friends of GRIFFITH PARK

the griffith reporter

the newsletter of friends of griffith park/summer fall 2019

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thoughts from the president

Photo: Kathryn Louyse

Friends of Griffith Park partnered with the National Park Service in 2011 to educate hikers in the city's largest municipal park on the importance of the Anza Expedition, Griffith Park, and the Los Angeles River in the history of Los Angeles.

We first applied for a Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Technical Assistance grant for the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail. FoGP members Gerry Hans, Bernadette Soter, Felix Martinez, Carol Henning and I worked with NPS planner, Patrick Johnston to bring awareness to and enhance the trail.

We all know what was happening on the East Coast in 1776, but what was happening on the West Coast? Spain was in Mexico, and knowing the Russians were already in Northern California, they wanted to establish a Spanish presence in the San Francisco Bay Area to claim California for Spain.

In the fall of 1775, a company of soldiers, their wives and children left Tupac, Arizona under the command of Captain Juan Bautista de Anza. The expedition consisted of 240 people–half of them children and eight pregnant women–and 1,000 head of livestock. This mixture of people had one hope like most immigrants to the United States–a better life. They walked 1,200 miles from Arizona to San Francisco Bay in eight months. They crossed the LA River in February, 1776. After camping here, they continued north along what is now the 101 freeway to San Francisco Bay.

Enlisted soldier José Vicente Feliz and his family were part of the expedition. In 1781 Feliz was reassigned from San Francisco to El Pueblo de Los Angeles; he was appointed Comisionado in 1787. For his services, Spain awarded Feliz 6,647 acres north of el pueblo, Rancho Los Feliz. In 1885 Colonel Griffith J. Griffith purchased the rancho and gifted 3,000 acres to the city of Los Angeles in 1896 to create Griffith Park.

In 2012, Griffith Park was awarded its own Anza Trail passport stamp, available at the Visitor Center. The following year, a trail guide with map, featuring an easy hike around the golf course, was published. With the help of Patrick Johnston, FoGP completed an Assessment and Recommendation Study in 2014.

One recommendation was to create a native plant garden that would show visitors the landscape that the expedition would have seen. Laura Bauernfeind, head of the Golf Division, gave us permission to plant the garden just north of the Crystal Springs Picnic Area. Katherine Pakradouni of Grown in LA designed the layout and propagated the plants. Grown in LA gathers seeds from native plants in the Park and propagates them in the Commonwealth Nursery–truly native plants! Sergio Guzman installed a water spigot and two NPS wayside interpretive signs.

Then our amazing volunteers, guided by Laura Howe and Ross Arnold, went to work. Student volunteers from John Marshall, Immaculate Heart and the Zoo Magnet as well as numerous regular volunteers weeded the area and applied thick layers of mulch. Other volunteers returned a few weeks later to plant 150 plants. Volunteer Jonny O'Hara accepted the responsibility of checking the garden every weekend and watering as necessary.

On May 2 FoGP held a formal dedication and unveiled the wayside signs at the de Anza Trail Native Garden. NPS Ranger Tori Kuykendall presented Griffith Park Rangers with a package of Anza Trail educational materials. Griffith Superintendent Joe Salaices and Councilmember David Ryu thanked FoGP for their dedication and support.

Please stop by this new native garden to enjoy the beautiful blooming flowers. Take a moment to read the interpretive sign; the second interpretive sign, located across from the Feliz Adobe at the Visitor Center, tells the story of José Vicente Feliz and Rancho Los Feliz. We hope you will enjoy and be inspired by the new garden!

Marian Dodge

~Marian Dodge

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Photo: Kathryn Louyse

on the cover:
Honey bees feast on the sweet nectar of the summer's prolific California buckwheat bloom.
Story on page 3.
Cover photo: Gerry Hans

photo above:
Recently Friends of Griffith Park participated in the L.A. Zoo's Spring Fling. While kids were drawn to our table for the famous P-22 paw print handstamp, parents flocked to talk about what Griffith Park had to offer.

The Beautiful Buckwheat *~Gerry Hans*

No plant typifies Griffith Park better than buckwheat. California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*) is found throughout the Park year-round and shows itself proudly on slopes as a coastal scrub species.

Buckwheat blossoms and seeds are long-lasting, with coloration trending over the seasons starting with fresh, tiny, clustered flowers, some boasting pinkish pedals and anthers and others pure white. The flowers gradually dry to a sustained rusty brown with copious tiny seeds formed which eventually get dispersed, if not eaten first by seed-seeking native birds. Butterflies, particularly metalmarks, hairstreaks, and San Bernardino blues, evolved with buckwheat, and make it their host plant.

Buckwheat was an important curative plant often served up as tea for Native Americans for so many ailments, but none are FDA-approved. If you could somehow gather enough of the minuscule seeds and grind them, you may be able to make a tiny buckwheat pancake, but don't count on it! Any local beekeeper will tell you that our native buckwheat is the ultimate nectar source for flavorful honey.

Take a close look and appreciate this bountiful species. If you need a plant that will thrive in your backyard that will attract birds and butterflies, consider California buckwheat or one of the cultivars available at native plant nurseries.

Photo: Gerry Hans

Volunteer Duo Tag Teams for Raptor Survey *~Brenda Rees*

Volunteers are the boots on the ground and eyes on the prize during the Griffith Park Raptor Survey, a partnership between Friends of Griffith Park and Cooper Ecological Services.

Now in its third year, more than 100 volunteers are monitoring their assigned nests in Griffith Park and surrounding landscapes to help scientists understand how our urban raptors are faring. From February through June, volunteers observe and record raptor behavior – are parents building nests? Tending to eggs? Watching fledglings branch?

Such exciting experiences are always best shared with friends, and two raptor volunteers have been tag-teaming their red-tailed hawk nest since the survey kicked-off in 2017. It's an experience that has cemented a friendship that is based on a love of the outdoors, a curiosity about the natural world and a desire to be of service.

"As a kid, I was an ardent birdwatcher with lots of books and I would crawl around the bushes looking for them. My parents were often worried about what I was doing there," says Gary Regester, FoGP member, volunteer and professional photographer.

Gary casually met fellow FoGP member Chip Clements at prior FoGP events, but they officially became better acquainted during the raptor training session. Since

The Dynamic Duo: Gary Regester (left) and Chip Clements

both travel on and off (Gary has a home in Colorado), they decided to partner up since they knew their nest would need regular observations.

"The major advantage of having a survey partner is that four eyes are better than two when it comes to close observation of something like a raptor nest," explains Chip. "When we hike in to see the nest together we often notice different details. Beyond that, having a survey partner means the nest is always covered when one of us is out of town."

So far, their system has worked out great, says the duo who both enjoy hiking into some of the most remote areas of the Park. Being part of this ongoing program has "given me an excuse to escape into the Park for a reason," says Gary.

With a background as a producer/writer who is also an educator and beekeeper, Chip was excited to hear about the survey three years ago. He had been out hiking in that remote Park location when he discovered a red-tailed hawk nest. "The next day, Friends announced the raptor survey," he says. "I knew this was meant to be."

Each of the three years, Gary and Chip's nest has produced chicks that eventually fledge into the Park. It never gets boring for the dynamic duo. Both Gary and Chip say the volunteer experience has taught them to keep their eyes open and always searching. "I used to keep my eyes on the ground, looking for scat, tracks, flora and now I have re-orientated myself and look up a lot more at the trees, scanning for nests or raptors," says Chip.

Gary agrees. Participating in the survey "has made me more aware of the raptors that live here in Los Angeles area. I feel like they were hidden before, but now I see them immediately. Many are resilient and take advantage of our urban environment – and it's such a great thing to witness them flying free overhead."

Want to be a raptor volunteer? FoGP will announce training dates for the next raptor nesting season in early January 2020. We'll be sure to keep you posted!

Local Schools Provide Student Volunteers *~Ross Arnold*

Student volunteers have always been a part of Friends of Griffith Park, but this year we have seen a large increase in the number of students and schools providing valuable community service; student volunteers are coming from John Marshall High School, Immaculate High School, King Middle School, Zoo Magnet High School, Brio College Prep School, Sonia Sotomayor High School, and many other Park-adjacent schools.

After the 2007 Griffith Park fire, students from John Marshall School Environmental Studies Academy began planting native trees and shrubs in Fern Canyon to help restore the area back to a lush, seasonal riparian area with a beautiful nature walk. Earlier, students studied the area soil and developed a plant palette incorporating native trees and shrubs that would thrive in the existing canyon vegetation. Once the plants were purchased (with assistance from FoGP), they were carried into the canyon. After they were planted, chicken wire was placed around these new plants with identifying tags which included the common and scientific names.

For the last 12 years, hundreds of students from Marshall High and other nearby schools have gone up to Fern Canyon to water these plants. Since there is no water system in Fern Canyon, FoGP works with the Park Rangers to coordinate parking a water truck at the top of the canyon so students can fill buckets and hand-water the plants throughout hot summer months. Additionally, to cut down on evaporation, students weed and mulch the plants. This is an ongoing project that always needs helping hands.

Photo: Kathryn Louyse

This year, students from area schools have also participated in other Park projects: from planting 15 trees in Fern Dell, 20 sycamore trees near LA Live Steamers, and more than 150 native shrubs along the Anza National Historic Trail next to the Wilson Harding Golf Course. They've removed invasive plants from other Park areas including Captain's Roost and the Bird Sanctuary, and have mulched trees in Park Central and Crystal Springs. Zoo Magnet students recently cleaned up the campus-adjacent native garden to create an outdoor environmental laboratory.

FoGP thanks all these students, teachers, and parents who work tirelessly to make the Park we all love a shining example of an urban wilderness environment.

Is your school interested in getting involved in the many FoGP projects that take place throughout the year? Go to our website at *www.friendsofgriffithpark.org* and send an email to our Volunteer Coordinators Laura Howe and Ross Arnold. Follow FoGP on Facebook and Instagram to keep up with Park activities so you, and your school can volunteer with us! Hope to see you out in the Park!

iNaturalist Needs Your Nature Eyes ~Brenda Rees

What's that bug? What's the name of this flower? What kind of bird just flew by? How many times have you asked these questions while out hiking or walking?

You can get all your answers about nature identification when you download and use the free *iNaturalist* app, a community science project and social network of naturalists, citizen scientists and biologists from around the world.

It's simple and easy to do – and your observations will help provide valuable field data that scientists might not get on their own which will help them better understand and protect our natural world. Who knows? Your discovery could be a rare sighting or the first of its kind. Think of the glory and fame.

Launched in 2008, *iNaturalist* is one of the world's most popular nature apps; more than 750,000 scientists and naturalists have uploaded observations – either directly in the field via smart phones or from another device at a later date. It's a joint initiative by the California Academy of Sciences and the National Geographic Society.

The *iNaturalist* platform is easy to navigate. Users create an account to begin uploading images that are tagged with location and date. Community experts examine the photos and confirm or correct a species designation; when three experts agree, the image is deemed "research grade" and it's uploaded to the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) used by scientists around the world.

Most participants contribute information to an existing project, although it is possible to create your own. In the Los Angeles area, you may want to consider uploading your findings to these projects: RASCals (Reptiles and Amphibians of Southern California), Biodiversity of Griffith Park, and Wildlife of Santa Monica Mountains. There are also specific species projects (flying squirrels, fungi, stinkbugs, mule deer, etc.). Even with the convenience of the *iNaturalist* app, most observations are uploaded via the website; hard-core photographers rely on the quality of a SLR camera lens not a smart phone for details.

But *iNaturalist* is not limited to photos; users can upload sound (although limited capacity) which can help identifying frogs, birds and other vocal critters.

Recently, by integrating Image Recognition software into the *iNaturalist* experience, a likely species identification is suggested! If you are prepping to explore a new area, you can search beforehand to see what kinds of flora and fauna have been documented.

Download the *iNaturalist* app or visit *www.iNaturalist.org* and get started! ☘

Finding a Surprise in Griffith Park ~Gerry Hans

Curiosity. Besides "killing the cat," there are many profound alternative sayings about it. "I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious," said Einstein. "Curiosity is lying in wait for every secret," said Emerson.

In my case, my mother didn't call it curiosity. She simply said that of her eight children, I was good at "finding things" on our farm with woods and creeks. Call it curiosity or not, it's always satisfying to find new and surprising things. For me, it's critters and flora, which I've been doing the last 30-plus years mainly in Griffith Park.

Griffith Park offers up surprises regularly that everyone can take advantage of. FoGP reported its documentation of the tiny Western thread snake species last year, and it was the first time a Griffith Park sighting was put on record. Shortly afterward, two other park hikers contacted us saying they, too, had seen this snake and had wondered what it was! Seeing this earthworm-sized snake in the future can be a great surprise for anyone who's curious.

Since there's only one mountain lion in the Park, and he naps during the day, it's highly unlikely you'll see P-22. A bobcat sighting, though, is not as unusual, in fact it's a special treat. And catching a glimpse of a Western grey fox is an equal prize!

Finding a species of a high level of rarity or scarcity can be very gratifying, whether you're a naturalist or not. The Blainesville horned lizard, once widespread across Griffith Park, has disappeared from most park trails including the ridge line trail from Cahuenga Peak to the Wisdom Tree. If you see one anywhere, count yourself extremely lucky; however, hikers and pets should keep their distance. They are adorable, but this lizard can spray toxic blood from its eyes. Flora of Griffith Park is well-documented in the Griffith Park Rare Plant Survey and cataloging which began in 2010 led by FoGP's Scientific Director, Dan Cooper. Yet, we continue to find new species and new locations for some of our rarest ones.

Besides rarity, timing is everything. If you blink, you can miss a plant species' flowering phase. Some of the Park's migratory birds – like the hermit warbler – are here for just days, if that long. And flights of some butterfly species are tightly dictated by the host plant's blooming phase. There's only one solution to compensate for timing: come hike on Park trails often and randomly!

Some final tips for finding surprise species in Griffith Park: Look at small things; take a magnifying glass. Bring along binoculars. Listen. Leave the headset and iPod behind and keep your phone in your pocket!

What will you discover today? ☘

From top: Behr's metalmark, an uncommon small butterfly, tied to beneficial host plant California buckwheat. Middle: gorgeous migratory hermit warbler. Bottom: rare sighting of a California kingsnake, a beautiful harmless species which is unfortunately declining in numbers.

Photos: Gerry Hans

Preparing for Fire Season in Griffith Park *~Brenda Rees*

DATE	LOCATION OF FIRE	SIZE OF BURN
01/31/2018	GRIFFITH PARK AT FERN DELL	0.25 ACRES
04/09/2018	GRIFFITH PARK AT BOY SCOUT ROAD	0.25 ACRES
04/13/2018	GRIFFITH PARK AT BOY SCOUT TRAIL	0.25 ACRES
06/19/2018	GRIFFITH PARK AT LOOP TRAIL	3.5 ACRES
07/02/2018	GRIFFITH PARK AT OLD UPPER ZOO	0.25 ACRES
07/10/2018	GRIFFITH PARK AT OBSERVATORY ROAD	20.1 ACRES
08/12/2018	GRIFFITH PARK AT FERN DELL & RED OAK DRIVE	0.25 ACRES
09/17/2018	GRIFFITH PARK AT LOOP TRAIL	0.25 ACRES
09/17/2018	GRIFFITH PARK AT TOYON TRAIL	2.18 ACRES
11/09/2018	GRIFFITH PARK AT CONDOR CANYON BELOW SKYLINE TRAIL	63.0 ACRES

Chart info: Courtesy of Senior Ranger Adam Dedeaux / Photo: Gerry Hans

The plentiful rains Southern California received this winter thankfully moved the region out of a long-lasting intense drought that persisted from 2011 to 2017. Hills surrounding the Los Angeles Basin – including the peaks and valleys of Griffith Park – were once-again lush and green from January through April, a surprising and welcome sight for many. Seasonal streams flowed through the backcountry and inundated the Park's thirsty trees and vegetation.

With the rain relief, however, comes new concerns about a potentially dangerous wildfire season this summer, following in the wake of California's deadliest and most destructive wildfire season on record in 2018.

After all, while the rains nourished native plants, they also nourished the non-native invasive plants like black mustard which is found in fields and slopes in Griffith Park, says Senior Park Ranger Adam Dedeaux. "When the grasses cure and other plants dry up, there is going to be a lot of fuel out there," he says adding that is why he and his fellow Rangers have been continually preparing and training for fire response and readiness – both internally and with their counterparts at Los Angeles Fire Department.

For the last three years, Dedeaux has been compiling and recording vital statistics and data about brush fires in all of Los Angeles' City Parks. This fire data provides opportunities to examine how fires are starting, concentration and location of fires and other information that could prove important to mitigating fires in the future.

The data also demonstrates the importance of having Park Rangers well-trained in wildland firefighting as well as the continued need for proper equipment and firefighting apparatus that can service more than 16,000 acres of Los Angeles park property.

Looking at the Numbers

In 2018, Park Rangers responded to a total of 124 calls for service related to fires such as brush fires, vehicle fires, illegal burning/barbecues, trash can/rubbish fires and smoke scares. The total acreage of Los Angeles Recreation and Park Property that burned from January to December 2018 was 135. These fires ranged from approximately a quarter acre to as large as 63 acres. Dedeaux stresses that this report may not contain all the fires that occurred on RAP property, but they are the ones that Rangers – along with LAFD – have responded to.

In Griffith Park in 2018, 10 significant fires destroyed a little over 90 total acres. That's two percent of the Park's total acreage!

When you contrast the 2018 fire year with the previous two, there are some interesting observations: 2016 had six fire responses in Griffith Park; four were near the L.A. River. Those blazes destroyed nearly three acres. In 2017, there were 11 fire responses in the Park; again four were near the L.A. River – but the total loss was less than one acre. There were also five fires in Western Canyon in 2017.

The 2018 November blaze near Skyline Trail was particularly intense, consuming 63 acres, making it one of the largest fires in the Park since the massive Griffith Park fire of 2007. The fire was located in an area with steep canyons and narrow fire roads, forcing fire crews to hike in through difficult terrain to determine the best course of action. Eventually fire engines were able to access the area.

The Park Rangers worked with more than 127 LAFD firefighters and additional air and ground support from L.A. County Fire to extinguish the blaze that also threatened the Los Angeles Zoo. This fire was particularly powerful because it was feeding on fuel that hadn't burned in many years.

In recent years, most Griffith Park fires seem to be concentrated in the southern and western portions of the park. "Since it's more developed and contains major attractions, these locations (such as the Observatory area) tend to see more fires," hypothesizes Dedeaux. He believes that many Griffith Park fires have either been started by transients or careless smokers.

Seven of the 10 fires in 2018 were in the general Observatory area (Fern Dell, Western Canyon, and Vermont Canyon), where tourism is concentrated. Having a resident-ranger with a ready brush patrol (pick-up trucks that carry 100 gallons of water) in Fern Dell has proven to be beneficial. Ranger Gary Menjuga quickly responded to a restroom fire in January 2018, keeping it from spreading to nearby mature trees until LAFD arrived in full force.

Fire Ready Rangers

The coordination between the Park Rangers and LAFD begins when there is a call about a fire. Both organizations contact each other about the location and jump into action. Many times during a fire response, red LAFD engines can be seen parked near the white and green ranger engines, vehicles that, according to Dedeaux resemble traditional wildland firefighting engines.

Overall, Park Rangers have at their disposal two engines, seven brush patrols, and two 2000-gallon water tenders that can supply water in the event there are no hydrants near the scene.

It may surprise you, but there are "over a hundred hydrants in the Park," says Dedeaux. There are two main types of hydrants installed in the Park – one resembles the traditional yellow hydrant but another, with a red top, is a high-pressure hydrant.

Fire training and preparation is an ongoing part of the Park Rangers' duties to ensure they're ready for California's year-round fire season.

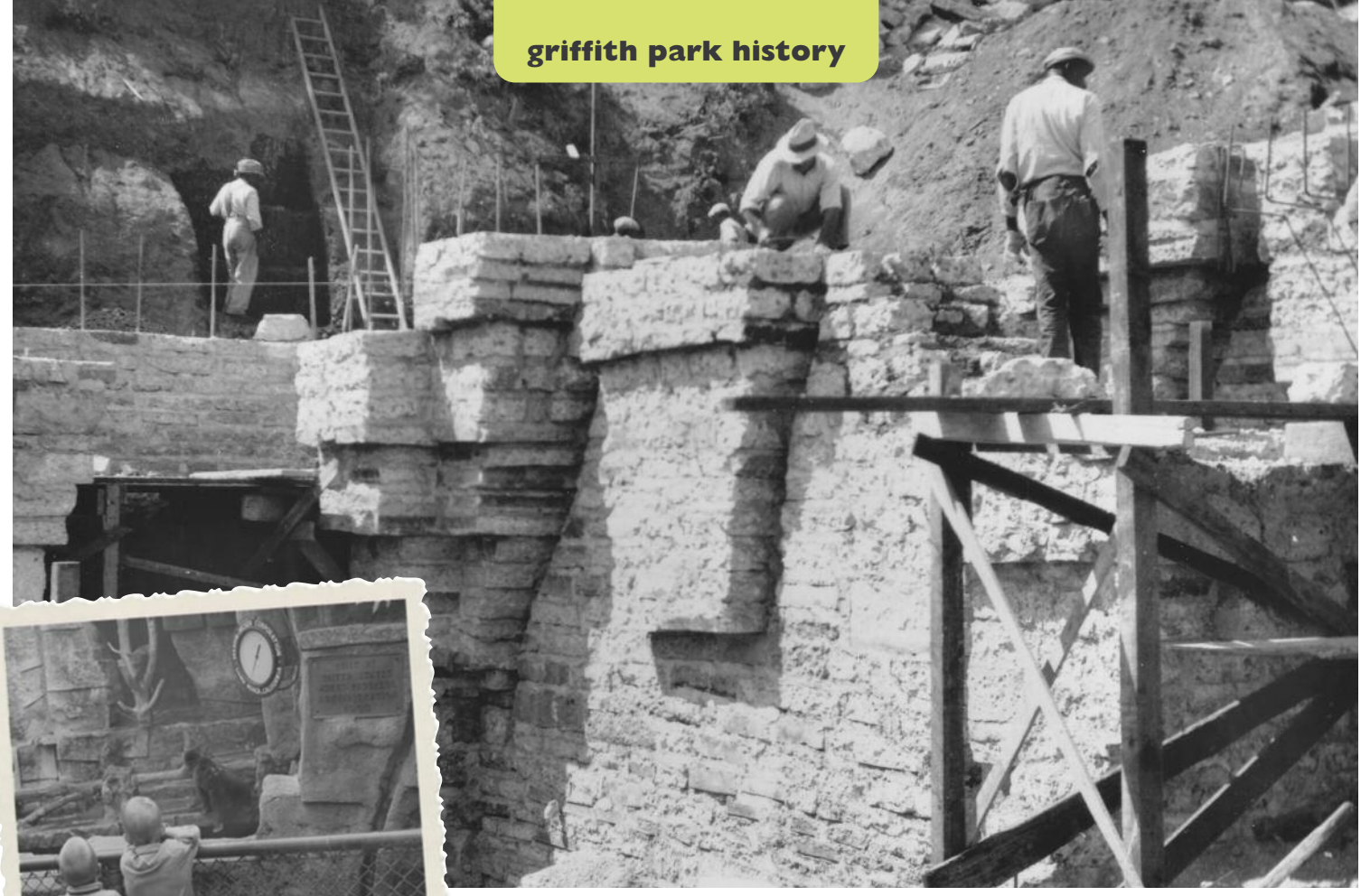
Dedeaux stresses that if the public sees a fire or smoke, do not hesitate. Call 911. The operator will connect you immediately to LAFD which will contact the Rangers.

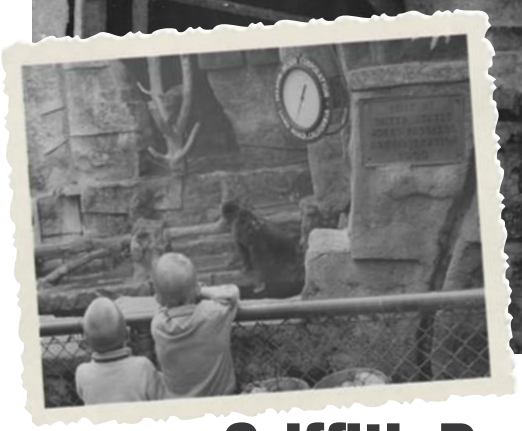
"If you see any kind of unsafe behavior with fire – like an illegal barbecue – that's the time to call," he says, adding that the public can also contact the Ranger Station at any time with a report.

PARK RANGERS (323) 644-6661

Rangers are on duty and/or a dispatcher should answer from about 6:45 AM to 10:30 PM daily. After hours, any calls will go directly to LAPD.

Remember: always call 911 for any emergencies. Your call could save lives, vegetation and wildlife.





Griffith Park Zoo – The Great World Zoo That Never Was (1912-1966)

~Mary Proteau

A Dicey Beginning

"Griffith Park is an ideal location for a zoological garden," an editorial gushed in the July 1907 *Los Angeles Times*. The idea fit perfectly with Col. Griffith's vision, when he created the park in 1896, that it be "a place of recreation and rest for the masses," but Griffith Park Zoo (today, the "Old Zoo") would not become a reality until 1912. There were a couple of zoos in Los Angeles around that time—the Eastlake Park Zoo (now Lincoln Park), and the private Selig Zoo, established by William Selig, who created the earliest and most successful film studio in the country, and brought animals from around the world for his "jungle" films.

In 1920, legendary Park Superintendent Frank Shearer told the *Los Angeles Times*, "Los Angeles can have one of the greatest zoos in the world and Griffith Park in my opinion is the place for it," noted Mike Eberts in his *Griffith Park: A Centennial History*. Timing was ripe, and with the support of park and city officials, along with private stakeholders, financial backing seemed assured. Until, that is, it wasn't.

The result was that the Griffith Park Zoo that opened in 1912 was constructed with a next-to-nothing budget from the L.A. City Council and was pretty much as basic as it gets. As the saying goes, you get what you pay for, and from day one the zoo was fraught with mishaps and missteps. Reports vary as to how many animals first populated the zoo—maybe as few as 15—and where they came from.

In 1885, Col. Griffith—ever the entrepreneur—formed a short-lived joint venture with Dr. Charles Sketchley, a naturalist from South Africa who had a successful ostrich farm near today's Knott's Berry Farm. There was money to be made from breeding (each bird worth about $400) and from the birds' fashion-attracting plumage. Sketchley relocated his farm, which included assorted other animals, to Griffith's Rancho Los Feliz. The public was intrigued by the tall long-necked birds and outsized eggs, and attendance was bolstered by a specially built, albeit tottery, railway that took visitors from the city to the Ostrich Farm. But the attraction closed in 1889 and Sketchley relocated the ostriches to Northern California, leaving other animals behind.

The original population of the Griffith Park Zoo was likely cobbled from Sketchley's abandoned animals, along with animals "from the estate of railroad builder Frank Murphy who had kept his own private zoo," writes Eberts. In any case, in 1913 the zoo's population grew with the arrival of about 100 frail animals from the shuttered, scandal-ridden Eastlake Park Zoo.

On Shaky Ground

Griffith Park Zoo was located in a canyon near Bee Rock. Wolves, monkeys, bobcats, deer and others were housed in rudimentary cages and enclosures, the bears in hillside caves. Larger animals were confined in jerry-rigged corrals. In 1914, an aviary, bear pits and more cages were constructed. But small animals escaped fragile structures,

and the slipshod facilities and restrictive quarters boded misfortunes to come. Eberts relates in his article "Two Zoos in Griffith Park," that in 1916 sewage was found to be draining into the Los Angeles River, almost shutting the zoo; and that many cats died after being fed horse meat during WWI when the City Council, citing budget issues, withdrew authorization to provide beef.

By the mid-1920s, closure loomed when park management, and even Col. Griffith's son Van, voiced displeasure. But the zoo struggled on, taking in more animals. In a 2012 Los Angeles Public Library article, librarian Christina Rice, wrote that animals from the Selig Zoo, having been shuttled from one place to another after its 1923 closing, were given to the Griffith Park Zoo.

In the mid-1930s, a glimmer of hope for a great world park emerged with a major years-long overhaul by the Works Progress Administration. But even this expensive venture—new bear caves alone cost $500,000—were not enough to reverse the zoo's shaky future. For starters, moving the animals into their new digs didn't go without misadventure. In Hadley Meares' KCET article, "A Whimpering Roar," she relates a series of fiascoes that included zoo superintendent Byron Gibson's struggle getting two bears into their new space; Elsie finally succumbed to a squirt of cold water, and Alice caved to sugar and raisin bread. But Rufus, a 625-pound lion, wound up stuck in a deep moat overnight.

The ensuing years brought more grief and bad press. A baby zebra and young bear suffered broken necks. Bears escaped an enclosure during a severe 1935 flood. Fights between tortoises and other animals, which terrified other nearby animals and birds, were broken up by caretakers.

In April 1934, Topsy, a Bactrian camel and star attraction, died. California's *Madera Tribune* headlined, "The Last American Camel." Topsy was said to have been one of the last—if not the last—survivor of camel herds that once carried packs across the mountains of southeastern California. She appeared in Fox movies and with the Ringling Brothers Circus. After Topsy's two humps were disfigured in a train accident, she was taken in by the Griffith Park Zoo to spend the remainder of her 80+ years in peace.

A bubble of hope for the beleaguered facility came during the Great Depression and WWII when, seeking solace in whatever entertainment they could find—and afford—the number of visitors rose significantly. But calamity followed calamity, and the specter of closure loomed—again.

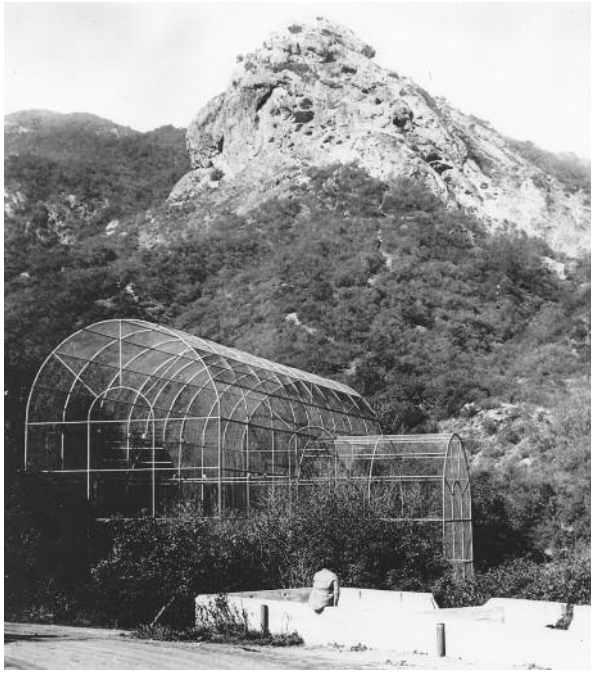
Vision of a Great World Zoo Dashed

In July 1949, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that chief animal keeper Charles Allen, concerned for the animals' well-being, called for a bigger zoo. Come the 1950s, the zoo's population had grown to 1,000 animals, further straining the doddering facility and imperiling the animals in their overcrowded quarters. Their sorry plight did not escape visitors, and complaints from zoo and local officials and other zoos grew more strident. Tension among employees and rumors of animal mistreatment resulted in occasional fights among employees, and local papers wrote of clashes among some of the overly stressed animals.

In Eberts' *Centennial History* he wrote of ongoing controversy and scandal,"…a horticulturist as director…trading trained animals for allegedly inferior stock…[and] animals donated to the zoo sold for private gain." Despite all, the embattled zoo remained open into the early 1960s. But things were coming to a head. It was time that Los Angeles had a zoo that matched the city's idea of itself as a budding great city of the world.

In 1958, voters supported $8 million dollar bond to fund a new zoo. This triggered several years of headline-making financial and political wrangling and contentious debate regarding the site and management of the new zoo. Finally, this chapter was over. The Griffith Park Zoo that had opened in 1912 officially closed five decades later, in August 1966. With its demise, Park Superintendent Frank Shearer's long-ago notion of Los Angeles as home to "one of the greatest zoos in the world" was not to be.

Then, on December 6, 1966, just two miles from the strangely eerie remains of the Old Zoo that can be seen today, the Los Angeles Zoo and Botanical Gardens opened with 2,000 animals…and another dream for a great zoo was born. ⚘



Facing page photos:
In 1935, WPA workmen were building the bear grottos, and (inset photo) in 1938 their hard work became the backdrop for bears in the enclosure. Note the clock and plaque on the wall which has long since disappeared.
Photos, this page:
center: Signage in grotto marks this as the site of the Old Zoo from 1912 to 1965 when the new LA Zoo was built along Crystal Springs across from the Autry Museum.
right: Bee Rock stands high above the (long gone) Bird Aviary.
left: Zookeeper Van Yrineo sits astride giant tortoise.

All photos except small signage photo courtesy of Paul Hernandez and Griffith Park Historical Society (GPHS). More photos are available on the FoGP website.

Bluebirds of Happiness *~Brenda Rees*

"We drove 'em out and we can help them establish a home here once again," says Bruce Painter, a Friends of Griffith Park member talking about the colorful Western bluebird, once a regular resident of Griffith Park.

Growing up in Louisiana and now retired here in Southern California, Bruce fondly remembers watching Eastern bluebirds fluttering in the skies of his childhood. "I like to see these little things and thought maybe others would enjoy seeing them too." The bluebird project Painter brought to Griffith Park three years ago may finally be showing signs of fruition.

Photo: Gerry Hans

Having no luck in the past two years of attracting a mating bluebird couple to his eight homemade nesting boxes scattered throughout the Park, Bruce was thrilled this year to discover five blue-colored eggs in one of the boxes. He was overjoyed to see that a few weeks later those eggs hatched! Additionally, he found a second pair of bluebirds building in another box! In the past, flycatchers and wrens had taken over some of the boxes while others had remained empty.

"If they are successful, maybe they will start a community again of bluebirds here," says Bruce. After all, he points to the success of Orange County's Southern California Bluebird Club that started with one nesting pair in 2006 and today witnesses more than 7,000 hatchings per year.

"If Orange County can do it, why can't we do it here in Los Angeles?" he asks.

To be fair, that club has more than 200 members; Bruce is a one-man show at Griffith Park who updates Friends of Griffith Park on box activity. He receives annual approval from LA Recreation and Parks to strategically place the nesting boxes in the Park; he originally positioned 12 but four of those have been vandalized or stolen.

In the coming years, Bruce wants to place more boxes for these small cavity-nesters that typically carve out space in rotting or dead trees as well as in the holes of woodpeckers. Since dead and diseased trees are systematically removed from Griffith Park, bluebird pairs had little options but to nest elsewhere.

But with nesting boxes, throngs of little bluebirds of happiness could abundantly return again to reshape the diversity of wildlife found in Griffith Park. We will keep you updated on Project Bluebird!

Reflections on the New Anza Trail Native Garden

~Katherine Pakradouni

We often think of the early history of California as beginning with the very first colonists and settlers from Europe who established the cities we know and love. In reality, that slice of history from the textbooks represents such a small and recent fragment of time compared with the long-standing natural history of this area. Before the New World was ever called the New World, before California was called California, and before Los Angeles was called Los Angeles, this land where we now reside was once a living, breathing network of native plants, animals, and people, of which only fragmented remnants remain today.

Griffith Park is one such remnant, an urban wilderness within the heart of a major metropolis that still contains evidence of its remarkable natural heritage. Despite high levels of recreational human activity, drought, and the presence of invasive species, the Park is still host to incredible biodiversity, the most essential of which

is its indigenous flora. Insects, rabbits, songbirds, lizards, deer, coyotes, and even our beloved P-22 can credit their survival to the plants that provide them with food, or provide their prey with food. Native plants are the building blocks of the entire food web, and it is essential that we protect, as well as augment, the natural wildlife habitat of Griffith Park and that of Los Angeles as a whole through the creation of native landscapes.

I felt especially honored to help in this capacity on the Anza Trail Native Garden project spearheaded by Friends of Griffith Park this spring. Through my work as the propagation specialist for *Grown in LA*, and with the permission of LA Recreation and Parks, I collected seeds from our local plant species in the Park and grew them at the old Commonwealth Nursery. These plants were then planted by volunteers this April along a stretch of the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail near the Crystal Springs Picnic Area and new education signage was erected to teach passersby about the natural history of the area.

The garden is already inviting wildlife back to the site. Hummingbirds are visiting the flowers of the already blooming showy penstemon, black sage, and sticky monkeyflower. Butterflies are alighting on the coast bush sunflower and laying eggs on the coffeeberry shrubs. The California sagebrush, aside from earning its moniker "cowboy cologne" because of its incredible scent, is attracting ladybugs that will prey on insect pests in the landscape. When it is mature, the toyon shrubs at the back of the garden will provide berries for birds during the middle of winter when all other food sources are scarce. And when the flowers have all gone to seed, not only will seed-eating birds get a feast, but I myself will be able to return to the garden to collect seeds for future *Grown in LA* propagation efforts, so that we may continue to implement these kinds of projects in Griffith Park and beyond.

You, too, can be a part of this concerted effort to revive the vitality and enhance the biodiversity of Los Angeles by supporting *Grown in LA*'s efforts to produce locally-sourced native plants for public projects such as this.

Katherine Pakradouni is a Propagation Specialist with Grown in LA. Get more information at www.growninla.org

Photo, top: Brenda Rees, bottom: Dora Herrera

Over a period of several weekends and hours of work from LA Recreation and Parks maintenance crews, volunteers helped mulch this underutilized, overgrown space between the equestrian/hiking trail and golf course (across from Crystal Springs Picnic Area). We then came back to place the *Grown in LA* plantings propagated from seeds collected in the area.

But it's through the combined efforts of FoGP boardmember Laura Howe and volunteer coordinator Ross Arnold that we've managed to achieve over a dozen volunteer projects this year, and the projects keep on coming. You can help support the Park by volunteering a few hours!

Photo: Gerry Hans

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

Friends of Griffith Park was recently joined in Park Central by a group of very enthusiastic young volunteers and their parents where they were given a brief rundown on the joys of mulching by volunteer coordinator Ross Arnold, then they got to work. Their efforts are very important to the health of the Park.

Photo: Kathryn Louyse

FoGP's Summer Science Series is Coming to the Los Feliz Library

LOS FELIZ BRANCH LIBRARY located at 1874 Hillhurst Avenue 90027

Thurs., June 27, 2019
Seed Conservation in GP

Thurs., July 11, 2019
Griffith Park Fires - Chapter 3

Thurs., Aug. 8, 2019
2019 Raptor Study Results