



the griffith reporter

the newsletter of friends of griffith park/winter 2013-2014



A gorgeous bobcat spotted in a backyard near Griffith Park

The Unintentional Consequences of Rat Bait

Wildlife continues to be threatened by these potent toxins: Brodifacoum, Bromadiolone, Difenacoum, and Difethialone. The chemical names aren't important. They're rat poisons or rodenticides, and their anticoagulant action delivers a slow bleeding death. Remarkably, they are purchased off-the-shelf at many stores and are used by pest control services. It's the unintentional secondary poisoning by these agents which devastates our wildlife, especially carnivores such as the beauty pictured here.

Earlier this year, Friends of Griffith Park published a four-page report concerning this issue. Since then, we have supported a proposed State of California regulation which will restrict the use of these poisons. Action has not yet been taken. We have also proposed that the City of Los Angeles initiate a council motion to ban these poisons.

Bobcat photo courtesy: Sheri Hellard

for more information on this or any story, go to friendsofgriffithpark.org



In 2008 the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) gave the makers of these products a three-year notice for their removal from store shelves. It is incomprehensible that to date it still hasn't happened because of prolonged legal challenges. In the meantime, poison bio-accumulates in the bodies of various mammals and birds as they find poison-intoxicated, slow-moving rodents in backyards as easy prey. And, so it goes up the food-chain. The rat poison kills the rat but it also kills the hawk, owl, or bobcat that ate the rat. The unintended consequence is that these poisons accidentally kill the natural predators of rodents.

- 🐾 Since 1996, bobcat testing in the Los Angeles area shows that 95% have exposure to anticoagulant rodenticides, with exposure statistically tied with notoedric mange, a slow, ugly, painful way to die.
- 🐾 Two collared mountain lions in the Santa Monica Mountains recently bled to death from anticoagulant exposure after living on a diet consisting of small mammals.

To do your part at your home: 1) take action to eliminate the *cause* of any rodent problem you may have by cleaning up food scraps in and around your home, and 2) use *traps* instead of poisons. If you rely on a pest control professional, be sure to stipulate that you don't want to use anticoagulant rodenticides as any part of the solution.

Don't Poison the Wild!

thoughts from the president

The holidays are the time of year when I always seem to reflect on the great gift given to our city by a most generous character, Colonel Griffith. The toyon shrubs in the park, with brilliant red berries, remind me it was just before Christmas in 1896 when Griffith J. Griffith wrote a letter to the city offering 3,000-plus acres for use as a park for the citizens of a growing city he was sure would someday become a very large metropolis.

Griffith Park was gifted with the intent that it be accessible to everyone as a “respite” from urban pressures. Clearly Griffith had major respect for the powers of nature, saying, “Give nature a chance to do her good work and nature will give every person a greater opportunity in health, strength and mental power.” Did he know that someday looking from Mt. Hollywood, urban sprawl would be in every direction?

Strong advocacy by Colonel Griffith during his lifetime, by his descendants, and by the Griffith J. Griffith Charitable Trust, has helped to sustain Griffith Park as a remarkable natural wonder. Its various habitats represent very healthy ecosystems, and as a whole Griffith Park has remarkable biodiversity, both in its wildlife and in its flora.

Over recent years, two important documents strive to protect Griffith Park as a place where people may continue to experience the healthy powers of nature. One is the City of Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument status which the Park received in 2009. The document describes the large, character-defining element of the park, the “Wilderness Area,” as a “historically sensitive resource.”

The other significant document is the Griffith Park Vision Plan, a scaled-down version of the work done by the citizen-based Master Plan Working Group beginning in 2005. The Vision Plan sets forth the concept of “Urban Wilderness Identity,” a dedication to preserving the park’s unique natural characteristics — not just the interior natural habitat areas — but the entire park. The plan is expected to be adopted by the City shortly.

Do these protections — on paper — mean that we no longer need to worry about new threats to the great gift of nature given to us by Colonel Griffith? No, it doesn’t, and it is no time to let down our guard. It’s the slow, insidious, slippery-slope I fear the most. The era of cumulative privatization and commercialization of our parks is upon us.

Look no further than October 2013, the fourth year of the expanding Haunted Hayride event in the Old Zoo picnic grounds, to see the creep of revenue-driven concepts. This event displaces park patrons (picnickers and hikers) for a month and a half each year. It impacts wildlife and beats up the grounds. And it takes the “free” and the “access” out of Colonel Griffith’s motives. At the Griffith Park Resources Board meeting on October 30 it was announced that a private corporation took in \$2.5 million from the Haunted Hayride; what did Griffith Park get from it? LA’s tax base is levied to sustain our city parks, and we should resist park commercialism, especially when it is completely unrelated to recreation and not nature-friendly.

Friends of Griffith Park is supported by folks like you who care about nature, care about history, care about maintaining what we have, and care about a healthy mix of recreational activities for Griffith Park. We hope you will join us in whatever way you can, to support our mission.


Gerry Hans



“Public parks are a safety valve of great cities and should be accessible and attractive, where neither race, creed nor color should be excluded.”

~Col. Griffith J. Griffith



Hike & Seek

Mary Button

On Saturday November 2nd Friends of Griffith Park participated in the National Wildlife Federation's Hike & Seek in the Mineral Wells picnic area of the Park. The NWF hosts Hike and Seek events in major cities throughout the country. This was the first time they staged an event in Los Angeles. We're proud they chose Griffith Park for their venue.

The Hike & Seek is an outdoor adventure designed for children ages 3 to 10 and their parents. The kids embarked on a family-friendly one-mile hike. Along the way they encounter five stop and study stations (plants, insects, mammals, reptiles and birds) where they learn fun facts about nature and participate in a learning activity.

Registration for the event was on the large grassy knoll, which also featured an expo. Several animal rescue and

environmental groups, including Friends of Griffith Park, set up informative displays. The weather couldn't have been more ideal. It was a warm and bright sunny morning. The NWF was thrilled with the participation. Nearly 500 registered for the Hike & Seek!

Friends of Griffith Park was also "on the trail." We were responsible for the mammal station. Erin Boydston, wildlife biologist with the USGS joined us. The kids were excited to see photos of the mammals that call Griffith Park home: coyotes, deer, bobcats, rabbits, squirrels and even our resident mountain lion, P-22. The children learned that mammals use their noses and have a sense of smell. The kids got to practice identifying different scents. They sniffed little boxes with the aromas of lemon, ginger, peppermint and pine and found these various scents which we "planted" on the ground near our station.

Hike & Seek was a successful, wonderful opportunity to introduce children to nature and to our beloved Griffith Park.



Park Rangers to the Rescue

Park Rangers in Griffith Park have become increasingly rare over the last years. The number of Rangers has been cut from 60-plus at the turn of the century to only 18 today. We need more of them. Every possible opportunity should be taken to show support for what they do and to ask for more funding.

Rangers perform a multitude of services. They are ready and able for: patrol, security and enforcement, medical assistance, brush fire suppression, search and rescue, dispatch, education, community outreach, traffic management, signage, and emergency preparedness. They are one of our city's best investments.

Our rangers know the park and are nearly always the first responders to fires and emergencies because they know it so well. On any given weekend they have little time to do anything beyond deployment from one situation to another. General patrol, interpretive, and resource management tasks — unfortunately — take a back seat to the emergencies.



Friends of Griffith Park applauds one of their new undertakings, a program for habitat protection. Just below Mt. Lee Drive, uninformed thrill seekers have been scaling a steep embankment, off-trail, causing horrific cumulative erosion. The remedy to discourage this bad behavior was to create a berm with a short stretch of woodcrete fencing in front of it. It's not an impenetrable barrier, but combined with a habitat restoration sign, citing enforceable city code, the point is clear.

There are, no doubt, many other problematic short-cut trails in the park where this kind of resource management approach is needed. Native plant restoration projects and trail etiquette programs would be worthy supplements to this kind of effort. We need to protect the great gift of nature we have.

Our Park Rangers come to our rescue and the rescue of habitat on a daily basis. Now it's time for us to come to the rescue of our rangers and ask the City Council and Mayor to restore funding for Park Rangers.



I see people of every age and nationality enjoying the tranquility. The trails are a sanctuary from our industrialized, hectic urban environment. It is critical we have a place such as Griffith Park to find some peace. Without this, we are less human and less than whole. When we lose touch with nature, we also lose touch with our humanity towards one another. I am inspired when I reach the top of a hilly trail and see an amazing sunset, or when I view filtered light hitting the trees on a crisp cool morning. The splendor of the Park fills me with joy, and I know the world is a beautiful place.

I run through a mini pine forest, and take in the scent of the pines. I transcend the urban environment. This is a precious gift. Briefly, I have escaped the nearby concrete jungle with its depressing mixture of trash, exhaust, and noise.

People of every walk of life enjoy their unique experiences in our Park. It is our responsibility and that of the city to nurture and conserve this sanctuary.

We need more Park Rangers to protect and educate the millions who come and will continue to come. We need to respect this park and not allow it to be eroded from over-use and mismanagement.

That is why when I run on any given day seeing a deer, coyote, squirrel, owl, snake or rabbit, I passionately want to protect the Park! We live in a world of ever shrinking wilderness. Private entities with their best intentions will not “improve” the Park with paving and buildings. The idea is unsettling. What we desperately need is green and open space left undisturbed.

The mountain lion, bobcats and other animals deserve to continue living in Griffith Park. Our children ought to be able see and learn about them as well. And so should many future generations on any given day.

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On any given day running in the park is a renewing experience. It starts in the parking lot with the camaraderie of seeing other runners. I belong to a running club, the Wild Mountain Runners, a group mainly of old-school elite Hispanic runners. It is an honor to train and run with them. They are always encouraging and light-heartedly kid about my next race. Running groups such as the Los Feliz Flyers and A Runners Circle also congregate in the Pony Ride parking lot, sharing stories of adventures and fun.

When one sets out on the trail, it inevitably means going up hill into the scenic interior of the Park. The greenery and wildlife make it an ideal training

ground. You will encounter a variety of flora and fauna. Deer and coyote are ever present. Occasionally I’ll see an owl in the evening, and have come across rattlesnakes! I take this as an auspicious sign, especially when I am training for a race.



Native Wildflowers of Griffith Park

On Thurs., Dec. 19th at 6:30pm, Jorge Ochoa will discuss the wildflowers of Griffith Park, highlighting the beautiful, precious native species found here. Los Feliz Branch Public Library • 1874 Hillhurst Ave. (at the corner of Franklin Ave.)

Crystal Springs Picnic Area

It's been a favorite gathering place for Angelenos for decades. If your family or community group had a big event, chances are you met here at the Crystal Springs Picnic Area in Griffith Park. Most activity in the park before World War I was centered in the Crystal Springs area because it is one of the few flat areas in the park.

Crystal Springs was a popular picnic area even before Griffith Park existed. In the 1880s, the area was known as Rancho Los Feliz and included an Ostrich Farm. It was the first recreational activity in the area that would later become Griffith Park. Col. Griffith was part owner of the Ostrich Farm Railway which brought visitors from Sunset and Beaudry downtown to the Ostrich Farm. The Ostrich Farm with large pens for ostriches also included a variety of birds and animals, trails, and elaborate picnic grounds. The *1886-87 Los Angeles City Directory* declared the Ostrich Farm "the very acme of happiness for children."^{*} But when the economic boom ended, and ostrich feathers were no longer fashionable, the Ostrich Farm was dismantled. The experience, however, did plant the seed in Griffith's mind for a park with trails, animals, and picnicking.

During the Great Depression Griffith Park became the home of three Civilian Conservation Corps camps. The park benefited greatly from their work; they planted trees, built check dams, cleared fire breaks, planted a new lawn in the Mineral Wells Picnic Area, and built cascades in Fern Dell. Crystal Springs Picnic Area was developed in 1936 and families have been enjoying the spacious facility ever since. With four large groups of picnic tables and barbecues, the area is the only location in Griffith Park where large groups can reserve one or all of the areas for an event. It is also one of the few areas where barbecues are permitted because of fire danger concerns. The funds raised by the modest fee charged for picnic reservations are used for maintenance of the area. Crystal Springs is a popular venue for family reunions, company picnics, church groups, and other organizations. Near the reserved area, are broad grassy areas where families gather for birthday parties, a barbecue, or simply to let children run around and play. Adults usually gather in the shade of the large welcoming trees to watch their little ones chasing balls across the grass.

Member Appreciation Picnic Friends of Griffith Park wanted to do something



special to thank our members for their support. We celebrated with a member appreciation picnic in Crystal Springs on October 20. It was a perfect day for a picnic, sunny and bright but not too hot. A light breeze kept us cool. Seventy Friends joined us for traditional picnic fare: hamburgers, hot dogs, potato salad, green salads and cookies. A few

volunteers came early and helped with the set up. Others helped us grill the hot dogs and hamburgers. Thank you all, especially Jay, Pearl and Denice. We have fabulous "Friends."



Our guests enjoyed the camaraderie and shared Griffith Park experiences. Toddlers played and adults mingled. Margret's delicious homemade cheesecake disappeared within minutes after she announced she was slicing it. Adults and kids alike engaged in the great debate, which cookie should I choose? They reached the same conclusion — try several of the yummy varieties!

The door prizes were a huge success, with plenty of swag to go around, thanks to our many generous sponsors and donors. FoGP President Gerry Hans called out the winning numbers at periodic intervals through out the picnic. More than half the guests walked away as winners.

It was a glorious day: the people, the laughter, the fun and the food. It couldn't have been better.

We appreciate Crystal Springs Picnic Area. It proved again to be "the very acme of happiness for children" (and adults) as it was in 1886. It has a rich heritage and tradition which we hope will continue for future generations to enjoy.

Thanks to our sponsors for a successful event!

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Los Feliz Library
Margret Lohfeld
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Simply Thai Restaurant
Skylight Books
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Please patronize our sponsors.

^{*}(Mike Eberts, *Griffith Park: A Centennial History*, 1996, p. 10, 21-23, 134, 142, 161)

Planning Fern Dell's Revival

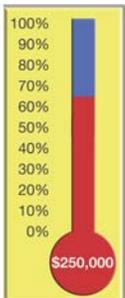
Marian Dodge



Fern Dell photo courtesy: Martha Benedict

There is exciting news about Fern Dell. The Griffith J. Griffith Charitable Trust has donated a very generous amount to Friends of Griffith Park for the Fern Dell Fund.

The Trust has always been a staunch supporter of FoGP. They supplied the necessary matching grant funding for the Los Angeles County Preservation Fund of the National Trust for Historic Preservation which made the initial cultural landscape assessment of Fern Dell possible. The Trust is thrilled that Fern Dell is being revitalized to the glory it once enjoyed when Van Griffith was a Park Commissioner.



More good news — the **Oaks Homeowners Association** has also come aboard, joining other private donors and family trusts with significant donations. Please remember, we have a private donor, who is matching every donation we receive, dollar for dollar! We are thrilled to share the good news that FoGP is now more than half way toward fully funding the \$250,000 Phase 2 of the Fern Dell rehabilitation project.

Meanwhile, we have already initiated the biological baselines survey involved in the project. **Cooper Ecological Monitoring** has begun studies to determine how much and what kind of wildlife calls Fern Dell their home. Although numerous scientific studies have been done in Griffith Park as a whole, this is the first time studies have specifically focused on Fern Dell. Biologists who surveyed the bird populations estimated as many as 30 nesting

species in Fern Dell. This is an amazing number of species for such a small area. Biologists have also set up cameras to document the mammals that frequent the dell. A healthy habitat can support a broad variety of wildlife.

Friends of Griffith Park met with **Rec and Parks** managers to coordinate this rehabilitation project. Upcoming on the agenda is a formal survey of Fern Dell and hydrological studies. We have coordinated with the **Office of Historic Resources**, the **Los Angeles Conservancy** and the newly opened L.A. office of the **National Trust for Historic Preservation**.



The **Cultural Landscape Foundation** held its first **What's Out There Weekend** in Los Angeles, featuring Fern Dell as one of its sites. The Foundation is the nation-wide organization which named Fern Dell

to its Landslide list of at-risk landscapes in 2012. What's Out There Weekend featured free, expert-led tours of more than twenty significant examples of designed landscapes. Previous event venues have included Washington DC, Chicago, San Francisco, New York City, Philadelphia, and the Berkshires. Friends of Griffith Park volunteer Kay Tornborg and

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Donna Matson (right) and Juliet Kipperman enjoy the recent FoGP Picnic in Crystal Springs

Donna Matson is a television pioneer, educator, and adventurer. In the 1960s she created live on-camera science programs for elementary science classes. Matson founded Western Instructional Television which produced more than 800 programs from locations around the

world. Her surf board resides in the California Surf Museum in Oceanside. She still sails to Catalina.

FERN DELL When I was about to start kindergarten, my mother bought me a little red pantsuit for chilly days. The first day I wore it to school the principal called my mother and told her to come pick me up, since girls were not allowed to wear pants to school. I was so upset and disappointed that my mother took me to one of my favorite places, Fern Dell. I watched the crawdads and dragonflies that skated across the stream. Enchanted, I leaned over too far and fell into the water. My pretty new red pantsuit was dripping wet and covered in mud.

GREEK THEATRE During the Spring Festival at the Greek Theatre, Miss Bond's fourth grade class was invited to perform a Japanese song and dance we had learned



Courtesy, John Stevenson

Early photo of the Greek Theatre stage, seats are empty, Probably taken before John Marshall High School graduation in 1933

while studying Japan. We had brought old sheets from home and made kimonos and decorated them with a floral design. Then we twisted pink crepe paper on branches to represent cherry blossoms. As we stood there on the stage in front of hundreds of excited school children we sang our song and swayed back and forth waving our branches of cherry blossoms. Then much to my horror, the end of my branch caught in my nose and I was out-of-step with everyone else. I never performed again at the Greek Theatre.

BEACON HILL was located south of Griffith Aviation Park on the east side of Griffith Park near the river. One day our Scout Troop climbed the hill to earn our hiking badge. We were taught the basics for good hiking: pacing, hydration, clothing, first aid, etc. Many years

later I climbed Mount Kilimanjaro in East Africa which is 19,532 feet high. The local natives crowned me with a wreath of ever-lasting flowers as the First American Woman to successfully reach the top of their sacred mountain. As I stood there looking up at the snows that capped this mountain, I reflected on my first hiking experience on Beacon Hill in Griffith Park.

GRIFFITH PARK GIRLS' CAMP Our Girl Scout Troop often spent time at the Girls' Camp in Griffith Park. One day while preparing for our farewell dinner I was asked to decorate the tables. I searched the nearby area for flowers, berries, or pinecones but could find nothing suitable. At last I came upon some colorful leaves of yellow, orange and red. I gathered up a few branches and arranged them on the tables. Halfway through the meal, someone recognized the colorful leaves as poison oak. Quickly they were removed and all the scouts were sent to the shower where they were scrubbed down with Fels naphtha soap.

THE MERRY-GO-ROUND Whenever we went to Griffith Park to hike, to play ball, or go to the old zoo, we would always stop by the merry-go-round for a ride or two. If we were lucky we would catch a brass ring and win a free ride. What fun we had!

THE BIRD SANCTUARY Halfway up the winding road to the observatory is a very special place located among pine trees and redwoods, the Bird Sanctuary. Early every morning the Park Ranger would scatter birdseed along the trails. The seeds would quickly disappear because of the many birds who called the sanctuary home. It was a quiet place to walk or sit and enjoy nature. Today every morning I feed the birds in my garden: finches, sparrows, doves and scrub jays that eat from my hand. And occasionally a red-headed woodpecker or a hungry hawk stops by. Every winter I make several trips to the Anza Borrego Desert where there is a group of people who count the Swainson Hawks that are migrating from South America to Canada. Many of my favorite friends are bird watchers. Common interests are a great way to meet and enjoy people around the world.

GRIFFITH PARK STABLES The stables were located near the river, just south of Los Feliz Boulevard. It was here that my mother taught six or seven Girl Scouts how to saddle a horse, check the horseshoes and to ride. We earned our horsemanship badge. What fun we had riding along the river!



Donna's mother Eva Matson taught Girl Scouts horsemanship at the Griffith Park Stables on Riverside Dr.

GRIFFITH PARK SWIMMING POOL During the summer there were swimming lessons and water ballet classes offered at the Griffith Park pool. I joined the water ballet classes and at the end of summer we were invited to participate in the All-City Festival at Exposition Park. At the end

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of the festival several of us were approached by a talent scout from the Esther Williams Company who offered us a contract with the company. Unfortunately, I had already accepted a position as the Director of the Girl Scout Camp on Catalina Island.

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Having fun at the Municipal Plunge in Griffith Park, 1939



Neal Dyste, 1941

GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY While attending school at UC Santa Barbara I was the leader of a Girl Scout troop which I took on many adventures. One trip was a train ride from Santa Barbara to Los Angeles where we visited the zoo and the Griffith Observatory. After watching the planetarium show, we loaded the scouts into our cars and drove to my backyard on Avocado Street, to camp out for the night. After the girls were snug in their sleeping bags, I did one final head count. Much to my horror I realized I was short two scouts. Frantic, with my heart pounding and tears in my eyes I raced up the hill to the observatory. There on the front steps sat Beverly and Susan. "Hi, girls," I greeted them. "Are you all right?" "Oh, we're fine. We knew you wouldn't forget us, Miss Matson."

Griffith Park was my own special backyard during my life. It provided me with a wide variety of experiences, knowledge and adventures. How fortunate I truly was.



Just a bit of rain will revitalize and energize park's native flora again. Chaparral current (*Ribes malvaceum*) New Year's Day, 2013

Fern Dell Update continued from page 6

Director Marian Dodge led Fern Dell tours on October 26 and 27 for enthusiastic groups of knowledgeable visitors, many of whom are landscape architects. One man drove from San Francisco to attend the event. They admired the charm of the dell but noted the need for much rehabilitation and offered helpful advice.

Friends of Griffith Park Directors joined **Councilmember Tom LaBonge** and **CD 4** staff on August 29 for a clean up in Fern Dell. Under the supervision of Rec and Parks maintenance personnel, invasive plants which were clogging the small stream on the eastern edge of Fern Dell were removed. Trash and debris from the stream bed was removed and the path was swept clean. PAVA (Pacific American Volunteer Association) has also worked hard with Councilmember LaBonge in raking the paths and picking up litter.

We hope that you will join the Griffith Trust, the Favrot Fund of the National Trust, neighborhood organizations and private individuals and make a generous contribution to the Fern Dell Fund.