



the griffith reporter

the newsletter of friends of griffith park/winter 2018-19



in this issue...

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- ❖ Fern Dell Museum *and more*



An Attitude of Gratitude

It's the season of thanks. As President of Friends of Griffith Park, I have much to be thankful for – and it always starts with the people around me.

First I get to work with an incredible board of directors, all volunteers, who bring to the table a broad spectrum of talents. Vice President of Science and Conservation Gerry Hans makes good use of his BA in Biology. He's always exploring the Park to photograph rare plants or animals. When he finds a new specimen, he's like a kid at Christmas. You'll see some of his finds at the Autry exhibition *Investigating Griffith Park*. It was Gerry who helped initiate the first of Griffith Park's natural history surveys which are

conducted by science experts and reveal important findings.

Mary Button runs a tight ship as VP of Finance and Administration; it's a relief to know our financial records are in capable hands. Director of Volunteer Services Laura Howe is a dynamo. She has taught hundreds of volunteers how to plant and care for trees as well as guided numerous clean-up events around the Park. Her enthusiasm is infectious. (Tip: If you challenge Laura to a 5K run, don't expect to win!) Lucinda Phillips is our eye-in-the-sky on the Fern Dell side of the Park. She keeps in touch with the Park Rangers and monitors traffic and filming. Dora Herrera brings her business acumen to the board, keeping us grounded while moving forward.

Brenda Rees has brought a new dynamic to the board. The creative duo of graphic artist Kathryn Louyse and Brenda are the ones responsible for the beautiful newsletter you are reading. They also assist with getting our name out on social media platforms. Avid Sierra Club hiker Al Moggia knows the Park well and alerts our Park Rangers for any dangerous or illegal behaviors. Felix Martinez had led more the 3,000 students on hikes in the Park – no small feat! Biologist Miguel Ordeñana, who rose to fame when he discovered and photographed P-22 as this puma first entered the Park, assists with our scientific surveys. When he is available, Miguel joins Felix on hikes, showing students how to identify animal tracks or listen to the signal from tracking collars.

Richard Stanley does meticulous research on all kinds of topics including local Native Americans, *faux bois*, and origin of parks and produces fascinating educational talks at the Los Feliz Library. Rex Link brings to our board in-depth knowledge and historic perspective on park infrastructure, especially relating to parking, circulation, and ADA compliance. Lucy Gonzalez lent her creative talent to Narrated Objects to design the cover for the P-22 coloring book. Carol Brusha, Sarah Napier, Linda Othenin-Girard, and Kris Sullivan do tabling outreach in the community and at events to spread the word about Friends of Griffith Park. All our directors are strong advocates for the *Vision for Griffith Park* as an urban wilderness.

Besides our amazing board, I am thankful for the wonderful partnership Friends has with the Griffith J. Griffith Charitable Trust. Composed of Van Griffith, Clare Darden, and Mike Eberts, the Trust has collaborated with Friends on projects such as the Fern Dell Report and the repair of the Fern Dell pedestrian bridge. They are always there for us.

Last, but perhaps most important, I am grateful for our fantastic members and volunteers. Whenever we put out the call, you are there to plant trees, mulch, water, pick up trash, paint out graffiti, dig out tumbleweeds, or count birds. We can count on you to help keep Griffith Park clean, beautiful and natural.

Everyone's enlightened stewardship of Griffith Park is vital so it can survive and thrive beyond the 21st century. Thank you for all that YOU do for Griffith Park!

Marian Dodge

~Marian Dodge

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on the cover:

A juvenile Western gray fox cavorts in front of one of Griffith Park's camera traps. See fox story pg. 3 and accompanying story on LA River Wildlife Camera Traps pg. 9 are increasing scientific knowledge about various wildlife species taking advantage of urban waterways. Photo: cover and pg. 3, Miguel Ordeñana.

photo above:

P-22 Day in Griffith Park. From left, Friends of Griffith Park's Mary Button, Dora Herrera, Gerry Hans and Marian Dodge welcome visitors to our booth. Story on page 5 and additional photos posted on website.

Our Tree Climbing Gray Foxes ~Gerry Hans



As elusive as P-22, Western gray foxes are rarely seen in Griffith Park. One of the earliest studies, as part of the continuing Griffith Park Natural History Survey in 2007, confirmed tracks in the Old Zoo. Later, a bobcat genetics study conducted by carnivore scientist Laurel Serieys and the National Park

Service inadvertently trapped a gray fox, rather than the targeted bobcat.

Of course, it was quickly released unharmed. Cameras deployed in the Griffith Park Connectivity Study have also turned up foxes, but only rarely. While sporadically documented in the Park between 2007 through 2013, they've been very quiet until recently. Now we have evidence showing they're successfully breeding in the Park.

For the first time ever, I was luckily treated to a five-second sighting of the reddish and gray, long and bushy-tailed critter crossing a trail in July during the morning hours. Near the same area, I noted curious scat, not similar to recent coyote scat which is common on most trails. This scat was loaded with an amazing quantity of red berries, some not well-digested. On a following hike, I discovered that Eastwood manzanita, an important species of a special plant community on the northern slopes of the Park, was providing the

apparently coveted red fruit to our gray foxes.

Gray foxes are omnivores. They are thought to consume a good amount of vegetative food, especially berries when available. Fortunately for foxes, berry season stretches over a wide period in Griffith Park, with currants, gooseberries, cherries, red berries, manzanita-berries, and succulent elderberries, all ripening largely out-of-sync with each other! Foxes also patrol the Park for rodents and rabbits, and are known to hunt birds, and even snack on insects. Now, that's a well-rounded diet.

How do they get to the elderberries that are found high in the branches of the elderberry tree? No problem for the gray fox which has an extraordinary adaptation for climbing, unlike its red fox cousin. In fact, gray foxes are the only canid (dog family) species in North America proficiently arboreal. (The only other in the world is the Asian raccoon dog.) A gray fox can gracefully scale vertical trunks and go high into trees. An inwardly articulating joint of its forelegs, matched with hooked claws, give the gray fox a tree-climbing edge. It's also a nice adaptation to escape being nabbed by coyotes, thought to be the fox's main predator. Gray foxes sometimes make their dens in hollow portions of trees where they can safely raise their offspring, away from hungry coyotes.

The genetic health of many mammal species, including the Western gray fox, bobcat, Western gray squirrel and mountain lion, is the foremost topic of concern by scientists studying fragmented habitat areas.

We need to provide increased connectivity between habitats to assure that these beautiful creatures can survive and thrive in our urban setting. ♡

Breaking the Poison Chain ~Gerry Hans

Friends of Griffith Park has carried out considerable behind-the-scene efforts to encourage the Department of Recreation and Parks to use alternatives to rodenticides, particularly anticoagulant rat poisons which climb the food chain to kill (or make ill) owls, bobcats, coyotes, hawks, foxes, and even P-22. We think wildlife is appreciative of our persistence!

Now it's time to eliminate rat poison usage in the residential areas of Los Angeles – after all, wildlife moves freely between residential and public places. Here are tips for keeping our urban wildlife healthy by not using rat poisons:

Primary Rodent Control

- ✓ Get rid of favorite food sources such as spilled bird seeds, pet foods, fruit rotting on trees, snails and slugs.
- ✓ Eliminate rodents' favorite habitats, such as English ivy, wood piles, and other outdoor sheltering spots.
- ✓ Seal it. Rodents find ways into sub-basements, vents, and attics. Openings – even dime-sized holes – must be sealed.
- ✓ Remove grass, vegetation, and any debris next to your house and buildings.

Secondary Rodent Control

- ✓ If rodents are numerous or have breached your home, mechanical or electronic traps are the most humane method

to deal with the problem. **Don't use glue traps; don't use live traps. Other wildlife could get entangled and besides, it's very cruel.**

- ✓ If you call a pest control company, insist they not use anticoagulant rat poisons. There are many harmless-sounding trade names for the same nasty poisons hidden in "bait boxes" so don't be fooled.
- ✓ Old fashioned wood snap traps work fine and are inexpensive. Electronic traps work, too. There are even electronic traps that will send you an email notice when tripped! How's that for technology?



And finally, don't freak out just because you saw a mouse, rat, or even two! As in Griffith Park, many rodent species are part of a normal ecosystem. In the Park, rodent species include the very cool dusky-footed woodrat and the cute California vole. ♡

Electronic and other traps can range substantially in price and capability. Make sure you shop around when you're comparison shopping to get exactly what you want.

my favorite hike...

Sometimes the simple and obvious solution is staring us in the face, yet we miss it... at first. Such is the case with the pedestrian path that leads from the Greek Theatre to the Griffith Observatory.

Traffic and congestion on the roads near the Observatory led to the Observatory Circulation and Parking Plan in 2016. This plan could not come soon enough! The Observatory holds spot Number 3 in the ranking of Most Favorite L.A. Tourist Attractions and is the most-visited public observatory in the world. Tourists come into Griffith Park to take advantage of the view of the Hollywood Sign, of course.

While a goal of the Circulation Plan was to improve multi-modal



Friends for their continuing support and for helping us reach our goal of implementing this important Park improvement!"

Now the current challenge is to let local Angelenos, as well as the millions of tourists who flock to Los Angeles, know about this safe and healthy alternative way of reaching the Observatory. We hope this becomes a "favorite trail" for Park users from L.A. and beyond! ♣ ~Mary Buiton

access, one measure completely missed was the idea of having a walking path from the north end of the Greek parking lot to allow people to walk safely up to the iconic Observatory, along the east side of Observatory Road, slightly over a half-mile.

People walk as far as a mile from their parked cars on Western Canyon Road, a hazardous route, without a sidewalk or pathway. Why not provide a safe route from the free parking lots at the Greek Theatre? After all, quite a few people already hike up to the Observatory next to the road.

Friends of Griffith Park made countless public comments on the need for a safe walkway to the Observatory, and finally the Department of Recreation and Parks took action this year, and our asked-for path is now nearly completed. We are told that a final section on East Observatory Road will be completed in spring 2019. This safe path has taken only a nominal investment, with hardly any impacts to the Park. It is a smart, viable way to reach the Observatory.

Joe Salaices, Griffith Section Superintendent, said, "RAP thanks

volunteer spotlight Boy Scouts Troop 10



Even with the current sprinkler system, there are numerous sections of Griffith Park that receive little or no water – which is imperative during the hot summer months when established and newly planted trees often need an extra drink to survive.

Coming to the tree rescue were the Scouts and leaders from Boy Scout Troop 10, sponsored by St. James Episcopal Church in Los Angeles. Since June and throughout the summer



provided buckets and hoses for the Scouts and also coordinated with Park Rangers the days and times when the water truck was available.

Overall, this volunteer project has been an outstanding partnership between Troop 10, Park Rangers and Friends of Griffith Park. Before collaborating on this project, the Scouts participated in other volunteer projects

in Fern Dell such as picking up trash and mulching trees.

As a thank you, FoGP threw Troop 10 a pizza party to celebrate their hard work and dedication. At the get-together, Laura Howe, Volunteer Coordinator for FoGP, presented the Scouts and troop leaders with a Certificate of Appreciation from the City of Los Angeles. Assistant Volunteer Coordinator Ross Arnold with the FoGP also presented the troop with a Conservation Good Turn certificate from the Greater Los Angeles Area Council (GLAAC), Boy Scouts of America.

FoGP always welcomes Scouts and other organizations that would like to participate in volunteer projects in the Park. Many hands make light work, plus the sense of comradery and working toward a common goal is a great way to create bonds among team members of any age! ♣

To learn how you or your group can participate in service projects in Griffith Park, go to friendsofgriffithpark.org/get-involved/volunteer and follow prompts to volunteer. You will be contacted within 48 hours.



months, these Scouts have been solely responsible for watering the trees and shrubs in the upper section of Fern Dell in the Park. Every two to three weeks, usually on Saturday mornings, Scouts filled water buckets from the Park Ranger's water truck and hauled the heavy buckets to the thirsty plants. Scouts watered plants near the truck with hoses. Friends of Griffith Park

Investigating Griffith Park ~Marian Dodge



Investigating Griffith Park (still): Courtesy Albert Sabaté and the ©Autry Museum
Lantern Slides: Joe T. Wright, Braun Research Library Collection, Autry Museum; LS.12544 & LS.12979
Tongva basket: Courtesy Southwest Museum of the American Indian, Autry Museum; 1760.G.9

If you were preparing an exhibition on Griffith Park, what organization would you consult? Friends of Griffith Park, of course! That's exactly what the Autry Museum of the American West did when they began planning their new exhibit, *Investigating Griffith Park*. Slated to open November 16, this teaser exhibit is designed to learn which topics about the Park attract the most attention from visitors.

Senior Curator Carolyn Brucken invited Friends Vice President of Science and Conservation Gerry Hans and President Marian Dodge to the museum for a preliminary discussion of their plans which include hands-on activities and thematic prototypes which may be incorporated in future exhibits. Topics of great interest will be expanded and developed into more detailed displays for a permanent exhibition on Griffith Park which is scheduled to open in 2021 on the 125th anniversary of the Park. The exhibit spans 4,000 square feet!

Gerry Hans was asked to prepare five questions about animals living in the park. No, we're not going to tell you the answers; you have to figure it out yourself! The animal part of the exhibit will feature life-size photos of several animals from a harvester ant to our famous mountain lion, P-22. You'll see how they keep visitors from stepping on the harvester ant. Additionally, kids can crawl into P-22's "cave" and play a board game designed by Narrated



Objects for their P-22 coloring book. (See FoGP's *Griffith Reporter*, Fall, 2017)

Other areas in the exhibit feature the plants of Griffith Park, early movies filmed on location, and famous people associated with the Park. The Autry's creative exhibit staff has designed a variety of ways for visitors to give feedback. In one area, visitors can write comments on a paper, clip them to a string, and run them up in the air like a kite. As visitors approach the gallery exit, they can try their hand at a pinball machine to choose where they will go next in Griffith Park. Balls will drop into holes each labeled with a different special feature in the Park. The idea is to encourage people to visit parts of the Park they have never seen before, hence the title of the exhibit: *Investigating Griffith Park*.

This is a terrific opportunity to learn new things about Griffith Park and to give your feedback to the Autry. Visit the Autry Museum of the American West's website at: theautry.org or call (323) 667-2000 for hours of operation and other details. ♡

A 1930s circa photo juxtaposed against a current view of Griffith Observatory reminds us that little has changed on the building's exterior. Center: bucolic view of Fern Dell from 1950s and a woven basket from the Autry collection harkens back to a time when the Tongva-Gabrielino tribes inhabited the area.

What a (P-22) Day in the Park!

The unusually hot October temperatures didn't stop crowds from attending P-22 Day, a celebration of the Park's most famous resident, and culmination of Urban Wildlife Week raising awareness about the plight of wildlife in Southern California. Sponsored by the National Wildlife Federation, the now annual event welcomed students, families, neighbors, elected officials and numerous environmental groups – including co-sponsor FoGP – to show support for issues like conservation, advocacy, rehabilitation, education and wildlife corridors.

Making its debut at the festival was FoGP's new interactive original game, "What Belongs in Griffith Park?" where players placed magnetic images around a large map of the Park. The game sparked some lively conversation about why some items – like balloons, drones and pet store goldfish – should not be in the Park while emphasizing diverse species that call the Park home.

FoGP's Raptor Survey also presented an original miniature diorama section of Griffith Park where players learned about raptors as they searched for three "hidden" raptor nests – and, if they looked hard enough, they could also locate a small replica of Los Angeles' famous cougar symbolizing the day's guest of honor. ♡



A full-scale raptor nest built by volunteer Anna Josenhans was one of the exhibits at our combined booth. We have more P-22 Day photos online.

Observing Feathered Families

~Courtney McCammon and Daniel S. Cooper, Cooper Ecological Monitoring

This was the second year of the Griffith Park Nesting Raptor Survey, and volunteer community scientists once again learned about and witnessed nesting raptor behavior in action as they provided important data during the 2018 nesting season.

Launched in 2017 in partnership with Friends of Griffith Park, the survey is an attempt to document and track each raptor nest in Griffith Park and the surrounding landscape. It's the first specific, comprehensive dataset of an entire raptor community in the Los Angeles area.

Hawk species provide the ideal specimen as a focal point for the community science program because of their role within the larger urban Los Angeles environment. They are important apex predators in most of the Earth's ecosystems, and coastal Southern California supports (or once supported) around a dozen breeding species. Of these, several are known to nest (or formerly nested) in Griffith Park.

For our second year, we again held two training sessions each attended by 40+ volunteer community-scientists, and by the end of June, we had roughly 100 potential raptor nests/territories located, with more than 50 of them becoming active during the spring. We then assigned nests to one or more volunteers based on their location preferences and birding ability. Volunteers were asked to visit their assigned nests at least twice a month to identify nesting stages throughout the season; they logged observations and sent back completed data sheets monthly.

Study Area and Species

The Study Area consists of Griffith Park, plus a large swath around it, including much of the Eastern Santa Monica Mountains, Elysian Park, Silver Lake, Echo Park, Debs Park, and more. The Study Area contains a large amount of private land, mainly occupied by single-family homes and yards with trees.

Cooper Ecological Monitoring conducted surveys during late winter to identify and map existing and potential raptor nests in



Griffith Park and the surrounding areas as a Study Area. Based on prior records, the Study Area provides potentially suitable nesting habitat for resident raptors including turkey vulture, red-shouldered hawk, red-tailed hawk, Cooper's hawk, great horned owl, barn owl, Western screech-owl, peregrine falcon and American kestrel. Former nesters, rare today in any season, include golden eagle and long-eared owl. Osprey are frequently seen through the nesting season – mainly along the Los Angeles River – but this raptor does not regularly nest in the Study Area.

Of the roughly 100 confirmed and potential raptor nests both years in the Study Area, we were able to locate and monitor roughly the same number which became active nests (49 in 2017, 55 in 2018), and of these, a similar proportion were confirmed or suspected as having fledged in both years (75-81% each year). Approximately 39 potential raptor nests (or non-breeding territories) were deemed inactive for 2018 (vs. 41 in 2017).

The species breakdown was also nearly identical in both years, though with more red-tails in 2018 (29 vs. 22), roughly equal numbers of Cooper's hawks (16 vs. 17 nests), and numbers of red-shouldered hawk and great horned owl also similar both years, with four-six nests for each.

Tree Preference and Nest Reuse

We again observed that the “native” interior of Griffith Park had relatively few raptor nests, but 2018 found multiple nests of various species in the “edge habitats” at the Park's periphery including places like Fern Dell and the golf courses. Again, just a single raptor nest in the entire study was located in a native oak tree (a Cooper's hawk in Fern Dell), confirming our suspicion in 2017 that this species is simply little-used by local raptors; ten nests (20%) were in sycamores (vs. five in 2017). Pines again represented a large percentage of the nest trees in the study, with 23 nests in pines in 2018 (vs. 22 in 2017).

Another well-used non-native, eucalyptus, accounted for 12 active nests in 2018, roughly the same as in 2017, when nine were in eucalyptus; sycamores supported few nests in 2018. The finding highlights the importance of very large, non-native trees in and around the Park many of which are the tallest trees around. They clearly provide excellent nesting opportunities to the local raptor community and have essentially outpaced native substrates. As in 2017, few raptor nests were among the many stick nests observed on transmission towers and other structures during the study; these seem to be the exclusive domain of the common raven.

Our 2018 survey allowed us to investigate patterns of nest re-use by species. Calculating re-usage is limited by the fact that we had incomplete information for many nests during both survey years. We found a 39% re-usage rate across all species (22 of 54 of the 2017 nests were re-used in 2018), and that red-tailed hawks maintain a higher-than-average rate (59%), meaning that more than half of red-tailed hawk nests found the first survey were also active the following year. The lowest fidelity of the four species was found in Cooper's hawk (29% re-usage rate), meaning fewer than a third of Cooper's hawks nests were re-used the following year. While the sample sizes were small, two of the seven great horned owl nests found in 2017 were active in 2018 (28%), and just one of the four red-

shouldered hawk nests from 2017 was active in 2018 (25%).

The finding that nest re-use varied across species, with red-tailed hawk showing a much higher-than-average rate of re-use, is not surprising. It is the largest species, and constructs the largest, most elaborate nests, and is well-known for re-using these nests. The lower rates of re-use found in the other species, in particular the Cooper's hawk, may either be an adaptation to varying conditions of urban life, or it may indicate the opposite – a vulnerability to loss of nest sites. Additional years of monitoring are needed to assess this, but preliminary analysis suggests that while Cooper's hawks are increasing in the region, red-shouldered hawks may be declining, suggesting that the flexibility strategy may be working for one species (Cooper's hawk) and not the other (red-shouldered hawk).

Anecdotally, two of the four red-shouldered hawk nests and three of seven great horned owl nests, from 2017, appear to have been blown out of their trees by high winds. And while great horned owls are still relatively common across the study area (the low numbers of nests reflect the difficulty of observing this largely nocturnal species), the red-shouldered hawk is rather scarce. Given these results, it would be helpful to learn if the various lost nesting species of the region, such as American kestrel, were similarly pushed from nest site to nest site until none remained.

Other interesting hypotheses are developing which need further study years and data collection to statistically support. Species-specific geographic nesting shifts and “pause breeding” may be strategies to maintain stable populations, at least for some species.

Looking ahead to 2019, we will continue investigating the nesting patterns of our urban raptors in and around Griffith Park. We are thankful for our partnership with Friends of Griffith Park and the wonderful volunteers who provided invaluable observations – and who also learned so much about these magnificent birds that live and thrive in our busy urban landscape. ♣

(Would you or someone you know be interested in participating in the 2019 Griffith Park Raptor Survey?)

Registration information will be announced in early January. Watch our website and follow us on Facebook for more details.)



Park Access Appeal Filed ~Marian Dodge

In March of this year, Friends of Griffith Park, Griffith J. Griffith Charitable Trust, and Los Feliz Oaks Homeowners Association lost a lawsuit to retain an existing access point into Griffith Park at the Beachwood Canyon gate. After this defeat, our organization decided to pursue further legal solutions to maintain access to the park. In August we filed an appeal to the judgement which will be decided next year by the Court of Appeal's three-judge panel.

Friends is trying to get the City to obey its own laws. The L.A. City Charter and Municipal Code specifically require closure decisions be made by the Board of Recreation and Park Commissioners only after a publicly noticed meeting with an opportunity for public comment. That never happened. The decision to close the access was made by Recreation and Parks staff even though the Municipal Code clearly states staff can only make such decisions in limited, specific emergency conditions, such as a fire. This closure came on the heels of an earlier ruling regarding the Sunset Ranch Stables, but in that case the judge never proposed complete removal of the access point. Although there were several options to comply, the City chose to close all access near the stables gate, effectively removing public parkland from public use.

Enter the Dixon Report

Last year, Councilmember David Ryu commissioned the *Comprehensive Strategies Report* to find solutions to excessive



traffic in and around the Hollywood Sign. The report, released in January 2018, included 29 recommendations to alleviate traffic. One of the strategies proposed moving the pedestrian gate to the right of the vehicular gate which would eliminate safety concerns raised by Sunset Stables. However, a report issued by the Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA) in June determined that plan was not feasible.

In September, Ryu's office explained the permanent gate closure: "The City lost a lawsuit, finding that

the pedestrian access through the gate on Beachwood interfered with Sunset Stables' business. Pedestrian access at that location has closed to comply with the judge's decision."

However, the City did not lose the lawsuit. The judge ruled Sunset Stables did not have exclusive use of the easement and the City was required to provide nearby access. This was a win for the City. Moreover, the CLA report claimed the Alternative Access Plan would require purchase of privately-owned adjacent land; although it would be entirely on park land. The CLA also claimed this plan would require environmental clearances, but that is the case with various other strategies which were voted by the City Council to move to the next step of feasibility study, including an aerial tram!

Friends submitted responses and comments to these proposals throughout the process and will continue to monitor the mitigation plans. ♡

FoGP has articles regarding this issue online at friendsofgriffithpark.org/legal-challenge-filed-in-hollyridge-trailhead-access-closure/

Being a Friend to Griffith Park ~Brenda Rees

Let's face it. No one wants to police, patrol or parent when they come to Griffith Park. We come to the Park to enjoy the beauty of nature, have a nice walk with good friends and reconnect with the world around us.

But just imagine: A mentally-ill person spewing obscenities walks into the brush with a rag and a can of propane. Hikers take a "shortcut" trail, trampling and breaking delicate foliage. A camping tent is placed smack dab in the middle of a major trail. An extremely large pile of trash is obviously dumped. A small-time non-permitted film crew set up haphazardly in a canyon. Loose pit bulls roam the trails, intimidating other park users. A smoker carelessly tosses a cigarette to the ground.

What do you do?

When you see a something illegal or dangerous, we encourage you to put on your ownership hat. After all, the Park is Our Park. As much as we want to think that it's someone else's job, sometimes a visit to the Park means we, those who love it and call ourselves Friends of Griffith Park, might have to step up and be that extra pair of eyes, ears and hands for our small, overworked but extremely dedicated staff of Park Rangers.

Remember there is power in politely posing a simple question or

calling attention to a destructive behavior.

"Guys, if you get too close to the ledge, you could fall."

"Did you know that there are trash cans further up the trail?"

"I worry about your dog hurting itself or other dogs by running off-leash."

"Fire danger is extremely high. That's why smoking is not permitted in the Park."

We encourage you to keep the Park Rangers phone number handy whenever you are in Griffith Park. Keep in mind that adopting a Park steward mentality is different than being a dial-happy alarmist vigilante. We want to create a welcoming environment, sending the message that Griffith Park is a place for everyone. Use common sense.

A note about wildlife: call if either human or animal is in danger, or if people are feeding wildlife. Our rangers don't need to be alerted every time a coyote crosses a path or someone discovers a coyote den. After all, coyotes call the Park their home! ♡

Park Rangers (323) 644-6661

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

Say Cheese! ~Brenda Rees

Friends of Griffith Park is participating in the L.A. River Wildlife Camera Project, helping monitor animals that use urban waterways



Friends of Griffith Park is one of many organizations currently working with the National Park Service monitoring wildlife in and around the 30 miles of the Los Angeles River and some of its tributaries.

The L.A. River Wildlife Camera Project which began in January 2018 involves 40 cameras installed at locations from the Bell Canyon headwaters to Boyle Heights. FoGP is in charge of three cameras in select spots in Griffith Park near the LA River.

Knowing that the LA River is often a corridor between big tracts of parkland and the city, the NPS wants to discover whether animals are using the river and its tributaries – with genetic isolation being a problem for many critters in the Santa Monica Mountains, it's hoped that maybe animals around the L.A. River are using these waterways as a wildlife corridor to chart out alternative passages. It makes sense when you think about it – these are undeveloped areas that often have little human activity, a good fit for wildlife.

The L.A. River Wildlife Camera Project is funded entirely through philanthropic support (Santa Monica Mountains Fund and the Lush Cosmetics Foundation). It's also made possible by the work of volunteers who are monitoring and manning the cameras. In addition to Friends, other groups involved in the project are: Citizens for LA Wildlife (CLAW), Friends of the LA River, Heal the Bay, the Los Angeles Conservation Corps, the Nature Conservancy, the National Wildlife Federation, the San Fernando Valley chapter of the Audubon Society, and Angeles Chapter of the Sierra Club.

Over the last year, Friends of Griffith Park deployed these motion-activated cameras for four-week intervals each quarter, with a mid-

period camera check. Cameras can generate an estimated 5,000 pictures each round due to tripping by wind-driven vegetation movement – it's no small feat to sift through images!

The project will last a minimum of two years.

So far, these camera monitoring traps have captured foxes, bobcats, opossums, coyotes, skunks, raccoons and other mammals throughout the breath of the waterways. Likewise, FoGP cameras have documented coyotes, bobcats, and yes, even P-22!

Researchers are also interested to see if feral cats – that often prey on wild birds – are using these passageways.

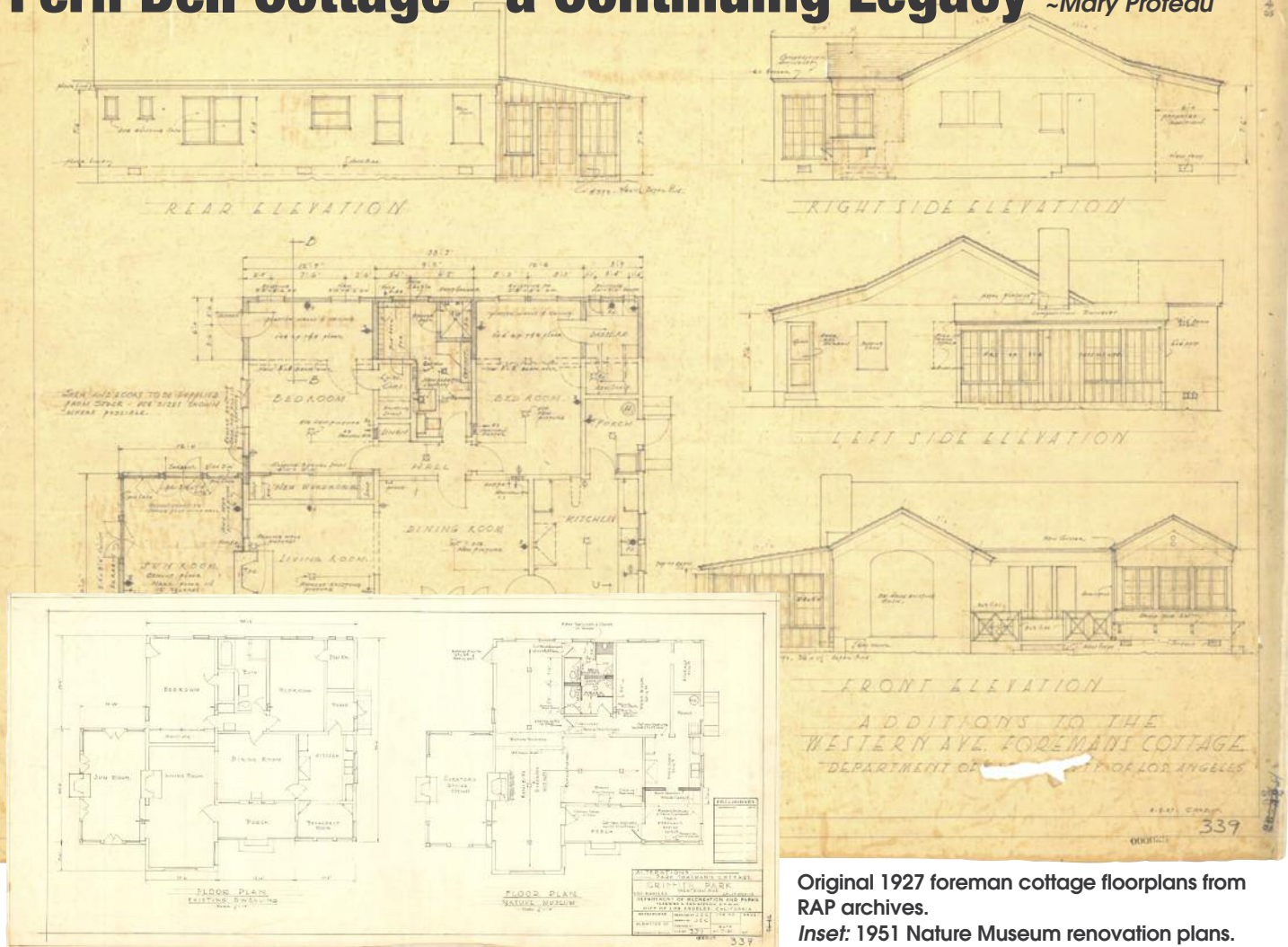
To increase the odds of the remote cameras snapping a picture of an animal, olfactory lures are strategically placed. The fatty-acid scented tablet – which smells quite a bit like bad cheese – is secured to the ground and lined up for optimal camera snapping position.

Similar studies are concurrently taking place across the country in cities like Denver, Austin, Indianapolis and others, as part of the Urban Wildlife Information Network, a project of the Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago. Biologists hope to observe overall trends and comparisons which can help them further understand urban wildlife and provide data to influence city planning and wildlife management. ♣



One of the camera traps being set by FoGP's Brenda Rees. Our traps have captured quail, opossums, skunks, coyotes, bobcats, raccoons and even a few shots of P-22.

Fern Dell Cottage - a Continuing Legacy ~Mary Proteau



Original 1927 foreman cottage floorplans from RAP archives.
Inset: 1951 Nature Museum renovation plans.



Have you seen it?

Amidst Griffith Park's 4,000+ acres, sits an unassuming, one-story 1927 Spanish Revival house—a small treasure with a long and colorful history.

Located on Red Oak Drive near Fern Dell Drive, the little house was built as the Cottage at the Western Avenue entrance to Griffith Park. Occupied by city employees assigned as caretakers, it was first known as the Foreman's House. Department of Recreation and Parks renderings show periodic modifications, but in 1951 plans were drawn to remodel the building into the Fern Dell Nature Museum. The living space was reconfigured into exhibit space, a projection room, an office and a lecture room.

Officially opened on April 20, 1952, and for nearly a quarter of a century, the Fern Dell Nature Museum regaled young and old visitors with the natural wonders found in Griffith Park.

"We gave tours to the public and to school groups," recalls Ranger Anne, now retired. "Each room had interpretive displays that included local plants, animals, insects and Native American artifacts. My father was a geologist and helped me gather rock specimens for the museum. We even had a moon rock specimen on display in a secured case. Short movies on different nature subjects were also shown for the public and the kids to enjoy."

The idea for the Nature Museum probably originated with Ranger Bill Eckert, a Griffith Park legend, who was hired as a gardener in 1949 and became a charter member of the ranger unit, Badge #1, in 1965.

"Bill [Eckert] was really the foundation of the museum," explains Ranger Albert Torres, Captain for the Park Ranger Division who's been a Park Ranger for 35 years and has 45 years in Rec and Parks. "[Bill] was the consummate interpreter and was admired for his vast knowledge of the Park—the perfect ambassador to visitors of all ages."

From cottage to museum to ranger residence, the little house near Fern Dell continues to endure.

Now retired, Ranger Dave Feliz served nearly 30 years in the Park and, from 1972–1992 as a mounted unit training officer. He has a strong connection to the park: his ancestors also rode horses in Griffith Park back when it was Rancho Los Feliz.

Feliz remembers many inner-city school kids getting Ranger-led tours of the museum, followed by a tour of Fern Dell. “Rangers collected display cases and exhibit items from area museums,” he recalls, “and the museum had a large book-like display of fern species found in Fern Dell. It was really big, and you would stand in front of it and turn the ‘pages’ just as you would with a book.”

“There was a display where you had to match the birds to photos on display—and [for a while] there was a pet raccoon,” recalls Senior Ranger Patrick Joyce, Patrol Section Supervisor, who visited the Nature Museum as a kid growing up in LA.

Torres describes a beloved tradition that originated at the little house. “A Boy Scout would start at the Nature Museum and hike to Mt. Hollywood,” he says. “The Scout would document the 5-mile round-trip by putting a note into a metal pipe at the museum and then leave marker notes along the way. When he returned, the boy received a certificate from the rangers that he’d completed the hike.” A proud achievement.

Born not far from Griffith Park, Ranger Anne had an early love of the Park. “I always wanted to be a ranger,” she says. She mastered in Outdoor Recreation and Resource Management at San Fernando Valley State College (now CSUN) which required in-service training. Naturally, she chose Griffith Park and had the honor of working with Eckert at the museum in 1972, her senior year.

“As a student, a lot of my work was done in the museum,” she recalls. “Bill Eckert had the most knowledge about the interpretative area of the job and was the inspiration. I wrote a self-guided Fern Canyon Nature Trail guidebook as a project for my major at SFVSC.”

Even though it welcomed thousands throughout its lifespan, a lack of funding related to Proposition 13 forced the closure of the Fern Dell Nature Museum in 1978. But that was not the end.

A New Chapter, A New Mission

In 1988, the Fern Dell Cottage took on new life when Rec and Parks decided to make it

available to Park Rangers as a residence.

“Park Rangers were preferred at the house because their presence provided better safety and response. They are always available to help [and] are a good resource for the Department,” explains Torres. And with that, the little house acquired a new designation: Ranger House.

Situated near one of the most heavily trafficked entrances to Griffith Park, occupancy of the building has always been important to the security of the area, which borders residential neighborhoods. When the house becomes available, all full-time Rec and Parks employees are eligible to apply for tenancy, but from the outset, strong support from community associations, individuals, and Friends of Griffith Park assured ranger tenancy.

Currently, 17 Park Rangers are assigned to patrol Griffith Park.

One of the earlier Park Rangers to occupy the Ranger House is Joyce, a ranger since 1995. Two sons were born to him and his wife during their time at the Ranger House, from 1998 until 2011, the longest stay of any ranger to date.

The next ranger to call the Ranger House home was Senior Park Ranger Adam Dedeaux, Supervisor of In-House Search and Rescue Training. “I’ve always had a passion for the outdoors,” he says, and “wanted to find a job where I could play in the outdoors.” In January 2007, he applied to be a Park Ranger, an endeavor that took two years.

Dedeaux and his wife lived in the house for about three years and had a son there. They got used to finding picnickers on the front lawn or a bobcat on the roof. “I chose to live in the Ranger House [because] it was a great opportunity to gain a lot of experience... I also just really love and appreciate Griffith Park and didn’t want to pass on this unique experience. Besides, I like the variety of the job and the scenery’s not bad either. But the most important part of the job is helping people.”

The current occupant of the Ranger House is Ranger Gary Menjuga who has lived there with his wife and young son for a little over a year. “The house is showing its age,” he says. “There’s no central heating, so we use space heaters and just one window A/C unit. Some of the tiles are separating, which makes the house prone to rodents and ants, so we follow our son around with a dustpan, picking up after

him to prevent rodent and ant infestations,” he says with a chuckle. Menjuga has some electrical skills and performs upkeep tasks—except, that is, when he’s not putting out fires.

“On August 12 of this year at approximately 5:40 a.m., a hiker called LAFD about a brush fire near Fern Dell and Red Oak Drive. LAFD notified me, and when I responded, the caller pointed me in the right direction,” says Menjuga. His first actions were: “Identify the location, quick assessment, relay assessment to responding resources, conduct initial attack,”—or, as we civilians would say—fight the fire.

Working on his own, Menjuga was “able to extinguish the fire before it spread and cancel most of LAFD fire trucks and helicopters that were responding. LAFD arrived and sprayed the area with additional water to guarantee the fire was out.”

Menjuga is used to visitors asking for a Band-Aid or calling in the middle of the night when they’re lost. Nor is it unusual for other Park staff to call for ranger assistance.

On a recent Sunday, Menjuga received a 2:00 a.m. call from Griffith Observatory security reporting two hikers, a man and a woman, both in an “altered mental state.” The woman had fallen down a hillside and couldn’t climb back up. Jumping into his Ranger truck, Menjuga radioed LAFD for assistance and, once at the scene, began to rappel down the hillside to help the woman. He was quickly joined by firefighters who helped complete the rescue and took the hikers to the hospital.

There’s no “The Ranger Is In” sign, but the Fern Dell Cottage, built in 1927, and the Park Rangers who live there continue to fulfill its legacy as a place of security and caretaking.

Along with putting out fires and rescuing people, today’s Griffith Park Rangers offer, among other responsibilities, general assistance to the public, conduct nature hikes, lead interpretive education programs and execute search and rescue. They are caretakers, public ambassadors, preservers of wildlife, conservationists, botanists and keepers of the peace. All of which makes for a whole other story. Stay tuned! ♡

Photos of Park Rangers and more are on our website at friendsofgriffithpark.org



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P-22 Day Pre-Celebration

Recently NWF's Beth Pratt and FoGP's Gerry Hans brought a group of Sierra Club hikers along a portion of the trail Griffith Park's P-22 may have taken as he entered the Park. The top of the Hollywood Sign can be seen just behind the group of hikers, with the city sprawled out in the background. 📷



SAVE THESE DATES... UPCOMING VOLUNTEER EVENTS IN 2019

Sat., Jan. 12

Native sycamore tree planting
Road Side Picnic Area with lecture
from biologist Barbara Brydolf

Sat., Feb. 2

Tree planting in Fern Dell

Sat., Feb. 9

Small tree planting in Fern Canyon
amphitheater area

Please follow us on **FACEBOOK**
When we post upcoming volunteer efforts
in Griffith Park, you'll be able to participate.

Sat., March 9

Watering and weeding
Cedar Grove

Sat., April 13

Earth Day tree planting
in Ferraro Fields Area

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