



the griffith reporter

the newsletter of friends of griffith park/fall 2015



LA River kayaker, George Wolfe traverses the river to prove the river's navigability in early 2008.

Earlier this year Mayor Eric Garcetti travelled to Washington, D.C. to garner support and funding for the eventual restoration of the Los Angeles River to a more natural state.

As rivers go, the Los Angeles River is relatively short, encompassing a mere 51 miles. Stretching from the confluence of Arroyo Calabasas and Bell Creek in Canoga Park to the north, the river winds through various communities, meanders along Griffith Park, curves down through the City of Los Angeles and finally empties into the Pacific Ocean at Long Beach. The sandy-bottomed area through the eastern edge of Griffith Park allows foliage to take root and often wildlife other than river fowl has been spotted on these islands in the middle of the river.

For many years, the river was considered nothing more than a giant concrete ditch whose sole purpose was to shift floodwaters away from communities, down the channel and into the ocean. Over the decades, several major floods had impacted communities along the frontage. In 1889 the LA River overflowed its banks and created a mile-wide flood zone affecting communities (including Los Angeles proper) for upwards of six weeks. Following the 1914 flood, plans were put in place to better control the flow of water during rainy seasons. However, these early attempts at controlling Mother Nature ended with the 1934 flood in which a

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The Rim of the Valley



Congressman Adam Schiff addresses community members at a recent event in Griffith Park.

FoGP board member Linda Othenin-Girard recently sat down with Congressman Adam Schiff, representing California's 28th District which includes Griffith Park and surrounding communities. As a long-time champion of the environment, Schiff is the author of the *Rim of the Valley Corridor Study Act*, signed into law by then President George W. Bush in 2008.

Linda Othenin-Girard: Congressman Schiff, thanks for joining me today.

Adam Schiff: Great to be with you.

LOG: What is the *Rim of the Valley*?

AS: The *Rim of the Valley* is an area that covers several of the mountain ranges and

wildlife corridors in our region. It's an area that is one of the rarest habitats in the world, a Mediterranean chaparral habitat that we're trying to preserve for future generations. But when people talk about the *Rim of the Valley*, what they're referring to is a multi-year study that's been going on to explore whether that area ought to become part of the SMMNRA (Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area) and be preserved so that we can keep beautiful mountain lions alive. So we can continue to see bears come down into the foothills and eat meatballs out of peoples' garages, and enjoy the abundant wildlife around us. So *Rim of the Valley* has become synonymous with one of the largest open space preservation efforts in years.

LOG: How did you become interested in preserving this area?

AS: As a State Senator I came into contact with large groups of constituents who were really dedicated to the preservation of open space. They were worried about runaway development of the hillsides, losing a lot of what attracted them to move to Los Angeles to begin with. They wanted to make sure they could pass on to their kids and grandkids the same kind of wonderful access to wildlife that they had when they were young. In the 1970s Congress had the foresight to create one of the largest urban parks in the country, the SMMNRA, and it made me wonder whether Congress today would have the same foresight. Now they knew back in the '70s LA was going to continue to grow, and if they didn't act to preserve some of this beautiful wilderness area it would be gone for good, and we are now confronting a very similar situation. I introduced legislation about ten years ago to study a dramatic expansion of the recreation areas in our region. It took years to get passed, to get funded, it's

Rim of the Valley continues on page 3

thoughts from the president



Friends of Griffith Park board members meet with newly-elected CD4 Councilmember, David Ryu (center). *From front left:* Carol Brusha, Felix Martinez, Marian Dodge, Dora Herrera, Laura Howe, Rex Link. *Back:* Kathryn Louyse, Lucinda Phillips, President Gerry Hans, Mary Button, Lucy Gonzalez, Miguel Ordenaño, Al Moggia and Richard Stanley. Not pictured: Sarah Napier and Linda Othenin-Girard.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *The Griffith Reporter*. The park has many challenges — some long-standing, some new. Our organization tries to find balance in dealing with issues effectively. Above all, we advocate for the value of preserving nature for LA's citizens and strive to keep the park on track with the wishes of its benefactor, Colonel Griffith J. Griffith.

New on the scene representing Council District 4 is Councilmember David Ryu. David took the time to meet with our full board of directors within weeks of taking office. Councilmember Ryu is a listener, a fast learner, and highly inspired. He is making up quickly for what he didn't know about Griffith Park. And fortunately, two FoGP board members are serving on Ryu's Transition Advisory Team. We hope you will welcome David as a thoughtful leader for Griffith Park's future.

Also relatively new on the scene is a functioning Park Advisory Board (PAB) specifically for Griffith Park. The PAB was mandated by the "Vision for Griffith Park" plan which was finally adopted by Rec and Parks in 2014, largely the product of the efforts by the Master Plan Working Group which first convened in 2005!

The Griffith Park PAB meets on fourth Thursdays each month at the Griffith Park Visitor Center at 6:30 pm — a public meeting under the Brown Act, so anyone may participate and make comment. Two FoGP boardmembers, Laura Howe and Lucinda Phillips are actively engaged members of GPAB. We encourage you to attend these meetings which aim to promote better transparency on park issues and to advise Rec and Parks.

Now, let's have a heart-to-heart talk about the use of rat poisons, aka, rodenticides. Don't! We've been preaching this a lot. Our wildlife are challenged enough by the drought, habitat fragmentation and everything else!

You may have read that a young mountain lion – P34 – recently succumbed to rat poisoning near Malibu. We're experiencing the same problems here in Griffith Park.

I personally found a dead Western gray squirrel, our native tree squirrel, near the Fern Dell area. At first glance I thought it was road kill since it was on the side of Western Canyon

Road. However, with no visible signs of trauma I became suspicious. Our organization had recently funded a gray squirrel genetic study being conducted by CSULA graduate student, Chris DeMarco. Knowing that he could use some of the squirrel for its genetic material, I collected it with the permission of Park Rangers.

After receiving the genetic material, Chris encouraged us to invest in an analysis for the presence of rodenticides by sending a liver tissue sample to UC Davis Veterinary laboratory. The results came back: positive for first generation rodenticide, Diphacinone. Diphacinone has been the most frequently detected compound found in bobcats blood samples during past studies which involved 195 bobcats in the Santa Monica Mountains, including Griffith Park. It was also one of the two rodenticides compounds detected in P22 when he was found sickened in 2014.

While we cannot definitively say this Western gray squirrel's cause of death was due to rodenticide poisoning, the presence in gray squirrels further enlightens us to the serious nature of our unintentional poisoning of the wild. FoGP believes that elimination of the use of rodenticides needs to become a priority for the City, Rec and Parks, and residents near any wildlife habitat areas.

I'm pleased with the dedication of our board of directors who all carry out their tasks on a non-paid basis, which allows our organization to operate lean. We work hard for Griffith Park. We've kept up our volunteer efforts and our school children hikes throughout the year, and we've also stepped up educational programming open to the public including lectures and outings.

Please continue to visit our website and our Facebook page. And we encourage you to continue supporting our work through a membership donation.


Gerry Hans

Rim of the Valley continued from page 1 taken years to undertake the actual study itself, but that study now is nearing conclusion and we've had thousands and thousands of people provide public comment and input has been overwhelmingly in favor of expanding this national park to include the *Rim of the Valley*.

LOG: The plan and the study provide four options for the National Park Service to consider. Can you describe briefly what those options are?

AS: The options really go essentially anywhere from the status quo to more than doubling or tripling the size of the existing national recreation area. We proposed a combination of two of the larger alternatives, C and D, that would not only maintain a lot of the recreational opportunities within the *Rim of the Valley*, but make sure that the *Rim of the Valley* areas that were incorporated into the park would be sufficient to include these important wildlife corridors. We just saw a couple weeks ago, another mountain lion killed trying to cross the freeway. We'd like to make sure that we preserve a broad enough space and the interconnectivity of these different habitats so that you can have these magnificent cats survive. So we have really recommended the largest alternative that has been proposed. The Park Service recommended the next to largest alternative which would still be a doubling of the size of the existing park and I was frankly pleased that they went as far as they did. They went big. We are pushing now for the final report to embrace the most expansive alternative.

LOG: So how is this huge park area going to be managed?

AS: The challenge is we haven't devoted adequate resources to the maintenance of the parks that we already have. The small smattering of people that have expressed reservations about expansion of the parks have largely done so because they said, "We're not investing enough in existing parks; why do we want to expand the parks?" There is some merit to this point. We aren't investing enough in existing parks, but in my view that's not an argument to say we don't want to preserve any new park land because frankly, those areas are going to be gone if we don't act to better maintain or preserve them. So we need to do both. We need to invest more in the maintenance of our current parks, and we need to continue expanding those park areas that maintain what people really love about Los Angeles which is we are one of the very few major cities in America where you can live in an urban/suburban environment and still have immediate access to the most incredible wildlife.

LOG: What about private property rights people who feel that maybe this consolidation will keep them from doing what they want to do with their own private property?

AS: We probably received about 5,000 comments in the public comment period and of those 5,000 maybe there were a few dozen that were opposed, so it's a very small group. Some of the folks in that group are already within the existing SMMNRA and they don't like the Park Service. That is a discrete point of view but it frankly is shared by very few people.

LOG: What kind of impact will this new organization have on the average person who goes to Griffith Park?

AS: I don't know if you'll see differences in Griffith Park itself but I think most park goers tend to like the outdoors; they like having all that green space and area to contemplate nature and so it's not a surprise that many people who utilize Griffith Park also utilize the Verdugo Mountains, the Santa Susanas, the San Gabriels and the Angeles National Forest. If you look at P22, he would not have been able to make it to Griffith Park had it not been for the *Rim of the Valley*. If those areas are gone it would be very hard for a cat like that to survive. So there is an impact on Griffith Park, but I think in the broader context the real impact is that for those that really cherish open space and the accessibility to nature, this is a big step in the right direction.

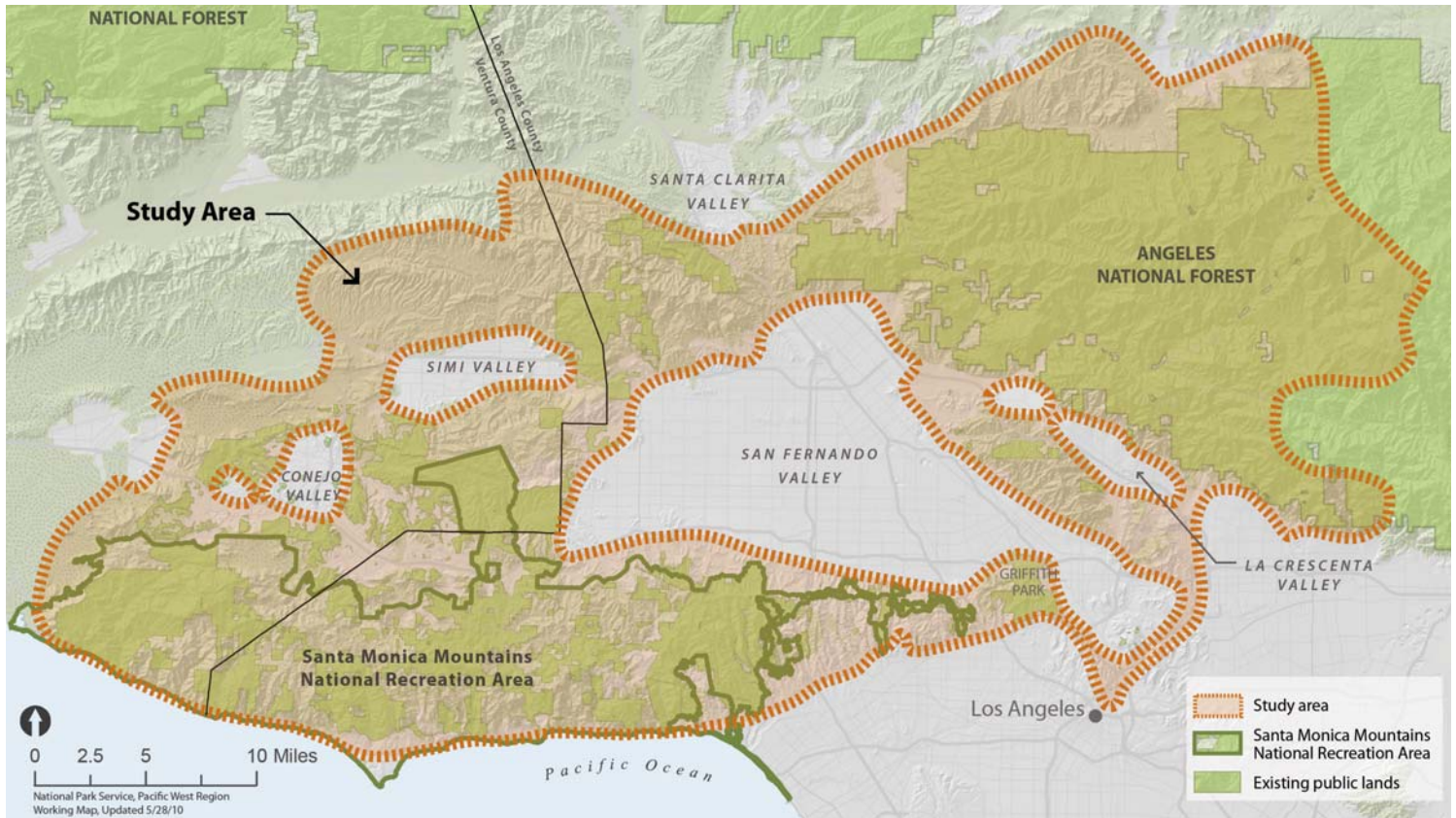
LOG: There are people who would like to see the Verdugo Wash included in the *Rim of the Valley* especially in light of what you just mentioned about wildlife connectivity. How do you feel about adding it to the plan?

AS: I am completely open to these suggestions and this is a good opportunity for me to talk about how the process works. The Park Service has released a draft report and they are now working on a final report, so the public has a final opportunity to weigh in before they come up with that final draft. And we've been pushing them to work on this in a timely way, so that we can try to move legislation this session. But it's important to know that the report and recommendations of the Park Service are only that. They are a study and a recommendation. None of that is set in stone. What is necessary and the next step in the process is that I'll introduce a bill to set out what the new boundaries of that park should be. It really is up to the public to decide what we want. We want to be guided by what the Park Service has to say both because they are experts in some of the wilderness and connectivity issues but also because it's easier to get legislation passed with their support than over their opposition. Once they come out with their final report, I want to get feedback from all those in the region. What changes do they think should be made? So I'm very open to hearing a case made for the Verdugo Wash and I look forward to having those conversations.

LOG: And finally. What will this cost and who will pay for it?

AS: So far each of these studies has cost four or five hundred thousand dollars. The cost in terms of the recreation area itself would be additional management which might require additional personnel. I would hope that we would want to see not just a new park on paper but in fact the direction of resources to that new park; to figure out what to do after fires; what to do in terms of non-native species; what to do in terms of trails, and wildlife preservation. I would want to see us work with the public and the Park Service together, to figure out the game plan. To the degree that we can acquire new resources for this, it makes it all the more doable. I know there've been concerns with the San Gabriel Monument that was just established by the *Rim of the Valley continues on page 4*

THE RIM OF THE VALLEY



Pacific West Region Working Map from the National Park Service brochure, Updated 5/28/10

Rim of the Valley continued from page 3 Obama administration, that while there is a new monument there they don't see much on the ground. Apart from the marker they don't see additional resources, in terms of trail maintenance and other things. So I think the first step is to make sure we have some rubric in which we can direct resources. If they are outside of the park it is very hard to direct federal resources, but if we are successful, then we want

to make sure to obtain the resources to really maintain and preserves those areas.

LOG: Congressman Schiff, thank you very much.

This interview can be heard in its entirety on the FoGP website at friendsofgriffithpark.org

A River Runs Through it continued from page 1



Recent kayaking tours begin in Atwater Village heading slightly south along the LA River.

sizable number of properties were destroyed and people killed. Only then did the populace call for stronger measures to help combat river flooding. In 1935, the LA County Flood Control District applied for and received federal (WPA) funding to help tame the river. In 1938, before channelization could be completed, another massive flood cost over 100 lives and nearly \$35 million in property damage. For many years after flood control measures were finally completed, the LA River became known as the LA Ditch.

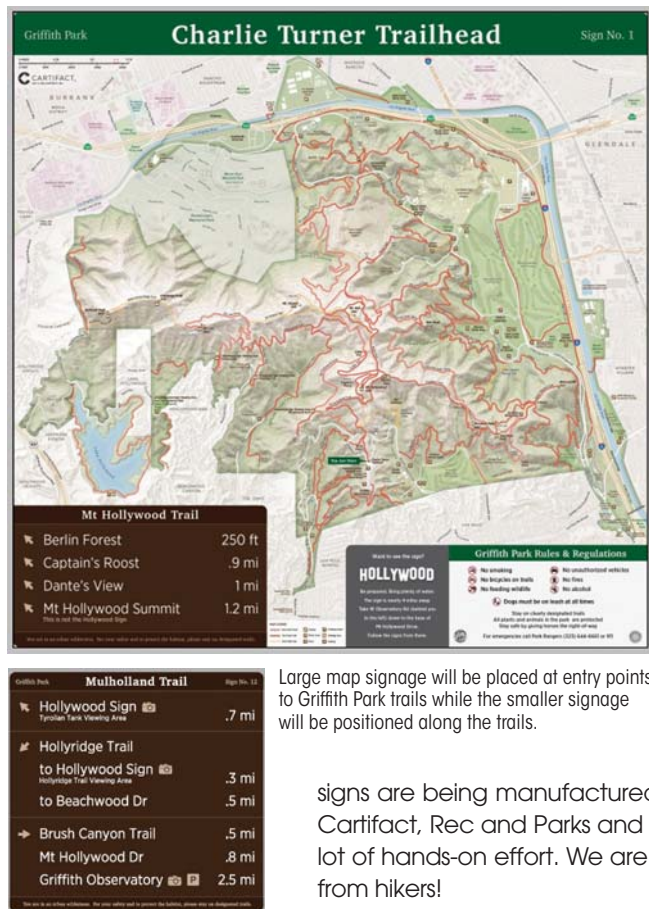
In 1972, things began to change for the river with the passage of President Richard Nixon's Clean Water Act. According to environmentalist Joe Linton "This is very important, because navigability is one of the conditions that assures that a river and its tributaries will be protected... that law can be summarized as stating that all our nation's waters will be swimmable and fishable - which is to say, safe for humans and for wildlife." In 2006 the Supreme Court ruled that the Clean Water Act would not protect certain seasonable streams, putting the LA River in jeopardy. However in 2010, the Environmental Protection Agency put those concerns to rest by establishing once and for all, the legitimacy of this waterway.

As a new chapter unfolds for the Los Angeles River, hopefully it will create a resurgence for the Los Angeles community as well.

~ Kathryn Louyse

see also *The Los Angeles River Needs to Lose Weights*, page 15

Trail Signage is a Necessity in Griffith Park



Large map signage will be placed at entry points to Griffith Park trails while the smaller signage will be positioned along the trails.

signs are being manufactured and should be placed by the end of year. Thanks to the Park Rangers, to Cartifact, Rec and Parks and the team that came together to make this happen. Designing signs takes a lot of hands-on effort. We are proud to have participated in their creation and look forward to feedback from hikers!

Friends of Griffith Park has long-recognized the dire need for directional trail signage in the park, especially in areas where ill-prepared tourists frequently get lost and don't realize the distance to destinations like the Hollywood Sign.

Prop K money became available for Park signage in 2011, but never even made it to a demonstration project phase. FoGP participated in the drive to get signage installed; however the effort fell on deaf ears.

This year, with the plethora of tourists being diverted to Griffith Observatory as a starting point on their quest for "selfies" and treks to the Hollywood Sign, Rec and Parks General Manager Mike Shull declared signs a critical step for the safety of park patrons. The initial focus for trail signage was to be the area most heavily used by tourists, spanning from the Observatory to Mt. Hollywood, and to the Hollywood Sign at Mt. Lee.

Fortunately, our Park Rangers have extensive knowledge of the trails and the trouble spots for hikers. Senior Ranger Adam Dedeaux led the effort which was coordinated through an ad hoc committee of the Park Advisory Board chaired by FoGP board member Laura Howe. Other FoGP board members who know the park like the back of their hands participated as advisors in the process. Cartifact, the firm that produced park maps for Council District 4, handled the design.

The end result is the creation of four trailhead signs and twenty-three directional trail signs. The signs are simple, low-profile and are "park style," similar to those found in our national parks. At the time of this writing, the

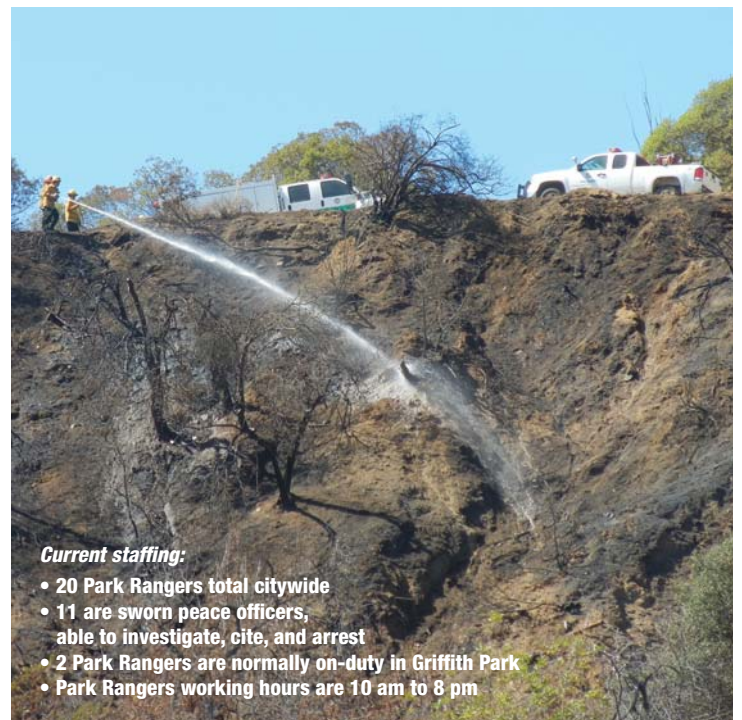
~ Gerry Hans

Rangers to the Rescue

Once again our Park Rangers have come riding in on their white steeds to save the damsel in distress from the fire-breathing dragon. Okay, so the white steed is a white water truck. In early September a fire broke out in the canyon just south of the Boys Camp. Because of the severe drought and high fire danger, Rangers have been keeping a water truck in front of the Ranger Station. First on the scene, they held the fire at Bill Eckert Trail and stopped it from going any further into the park. Griffith Superintendent Joe Salas was effusive in his praise for the Park Rangers. Although LAFD, Glendale Fire, Burbank Fire, and LA County Fire helicopters all responded under the mutual aid agreement, it was the Park Rangers' immediate response that contained the fire to about five acres.

Rangers have rescued numerous hikers who attempted steep trails, or have run out of water, were injured, or were lost. It is remarkable that Rangers are able to keep everyone safe while severely understaffed considering the number of visitors and the size of the park.

We support the hiring of more rangers until numbers reach the pre-recession level of 60 Park Rangers.



Current staffing:

- 20 Park Rangers total citywide
- 11 are sworn peace officers, able to investigate, cite, and arrest
- 2 Park Rangers are normally on-duty in Griffith Park
- Park Rangers working hours are 10 am to 8 pm



Scenes from an Anza training session... after a morning of discussion about the expedition, participants walked a portion of the Anza trail that borders Griffith Park.

Northward Along the Anza Trail

How did your family get to California and when did they arrive? These are just some of the questions explored at an Anza Trail Ambassador training session held in May.

National Park Service Interpretive Specialist Hale Sargent presented a workshop entitled *Interpreting the Anza Trail in Griffith Park* sponsored by Friends of Griffith Park. By relating the experience of the Anza expedition to our own experiences, he drew us into the lives of expedition members. Training participants included five Park Rangers, six FoGP board members, and three neighbors. During introductions, we discovered that many attendees and their families, including a part-Native American, had originally come to California seeking a better life just as members of the Anza expedition had done in 1776.

Participants explored the Anza expedition from various points of view including the lives and hardships encountered by soldiers, priests, Native Americans and the women who brought their families along the potentially dangerous route that began in Mexico and journeyed north to establish San Francisco and claim California for Spain.

Ranger Sargent noted that José Vicente Feliz was unique among the expedition members in that he rose to prominence when he was assigned as Comisionado of El Pueblo de Los Angeles and granted Rancho Los Feliz. It was the second generation of expedition members who had travelled to San Francisco that eventually became the movers and shakers of that city.

In keeping with the theme of the original Anza expedition members from Mexico, participants enjoyed a delicious lunch from Yuca's on Hollywood.

The training event kicked off the NPS Centennial campaign *Find Your Park* — a celebration of all parks — city, county, state and national. Share your own park story at www.findyourpark.com.

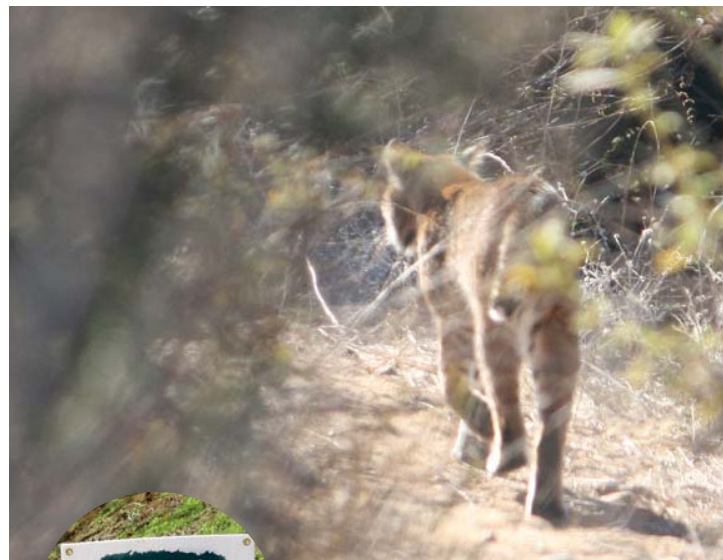
California Leads Nation With Bobcat Trapping Ban

California Department of Fish and Wildlife will no longer issue commercial permits to trap and kill bobcats after a hold-your-breath 3 to 2 vote was taken by the agency's Commission in August in favor of a total trapping ban. With the spotted pelts of bobcats going for upwards of a \$1,000, and wild game trapping entrenched as a Western frontier sport, this was not an easy win. Persistent advocates convinced the Commission with thousands of letters citing animal rights, as well as solid natural science arguments.

Friends of Griffith Park, armed with first-hand experience with bobcats in Griffith Park and its own scientific advisory team, argued that harvesting bobcats potentially endangers the genetic health of populations. While populations may recover after depletions within allowed trapping areas, the composition of the gene pool may become shallow. This is especially important when other stressors, such as drought, rodenticide poisoning and freeway road kill have become more prevalent in recent decades. Friends of Griffith Park also argued that commercial trapping may be occurring more at periphery areas where wildlife connectivity to other areas is most critical for genetic variability.

Commercial trapping is not an issue in Griffith Park or in other Santa Monica Mountains wilderness areas, but the species' health needs to be looked at on a global basis. The public's support for this statewide ban completely dwarfed those who wanted to continue the practice which involves about one hundred trappers. Again, California sets a standard for the rest of the country to follow.

~ Gerry Hans



If you notice this signage along your hike in the Park, it means there is a Friends of Griffith Park sponsored event somewhere up ahead. FoGP events include graffiti paint removals and trash pickups in the Old Zoo as well as native plantings and watering... It's easy to get involved — and remember, it's the people's Park!

Athletes Shine at the Special Olympics in Griffith Park



The City of Los Angeles hosted the 28th Special Olympics World Games in July for 7,000 athletes from 177 countries in sites throughout the city. Griffith Park played an important role in the games, hosting equestrian events at the Los Angeles Equestrian Center and the golf competition at Wilson-Harding Golf Courses.

Bryan McQueeney organized the equestrian events for these Special Olympics. Equestrian groups from throughout Southern California loaned 90 horses for riders. It was a challenge to match horses to the size and ability of the individual competitors. The dressage competitors were a study in concentration as they put their horses through their paces around the course. Only after their competition was over and they were leaving the arena did the athletes break into broad smiles when they looked to the stands and saw all the "happy hands." "Happy hands" is a silent waving of the hands back and forth so as not to spook the horses. The Equestrian Center also provided entertainment such as Medieval Times and the LAPD Mounted Unit during the lunch break for the athletes and spectators.

Nearby at Wilson-Harding Golf Courses, Special Olympic athletes were enjoying the beautiful setting the course provides. An American athlete took home the gold with a twelve under par.

Our thanks to the Department of Recreation and Parks and to all the volunteers from the equestrian and golf communities who helped make this event a huge success, a special moment for the athletes, and a proud moment for the City of Los Angeles.

~ Marian Dodge

Restoring Captain's Roost



An enthusiastic team of Friends of Griffith Park volunteers made the trek up to Captain's Roost on Sunday, April 12 to begin restoration in this popular folk garden which had been heavily damaged in the 2007 Griffith Park fire. Although stories differ on how this area came to be known as "Captain's Roost," many agree an indi-

vidual known only as "The Captain" began planting and caring for the small garden in the early 1940s, but by the late '40s, had disappeared from the scene. After the garden burned in a 1961 fire, another caretaker began tending the garden. Eventually she too retired, and the garden was left to anyone willing to care for it. Some began planting non-natives, including several palm trees which still bear scars from the '07 fire.

Previous attempts to restore this area were stymied by the failure of the irrigation system but once the system was repaired, we were ready to go. Volunteer Services Director Laura Howe, trained by TreePeople, led the expedition. Landscape specialists helped in the selection of the California native plants. FoGP President Gerry Hans and Park Rangers delivered the plants while a Rec and Parks maintenance crew delivered a truck-load of mulch to the site. The potted plants were carefully positioned where they were to be planted and Laura gave a demonstration of proper planting technique; it's an art.

Then the 35 intrepid volunteers dug in — literally. The ground proved to be harder than anticipated which required some heavy-duty shovel stomping. Sometimes the ground won in spite of our best efforts and sweat equity and the plant was moved to another location. The depth of the hole was carefully measured, the plant tucked in, gift wrapped in a chicken wire cage to protect it from being trampled, the soil patted down, a berm formed around the plant to keep the water in, and finally a good layer of mulch covered the basin. Then, on to the next plant. The process was repeated until all 150 plants were safely in the ground. Laura turned the spigot and each plant got a nice drink of water. The solar-powered smart irrigation system will water the plants until they are established. Another job well done, everyone!

Hikers on the way to Mt. Hollywood stopped to admire our handiwork. One of those admirers was then Councilman Tom LaBonge who paused on his morning hike to plant one of the natives.

This project was made possible by a kind and generous donor, the cooperation of the Department of Recreation and Parks, our fabulous volunteers, and members like you.

~ Laura Howe and Marian Dodge



Friends of Griffith Park has the best group of volunteers who consistently come out to help whenever the need arises. We cannot thank you enough for all your efforts which help to make this Park so special to anyone who visits.



FoGP's Ongoing Lectures Cover a Broad Range of Topics

In early February, author and leading mushroom expert Gary Lincoff graced our lecture series with a fascinating talk on the world of mushrooms and their role in all living plants. The following Saturday morning, Lincoff headed up a hike in Griffith Park for a closer look at the practical side of mushroom inter-connectivity in the Park.

Our June lecture featured Jorge Ochoa, Horticulture Department Chair at Long Beach City College. Jorge discussed

lingering effects of the 2007 fire in Griffith Park and the opportunity to survey repopulated native species not seen in the Park in many decades. Ochoa also discussed previously un-recorded plants that have been identified since the fire as well as the positive interactions between plants and animals.

In July FoGP welcomed researcher Chris DeMarco tackling an issue of great concern to all Park lovers... the rapidly-disappearing native Western gray squirrel and the potential effects this will have on the Park ecosystem. He began his lecture by talking about the accidental introduction of the Eastern fox squirrel into the Western states and how it has impacted Western gray squirrels over the decades.



Lectures at the Los Feliz Branch Library include author, and mushroom expert, Gary Lincoff. On the Saturday hike, he took a group of 'shroomers out into the field in an attempt to locate some very evasive species, for which they were rewarded. LBCC Horticulture Dept. Chair Jorge Ochoa waits to make his presentation on flora, fauna, and a few animals. Researcher Chris DeMarco discusses the rapidly-disappearing Western gray squirrel and likely effects this will have on the Park ecosystem. Many thanks to Pearl Yonezawa, staff members, and the Los Feliz Branch of the LA Public Library for hosting many of our ongoing lectures.

More on Rodenticides



While the City of Los Angeles grapples with phasing out all rodenticide use, these dangerous substances continue to find their way into the Park. Friends of Griffith Park along with other organizations have spoken before City Council and packed committee hearings looking into alternatives. Thus far, we've seen little progress on this issue.

This past July, activists waited for a followup presentation at the Arts, Parks and River Committee

on rodenticide use in city parks. To date, the committee agenda has not mentioned any findings, alternatives or when this topic might be presented, yet concerns of rodenticide use in the Park continue to grow among concerned citizens.

In the meantime, wildlife in the Park continues to sicken and die from anticoagulant rodenticide poisoning.

Some helpful tips to help reduce rodents around your home

- **Don't leave pet food and water outdoors, especially overnight. Store pet food supplies indoors in sealed containers.**
- **Seal gaps around air vents to building sub-areas and attics and any other openings that penetrate exteriors. Use sweep seals under doors. A rat can squeeze through a hole the size of a quarter; a mouse through a hole smaller than a dime.**
- **Don't plant ivy – it provides shelter and a food source for rodents: snails and slugs. Ivy on walls can form "rat ladders" to windows, attics and other interior spaces.**
- **Keep compost piles as far away from structures as possible.**
- **Keep grass trimmed.**
- **If you have a bird feeder, use a squirrel guard at the base to keep rodents away. Always keep the ground area clean of bird seed.**
- **Keep outdoor grills and cooking areas clean.**
- **Keep firewood off the ground and as far away from structures as possible to mitigate shelter opportunities.**
- **Use city-issued plastic trash bins. If the bin is cracked or missing a lid, contact the Department of Sanitation for a free replacement.**
- **Clean up trash in garden areas to remove shelter for rodents.**

The Unrelenting Drought

It's not just trees that are suffering from a lack of water... it's all living things, including Griffith Park wildlife.

Although we've recently seen some rain, it's certainly not the sustained rainfall needed in order to fix the four-year drought issues. Is climate change really affecting parklands in Southern California and if this is the case, can we as a community adjust to these changes? I believe the answer is yes.

Four years of reduced rainfall in Southern California has had a devastating effect on Griffith Park

Lately, it seems at least once a week we're hearing about the effects of the drought. And while cities and city residents have been tasked with reducing water usage and turning off garden sprinklers, the potential loss of trees might far outweigh water-saving benefits. Go anywhere in the Southland and look at lawns and parkways. While there are some green lawns, the vast majority of lawns and gardens have gone brown as more people understand the severity of the water crisis. The breadth of devastation across the California landscape is tragic as nearly a million trees have succumbed to drought conditions. Now homeowners are facing the real

possibility that in cutting back water to their gardens, they may have inadvertently placed the health of their trees in jeopardy. And beyond concerns about falling trees, falling branches and the increasing number of pests affecting Southern California trees comes a new concern: the potential effects of an El Niño this winter. If trees are already



One of many redwoods in Griffith Park affected by the drought.



Recently a dead eucalyptus fell onto one of the golf cart roads along the golf course.

stressed, what will be the consequences if this weather pattern occurs?

In a recent AP article entitled "Amid California Drought," Evergreen Arborist Consultants said, "You don't want to be cutting back the water to the trees as the trees can't adjust." In Griffith Park, the native habitat areas have trees well adapted to our dry climate, though now even their health is challenged. However, planted areas of the park utilizing water-thirsty non-native trees, such as along roadways, are not faring as well under the water-saving plan. More important, when dead or dying trees are removed from parkland, those trees must be replaced so as not to destroy natural habitat and canopy cover.

Those concerned with how the crisis is affecting Griffith Park are considering alternatives to watching trees die. If you hike in the Park, you may have noticed some of these new measures. Many of the Park's golf courses are now being watered using "purple" water, in other words, recycled water. Currently not all courses utilize this water, but Rec and Parks is working with the DWP to rectify the situation and soon, all courses will be using the same recycled water source from a treatment plant on the east side of the river in Atwater. Also, mulch is being used more extensively in areas that don't get sufficient water. In Fern Canyon, FoGP volunteers have laid down mulch to help protect new native plantings in addition to the hand-watering that's occurring several times per month. In some areas without water sources, "irricades" are being positioned to help new trees take root. (Irricades look like hollow roadway barricades and are designed to channel water via soaker hoses to trees.)

While effects of the drought are clearly evident on flora, these effects are less evident in the park's fauna. Surely, there are some detrimental effects on wildlife, but it's hard to assess the extent or whether there are any major risks for any species populations. Perhaps certain species wander into Park-adjacent areas more, but most species have adapted to periodic arid conditions, just like our native plants. While there are concerns that our large mammals are not getting sufficient water, our scientific advisors say it should not be a concern. Wildlife experts caution against placing water out for wild animals as these animals become more dependent and acclimated to humans.

The bottom line — yes, there is a drought, and conservation of resources will help. But like other communities facing similar concerns, our community needs to address this issue for the long term. Suffice it to say, in general, things that man has not touched are holding up just fine.

~ Kathryn Louyse

Mt. Hollywood Drive – Fewer Vehicles, More Passive Recreation



The tunnel and roadways leading up to the Observatory and Mt. Hollywood Dr. were consistently impacted by vehicles attempting to locate parking. Erosion was evident on many of the ridges and hillsides as pedestrians scrambled up to get their selfies with the Hollywood Sign. Security guards were overworked as they attempted to keep pedestrians safe along roadways.

In 1992 when L.A.'s Recreation and Parks took the unprecedented step of closing Mt. Hollywood and Vista del Valle Drives to private vehicles, a surprising thing occurred – the upper section of Griffith Park became an inviting urban space available to Park recreationists.

For nearly 25 years this area has been embraced by equestrians, bicyclists, hikers, runners, dog walkers and families pushing strollers. On any given weekend they could be seen enjoying beautiful vistas while taking advantage of the safety provided by these closed roads.

A brief history of the roadways

Mt. Hollywood and Vista del Valle Drives were largely constructed in the 1930s by Civilian Conservation Corps workers (part of the national effort aimed at getting Americans back to work during the great Depression). The construction of these roads not only provided job opportunities; they drew massive numbers of urban dwellers into Griffith Park, many for the first time were there to experience the healing effects of nature.

However, by the '70s and '80s, interior roads were seeing a core shift in usage. People began using canyons as trash dumps, there was increased graffiti, and brush fires in the parkland were multiplying. Worse, lewd behavior and an escalation in criminal activity was making the park unpalatable to many who had come to commune with nature.

After Park activists began object-

ing to this increased level of destruction, at the request of Councilman John Ferraro and his deputy, Tom LaBonge, Rec & Parks wisely decided to close the two roads to vehicular traffic. The area was immediately transformed; far less garbage made its way down canyon slopes, earlier criminal and lewd conduct all but disappeared, and people

again flocked back to these roads, this time as passive recreationists. And because the roads were less congested, emergency vehicles were better able to respond to Park problems, such as brush fires.

In a 1992 commentary in the *L.A. Times*, Mike Eberts, author of "Griffith Park: A Centennial History" wrote — "As we decide how to rebuild L.A., we should also decide what not to rebuild. We shouldn't rebuild Hollywood Dr. and Vista del Valle Drive. Take cars off these roads permanently. Let this small sliver of our city grow with nature, not blacktop. Let it be a haven for anyone wishing to escape the maddening din below."

Today a different story is emerging

In March 2015, long after the city originally closed the two interior roads, a decision was made to reopen Mt. Hollywood Dr. to a pilot program aimed at permanently reopening the road to paid parking. According to Rec and Parks, this reopened stretch could potentially generate enormous revenues for city coffers. Another reason for implementing a parking plan along Mt. Hollywood Dr. was to decrease the traffic burden in Beachwood Canyon generated by renewed public interest in the Hollywood Sign.

As hordes of drivers descended on the Park, the reopened stretch along Mt. Hollywood became a traffic nightmare. Cars maneu-

Continues on following page

IN MEMORY OF DONNA MATSON



Donna Matson was an amazing, talented woman: a pioneer in children's educational television; world traveler; adventurer. She was the first American woman to climb Kilimanjaro. A pioneer surfer, her board is in the California Surf Museum. She sailed regularly to Catalina and loved to scuba dive. Donna grew up in Los Feliz, graduating from John Marshall High School in 1947. She spent her childhood exploring Griffith Park where she honed her skills — horseback riding, synchronized swimming, scouting, and hiking so it is no surprise that Donna was among the first donors to Friends of Griffith Park. She was particularly fond of Fern Dell, an enchanting place for a little girl. Donna died in July; she will be remembered with great fondness.

vered around people biking or walking, or attempted three-point and U-turns. Some cars were even parking on the wrong side of the road, adding to the parking chaos. Not only did the onslaught of vehicles create problems, enormous amounts of garbage were left by visitors littering the area with fast-food wrappers, soda cans, water bottles, and even used diapers. Garbage cans could be seen further down the slopes, spilling their contents among the native chaparral. A more disturbing and potentially destructive issue — smokers could be seen in extremely sensitive areas, tossing their cigarettes along roadsides and into dry brush. More worrying — emergency vehicles could not traverse these congested roads.

The pilot project ended April 12, and when pressed for information regarding results, the department responded the study is still being analyzed and will be presented to the public upon comple-

tion, which to date is still pending.

Meanwhile, car-centric LA is creeping back into the Park—actually, it's been more like floodgates opening in this highly sensitive area, spewing forth cars and people who seemingly have little regard for this spectacular urban wilderness. Griffith Park has become the go-to place where people can achieve the best "selfie" with the Hollywood Sign in the background.

Unless specific rules regarding appropriate behavior among Park visitors are in place and enforced, the long-term impacts to this urban wilderness will be disastrous.

What are the downsides of this potential revenue scheme?

So far there seems to be no long-term solution proposed by the City to counter the immediate problems of huge numbers of cars and people visiting the Park. Reopening roads in this highly-sensitive parkland jeopardizes Park wildlife and people in many ways.

Erosion along slopes and ridgelines has increased, and graffiti is covering more and more natural Park elements.

However, proposals have been advanced by concerned park users including Friends of Griffith Park. A traffic management plan limiting the number of vehicles entering Griffith Park during high volume days or times is one recommendation. Greater use of shuttles would allow park visitors access while reducing the number of vehicles. At the same time, recreational groups and individuals could still utilize and enjoy the natural areas. Another proposal would erect a Hollywood Sign Visitor Center in Hollywood providing visitors a view of the sign plus shuttle service to the sign and other L.A. attractions.

Moving toward a solution to protect this parkland for future generations will not be easy, but we are hopeful that Rec and Parks will ultimately adopt a more comprehensive "green" response to traffic and visitor problems generated along Mt. Hollywood Drive.

PROGRESS REPORT



Friends of Griffith Park is thrilled to announce the completion of *Phase 2* of the Fern Dell project. Here's a summary of accomplishments.

- 2011** Fern Dell Preservation Project launched with grants from the National Trust for Historic Preservation
- 2012** Cultural Landscape Foundation names Fern Dell one of 12 most threatened landscapes in the country
- May 2012** Phase 1 Cultural Landscape Assessment completed for \$23,000
- 2014** \$256,000 raised for Phase 2 with significant donations from Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky ♥ and the Griffith J. Griffith Charitable Trust ♥, aided by a generous matching grant ♥
- April 2015** Fern Dell Landscape Rehabilitation Phase 2 completed
Plan presented to Department of Recreation and Parks

The Fern Dell Landscape Rehabilitation Phase 2 report is a well-researched and comprehensive document listing what work needs to be accomplished in every aspect of Fern Dell from repairing the *faux bois* railings, repairing the comfort station and Ranger house, to the condition and pruning needs for every tree with a cost estimate for each item. We are anxiously waiting for the Department of Recreation and Parks to complete their review of the document so that we can begin applying for large grants to help to pay for the rehabilitation so we can all enjoy the lush beauty of Fern Dell once again.

Our priorities for implementing the recommendations:

- 1) Establish a recirculating flow of water to the creek.**
- 2) Restore the historic pedestrian bridge at Red Oak.**

Sunday, Nov. 22
Saturday, Dec. 5

Fern Dell Tours

**learn all about this lush
area of Griffith Park
rsvps are encouraged
check our website**

Griffith Park Plant ID Class

with horticulture expert

Jorge Ochoa

Sunday, Dec. 6

Hike begins at 9 am

**go to friendsofgriffithpark.org
for more info. and to rsvp**

Griffith Park Advisory Board Meetings

**last Thursday of month
GP Visitors Center**

Bird LA Day in Griffith Park



Based on the response to the launch of Bird LA Day in early May, this is an event that's long overdue! Friends of Griffith Park sponsored a hike with National Park Service Rangers in Fern Dell and were pleasantly surprised to get an additional 22 people over our original 40 RSVPs. A broad range of age, and birding experience was evident among hike attendees from novices to middle-schoolers, toddlers and third generations. All gathered early to enjoy the myriad bird songs in the Dell and learn birding and Park safety basics from our hike leader, Ranger Anthony Bevilacqua from the Santa Monica Mountain Recreation Center.

And, teach he did! We learned about birds, cucumber vines, squirrels, poison oak, flowers, lizards... Ranger Anthony's knowledge and enthusiasm was boundless. Aided by long-distance binoculars, and other tools of the trade, the two Rangers helped all Griffith Park birders enjoy and appreciate the life that teems in our own Park backyard.

From Fern Dell, the NPS Rangers headed over to Olvera Street, Downtown L.A. and other locations throughout the City to dispense their unlimited knowledge of our fine-feathered friends to other communities. School kids from the hike went home to write their reports, while other hikers from the group lingered at Trails Café over a hot cuppa joe.

I headed over to Atwater Village near the L A River for more bird watching hosted by Lila Higgins with the Natural History Museum. At the river's edge, P-22, our famous Griffith Park Puma, stole the show with a photo-op cut-out, courtesy of NPS Ranger, Beth Flowers.

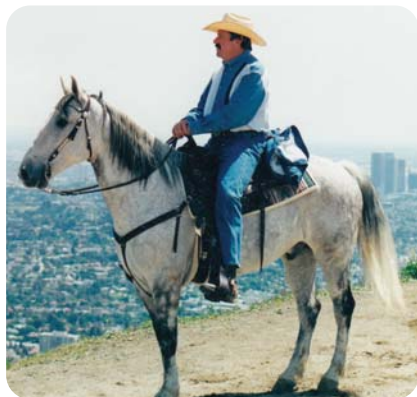
What a wonderful day. I can't wait till next year!

~Dora Herrera



Trail Riding in Griffith Park

by Lynn Brown



The City of Los Angeles, movie capital of the world, does not call to mind horses and trail riding. Yet, located in the very center of Los Angeles, bordered by both Burbank and Glendale, hidden in the heart of one of the United States' largest cities is one of its best kept secrets. This unexpected equestrian delight is in Griffith Park encompassing more than four thousand acres with over fifty-five miles of dirt trails. Our mild climate makes riding horses a year-round sport as there are very few riding days lost to bad weather.

When I discovered trail riding horseback in this park, it was a revelation that changed my life and attitude about living in one of the world's major cities. Certainly, there is not another city in the United States that has this priceless asset accessible to the public, either by renting a horse or keeping one at a local barn.

Usually, to enjoy horse-keeping, one has to live in rural areas where the cultural aspects of city living are not readily available.

It remains an unequalled and wonderful thing to be able to go ride a horse in "cowboy" land, with the rural aspects of the horse-keeping zoning applicable to the stable areas, including the wildlife and the outdoors in the Park. Much of the Park still remains in a natural state of a wild California habitat.

When I'm done for the day, I can knock the dust off my boots, dress up and go enjoy a concert, the theater, the museums and restaurants that a major city has to offer.

When Col. Griffith J. Griffith donated Griffith Park in 1896 to the City, the hilly terrain was considered worthless for developing. What was then worthless is now a priceless piece of the shrinking open space in this City. There has long been a myth that Col. Griffith dedicated the trails in the park for "equestrian use." Unfortunately, this is not true. If it were, it would have saved a lot of grief for those of us who seek to keep the horse and hiking trails free of wheeled vehicles.

As a horse riding area, Griffith Park is unsurpassed for urban riding in the United States. Over the years, the state and local politicians have recognized the unrivaled aspects of this urban park by providing continuing horse access even as the surrounding cities have crowded around Griffith Park.

The people who use these trails are fiercely protective of this special piece of a rural environment in the City with its lovely wide trails offering a contact with what remains of California's Western heritage surrounded by the city's sprawl.

The Park, designated as an Urban Wilderness, supports all manner of wildlife. Riding through the Park one is likely to encounter many deer, coyotes, a variety of raptors including red-tailed hawks, owls and peregrine falcons, and many other shy animals who prefer the less crowded evening hours to come out.

Once inside the Park, it's a different world. One legacy of the Spanish friars was that they scattered mustard seed between their missions to mark the route lest early travelers become lost. Now every spring the hills are carpeted in wild yellow mustard plants. Among the trees and hills, the roar of traffic fades to silence, as you ride the wide fire roads, or the deer trails.

Many riders carry picnic lunches in saddlebags as they can travel most of the day without covering the same trail twice. Back in the hills, it's hard to believe that you are in the City, until you top a steep rise and see downtown spread out in the distance. It's easy to feel sorry for those trapped on the freeway or caged in their offices.

There are three rental stables offering guided rides in the Park on the Glendale/Burbank side of the Park. On the Hollywood side, there is a stable which has made a unique niche for itself by offering evening rides that completely traverse the Park, ending midway at a well known 40-year-old Mexican restaurant, the Viva Fresh, which sits adjacent to the trail, with big windows and tie rails for a large number of horses. The food is excellent and most welcome to the dudes who have just ridden for two dusty hours over the hilly trails to get there. After tanking up on strawberry margaritas, they proceed to mount up and ride another two hours back in the dark.

On the broad trails, it's easy to chat, riding two and three abreast with friends. After I've had a relaxing ride along these tree-lined, curving trails, I've felt that life doesn't get any better than this – a good horse to ride with good friends in this beautiful park.

Lynn serves as Vice President of Los Angeles Equine Advisory Committee and is a Griffith Park Advisory Board member. All photos courtesy Lynn Brown

The Los Angeles River Needs to Lose Weights

"Look at these," said a volunteer at a recent FOLAR clean-up hosted by Friends of Griffith Park. He held out a handful of what looked like musket balls—nice, round lead balls and told us he found them in the river bed. Thinking that stray musket and minié-balls must be lying around the river bed waiting for urban archeologists to discover, FoGP board member, Kathryn Louyse, and I went looking for some more. What we found was intriguing: lead balls and blobs of all descriptions—all wonderfully tumble-smoothed by decades of washing by the Los Angeles River and its gravel. I immediately recognized what the "musket balls" were: tumble-polished lead wheel weights in abundance in the shallow shoals of the river bottom. The L.A. River, it seems, is not just lined in concrete, it's also lined with lead!

The idea that so much lead exists in our major local waterway began to weigh upon me, too. Why is lead so bad for living organisms? Lead is one of the most studied of toxins. No level of lead is beneficial to the human body. It can be absorbed by organisms quickly and can profoundly affect the nervous, cardiovascular, renal, reproductive and immune systems. Children suffer severe learning disabilities from lead exposure, which can begin in the womb. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency lists lead among its most serious toxins—and it's everywhere.

Lead plumbing and wine flavorings precipitated the decline of Rome. A century ago, the paint industry popularized freshening old, dark and drab Victorian-era homes with bright "white lead" paint, a new, chalking-resistant paint base. In the mid-1970s, the U.S. banned lead in paint (and in gasoline, jewelry, toys, plumbing and other items). Lead was being ingested by toddlers who ate loose paint chips as well as by adults who sanded and heat-removed old paint from their homes. Millions of older American houses have lead paint lurking just beneath newer, post-1978, coats of paint.

A common, continuing use of lead is the balance weights on automobile and truck wheels. These weights counterbalance



the shimmying rotational effect of unbalanced wheel and tire combinations, thereby reducing tire wear and improving vehicle control. The weights either clip onto a steel rim with a steel clip or stick onto alloy wheels with a self-adhesive. Peel out, stop short, take a curve too fast or hit a curb or pothole and wheel and weight will soon part company. Virtually all "lost" wheel weights become part of the environment, in the form of abraded lead dust that is blown around the landscape to be inhaled or as pieces and particles in waterways to be ingested by wildlife and humans or as toxins in landfills. California "loses" about 500,000 pounds of lead wheel weights a year.

There is hopeful news however. Currently, California is one of six states that have banned the use of lead wheel weights on new cars or whenever a new or replacement weight needs to be installed. (The other states are Washington, Maine, New York, Vermont and Illinois).

California's law has been in effect since 2010 and carries a \$2,500 per day fine for non-compliance. The unfortunate news is that California has over 13 million cars and trucks on the road. Over 9 million of them probably have lead wheel weights clinging to their rims. California's dry climate

allows cars to be among the oldest on Earth, outside of Cuba, so it could take many years to retire our state's inventory of lead wheel weights. In the meantime, the Federal Government needs to catch up to the six states that are exemplars. Much more has to be done to ensure lead is always recycled, never "lost." Getting rid of this kind of weight will be a long-lasting toast to everyone's health.

~ Richard Stanley

Top photo: The Los Angeles River presents a wide assortment of cultural debris along its margins—some of which is toxic e.g., lead wheel weights.

Bottom photo: Small group of lead wheel weights collected recently by the author under the I-5 bridge over the LA River. Collection includes a battery terminal and .22 bullets. Genuine 19th century iron musket ball and lead "minié ball" shown at upper right for comparison only. The author was able to collect about a pound of lead debris while walking along the edge of the L.A. River in just a few minutes.



Join Friends of Griffith Park

When you become a member of FoGP at the \$250 level you'll receive a complimentary copy of Mike Ebert's *Griffith Park: A*

Centennial History (This

publication is out of print so availability is limited to first come.)

Now available from Amazon...

Ebert's *Griffith Park: The Second Century* (downloadable as an e-book.)



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Ed Hunt, park policemen for Griffith Park, holds the reins of his saddled horse, circa 1912.

Hiking off-trail has become a significant problem in Griffith Park. These new small signs are being installed to remind hikers and Park users that habitat damage occurs when short-cuts are taken. Please stay on trails!

