



# the griffith reporter

the newsletter of friends of griffith park/winter 2014-15

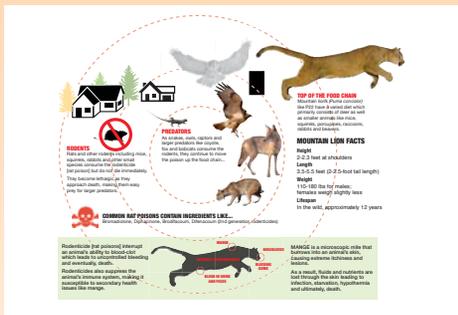
## SPECIAL ISSUE – A SALUTE TO VOLUNTEERISM IN GRIFFITH PARK



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Rodenticide Lecture page 3

**Griffith Park, originally gifted by Griffith J. Griffith, has over the years become many things to many people...** passive recreationists rub shoulders with hikers, runners, bikers, picnickers, golfers and sometimes, the occasional four-footed animal. Over the past century, it's become obvious to many that because of the proximity of the Park to its urban neighbors, this Park has very special needs. This is the reason Friends of Griffith Park was originally formed and it's because of the financial support the group has received from people like you, that FoGP and the Park continue to thrive!

FoGP and the Park are also fortunate to have numerous enthusiastic, dedicated volunteers, both old and young, who do great work. These are challenging times for the Park because continuing budget cuts and staff reductions have made it difficult for L.A.'s Rec and Parks staff to stay abreast with the upkeep and maintenance of the Park. As a result of these cuts in service, volunteers have stepped in to help, and are working wonders. Our Volunteer Services Coordinator Laura Howe has organized several projects that beautify and enhance areas within the Park. On many weekend mornings she has culled students from Marshall High and Immaculate Heart who have joined in and labored, and have become passionate about the Park. The FoGP team continues to work closely with Rec and Parks staff, resulting in a better Park for us all.

Please peek inside this issue to learn more about the fabulous work and view the photographs which document the stories.

*Let's continue in the New Year to protect and preserve our Park.*

## thoughts from the president

This newsletter features volunteerism in Griffith Park. The outpouring of volunteers that come to us, whether schools, companies, organizations or individuals, is moving. We see great potential in our future to deliver needed services, hand-in-hand with the Department of Recreation and Parks. We are working to build our capacity to manage volunteers and to provide an educational experience for every volunteer activity we offer.

Major park undertakings require careful planning, years in the case of Fern Dell's revitalization. In 2012, we completed Phase I, Cultural Landscape Assessment. We are excited to announce that Fern Dell Phase II, Restoration and Rehabilitation Technical Assessment, is now fully funded at \$250,000. We can only say... thank you, thank you, thank you, to all the individual donors who decided Fern Dell is very much worth saving and wrote checks. Notable organizations which helped complete Phase II funding include LA County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Los Feliz Improvement Association, Hollywood United Neighborhood Council, and Oaks Homeowners. Along the way, we received an important grant award from Favrot Fund of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Our warmest thank-you goes to our anonymous donor whose matching funds helped us reach our goal at twice the speed!



Several parts of Fern Dell Phase II are complete, including a hydrological analysis. Natural and supplemental water sources, soils, and the possibility of reinstating a recirculating water system have been studied. Many remaining aspects of work are now under contract and in progress with completion certain in 2015.

This fall, our Griffith Park Anza Trail Project, Assessment and Recommendation Study, was completed and adopted by the City. See the story about Friends of Griffith Park's joint work with National Park Service in the separate story on page 13.

Scientific work to understand the rich habitat and wildlife of Griffith Park continues to be a major focus. We're proud the FoGP-funded wildlife cameras discovered a mountain lion, P-22! This mountain lion has brought national attention to the Santa Monica Mountains and to Griffith Park. The love and challenges of living within an urban wilderness is now the theme for such organizations as National Wildlife Federation, with P-22 as its icon.

Advocacy for the park is also a key focus of our organization. Important decisions are not easy to make. Our legal action against the City is not taken lightly by our organization. We tried every step of the way to protect the Crystal Springs Picnic Ground from being diminished in size and adversely impacted by two Little League fields. These fields were targeted for Crystal Springs as far back as 2005, with a request for Prop K funding in 2009. Yes, we all saw it coming and there was no stopping it, at least not without litigation. Despite our confidence in prevailing, it was a difficult choice to make.

Friends of Griffith Park is not in this alone. We have received widespread support and funding to oppose the Crystal Springs picnic ground location for the ball fields. The Griffith J. Griffith Charitable Trust stands by our side in the battle for an alternative location for the fields. The Sierra Club Griffith Park Task Force also actively supports our position.

We appreciate all the feedback and support we have received on our actions to protect Crystal Springs, as well the Old Zoo area which is within the wilderness area per the Historic-Cultural Monument dedication. The Old Zoo continues to be gradually transformed into an outdoor commercial event area, to the detriment of nature and passive recreation.

Please enjoy Griffith Park over the end of year holidays and appreciate the nature and history it bestows upon us all.

Gerry Hans



**"I consider it my obligation to make Los Angeles a happy, cleaner, and finer city. I wish to pay my debt of duty in this way to the community in which I have prospered."**

*~Col. Griffith J. Griffith*





**This past July, UCLA Biologist Laurel Serieys presented a talk on the effects of rodenticide use in wildlife communities**

## Rodenticides – The Legislative Front

Friends of Griffith Park has been vocal in asking the City and the State to do their part to reduce the use of rodenticides. A City Council motion was responsible for bringing the Department of Recreation and Parks to the table which has finally led to a voluntary phase-out of second generation anticoagulant rodenticide usage in our city parks, including Griffith Park.

While that's a good start, Griffith Park's P22 was nearly killed by a first generation rodenticide. These rodenticides are also potent but don't have the lengthy half-life in the blood that second generation agents have. So far, citizens have it on good word that the first generation type will be used in our parks only when other methods of rodent control can not be used. We would like to see a more absolute commitment to their elimination. A number of other cities, such as Malibu, have completely outlawed all first and second generation rodenticide usage.

On the residential side, second generation agents have been taken off the shelf for consumers since July as a result of state legislation which we strongly supported. However, licensed pest control companies may still use them. And first generation rodenticides are still available to consumers. The use of these poisons, especially surrounding parks with an abundance of wildlife, is highly inappropriate considering the many alternative methods for solving most rodent problems.

Alternatives include humanely-designed mechanical and electrical traps. However, the first focus should always be eliminating the primary cause, often the availability of food sources and plant protection (such as ivy) where rats thrive.

### **Rodenticides (Rat Poison) in Griffith Park and the Santa Monica Mountains**

- 92% of bobcats tested since 1996 show exposure to anticoagulant agents
- Two mountain lions have died as a direct result of rodenticide use, and both had mange
- P22 was gravely sick from exposure to rodenticides, but is recovering
- 83% of coyotes tested show exposure to rodenticides over five years
- Children and pets have also been unintentional victims of these poisons

## ICO HIKES IN GRIFFITH PARK



## Inspiring Outdoor Connections in Griffith Park

Friends of Griffith Park is proud to continue its support of this great program, in partnership with the Sierra Club. We have been actively involved since 2011, the first year of FoGP. That year we helped sponsor five separate outings, which brought 168 children into the Park. Inspiring Connections Outdoors, formerly known as Inner City Outings, is focused on nature trips for the underserved K-12 grade classes in Los Angeles. We've increased our participation each year. This year we have been part of fifteen outings thus far with 549 children. We hope to squeeze in a few more hikes before year's end. We're proud to report that in total, we have opened the eyes, ears and hearts of 1,312 children to Griffith Park! FoGP Director Felix Martinez has helped on nearly every hike. He has shared many of his experiences with the youngsters, who bond with him like a grandfather. Felix also talks about the Park's history, including the Anza expedition. FoGP Director Miguel Ordeñana has also provided interpretive guidance. The children benefit from his scientific knowledge and expertise.

It is heartwarming to see the urban youth explore and appreciate the natural world. We hope these experiences today will help shape their values for tomorrow. May they learn it is critical to preserve and protect the Park, for they are its future stewards.

## Become a Griffith Park Citizen Scientist

The internet has greatly enhanced the availability of data for scientists worldwide. Referred to as "crowd-sourcing" by tech gurus, mass-contributed information can be valuable in assessing the distribution of wildlife species.

When you take your next hike in Griffith Park, take along your camera or smart phone. It's easy to participate in citizen science work. It's fun, educational and it's a great experience for young children. A citizen scientist is anyone who gathers and contributes information.

A favorite resource for becoming a citizen scientist is *iNaturalist.org*. Here's how it works: if you see a lizard, toad or bobcat in the park or in your yard, just snap a photo. Then submit the photo to iNaturalist with a tentative identification, if you know it. Or select the ID button and try to identify it. A date, time and location are also required. If you use a smartphone, this information can be synced along with the photo. *It's so easy!*

The learning experience does not end upon submission. In fact, where else do young learners get the privilege of interacting readily with scientists? The iNaturalist project managers or other iNaturalist members will confirm or help with the species identification. If you wish, you can see reports of the same species at other locations or see all the species submitted close to your location. iNaturalist also provides the citizen scientist an easy means for keeping a log of all personal animal discoveries.

Here are several favorite iNaturalist "projects" that should appeal to Griffith Park enthusiasts. You can submit the same findings to multiple projects, if you wish.

### ↓ RASCALS Reptiles and Amphibians of Southern California

The project curator is Dr. Greg Pauly from the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, a respected herpetologist and cool guy. Submit only reptiles and amphibians to this project.

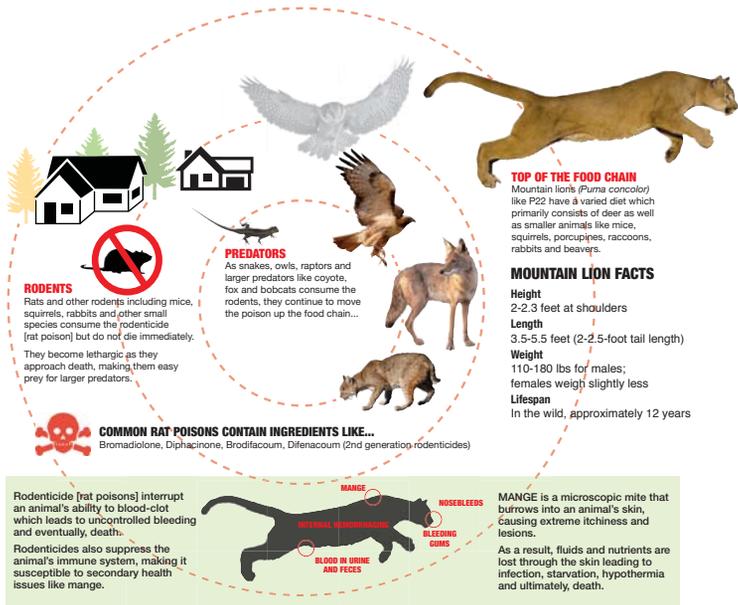


🐾 **SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SQUIRREL SURVEY** Scientists are engaged with studies to understand how the beautiful Western Gray Squirrel is losing territory to the Eastern Fox Squirrel, a species accidentally introduced into California in the early 1900s. Submit your sightings of both tree squirrel species along with sightings of California ground squirrels. The project is led by mammalogists Miguel Ordeñana and Jim Dines for the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.

🐾 **BACKYARD BOBCAT STUDY** Led by USGS Research Ecologist, Dr. Erin Boydston, this project studies urban bobcats throughout Southern California. Your input will fill in the gaps in carnivore data, whether it's a bobcat you see in Griffith Park or in your neighborhood.

🐾 **GRIFFITH PARK BIODIVERSITY PROJECT** Submit all animals, plants and even insects. This project is specifically tracking the biodiversity and distribution of wildlife in Griffith Park.

🐾 **L.A. NATURE MAP** informs the LA community about the rich diversity of species located within Los Angeles. The LA Nature Map accepts all plant and wildlife observations throughout the area, including Griffith Park. You can submit your sightings from the Park and continue submitting to other projects when you get home.



How rodenticides affect wildlife in parks

### P22 in Griffith Park: Will He Get the Three Year Itch?



**Feb 12, 2012** Griffith Park Connectivity Study camera snaps photo.

**Feb 28, 2012** Wildlife biologist Miguel Ordeñana downloads and views the mountain lion to his great surprise. He notifies authorities.

**March 28, 2012** National Park Service (NPS) captures the mountain lion with a cage, anesthetizes, and fits him with a tracking collar. The male cat is named P22, "P" for puma, and "22" for the 22nd puma captured by the NPS team based in Thousand Oaks.

**August, 2012** NPS recaptures P22 and replaces the previous malfunctioning collar.

**March, 2014** NPS recaptures P22 and replaces collar batteries; P22 is treated for rodenticide poisoning and mange, in situ.

**April 2014 to Current** Camera photos seem to indicate some improvement in his appearance. We are hopeful his health has improved; however, he remains vulnerable to rodenticide exposure as long as the city, park facility operators and homeowners continue to use them to control rodents instead of safe alternatives. P22's movements in the Griffith Park area continue to be followed via GPS points transmitted multiple times daily by his collar, supplemented by occasional camera photos. He continues to behave as expected by hunting wild prey (primarily deer) and actively avoiding people.



Students from the School for Environmental Studies at John Marshall High School Native Planting in Fern Canyon, January, 2014

## FERN CANYON RESTORATION PROJECT

In 2007, fire devastated huge swaths of Griffith Park, including the Fern Canyon area near the merry-go-round. Although fire is an essential, healthy part of the natural ecosystem, nature sometimes needs a helping hand to recover from a disaster of this magnitude. Fern Canyon, once a lush, seasonal riparian area and beautiful nature walk was in dire need of restoration after the fire and recent drought.

As the mission of Friends of Griffith Park is to protect and preserve the Park's precious resources, our organization realized Fern Canyon would recover from the effects of the fire more quickly with an infusion of human intervention. With this in mind, Friends of Griffith Park approached the School for Environmental Studies at John Marshall High School to enlist their aid in the recovery of Fern Canyon.

In order to successfully plant native species, Marshall students first conducted soil sample tests to identify which plants would do best in which areas. Based on those results, students created a plant list and drew plans to achieve optimal plant distribution.

It was essential that these plants eventually survive on their own and to achieve this goal, Marshall students hand-carried water to the site as the area has no natural irrigation system. Griffith Park Rangers helped the process by providing a watering tank near the planting site.

In addition to damage from the fire, the Fern Canyon area was impacted by spates of vandalism. In order to address the issue, Marshall students along with other volunteers, worked to mitigate graffiti and repair the vandalism done to this natural amphitheatre.

Friends of Griffith Park owes Griffith Park Rangers a tremendous debt of gratitude for their efforts in this native planting project as well as their ongoing commitment to protecting Griffith Park and those who utilize the Park.

Thanks also to Park Ranger Albert Torres who helped coordinate this restoration effort with Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks.



**PLANT UPDATE / SPRING-SUMMER 2014**

Because of the special care given during the early planting stage, this area is once again flourishing.

Friends of Griffith Park and volunteers from the community continue to water the plants on a bi-weekly basis as plants are still establishing in the area. Eventually they will be able to thrive on their own.

**SAVE THE DATE *for the* UPCOMING FoGP LECTURE**



**Thursday, February 5th /6:30-8:30PM**  
**Griffith Park Visitor Center Auditorium**  
**4730 Crystal Springs Drive LA, CA 90027**

**MUSHROOMS and ECOSYSTEMS... CONNECTING THE DOTS**  
**Presented by Gary Lincoff**

Gary Lincoff is a leading educator and expert on mushrooms. Whether you know your mushrooms or not, Gary’s humorous talks appeal to all. Gary has helped survey mushrooms in Griffith Park over the last two years and focuses on the urban mushrooms in the parks of New York City when he is at home. He is the author of “The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Mushrooms” and other publications. He teaches courses on mushroom identification at the New York Botanical Garden and has led mushroom study trips around the world. Gary is travelling to Los Angeles to present this lecture and also participate in the annual Los Angeles Mycological Society Fair.

# In Celebration of the



TOGETHER IN CRYSTAL SPRINGS

# Griffith Park Sycamore



photo courtesy Martha Benedict



## FERN CANYON STAIRS RESTORATION

Over the course of time, the Fern Canyon Trail has been heavily used by hikers going to the interior of Griffith Park. The stairs on the trail leading up from the amphitheatre were in need of repair. Recently the stairs had been closed due to damaging rainfall that made them dangerous. Because of overuse and rainfall, the hillside immediately adjacent to the stairs had also been impacted by erosion.

An Eagle Scout in need of a final project approached Friends of Griffith Park who then coordinated the restoration effort. With a great deal of advance preparation, Eagle Scout Troop 31 completed the project in several days and the refurbished stairs have since been reopened.

Thanks to Eagle Scout Nick Sauer, his dad, Bob Sauer and all those from Eagle Scout Troop 31 who participated in this stair restoration project.

Special thanks to Kristin Sabo, the volunteer caretaker of Amir's Garden, who helped facilitate the construction with a stair-building lesson, and members of the LA Department of Recreation and Parks maintenance staff.



Both the Fern Canyon and Stair Restoration projects are the culmination of Friends of Griffith Park partnerships with students from the School for Environmental Studies at John Marshall High School, LA Department of Recreation and Parks maintenance crews, Griffith Park Rangers, Eagle Scouts,

and area nurseries.

Friends of Griffith Park continues to engage community volunteers in our efforts to preserve and protect this beautiful urban wilderness.

## Join or renew your Membership with Friends of Griffith Park

FOR OVER A CENTURY, GRIFFITH PARK has been L.A.'s great urban wilderness where we all come to connect with our natural heritage. Friends of Griffith Park is a non-profit charitable organization that promotes the enlightened stewardship of Griffith Park so it can survive and thrive for another hundred years.

Although some attractions in Griffith Park have organized groups supporting their missions, until now, no one group has worked to promote and sustain the entirety of the Park. Friends of Griffith Park seeks to conserve Griffith Park's essence - it's irreplaceable environment and the history it enfolds.

Currently, reductions in funding, maintenance and staffing can be seen in the Park's deteriorating landscapes and historic features. Pressures are rising to reposition the Park as a revenue source, opening the door to commercial developments that encroach on its free and open character.

Unless we act now, Griffith Park will cease to be the natural escape from urban pressures that Colonel Griffith envisioned when he donated the Park to the people over a century ago.

*When you join or renew your membership with Friends of Griffith Park, you will help:*

- Preserve Griffith Park's open landscapes, ecosystems and Urban Wilderness features
- Safeguard Griffith Park's integrity as L.A.'s largest landmark and work to restore its historic fabric

- Oppose loss of open space, free use and identity-changing development and commercialization
- Ensure that planning and decision making are open, accountable and made in partnership with the public
- Promote knowledge about the Park's natural heritage and human history
- Provide grants and engage in fundraising for the Park's study and preservation

*By joining Friends of Griffith Park you help preserve this living resource for future generations to enjoy. As a Friend you will receive:*

- The Friends of Griffith Park newsletter with news of issues and events affecting the Park and its users.
- Invitations to lectures and programs, guided hikes and other activities.
- Invitations to volunteer opportunities in the Park.
- The satisfaction of knowing that you have helped to preserve and sustain the natural heart of our city.

## Become a Member of FoGP Today!



Friends of Griffith Park is a 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit corporation. As such, your donation is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Friends of Griffith Park now accepts stock donations, giving you even more flexibility when donating.

## Folk Gardens in Griffith Park and Remembrances of the Captain

Folk gardens in Griffith Park were established by three separate men in the 1940s. Captain's Roost is the oldest, followed by Dante's View and then Amir's Garden. Building these tranquil gardens became their passion.

I first met the "Captain," who ruled his "Roost" on the west-facing slope of Mt. Hollywood, in 1946. He seemed ancient, but perhaps this is because I was a mere child. Captain's Roost became a lush garden, but the fierce fire in May 2007 turned it into a barren, semi-inhospitable place, much as I remember it when I first hiked the area over sixty years ago.

The Captain was a shirtless, grumpy man in shorts, who wore a captain-type cap. He had leathery skin which had tanned to a golden brown. He did not talk much. He wanted to be left alone to work this sparse plot of land. Perhaps he once was an official captain. As a child, I didn't care. I just wanted to walk up the gigantic hill that led to his outpost and sit on the tiny, wooden bench he had handcrafted or the dirt seat he had carved into the hillside.

My family, (Mom, Dad, my sister Joan and I) would approach his garden from the Bird Sanctuary. He never greeted us. Mom always said hello; his response was an indifferent grunt. We were often the only ones at his Roost, but occasionally a few other hikers stopped by on their way to the summit of Mt. Hollywood.

The Captain noticed I was extremely skinny, which was of grave concern to my mom. He witnessed me turn down the sandwiches she packed, and he begged me to eat. One day he suggested to Mom I might be tubular. The following morning I was rushed to get a chest X-ray which proved negative. The next time we visited the Roost, Mom made a special effort to let the Captain know I was in perfect health.

I returned to the spot several years later while I attended college. The Captain was gone, but the area had blossomed with plants. A real bench was in place. It had become a gathering place for middle-aged and elderly Europeans. Some were German-Jewish refugees. They were friendly and I enjoyed being among them.

One woman, Rae Pivnik, later became semi-famous as the



Current view of Captain's Roost still shows the effects from Griffith Park's devastating 2007 fire

next caretaker of Captain's Roost. Mrs. Pivnik was once featured on a TV newscast. The gist was to document how this woman, over 80 years old, came to the Roost every day to take care of it. I never saw her do any gardening, instead she supervised others. She sat on a bench, bundled in a coat, and wore a small hat as she gave her orders. The true caretaker of Captain's Roost was Dante Orgolini, a man decades younger than Mrs. Pivnik. He did most of the planting and weeding.

The older Mrs. Pivnik got, the crankier she became. She was very territorial and often snapped at hikers. Mrs. Pivnik did not faze my mother, who often visited Captain's Roost during the week. One day Mom and Mrs. Pivnik sat on the bench while Dante feverishly worked. Mrs. Pivnik was in a particularly nasty mood. She constantly berated and criticized Dante. He finally stood up, threw his trowel down on the ground and said, "Okay, you can have this place for yourself. You will not see me again." Then he left.

That is how Dante's View was started. Dante went to the other side of the hilly slope and created a spot which was his labor of love. He raised the American flag at the entrance, as a signal he was in his garden. He made it very clear everyone was welcome, possibly as an antidote to the unpleasantness that had developed at Captain's Roost.

Dedicated caretakers have carried on tending these folk gardens. Friends of Griffith Park boardmember Felix Martinez took care of Captain's Roost several years prior to the 2007 fire. After the near total denuding from the fire, Department of Recreation and Parks made a failed attempt three years ago to reestablish Captain's Roost. The area remains sadly barren and unattractive, with virtually no shade, and no water fountain. Exposed PVC water lines litter the area leading to the downhill ridge in glaring incongruity with the natural surroundings. Non-native areas such as these folk gardens are hard pressed to recover from fire, compared to native habitat. FoGP hopes to work with Rec and Parks at Captain's Roost in the near future with a goal to plant the area with climate-tolerant native flora.

~ Carol Prager Brusha

## PARK-RELATED UPDATES

You've probably hiked the trail along the LA River in Griffith Park not realizing you are walking in the footsteps of families who walked along this trail to San Francisco, claiming California for Spain. That is all about to change. Friends of Griffith Park has been collaborating with the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, & Conservation Assistance (RTCA) since 2011 to bring awareness to the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail. We've walked the 4-mile trail, photographed it, and documented its characteristics. Working with NPS's Patrick Johnston, former FoGP board-member Bernadette Soter helped draft the Griffith Park Anza Trail Assessment and Recommendations Study, describing the trail, analyzing its assets and liabilities, and making suggestions for enhancements. One recommendation is installation of interpretive signage along the Griffith Park route.

The 58-page document was then presented to LA's Depart-



Artist rendering of terraced sound wall with native plantings

### Anza Trail Traverses Griffith Park

Rangers as docents. This training, funded by a grant FoGP received from the National Environmental Education Foundation will eventually become available to the public. Please watch for Anza Trail docent training announcements in the spring.

Are you an avid collector of National Park stamps in your NPS Passport? Get your passport stamped for the Anza Trail at the Griffith Park Visitor Center where you can also pick up your free copy of the Anza Trail in Griffith Park brochure produced by FoGP last year. Happy hiking.



Huge speaker systems were installed in the Old Zoo prior to the GREAT HORROR CAMPOUT while signage to the event was notably garish



The spectre of death greeted visitors to the recent HAUNTED HAYRIDE event and one exhibit displayed "remains" from twin guillotines, spilling down the slope

## Commercial Deals Begin to Transform the Old Zoo Area in Griffith Park

Publicly-traded giant Live Nation, sporting \$6.5 billion in gross revenue last year, has taken an equity stake in the Haunted Hayride and the Horror Campout events whose home base has become the Old Zoo, the bucolic picnic area surrounded by wild lands and hiking trails in Griffith Park. The picnic site was formerly home to rock cages housing zoo animals until the 1960s when the Zoo moved to its present location. The Old Zoo is also the venue for seasonal Independent Shakespeare Company performances, Boy Scout programs and more.

Billionaire Mark Cuban previously invested \$2 million in the company, Ten Thirty One Productions, which hosts the Haunted Hayride. Live Nation has now launched a dedicated webpage, "Griffith Park Old Zoo" as one of their event venues. While much of the community is carefully watching Live Nation as they attempt to take over the operation of the Greek Theatre from the Nederlander Family after nearly forty years,

attention should also be focused on commercial use in the Old Zoo area.

The Old Zoo area is within the "wildlife area" and its remaining animal grottos are designated a "historically sensitive resource" by the Historic-Cultural Monument documents. Intermittent use of the grassy picnic area of the Old Zoo for early evening family-oriented performances is not a significant ecological threat. However, the current usage trend along with \$5 million of proposed infrastructure sends fears that this area is being transformed into a cash generator for the City and Live Nation, at the expense of recreation and nature!

Friends of Griffith Park will continue to campaign for appropriate "conditions of use" to be established for this designated wildlife and historic area. Numerous organizations and park users join us in the effort to protect the Old Zoo area.

## Western Gray Squirrel Genetics Study Begins



Pacific Biodiversity Institute: Craig Olson

The western gray squirrel, Griffith Park's only indigenous tree squirrel species, is losing traction across the west coast states. The competing eastern fox squirrel accidentally introduced in California in 1904 may be one factor leading to noticeable declines in the presence of the western gray. Habitat loss and urban development also play a role in this squirrel's decline.

CSULA biology grad student Chris DeMarco is looking at western grey squirrel genetic material in order to learn more about this species. The genetic diversity of the Griffith Park squirrel population will be compared to that of populations in the Santa Monica Mountains to the west of the park and then the gene flow between these populations will be assessed.

Gene flow and genetic diversity are important issues in the fragmented habitats of our urban area. Long-term viability of squirrels, bobcats and mountain lions is questionable due to the lack of connections across freeways. In Griffith Park, crossing opportunities on Hollywood Freeway through Cahuenga Pass on overpass bridges continue to provide a critical connection to the large habitat areas of the Santa Monica Mountains to the west.

Results from this study will give scientists insights about conservation measures in order to enhance healthy populations of the western grey squirrel. Also, a prediction of the longevity of the Griffith Park squirrels or their population extinction will be made based upon genetic findings.

The ubiquitous western gray squirrel in Griffith Park is nothing to take for granted. These squirrels are a gorgeous species with pure white bellies and large fluffy gray tails. Friends of Griffith Park has fully funded the costs of the study through a grant to CSULA because we recognize the importance of this species within Griffith Park.

The study is now launching. Hair tubes are being deployed in various areas within Griffith Park. These harmless non-invasive contraptions will snare hair from squirrels which will then be collected and analyzed. The hair roots provide DNA material that will identify genetic profiles of various pockets of western grey squirrels within the park.

If you see these hair tubes, please leave them alone and spread the word to others. Fern Dell, Oak Canyon, and Vermont Canyon are just a few of the areas where these devices will be placed. For additional information, please contact us via our website.

~Gerry Hans

## LA Heritage Day

In its sixth year, the L.A. Heritage Alliance once again welcomed visitors and participating organizations to celebrate and share the history and diversity of Los Angeles. FoGP Boardmembers were available to answer questions. As a bonus, FoGP Boardmember Richard Stanley's vintage 1928 La Salle 303 Roadster was highlighted in the front driveway of the Pico House. Many visitors to the FoGP booth were interested in getting more information about Griffith Park's resident P22 as well as other Park-related issues.



## L.A. River Restoration

The US Army Corps of Engineers recommended the most comprehensive \$1 billion plan to restore the Los Angeles River in May. Concerned groups including Friends of Griffith Park supported Alternative 20 which includes restoration of the wetlands at the confluence of the LA River and Verdugo Wash. The Headworks Project area in Griffith Park, where underground tanks will replace the Silver Lake Reservoir water supply is part of the river revitalization effort. FoGP is collaborating with Army Corps of Engineers and DWP to explore habitat restoration concepts for this area, which may include a seasonal wetlands area to replace what was lost when the river was channelized. A wildlife crossing envisioned by FoGP President Gerry Hans over Forest Lawn Drive is currently under consideration by the Army Corps.

## FOGP PARTNERSHIP WITH FOLAR ON RIVER CLEANUP



## The 2014 LA River Cleanup

The 25th Annual Great River Clean Up took place this past spring. Friends of Griffith Park volunteers joined forces with event sponsor FOLAR (Friends of the Los Angeles River) to pluck a trove of trash from the L.A. River. This is one of the largest river clean ups in the country where thousands of Angelenos wearing disposable gloves and armed with trash bags become garbage-collectors-for-the-morning at 14 sites spanning the L. A. River from the Tujunga Wash at the foot of the San Gabriel Mountains to the Willow Street Estuary in Long Beach.

FoGP hosted the Bette Davis Picnic Area site in Griffith Park and thanks to hundreds of volunteers who came out, heaps of litter were hauled out of the river. This event helps to regenerate the precious natural resource of the L.A. River.

Hats off to everyone who came out for the event on April 26th. We hope to see even more of you next year at La Gran Limpieza! Although it's hard work, it's also a day filled with laughter, camaraderie and the knowledge that we've all done our part to help protect the L.A. River.





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SAVE THE DATE

**MUSHROOMS & ECOSYSTEMS  
CONNECTING THE DOTS**

**Presented by Gary Lincoff**

Thursday, February 5th, 2015

6:30-8:30PM

at the Griffith Park Ranger Auditorium

*see page 7 for more details*



photo: Gerry Hans

## Meet Bobcat B253

Seeing a bobcat is always a special gift. The ear tags revealed this feline had once been captured by bobcat researcher, Laurel Serieys, several years ago near Travel Town. The male bobcat, B253, was part of bobcat genetic research conducted in Griffith Park. Apparently his territory now includes the Bronson Canyon area of the Park.