern Dell, stroll across the fully ADA-compliant pedestrian bridge.

When you walk under the bridge, take a look up and admire how the replaced arch perfectly mirrors the concrete auto bridge arch and savor this little gem in Los Angeles. ♡



Photos from top, right: Fern Dell completed pedestrian bridge. Note how the arch is repeated on both bridges.
Middle: Recently installed black fencing and signage.
Bottom: Bridge during construction phase.
Left side: Postcard showing 1930s-era bridge.

Photos, top/middle: Gerry Hans, bottom: Kathryn Louyse

A Bird-Friendly Landscape, A Human Refuge

Restoring Griffith Park's Bird Sanctuary

~Linda Othenin-Girard,
FoGP Board member

My first visit to the Griffith Park Bird Sanctuary was almost a decade ago. I had just retired from the stress of working in media and I desperately needed to find some peace and quiet. What better place than Griffith Park! Since I wanted to rediscover my joy of bird watching, the Bird Sanctuary sounded like the perfect place to go.

When I arrived at the location off Observatory Road, I found a rather desolate urban wilderness area. Oh, the landscape included some gorgeous sycamores and plenty of laurel and native greenery but several burnt trees served as reminders of the 2007 fire that devastated many parts of the Park.

The Bird Sanctuary was hit hard by the fire and many of the originally planted trees and shrubs were heavily damaged or destroyed. To my delight, however, birds could still be found here. I discovered all the usual suspects such as acorn woodpeckers, oak titmouse, scrub jays, house finches and the occasional red-tailed hawk perched high in the dead trees that still towered. But this area couldn't really be called a sanctuary.

One fateful day while I was walking in the Bird Sanctuary, I stumbled upon then-

Councilmember Tom LaBonge (CD 4) who was showing the area to a group of hikers. He spoke lovingly of this forgotten part of the Park. Looking right at me he said, "You need to do something about this place."

What? Me?

But a couple of weeks later I was in Tom LaBonge's office talking to Carolyn Ramsay, Tom's chief of staff, about giving the Bird Sanctuary some TLC.

The first order of business was to find out exactly what was growing and living in this pocket park. You can't restore an area without knowing what's already thriving there.

In July of 2012, I teamed up with FoGP and, at their suggestion, we engaged environmental scientist Dan Cooper to provide an analysis of the flora and fauna in this designated area. Dan found several dead trees that served as possible nesting sites or granaries for acorn woodpeckers or by secondary cavity-nesters like house wrens or ash-throated flycatchers. No nesting pairs were observed. He also observed over a dozen other birds species including Cooper's hawks, a great horned owl, wren tits, dark-eyed juncos, and song sparrows. All of the species he found nearly a decade ago still frequent the Bird Sanctuary.



We Can Help You Explore Griffith Park...

JOIN Friends of Griffith Park FIND & FOLLOW us on Social Media



Instagram



Soon after the survey was completed, RAP came through with a generous donation of 50 native plants and a few non-native trees. FoGP provided a dozen volunteers. It was a great day of planting and I spent many wonderful hours weeding and watering these new plantings. Over the years, many native plants survived and flourished. Predictably, the non-natives perished. But time and the drought has taken its toll on the natives, too.

Now, FoGP has again come to the rescue of this beautiful but often neglected piece of urban wilderness. In conjunction with Grown in LA, several events had volunteers removing weeds and toxic non-natives like castor beans. This winter, two planting

events have completely transformed the landscape with more care and attention planned for the future. I am delighted to announce that yes, the birds are still there – and I predict more will find home here.

Bird Sanctuary Beginnings

Delving into the early forces that created this special avian place, I discovered that the history of the Bird Sanctuary is rather elusive.

In Mike Eberts' *Griffith Park: A Centennial History*, one small entry about the Bird Sanctuary suggests it was a dream of neighborhood women who visited the area and found thousands of wintering birds. The original plan to develop the sanctuary must

have included an elaborate water feature of pools and basins using the Park's extensive irrigation system.

Eberts writes that in a 1924 report, Van Griffith indicated that the Bird Sanctuary drew "hearty approval" from about 20 organizations including the Audubon Society.

On January 21, 1926, *The Los Angeles Times* reported that boys from the city's Agriculture School planted 70 redwood trees, 30 live oaks and a large quantity of holly berry in the Bird Sanctuary. One could imagine formally dressed bird lovers, women in long skirts and tight fitting hats, men with canes and maybe sporting natty tweeds, holding binoculars to their eyes trying to spy a gorgeous acorn woodpecker drumming his beak against a rock-hard sycamore trunk.

Eberts also writes that local Boy Scouts offered to build bird houses for the Bird Sanctuary, but it's unclear whether that ever happened.

Overall, the mystery of the Bird Sanctuary's early days continues to cause speculation and spark imagination.

Moving forward to the future, however, FoGP remains committed to providing this special part of the Park with new life and vitality as it truly becomes a sanctuary for our feathered friends and a refuge for weary humans.

We are waiting to invite volunteers of all ages to join us on upcoming Bird Sanctuary events once we can safely accommodate such large groups. Make sure you follow us on social media; Facebook or Instagram, and be sure sign up for our email blasts.

In the meantime, I hope you will visit the Bird Sanctuary and see how this little jewel is becoming a shining example of the beautiful things that can happen when we work together. ♣

**Editor's note: Do you have information and/or photos about the history of the Bird Sanctuary you'd like to share? Please contact us at info@friendsofgriffithpark.org. We'd love to know more about the early days of this delightful part of the Park.*



First came the mulching. Grown in LA's Katherine Pakradouni on right in top photo helped guide volunteers. Then came the planting.

Photos, top: Brenda Rees, bottom: Kathryn Louyse

Like us on **FACEBOOK** and **Instagram**... **Friends of Griffith Park**

Griffith Park Aerial Tram: Another Bright Idea?

~Gerry Hans, FoGP president

Aerial trams in Griffith Park have been on the drawing board many times in the past, most recently in 1960, 1968, and 2005. Each time, the public was outraged for so many good reasons. And each time, in the end, the people of Los Angeles came together to defend the very essence of Griffith Park, as an expansive, accessible wilderness within a massive metropolis.

The ruse for the currently proposed “Aerial Transit System,” is rooted in the need for traffic congestion relief to residential communities taking the brunt of Hollywood Sign visitor impacts. Some would like the public to believe an aerial tram will help. Most understand this proposal will not provide any relief.

In 2017, Dixon Unlimited, a parking consultant from San Diego, was commissioned to find strategies to reduce traffic, congestion and hazards in affected areas on the south side of the Hollywood Sign. Many viable and reasonable ideas came from the community. In the final Dixon Report, the aerial tram appeared as one of 29 strategies, although it was not one declared as supported by the stakeholders who met several times with the consultants. It was the most colossal



and expensive of all strategies! Why would it be moved ahead of all other strategies?

The Dixon Study was completed in early 2018, and in March, 2019, \$600,000 was approved for engineering giant Stantec to determine the best alignments. More money was needed, so another \$150,000 was approved for an expanded scope of study. Sure enough, Stantec was able to determine three possible routes for a “mono-cable detachable gondola,” with up to 95-100 gondola cars traversing more than two-miles of the Park’s designated “wilderness area.” A fourth option was gratuitously provided by the civic-minded Warner Bros., neighbor to the Park.

Stantec has done a limited amount of outreach with the public and is due to report results to the City. Next, the City will make a decision whether to proceed with more studies and design work with a chosen alignment.

So far, approximately 25 letters of opposition have been sent by local neighborhood councils, advisory boards, homeowner

associations, as well as environmental and advocacy organizations. Petitions in opposition have clocked well over 3,400 signers and counting.

In its September letter addressed to Mayor Garcetti, the Department of Recreation and Parks, and Council members, FoGP called for a halt in the study process now after the second of four phases has been completed. We are confident at least some allocated funds would be recovered, as they are much needed with the City-declared fiscal crisis. Our letter cites the public’s unwillingness on many counts to allow an aerial tram to change Griffith Park forever.

A solution looking for a problem

Stantec has made it clear their job is merely to address questions and comments regarding the aerial tram itself. By relying and referencing the Dixon Report, Stantec has falsely validated the aerial tram as a real viable solution to traffic and congestion problems. Instead, this concept will merely add another

story continues on page 18

A Look Back at Pioneering Park Rangers

~Marian Dodge, FoGP Board member

Have you ever studied the ceramic mural in the courtyard of the Visitor Center? The mural, designed and created by ceramic artist Elaine Katzer in 1987, gives a brief history of Griffith Park. In the final panel representing current times, Katzer chose two pioneering Rangers to represent the Park: Lucia Ruta, the first female Ranger, and Doc Jefferson, the first Black Mounted Ranger.

Doc Jefferson started his long career with the Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) in the Maintenance Division in 1961. Originally assigned to the Commonwealth Nursery, Doc learned all about plants and the propagation of trees. At that time, the nursery supplied plants and flowers for city parks and city events. Doc delivered floral bouquets to City Hall, Pershing Square and city libraries. He helped develop the planting landscape at Hansen Dam, moved up the ranks and became a park maintenance supervisor.

Affirmative Action implemented in the early 1970s was aimed at hiring more minorities and women to fill RAP ranks. During that time, the Mounted Unit was also getting started and Doc was talked into applying. "They dragged me kicking and screaming into the program," he recalls. "I was a city boy; I didn't know anything about horses." David Gonzalez, who later became Chief Ranger, trained six men and horses with the LAPD Mounted Unit on crowd control, how not to be spooked by loud noises, riding on sand at the beach, and riding in difficult mountain terrain.

Doc's new partner was Big Red, a large chestnut quarter horse with a white face. The Mounted Unit patrolled the Park in pairs, accessing places where vehicles could not. Big Red learned how to pick his way carefully along ridges. This patrol checked out reports of smoke in the interior of the Park, performed rescues and general monitoring. At the time Rangers didn't want to carry firearms; they were more nature-minded. Later, Doc worked full time in the film office issuing film permits.

Doc took the exam for assistant general manager and ranked fifth. As there were five positions open, he was sure he would get one. Lucia Ruta who ranked fourth was named Chief Ranger, a position she deserved. But Doc was passed over and was told "he didn't write up enough people," but he said "he never had any problems working with them so there was no need to write them up."

Reflecting on the job of Mounted Ranger, Doc realized, "It was the best, most exciting job I ever had. I miss it."

Lucia, a self-described party girl, left her home in Washington, DC seeking adventure in California. Her only skill was stenography. She held a number of jobs, but wasn't happy being stuck in an office. Then she heard about the Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA), a program aimed at hiring women and minorities. It was the first time women could apply for jobs traditionally held by men. She applied with Animal Services and Park gardener/caretaker although she knew nothing about either. She was hired for the latter!

In 1975, Lucia was assigned to the Central Service Yard (CSY) to do roving landscape work. You had to be tough to survive because the supervisor made it clear he didn't want women there; however they did want the money from the federal program.

While working in Fern Dell, Lucia met maintenance supervisor, Luis Ramos, who was aware of the sexual harassment she faced at CSY. Ramos treated her with respect and recognized she was a hard worker. He finagled a transfer for Lucia out of CSY.

Lucia worked in Fern Dell for a year raking the paths, pulling garbage out of the stream and cleaning restrooms. At the Ranger House she met one of the first Rangers, Bill Eckert, an expert horticulturalist who taught her all about plants.

Later Lucia went to Park Center as a gardener. She was up on a ladder pruning a tree when a Ranger rode by on a horse. It was Doc. Since they were at the same height, they struck up a conversation. Doc told her all about the Mounted Unit and how he had started in

maintenance, too. He encouraged her to apply for the Mounted Unit. "I didn't know someone would pay you to ride a horse in Griffith Park," she exclaimed. Thanks to a chance meeting with Doc, she decided to stay with the City.

Lucia became a Senior Gardener and was responsible for training gardeners. Most of the trainees were getting out of jail. Even though she had 10 convicts working under her, she had none of the problems that some of the male trainers had with their men. She loved working outdoors. Lucia's crew put in the landscaping at San Pasqual Park in East LA including installing the irrigation system for the ballfields. She told her crew that they could brag to their kids that they had built the park. She moved up to



Maintenance Supervisor.

Meanwhile Lucia became active as a union organizer in the 1970s. She spent hundreds of volunteer hours helping city employees organize. “I was young, in my 20s, and indestructible,” she observed, “Boy, I had a lot of energy.” Doc described her slightly differently; “Lucia was spirited. She didn’t back down.”

At the end of the CETA program, the City had to place everyone, and since there were openings for Rangers, Lucia signed up. Lucia, Albert Torres and Tom Cotter all started in the program at the same time. Since early Park Rangers came from the maintenance section, most were Latino with a few Blacks. Lucia became a Ranger in 1984 and by 1987 was promoted to Chief Ranger. She was always lobbying for more Rangers and more funding because the City often cut funding to RAP and libraries whenever there was an economic downturn. One of Lucia’s hires was Ranger Anne Waisgerber who developed many materials to teach children about the Park and its plants and animals.

In the early 1990s several groups and Councilmember John Ferraro wanted to upgrade the Ranger position to peace officer status and give them guns. Lucia feared it would change the nature of the job.

As Chief Ranger, she deliberately chose an abridged version of peace officer training at Rio Hondo College in 1989 so that trained Rangers wouldn’t leave for other law enforcement departments. Lucia firmly believed that Rangers should be the friendly face in the Park.

When the Northridge Earthquake struck in 1994, Lucia was in RAP Emergency Operations Division which sheltered victims in recreation centers for several months. Funding for a permanent Emergency Operations section failed to materialize, but the Department of Public Works asked her to head their emergency operations department. Lucia transferred to Public Works and spent the last 10 years of her career with the City in that capacity.

The two old friends Doc and Lucia met again in 2018 at a reunion for retired Rangers. Both enjoyed reminiscing with friends and renewing the Ranger camaraderie. Today, Doc lives in Corona to be closer to his children and grandchildren. Lucia moved back to her native Washington, DC.

Both Doc and Lucia played key roles in creating a robust and inclusive Ranger unit in Los Angeles – and we are grateful for their trailblazing service and talent! ♡



A portion of the ceramic mural created by artist Elaine Katzer celebrates the firsts – Lucia Ruta and Doc Jefferson

Opposite page, top photo: Lucia takes the mounted ranger lead, while Ranger Albert Torres brings up the rear. Bottom: Lucia and Doc at a ranger reunion in 2018. Photos on opposite page: courtesy of Lucia Ruta. Photo of mural: Kathryn Louyse



Photo: Kathryn Louyse

Expanding Griffith Park ~Brenda Rees, FoGP Board member

This spring, Griffith Park got a little bigger, thanks to a coalition of partners who worked quickly and effectively together to respond to a rare once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Two undeveloped lots on a hillside just outside of the Bronson Canyon entrance on Canyon Drive went up for sale. These lots came on the market a year ago with a combined asking price of \$1.15 million, but the price was reduced greatly to an amount of \$500,000, with an agreement to a shortened, 21-day escrow.

Friends of Griffith Park banded together with a coalition of conservationists and park-lovers to help raise pledges to purchase the site and protect it from future development. The 1¼ acre site features city-protected sycamores and coast live oak trees – the largest being 60' tall – and the site is a habitat for deer, coyotes, birds and other wildlife.

Partners in this endeavor include LA City Councilmember David Ryu and The Oaks Homeowners Association along with numerous

individuals who believed in the value of expanding Griffith Park's landscape.

After a whirlwind fundraising campaign, a deal was struck. The land is now held by a local public agency, the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) that's dedicated to conserving and protecting open space, wildlife habitat and parkland that will be easily accessible to the public and ensuring that it will never be developed.

FoGP established the Canyon Drive Fund which, after collecting sufficient funds for the purchase of the property, also accepted funds that will be used for annual maintenance of the property.

The quick-moving episode is a good reminder that many people and organizations see the necessity of keeping Griffith Park as a wilderness refuge that needs to be protected and preserved. A big thank you again to all who contributed! ♣

The Next Generation of Environmental Stewards

~Anna Josenhans, FoGP Board member

For the first time, Friends of Griffith Park will be offering scholarships to two students of color from the class of 2021 attending the North Hollywood High School Zoo Magnet Center, better known as the Zoo Magnet School.

The Zoo Magnet, located in the heart of Griffith Park, is an excellent place to find a scholarship recipient who reflects our organization's beliefs and values. A highly academic curriculum with emphasis on animal studies and biological sciences, the school provides its students the unique opportunity to observe and conduct research at the adjacent zoo facilities.

The impulse for initiating this scholarship program arose from a desire to address the racial inequality that exists within our community and will strive to make the wonders of Griffith Park equally accessible to all Angelenos. This scholarship seeks to broaden and extend that spirit of generosity to the larger community, and aims to support students of color by assisting with financial expenses and educating future environmental stewards.

All applicants to our scholarship will be given honorary memberships to FoGP, increasing both membership and diversity. Please visit our website for more information about this program. ♡

STAY TUNED

Check Out FoGP's New Website!

~Brenda Rees, FoGP Board member

This year, Friends of Griffith Park website is getting a major upgrade! Now when you visit us online, be prepared for lush large photos, a cleaner layout and a user-friendly design that works effectively on both desktops and mobile phones. New tabs will help visitors quickly access information about Park trails and maps, news, volunteer activities, science, history, and more.

FoGP worked with Zumwinkle Design on a new design we believe will showcase the beauty of Griffith Park as well as educate and inspire visitors about the mission of FoGP.

The Zumwinkle team has designed numerous websites for other cultural and non-profit organizations, many environmentally-directed including the Los Angeles Chapter of the Sierra Club, the Los Angeles ICO and the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy to name a few. ♡

PLAY it SAFE!

for everyone



wear a mask
social distance



friends of
GRIFFITH PARK

You may have seen one or more Friends of Griffith Park-designed/printed banners in various parts of the Park. These banners were offered to RAP to help spread the word and keep the Park open even as other recreational areas were being shut down.

Visit our website [friendsogriffithpark.org](https://www.friendsogriffithpark.org)

continued from page 13

attraction to Griffith Park targeted toward tourism and monetization of the Park on a massive scale.

The gift to the “plain people”

Colonel Griffith’s gift in 1896 would be dishonored. His visionary proclamation of the “healing powers of nature” is now supported by notable health organizations, preached by many environmental organizations, and backed by science!

Conflict with City-approved policies

A Vision for Griffith Park was adopted and celebrated by the City in 2014. Yet, a project of this scale clearly would violate specific messaging within it, for example, “avoid in-fringing upon natural areas, preserve the

identified Wilderness Area,” and “there is no clearly identified need for new recreational rides.”

Historic-Cultural Monument # 942 declares the Wilderness Area of Griffith Park a historically sensitive resource. It references landscapes retaining their integrity dating back to the period of Gabrielino Indians known to be the earliest inhabitants of the region. The character of this natural wilderness area would be spoiled by the visual intrusion of moving gondolas and metallic towers.

Environmental destruction

Above all, inevitable permanent destruction would be inflicted upon precious open space, habitat and wildlife refuge. Various sensitive species in both plant and animal kingdoms

persist in various locations where up to 24 towers would be erected. Invasive weeds would inadvertently be introduced affecting ecosystems balanced by nature alone. Sonic and visual disturbance would increase. Reproductive success of sensitive ground birds in scrub habitat could be adversely impacted. And much more.

Safety and evacuation

How would an evacuation of such large scale, up to 500-1,000 people, be possible during a brush fire? In the last two years, 177 acres burned in Griffith Park, with an average of eight significant brush fires per year. Mechanical and power failures, as well as earthquake emergencies are also possible. Heat inside sun-exposed gondola cars is a persistent problem at many aerial tram installations during the summer months. ♣



Interested in getting more information about the proposed Griffith Park Aerial Tram?

Friends of Griffith Park has weighed in on this issue. You can read our letter, plus receive more information and a petition to voice your concerns is available at <https://friendsofgriffithpark.org/griffith-parks-aerial-tram-history-repeats/>

Aerial tram renderings (pages 12-13 and this page) courtesy of CARTIFACT



Volunteer activities in the Bird Sanctuary earlier in 2020 included mulching and planting many natives.

Eager to Volunteer Again

~Ross Arnold, FoGP Volunteer Coordinator

For the last three years, Friends of Griffith Park volunteers have undertaken a massive effort to place more plantings in the Park using, wherever possible and practical, California natives which were propagated from Griffith Park seeds at the Commonwealth Nursery.

Overall, the planting process is extensive and requires weeding and mulching to stop weeds vying for water and nutrients, and to reduce evaporation once natives go into the ground. Additionally, planting preparation requires numerous volunteers and hours. We are grateful for the hundreds of volunteers who have assisted us over the years in creating these beautiful native garden areas.

Some of the recent areas planted include:

- FoGP conducted two plantings across the street from the Live Steamers, planting mostly sycamore trees from sycamore seeds harvested in Griffith Park.
- FoGP volunteers planted more than 160 California native plants along the Anza Trail Native Garden, located behind hole seven on the Wilson Golf Course in the southeast corner of the Crystal Springs Picnic Area.
- At the East Observatory Trail leaving Fern Dell, more than 150 California natives were planted by FoGP volunteers.
- Across from the Trails Café in Fern Dell, volunteers planted 15-gallon trees and a year later, more than 150 California natives plants.
- And finally, in the past year, more than 200 California native plants were placed in the Bird Sanctuary by FoGP volunteers over several weekends.

Even with RAP pandemic restrictions, these gardens are currently being monitored! Over the past weeks, FoGP board members Kathryn Louyse, Dora Herrera and I have toured planted areas for a check-up. We are thrilled to report that most areas are looking good and most of our natives plants are still healthy.

At this time, FoGP has been asked by RAP to forego volunteer activities in the Park, but this should not prevent you from visiting planted areas. If you have volunteered at any of these events, take a moment next time you're in the Park and check out your handiwork. You'll be amazed at how much the plants have grown. As always, if you see trash and are able, we encourage you to help keep

all areas of our Park clean. Once we're given the green light to host volunteer activities, you will be contacted.

FoGP looks forward to a time when we can get back into the dirt planting trees, flowers, bushes and more in Griffith Park. And did we mention – we really miss our wonderful volunteers! ♣



Ross Arnold checks on the progress of Bird Sanctuary plantings from earlier in the year.



Dozens of volunteers showed up for our tree planting in early 2020, across the street from the Live Steamers Railroad Museum in Griffith Park. These new trees were mulched and watered after being placed in the ground.

Photos, top: Brenda Rees, bottom: Kathryn Louyse

Like us on [FACEBOOK](#) and [Instagram](#)... Friends of Griffith Park



Raptor Survey 2020 Takes Flight

~ Dan Cooper and Courtney McCammon

(Excerpts from *Nesting Raptors of Griffith Park and Surrounding Area 2020 Report*)

We expanded our study area and greatly increased the number of monitored nests for the fourth year of the Griffith Park Nesting Raptor Survey (2020), owing to extra observation time made possible by reduced traffic and altered schedules as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

While investigators and volunteers had monitored 60 active nests in 2019, in 2020 we confirmed and monitored 192 active nests, and an additional 38 presumed active breeding territories.

Unlike in prior years, we were able to confirm as active many territories by the presence of recently-fledged young and recently-used nests, using clues learned this year while more closely observing known nests.

We expanded our coverage territory to include the Sepulveda Basin, Glendale/Burbank, and Baldwin Hills. Although we attempted to expand further, to East Los Angeles/El Sereno, Encino and Pasadena; our coverage remained light, so nests from these areas were dropped from the study to ensure we were finding as many nests as possible within a clearly-defined study area.

Once again two training sessions were held, each was attended by 40+ volunteer “community-scientists” in late winter (February 1

and 9), and by the end of June, we had roughly 100 potential raptor nests/territories located, with 60 of them active at some point during the spring. As in prior years, we then assigned nests to one or more volunteers based on their location preferences and birding ability. Volunteers were asked to visit their assigned nests twice per month to identify nesting stages throughout the season. Raptor volunteers were asked to send back completed data sheets at least monthly. Each active nest was confirmed (by a photograph if possible) by Dan Cooper, Courtney McCammon, or Gerry Hans to ensure data reliability.

Another addition to this year’s survey was the collaboration with Cornell Lab of Ornithology through use of *NestWatch*, a nationwide nest monitoring program designed to track nesting status and trends in the reproductive biology of birds. McCammon input the Griffith Park Raptor Survey data into *NestWatch* in order to contribute to a nation-wide data set increasing our understanding of differences and similarities among hawk species on a larger scale. While *NestWatch* is a citizen science tool used by the public in monitoring the fate of bird nests around the United States, the Griffith Park Raptor survey data has the locations kept hidden due to the sensitive nature of this shared information. This data is primarily used to support other raptor monitoring programs and to provide comparative data to fellow researchers. The public is unable to access the location of nests tracked through the Griffith Park Raptor Survey.

In all, we detected 94 active red-tailed hawk nests/territories, 93 Cooper’s hawks, 21 red shouldered hawks, 17 great horned owls, two Western screech owls, and single nests/territories each of barn owls, American kestrels, and a Peregrine falcon. These numbers (at least the diurnal species) probably more closely reflect the actual numbers of active nests in the study than those in prior years’ surveys. Nest success was very high in 2020; of 188 active

nests where the outcome was known or strongly suspected, 175 fledged at least one young (93%); just 9 nests were believed to have failed, or were apparently abandoned, generally in the incubation stage.

With the expanded coverage areas, the 101-405 Freeway sub-region (including the Santa Monica Mountains between Ventura Blvd. and Sunset Blvd.) had the most active nests/territories, with 69. This was followed by Griffith Park (34) and the San Fernando Valley floor (33).

In 2020, we increased our effort determining the breeding status of territories where nests had not been located, but where we found a pair of raptors exhibiting breeding behavior such as tandem flights, copulation, stick-carrying, etc.; in some cases, we identified a territory based on the presence of a single adult, such as an adult Cooper's hawk delivering a territorial call.

We also included as territories, areas where we found fledglings that appeared to have been hatched very close by, but where we were unable to locate a physical nest. Several of these "territories" were later confirmed as "nests" when a physical nest (appropriate to the species and clearly from the current year) was located. In all, territories without nests accounted for 16.5% of our total active breeding sites monitored (the remaining 83.5% were observed nests).

As in 2019, 2020 again found pines (*Pinus spp.*) to be the most common nest tree used (68 nests), followed by gums (*Eucalyptus spp.*) and related species (42 nests), Shamel ash (*Fraxinus udhei*) with 21 nests, and sycamores

(*Platanus spp.*) with 18 nests. Just six active nests were in native trees other than sycamores, including coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) (3 nests), cottonwood (*Populus spp.*) (2 nests) and willow (*Salix spp.*) (1 nest).

While non-native, they clearly provide excellent nesting opportunities to the local raptor community, and have essentially outpaced native substrates locally, perhaps enabling native raptors to continue using the habitats.

Relatively less common than red-tails or Cooper's hawks, both red-shouldered hawk and great horned owl nests appear to be thinly distributed across the study area, and both are nearly absent from the floor of the San Fernando Valley as well as from the Westwood-Downtown subregion, indicating the importance of hilly open space areas like the Griffith Park area in keeping them around.

Due to the great difference in our sample size of nests between 2019 and 2020 (and because so many nests in 2020 were newly discovered due to much higher effort levels and expanded coverage, particularly in the San Fernando Valley), it is difficult to compare nest re-use from 2019. However, trends remained similar, with high levels of nest and territory re-use documented for red-tailed hawks, and low re-use by Cooper's hawks. (Note: Next year nest re-use data will be exciting with many new nests!) ♣

(Editor's note: More details on the 2021 Raptor Study will be forthcoming in mid-January.)



Photo, opposite page & top: Dan Cooper, Courtney McCammon and Gerry Hans discussed previous year findings with volunteers. Then Courtney took a group out into the field.

DON'T MISS OUT... FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED VIRTUAL TRAINING FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS SAT., FEB. 20, 2021



Raptor Photos: Gerry Hans

Visit our website friendsofgriffithpark.org

Keepers of the Flame: The Griffith J. Griffith Charitable Trust

~Mary Proteau

Visionary Stocking Stuffer

Griffith Park was born on December 16, 1896, when Colonel Griffith J. Griffith donated 3,015 of his Rancho Los Feliz acres to the city of Los Angeles for use as a public park. He "...generously filled the stocking of Los Angeles with his gift...its diversified acres, magnificent heights, picturesque roadways," wrote Harris Newmark, a founder of the Los Angeles Library. Griffith's "Christmas gift" (he later donated another 1,000 acres) came with his stipulation that "It be made a place of recreation and rest for the plain people." Visionary in the booming Los Angeles of his day, the Colonel accurately predicted that the Park would become one of the country's greatest, "a safety valve" from urban pressures, "open space—rustic and available to all."

Keepers of the Flame

In his 1916 will, and concerned that his considerable wealth might be misused after his death, the Colonel established an Advisory Trust, naming as members his son, Van; his attorney, John T. Jones; and W.C. Mushet, a business friend. Aware that he might not live to realize his dream of an observatory on Mt. Hollywood and a Greek theatre, Griffith stipulated that Trust funds be used solely for their construction. Years of debate about logistics and legal and political wrangling followed his death in 1919. At one point, even the name of the observatory was in contention, but eventually Griffith's dream became reality: the Greek Theatre was dedicated on September 25, 1930, and on May 13, 1935, the Griffith Observatory opened its doors.

While established specifically for the Observatory and the Greek, the Trust remained viable, with son Van ensuring it was used solely for projects true to the Colonel's vision. Then, as now, Trust members have found it necessary to fend off efforts to commercialize the Park. They succeeded in retaining free admission, prevented unrestricted incursion of freeways, and defeated one of the more grotesque proposals, a gaudy commercialization of Mt. Hollywood.

The Gift that Keeps on Giving

The Griffith Charitable Trust, which devolved from the original 1916 trust, has, over more than 100 uninterrupted years, been helmed by three generations of the Griffith family—son Van, grandson Harold, and great grandson, Van. Each has been both guardian and advocate of their forebear's vision, and has left his own individual legacy—no small feat, given that the 4,310-acre Park is the country's largest urban park *with a wildlife area*, and is visited by some 10 million people a year.

Today, the Trust's three members, great grandson Van Griffith; Clare Darden, retired graphic artist and ardent Park advocate who's been hiking there since 1975; and Mike Eberts, author of *Griffith Park: A Centennial History* and Associate Professor of Mass Communications at Glendale Community College, advance an unbroken tradition as Park stewards. "We take our position as Trust members very seriously," explains Darden. "We do the research and carefully determine the most important projects to donate to. As LA Recreation and Parks has a budget that only goes so far, so, to the extent possible, we fill in. We're very cognizant of the difference in opinions that can occur," she adds, "but we have a good relationship with Rec and Parks."

Among the Trust's accomplishments, two are conspicuous in their significance:

In 2008, Van Griffith led the Trust's effort to nominate Griffith Park as an L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument.

Van Griffith, Darden and Eberts spoke to Col. Griffith's wish that the Park be free, rustic and serve as a safety valve to city life. Eberts called it "sacred ground." Darden agrees, adding, "It was the largest most gratifying project, having the *entire* Park become a cultural-historic monument." Led by David Jones, the firm of ICF Jones and Stokes compiled a painstakingly detailed 321-page application, signed by Van and presented to the Office of Historic Preservation on May 15, 2008. It was championed by more than 50 civic and community organizations and individual supporters. Then-Park Superintendent Joe Salaices declared, "I think it's our obligation, as a department and as a community, to commit to the continuation of Griffith Park. Forever." And on January 27, 2009, the City Council voted unanimously to name Griffith Park L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument Number 942. "Hopefully," said Van, "this will just add another layer of protection against development so that future generations can enjoy the Park the way we all have."

A 14-foot bronze statue of Colonel Griffith stands at Los Feliz Boulevard/Riverside Drive, the Park's main entrance.



"The first project I got involved in after I became a Trust member in 1994, was the statue," Darden relates. "Leading up to the Park's 1996 Centennial, we realized there was no dedication to the man who'd given the city this extraordinary gift." An earlier, small bust having been lost, Darden and then-Trust member, Marty Tregnan (Griffith Park Golf Historian), proposed a full-figure bronze statue. Well-known local sculptor Jonathan Bickart was hired, and RAP approvals and city permits were obtained as Bickart continued his meticulous work. The duly im-

posing statue was unveiled on November 23, 1996, with Van, Darden and Tregnan (who died in 1997) present. "It was a big deal," recalls Darden. "City fathers attended, LAFD firemen with their big trucks, and of course the Rangers, along with local community members, plus lots of Park advocates."

The Trust's other accomplishments include:

- Griffith Observatory – multiple projects
- New Visitor Educational and History Center
- Marty Tregnan Golf Academy, named for the Park's beloved Golf Historian
- Travel Town – various projects, including a new gift shop
- Resurfaced tennis courts
- Boys' and Girls' Camps building improvements and equipment
- Park Rangers – multiple, including tack for mounted units, mobile surveillance camera systems and wildlife cameras

Friends in Deed

The Trust is a prime actor among the advocates who seek to preserve the equilibrium of the Park's natural gifts, cultural venues and activities. Over its long history, it has enjoyed the support of many stakeholders—among them, homeowner associations, environmental organizations, individual advocates and Friends of Griffith Park. “The Griffith Trust is an amazing partner,” says Marian Dodge, FoGP board member and one of its founders. “They have always been there for the Park and have consistently defended Griffith’s vision of the Park as free respite from the pressures of urban life. The Trust has generously invested in and been outspoken supporters of projects that reflect a mutual desire to preserve, maintain and protect the Park. They are wonderful to work with.”

The two organizations work independent of one another, each with its own agenda and priorities. Says Darden, “We both benefit: we help them, they help us. Gerry, Marian, Mary Button and all the board and members... they really are a premier organization backing this Park.”

Given their shared commitment as Park stewards, the Trust and FoGP sometimes work hand-in-hand to support, defend, and occasionally oppose, issues of mutual concern. “I consider the relationship between the Trust and FoGP valuable not only for its support of the Colonel’s vision but for the ongoing efforts of the Trust,” says Eberts.

Since FoGP’s founding just 10 short years ago, this common purpose has resulted in a number of projects, among them: preventing a baseball field in Crystal Springs, because it required removal of many trees, including a heritage sycamore; and the Trust joined other funders to support FoGP’s years’-long efforts to revitalize Fern Dell, most recently the historic Pedestrian Bridge. (see article page 9) Returning the entire Dell to its original rustic aesthetic is an arduous, detailed process, and its aspects and features are prioritized and dealt with individually.

“Fortunately, Colonel Griffith’s ambitious advocacy for the Park continues through his descendants and Griffith Charitable Trust members,” says FoGP president Gerry Hans. “Besides annual gifts for various projects, the Trust steers the Park in the right direction.

Throughout the decades, attempts to deviate from the Colonel’s vision for the Park, or exploit it, were met with battles with the city, and sometimes lawsuits. This rightful tradition should continue. Friends of Griffith Park’s mission is squarely aligned with the motivation and intention of the Colonel’s great gift to the ‘plain people’ of Los Angeles.”

“We stay in contact and talk about how we might work together,” says Darden.

Minding the Future

It is to be hoped that Griffith Park will be preserved in accordance with Col. Griffith’s vision. The Park is not merely a gift of land, but a remarkable gift of nature’s bountiful flora and fauna, much of it unique to the area, some of it endangered—and all of it fragile. It is a place to connect with and learn about nature, to ride a bike, take a hike; ride a horse or ride the carousel, play tennis, play golf, go to a museum, attend a concert, visit the planets... or just have a picnic.

Many of the Park’s irreplaceable 4,000+ acres were created thousands of years ago. And since its inception, the essential, if fragile, balance between nature’s munificence and human activity has, pretty much, been maintained. “Balance” being the operative word. As the number of Park users grows, so, hopefully, will grow an awareness of just how precious it is. Easily taken for granted, the Park’s seeming endless space and natural gifts could just as readily become over-burdened by misguided endeavors that lack a sufficient view of its innate limitations that, once breached, cannot be mended.

As the Park approaches its 125th year, Griffith J. Griffith Charitable Trust members continue stewardship of what Darden calls, “...a gem in the middle of the city... a treasure. I’m optimistic,” she adds. “In the end, I think there are enough people who appreciate open spaces because, in today’s world, where else can they go to be quiet, to enjoy nature?”

On the occasion of the Park attaining LA Cultural-Historic Monument status, the Colonel’s great grandson Van declared, “I don’t know what the future would hold, but I hope the city respects that the Griffiths are still around, looking over their shoulder.” 🌿



Top: Park Visitor Center Dedication in 2005. Van Griffith and then-CD 4 representative Tom LaBonge cuts the ribbon, as Clare Darden and others look on.
Bottom: Unveiling of Col. Griffith statue on Park's 100th anniversary; from left Clare Darden, Marty Tregnan, and Van Griffith holding the dedication certificate.



Photo: Brenda Rees

Support FoGP's Efforts to Protect the Park

Join us today...

friendsofgriffithpark.org



Friends of Griffith Park
P.O. Box 27573
L.A., CA 90027-0573

Non-Profit Org.
US POSTAGE

PAID

CANOGA PARK, CA
PERMIT #537



**THANKS FOR THE
MEMORIES**

Photo: Kathryn Louyse

Julio Goddinski's huge smile was the first thing folks saw when they came for a ride on the 100-year-old Griffith Park Merry-go-Round. Originally from Peru, Julio worked at the ride as a teenager and, because of his passion for the attraction, eventually became a co-owner in 2011. He passed away suddenly in August, 2020 at the age of 49.

We miss you Julio. Thank you for being a part of our lives and our memories of Griffith Park!