



BETWEEN FRIENDS

news & updates from friends of griffith park /february 2011

UCLA Bobcat Study Finds Wild Cats and More in Griffith Park

GRIFFITH PARK IS AN ISLAND OF NATURAL HABITAT for native bobcats allowing these beautiful and elusive creatures to exist in our congested metropolis. With urbanization posing a threat to wild cats worldwide, it is vital that steps be taken to ensure the continued survival of the Park's population.

Since 1996, National Park Service (NPS) biologists have been studying bobcats in Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA). In September 2010, NPS collaborator Laurel Klein extended the study to Griffith Park as part of her UCLA Ph.D. dissertation research. Ms. Klein's research aims to assess the effects of urban development on disease susceptibility in bobcats in urban areas around Los Angeles. This study involves capturing bobcats, collecting blood samples, and tagging and releasing individuals at the site of capture. Blood samples will be used for genetic analysis, disease surveys, anticoagulant rat poison exposure testing, and basic veterinary diagnostic assessments. Seven bobcats have been captured in GP, and three have also been radio-collared, allowing researchers to track and record data on the bobcats' movements. All of the captures have appeared healthy, though blood and anticoagulant exposure screening results are pending. Across Southern California, more than 80% of bobcats tested for anticoagulants have been positive. Thus, we expect that bobcats in GP are also exposed to these prevalent poisons. These GP bobcats also appeared to be free of



Left: a Griffith Park bobcat looks boldly into the camera. Right: in the course of bobcat research, carnivores such as raccoons or coyotes can be detained temporarily. This grey fox caught and released at Mt. Lee provides the first photographic evidence of a species whose presence in Griffith Park had been confirmed previously by tracks.

manage, an ectoparasitic disease that has devastated bobcat populations in other parts of SMMNRA, though results on a disease survey test to assess subclinical infection are also pending.

Friends of Griffith Park is pleased to have contributed financial support to this research. We are also working to get the word out to Park neighbors about the dangers anticoagulant rat poisons pose and to suggest effective alternatives that do not injure wildlife. For more information, visit friendsofgriffithpark.org

Just Released: Griffith Park Natural History Survey's 'Rare Plants of Griffith Park'



Sparse leaves and tall stems make White Pincushion *Chaenactis artemisiifolia* easy to spot. Below: Rare CNPS Category I species, Hubby's Phacelia, *Phacelia hubbyi*, occurs at two Park locations.



WITH ITS DIVERSE TERRAIN, deep valleys, ridgelines, and even natural spring-fed drainages, Griffith Park boasts multiple vegetative habitats. Of the nearly 300 native flora species in the park, some are precious simply because of their limited occurrence and distribution. Beginning early in 2010, Griffith Park Natural History Survey (GPNHS) piloted a Rare Plant Survey focused on official "special-status" species, designated by California Native Plant Society (CNPS) as Category 1 taxa. However, with a large professional and volunteer effort in place and a perfect year for long blooming periods, the survey expanded to include other "targeted" species, such as plants which are not rare, but have very limited local and regional presence.

The project was managed by Cooper Ecological Monitoring and was funded in significant part through the efforts of Friends of Griffith Park. FoGP was also successful recruiting volunteers for the many hours spent methodically searching for wildflowers. Distributions of targeted flora species were mapped for all 40 grid sections in the park, and in only 7 grids were no targeted species documented. Occurrences of targeted species ranged from less than 10 plants in a 5 x 5 foot area (Slender mariposa lily) to wide spread occurrence for others.

In summary, important populations of rare plants were found park-wide, with no regions of the park that could be declared unimportant to rare plants. Also, several new species, most presenting as single populations or single plants were documented for the Park.

For more information, visit friendsofgriffithpark.org

Acting to Save the Park's Historic Fabric

IN HIS AWARD-WINNING PBS FILM, *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*, documentarian Ken Burns devotes an entire episode to the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), Roosevelt's New Deal answer to the catastrophic unemployment and dislocation of the Great Depression. During the 1930s, three CCC live-in camps were established in Griffith Park. They offered the dignity of work to otherwise indigent men who poured their energies into planting trees and constructing much of its hardscape. Today their handwork survives in retaining walls, paths, culverts, curbs, drinking fountains and other structures that are classic examples of what architectural historians call *Park Style*. Now that Griffith Park is an L.A. Historic Cultural Monument, we can and should preserve the work of our fathers' and grandfathers' hands, as much for its beauty as for its tangible reminder of how our America struggled and overcame adversity.

Friends of Griffith Park is in talks with historic consultants to determine the feasibility of restoring a prime example of the Park's New Deal legacy, a 310-foot long retaining wall in Western Canyon that is at risk of collapse. Although damaged by time and marred by



well-meaning repairs, close inspection of this signature feature reveals how willing workers skillfully chiseled and set each stone in place to create a thing of beauty. As a Friend of Griffith Park you help further the goal of protecting Griffith Park's historic fabric. For more information, visit friendsofgriffithpark.org

Griffith Park Master Plan Identity Crisis

AFTER THREE YEARS OF PUBLIC MEETINGS, the Working Group, the citizens' panel rewriting the commercialized 2005 Draft Master Plan for Griffith Park, submitted a new Draft emphasizing the Park's preservation as L.A.'s great urban wilderness and place of free access and recreation. After fifteen months, the Draft was returned to the panel marked with "redline" changes and additions that dilute and sometimes reverse these recommendations. On the cover, *Master Plan* is crossed out and replaced with the title, *Vision Plan*, a fundamental change in the Draft's definition, authority and function that the public is being told is necessary to avoid an environmental review (EIR) "costing hundreds of thousands of dollars."

Nevertheless, to its Executive Summary this statement has been added, "A Master Plan for Griffith Park would be expected to follow the Vision Plan for the Park...and also contain specific projects for the Park..." These words suggest that after the *Vision Plan* is put to bed and the Working Group retired, the City intends to hire consultants to create what it will view as the real Master Plan for Griffith Park. No doubt, this plan will recommend capital development and the City will find funds to pay for its expensive EIR.

Currently, several planning documents and building projects are moving through municipal processes that are exempt from the City's EIR requirement and its associated costs. These include the new Bicycle Plan for the City of Los Angeles which contains myriad capital recommendations, and the multi-million dollar renovation of the L.A. Zoo Parking Lot in Griffith Park. Both have received Mitigated Negative Declarations, side-stepping the EIR requirement.

We submit that the Working Group's Draft Master Plan should join them. Although it is not above fact-checking by Rec & Parks before being put out for public review, the City should not seek to change the document's fundamental identity nor its core recommendations. We are nearing the finishing line of a community process. Hitting the reset button and claiming that the Master Plan is not a Master Plan at all, does not serve Griffith Park.

Zoo Pressured to Introduce Parking Fees to Griffith Park

IN OUR PUBLIC TRANSIT-DEPRIVED METROPOLIS, charging to park in a regional park is tantamount to an admission fee. Currently, the Greater Los Angeles Zoo, a popular rent-free tenant of Griffith Park, is being pressured to introduce paid parking to the lot that not only serves its visitors, but non-Zoo recreationists and, at times, the Autry Museum. Protests have been lodged by several groups, including the Griffith J. Griffith Charitable Trust, that such a move is regressive and violates the spirit of Colonel Griffith's stipulation that the Park remain a place of free access.

The ostensible reason for initiating the fee, increasing revenue for the Zoo, does not convince. The considerable expense of installing and staffing a fee-collection system, coupled with the report that Zoo receipts are running ahead of projections, suggests that at most, a minimal increase in ticket price will achieve the Zoo's revenue goals without penalizing other park visitors. Likewise, northbound motorists on the 5 to 134 freeways already idling in weekend congestion caused by exiting traffic crawling slowly towards the Zoo lot, should not be further penalized by the increased delay that will be the consequence of fee collection.

So why the pressure to take this unwieldy and seemingly unnecessary step? The Zoo is a separate department of the City. It is not governed by Rec & Parks. Ergo, it is rarely top-of-mind for general park users. Advocates for Griffith Park and parks throughout the City are concerned that this attempt to quietly establish paid parking at the Zoo is the prelude to instituting parking fees everywhere in Griffith Park – and wherever physically feasible in parking lots that serve our other City parks. Charging cash-strapped families and individuals to use our free parks is the last thing we need in these economic times. See documents relating to this issue at friendsofgriffithpark.org



Visit friendsofgriffithpark.org for more on these and other topics. If you're not a member, you'll also find information there on how to join Friends of Griffith Park.