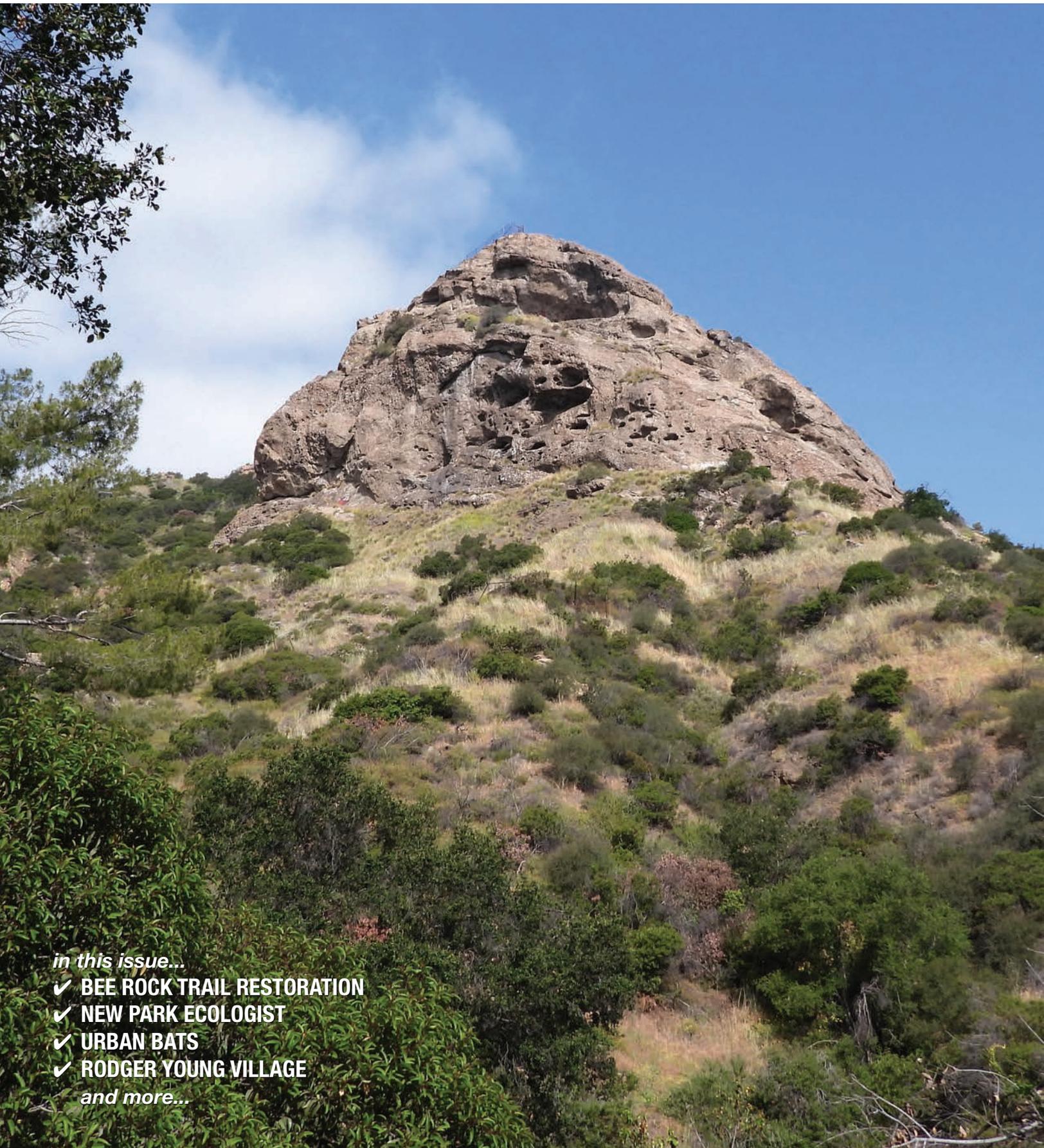




the griffith reporter

the newsletter of friends of griffith park/summer-fall 2022



in this issue...

- ✓ BEE ROCK TRAIL RESTORATION
- ✓ NEW PARK ECOLOGIST
- ✓ URBAN BATS
- ✓ RODGER YOUNG VILLAGE

and more...



Gerry Hans and CD-4 representative Nithya Raman celebrate 2022 Earth Day at a Fern Dell planting

With the leverage of an expanding membership, Friends of Griffith Park can and does get things done!

As this newsletter was ready to print, we received great news: a significant Technical Resources grant award was recommended by the Los Angeles County's Measure W Committee toward a Fern Dell feasibility study, to the tune of \$300,000. The Safe, Clean Water Program targets storm-water recapture, cleaning and storage. In Fern Dell, it pairs water conservation and recreational objectives, with our hope of restoring stream flow to the upper Fern Dell area. Once the grant is funded, an engineering firm will be chosen. The feasibility study could start by...are you ready?...the end of the year!

Craftwater Engineering was engaged as our grant consultant for this successful award. Since we already completed both a cultural landscape assessment and a historic restoration plan, FoGP had a solid base to propose this project. After the feasibility study, we'll be

in the queue for further competitive funding in the Measure W stepped grant process. Imagine for a moment: water flowing again in Fern Dell! It's a dream that's now getting closer to reality.

Another dream took place on Earth Day: the groundbreaking of the Wallis Annenberg Wildlife Crossing in Agoura Hills. Kudos to Beth Pratt of the National Wildlife Federation, and to mascot P-22 of Griffith Park! They've set a new "high bar" in conservation, with the world's largest wildlife bridge, spanning ten lanes of deadly traffic which will save countless animal lives and reconnect gene pools. (Speaking of our famed mountain lion: mark P-22 Day on your calendar; it's scheduled for Saturday, October 22, 2022 in Griffith Park.)

On Saturday of Earth Day weekend, Council District 4 joined forces with FoGP to organize volunteers who planted 100 ferns in Fern Dell. Then on Sunday, FoGP members enjoyed hiking with botanist Jorge Ochoa, looking at the abundance of insects on the Park's amazing flora, and observing "fire recovery" at a 2018 burn site. Whew, what a busy three days!

Safety for everyone visiting Griffith Park is paramount. As vehicular speeds and volume ramped up over the years, bicyclists have often taken the brunt; especially poignant was when 77-year-old Andrew Jelmert, training for a charity ride was struck and killed along Crystal Springs in April..

The "Cars Rule" model no longer works in the Park. In addition to environmental reasons, car traffic has become less compatible with pedestrians, bicyclists and even wildlife. Park roads, such as Crystal Springs and Zoo Drive, often have cars speeding well beyond the posted 25 MPH limit. This higher volume of vehicles can be attributed to commuters rushing to bypass the free-ways. Specific data is necessary to inform the appropriate next steps.

We credit Superintendent Stefanie Smith and her staff, including Tracy James, for getting in front of this serious issue. Traffic engineering studies and potential solutions are underway. Now there is greater impetus to make the Park safer, more park-like.

For years, FoGP has urged safer crosswalks, protected lanes for bicyclists, and even additional closed Park roads. In fact, the idea for the highly successful sidewalk along the hill to the Observatory from Vermont Canyon, came from FoGP! Park staff listened, and they are listening again. Short-term fixes will most likely be implemented, but important long-term solutions will take, well... long term.

While on the topic of safety, let's think about curtailing brush fire dangers from now until the next hopeful winter rains. Grasses and invasive flora are thicker this year, and make for fast-moving fires. Per Park Ranger data, 10-15 significant (more than one-quarter acre) fires are ignited each year in Griffith Park. Years 2018/19, were worse with about 90 acres scorched each season. And we're not talking fires attributed to lightning strikes. Most of these fires can be traced to...us. Here's my favorite approach to every smoker I encounter in the Park: "Hi there! Do you know there's a fine up to \$1,000?" It often works.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter! Let us know. The work and talent is nearly all our own board, with some articles also contributed by our members. We'll always be a grassroots organization, so please stay in touch!

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Photo: Gerry Hans

on the cover:

The significant geological landmark Bee Rock – article on page 3. Cover photo: Gerry Hans

photo above:

The Raptor Study is now happening in Griffith Park and surrounding areas. This Great Horned owl is part of the study and results continue to expand our knowledge about raptors, nesting habits and adaptation within the urban environment.

Photo of Gerry Hans and Nithya Raman: courtesy Tracy James

**Park Rangers respond 24/7 to Park-related emergencies. Keep this number handy!
(323) 644-6661**

Griffith Park's Iconic Bee Rock ~Gerry Hans, FoGP President

Bee Rock is undoubtedly the most significant geological outcrop and natural landmark within Griffith Park. Its highest elongated peak points toward the east, hovering over the Old Zoo, and towering over picnic areas and the Wilson-Harding Golf Course.

How did Bee Rock get its name? The answer is not written in stone, but there are theories and legends. The first is that the outcrop simply looks like a beehive. Another tale describes maintenance workers at the Old Zoo dumping spoiled soda syrup off the cliff, which lured swarms of bees. A third theory suggests that bees naturally take up residence in the holes and pocks on the cliff side overlooking Spring Canyon. I like the latter line of reasoning best, having seen numerous honeycombs and swarming bees in the cavernous networking of Bee Rock's dangerously vertical cliff side. You can only see these hives with good binoculars from Upper Old Zoo Trail.

Bee Rock is cited in the folklore of the Griffith Park "Curse" bestowed by the Feliz Family's brother and sister Don Antonio and Petranilla on all subsequent owners of Rancho Los Feliz. According to the legend, this property was swindled from the family lineage upon Don Antonio's early death from smallpox, while Petranilla was away from Los Angeles. The "curse" involves the ghosts of Don Antonio and Petranilla haunting Bee Rock. Of course, Colonel Griffith's later acquisition was entirely legitimate, so ghost activity in the Park has quieted down – and even more so when Rancho Los Feliz became public parkland! Don't worry about running into an errant spirit when you're in the vicinity of Bee Rock.

Bee Rock's geology is complicated – as is all of Griffith Park. With several known fault lines traversing the Park, Bee Rock is saddled closely by the Griffith Fault just to the north, and the Hollywood Fault immediately to the south. A previous *Griffith Reporter* article by geology enthusiast, Bill Neill, "Mapping the Geology of Griffith Park," described Miocene conglomerate as one of the Park's three major rock formations which underlies a large area of the Park — and is prominently exposed at Bee Rock. This conglomerate is comprised of cobbles, pebbles and sand, transported and deposited by fast-flowing streams and rivers.

At the top of Bee Rock resides the same rusty chained-linked fencing that has, for the last seven decades, prevented hikers from slipping to a nearly 50-foot demise. The fencing is repaired regularly due to breaches by hikers testing fate.

There are Bee Rock Trail approaches from the north and also a connection at Vista del Valle. Read about FoGP's plans to restore Bee Rock Trail on [page 9](#). ♡

Want to Get More Involved in Park Activities? We Can Help!



You came to Griffith Park for a picnic, and as you headed back to your car, noticed a bunch of folks in Fern Dell planting ferns, and wondered...

How can I get involved?

Wonder no more as Friends of Griffith Park is always gearing up for some terrific events:

The 2023 L.A. Raptor Study

This study continues and as soon as we have dates for the training sessions, we'll post on the website. Stay tuned!

Volunteer Events

FoGP continues to conduct volunteer efforts around Griffith Park, mulching, watering, tree planting, invasive removal and others. If you're interested in an activity that gets you out-and-about and helps the Park prosper... go to our website and sign up today — we'll alert you about upcoming events.

Hope to see you in the Park!

Hike North Atwater to Lower Beacon

my favorite hike

~William Hallstrom,
FoGP contributor



Photo: William Hallstrom

A few years ago I found out about North Atwater Park, where you can access a part of the L.A. River where the bottom of the channel is so-called ‘soft-bottom.’ Here is a riverbed with sand and stones, not concrete, under the water, which allows for a more natural riparian environment. (Did you know that North Atwater Park is officially part of Griffith Park?)

Soon after I first visited North Atwater Park, I thought about continuing the hike into Griffith Park, just for fun. After all, the brand new North Atwater equestrian/pedestrian bridge crosses the river and a tunnel goes under the freeway, making it easy to get into Griffith Park. After making this crossing, however, I wanted to hike straight up into the hills, but I couldn’t find a trail going in that direction. I ended up just turning around and heading back. Still, I kept thinking about linking a path from the river into the hills on the east side of the Park.

Then I found it.

To start this hike, leave the parking lot at North Atwater Park and head toward the river. You can see the bridge with its tall, bent white tower to your left — this is the first destination. As you pass by the river and cross the bridge, you can see the route of the waterway as it emerges from the San Fernando Valley to the north, and heads toward downtown. Here you will see aquatic birds like blue herons or cormorants, and riparian plants such as willow trees.

After crossing the bridge, jog slightly to the left to find the route that leads down to the tunnel that crosses underneath the freeway. Once you pass through the tunnel, you make an immediate right turn to follow the wide trail bordered by a woodcrete fence. This part of the hike crosses some of the more developed parts of Griffith Park.

Walk on the wide trail, past the Crystal Springs picnic area for a bit, and make a left turn at the first opportunity, just before the Anza Native Plant Garden that borders the Wilson Harding Golf Course. Make your way toward Crystal Springs Drive, where there is plenty of lawn and other landscaped features. You may smell the aroma of barbecue smoke if folks are using the grills installed near the picnic

tables. The sycamore trees may remind of us of the more riparian environment that once existed here. One of the sycamores appears to be older than the rest; this elder was saved by FoGP in 2014 when officials were planning to remove trees from the area to insert more baseball fields.

Just before you cross Crystal Springs Drive, you will pass by the Ranger Station and Visitor Center. In front, facing street side, is the now modified adobe structure that was once the heart of the Rancho Los Feliz. Keep going up the road that leads toward the merry-go-round parking lot, but when you get to the entrance to the lot, head to your left, toward the hillsides.

From here, hikers have many options. You could head up the Fern Canyon nature trail, for instance. If you’re looking for a workout you could head to Mt. Hollywood which is about seven to eight miles round trip with over 1,000 feet of elevation gain!

I was looking for a view of the river, though, and so I went to the left. I headed up to the east to find the Lower Beacon Trail. On a trail that looks like a fire road, I meandered around the hillside with views of the city of Glendale, the Verdugo Mountains, and the peaks of the San Gabriels. As you make your way along this trail, you will see the path of the river below you. From this trail, look down on the North Atwater bridge and see a wide view of the river.

At a shady spot where some sedimentary rocks contorted at an angle in the cliff beside the road, and with an oak tree shading overhead, I found a perfect place to reflect before heading back.

This destination really makes this hike worthwhile for me. The trail is surrounded by concrete, cars and reminders of the city and infrastructure. Here and there, though, these things pass out of view, and I occasionally get glimpses of what was here before.

Even encased in cement, the path of the river and its ancient route can still be traced. The city of Glendale has only sprung up in the past hundred years, but the contours of the land and the peaks in the distance have been here much longer. The weeds that sprout from the slopes are also mostly recent arrivals, but the oaks in-between have such a deeper history and more profound legacy. ♣

Griffith Park Aerial Tram is Not a Dead Deal *~Gerry Hans, FoGP President*

After throwing a hefty heap of money toward the Griffith Park aerial tram feasibility study to the Hollywood Sign, engineering giant Stantec's work was "put on ice" by L.A. City's Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) in early 2021.

As many of our readers will recall, the proposed (and misnamed) "Aerial Transit System" (ATS) is a roundtrip ride to a platform below the Hollywood Sign. Several alignments are on the table, including routes from Travel Town and the L.A. Zoo area, more than two miles away! This would result in damage to a large portion of this wildland habitat, especially since more than 20 towers would be constructed across the ridgeline.

News Flash: The Mayor's Office featured the "scenic aerial tramway or gondola" in the City's newly released Tourism Master Plan, in a section entitled, "Destination Development."

The gondola ride in Griffith Park has once again raised its ugly head after nearly a two-year slumber. Being in the "Destination Development" section implies the City believes the proposed aerial tram could be a huge draw for tourism dollars. Apparently it is no longer about "transit" as falsely framed before.

Is the Mayor's Office aware that the proposed aerial tram alignments have received significant opposition from the public? Letters of opposition have come from more than 30 environmental/conservation non-profits (e.g., FoGP, Center for Biological Diversity and Sierra Club), homeowner associations, various Neighborhood Councils, and even municipalities (Burbank and Glendale).

The Tourism Master Plan also implies the aerial tram is a solution for the residential neighborhoods adjacent to the Hollywood Sign affected by "visitor intrusion problems" and "disruptive visitors." Again, does the Mayor's Office know there has been nearly universal opposition to the aerial tram from these Hollywood Sign-adjacent neighborhoods?

The public's continued outrage should come as no surprise, as a laundry list of previous proposed gondolas in Griffith Park from 1942 to 2005, were all squashed after study and planning money was wasted. Why would it be any different this time around?

Whose Park is it? The public needs to speak up and voice their objection to the gondola, which the Mayor's Office seems to want before tourists flock here for the 2028 Olympics. ♣

L.A. Zoo Expansion Project

*~Gerry Hans,
FoGP President*

"If it's not one thing, it's another," as they say. And, so it goes for potential incursions into Griffith Park wildlands.

Just when the aerial tram scare slumbered into a temporary hibernation in early 2021, the Los Angeles Zoo's Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for its major expansion was circulated, with a project price tag of \$650 million for Phases 1-3 of 7. FoGP

and only a handful of other organizations were aware of the project and submitted comment letters. As always, there was a very tight window for submitting comments, with little public awareness of the massive projects being floated.

Last summer, the Final EIR was released. It was evident that nearly none of the comments and suggestions was taken seriously. However, as required for all EIRs, alternatives were presented. One of the alternatives was to eliminate the proposed expansion of the Zoo's developed footprint onto 23 acres of oak woodland and shrub habitat! This is Alternative 1, which FoGP then – and now – supports.

The L.A. Zoo is its own City Department, so the Zoo Commission swiftly approved the full project, as proposed. In fact, they ad-



vanced their meeting date by one week to do so!

Standard practice is for the EIR to go to Council Committee for the next vote of approval, followed within days by the full City Council's action. Fortunately, the item was not placed on the Committee agenda, and has still not been placed on the agenda. FoGP attributes this delay to concerns expressed by Council District 4 and perhaps other politicians. The process was moving too quickly without the public's knowledge.

Enter the *Los Angeles Times* front page story on October 20, 2021 by Louis Sahagun.

Finally, there was unquestionably robust public knowledge of the proposal. And the public reacted with intensity, speaking out in favor of Alternative 1 which does not sacrifice over 200 mature protected native trees and the habitat acreage. Instead, under Alternative 1, the focus remains on modernizing animal welfare and care infrastructure, adding accessibility features and visitor amenities, without taking over undeveloped areas.

Here's the good news: the Zoo, while first defending and rationalizing the full project, finally may be listening. Or perhaps has been given no choice but to listen. At the time of this writing, FoGP has been told that changes will be made to the EIR. The public will have a second chance to voice their opinion in the Zoo's future – and – Griffith Park's. Let's all keep our eyes and ears open because the future of Griffith Park could depend on it. ♣



All photos, courtesy L.A. Wild

Finding Support for a Wildlife Rehabilitation Center

~Gerry Hans, FoGP President

LA WILD is a non-profit organization with a mission to rehabilitate and release sick, injured and orphaned local wildlife in the Los Angeles Metro area. It was founded by past leadership, staff and volunteers of the well-respected California Wildlife Center (CWC) in Calabasas, due to the dire need for wildlife rehabilitation in our more central urban area.

Friends of Griffith Park met with LA WILD board members several times even before the pandemic, but finally there is strong movement to find a suitable location for their work to begin. Is Griffith Park a possibility? The idea is worth serious consideration and already has credible support. Because LA WILD hopes to educate the public on coexisting with urban wildlife, having the proposed center in a public park, rife with wildlife, makes a lot of sense!

The services provided by LA WILD would

be free to the public delivering wildlife patients. The proposed hospital and rehabilitation facility would be staffed with a team of veterinarians specializing in wildlife care. This will relieve the already limited resources of L.A. City Animal Services that focuses on domestic animal care, mostly dogs and cats. It will also reduce the necessity of transporting wildlife to far-away rehabilitation centers, specifically CWC and the Ojai Raptor Center.

This past March, the Los Angeles City Council introduced a motion in support of LA WILD's mission and goal to find a permanent home. The motion highlights that collectively, Los Angeles City and County had over 12,000 total wildlife intakes from 2019-2020, with about 7,000 intakes within the City of Los Angeles. "Neither L.A. County Animal Care and Control, nor Los Angeles City Animal Services are equipped to care for sick, injured, and orphaned na-

tive wildlife, the majority of which are euthanized," the motion states. "The City's wildlife is an essential portion of the overall environment, and it is critical to protect the wildlife within the City's boundaries especially in the urban metropolitan areas."

FoGP agrees. We are advising Recreation and Parks (RAP) on our ideas to make a home for LA WILD a reality in the near future. Unfortunately, injured and sick wildlife can't wait. A report regarding potential sites for LA WILD from RAP to the City Council is due this June.

LA WILD's Board President Victoria Harris says: "With the support of our City of Los Angeles leadership, we look forward to providing our wildlife rehabilitation services to the L.A. Metro and Greater L.A. area. We are committed to preserving the important role native wildlife plays in our local communities, for the good of both native wildlife and the City as a whole." 🌿



Griffith Park's First Ecologist ~Mary Button, FoGP Board Member

Courtney McCammon has a sparkling personality. Discussing her new position as L.A. Recreation and Parks' first ever ecologist, Courtney was enthusiastic about her goals and visions for our urban parks. Her energy is contagious; as we sat down and talked, the more excited I became!

Friends of Griffith Park has advocated for a full-time ecologist for more than a decade. Courtney comes highly qualified: a Loyola Marymount University graduate in Urban Ecology (BS, MS) who has consulted on many scientific projects in Southern California. Most notably, she has been a lead scientist on our Raptor Study since the beginning in 2017.

We met for a lunch interview in mid-March when Courtney had been on the job for less than two weeks. Already she had met with many of the Park Rangers, personnel, maintenance division, zoo officials and others.

Courtney is passionate about her new position, and yes, a bit nervous. That's understandable since RAP is a big department and everybody wants to meet her. She often hears, 'We've been waiting for you for 10 years.' Being in the spotlight can be daunting but Courtney is determined to do her best to "live up to the expectations everyone has of an urban ecologist."

Here's a recap of our discussion.

Mary Button: When did you know you wanted to be an ecologist?

Courtney McCammon: When I was in high school I registered for environmental classes. I had a very inspirational teacher. My senior year in high school she took us on a trip to Yosemite, and I decided I wanted to be an environmentalist. I never changed course. I began doing beach cleanups with the Surfrider Foundation. I also started the first recycling program at San Clemente High School.



Courtney McCammon is joined by RAP's Tracy James, and Park Rangers Tom Mendibles and Brandon Wylie at the recent Earth Day Celebration Event in Griffith Park

MB: Why do we need an ecologist in Griffith Park?

CM: We need a park ecologist because Griffith Park comprises more than 4,000 acres of some untouched natural canyons, scrub, chaparral and woodland habitat in the farthest reach of the eastern Santa Monica Mountains. The Park is a hub of recreation, with different areas used for various reasons. We have filming, the nursery, golf courses, plus the Observatory, the Zoo, the Gene Autry Museum and more. There's a mix of recreation plus public interest spots. Beyond that, many people may not know Griffith Park is home to an intact habitat that needs to be protected. The role of the ecologist is multi-faceted. It includes education, protection, scientific studies and maintenance.

MB: How much of your time will be spent in Griffith Park?

CM: I am the ecologist for the entire Recreation and Parks Department, but my primary focus is Griffith Park and probably 75% of my time and efforts will be there.

MB: What are your short term goals and priorities?

CM: The education of the different park divisions is a top priority for my supervisor [Stefanie Smith] and me. I am advising the forestry division next month. I am also setting up training for the maintenance division. A lot of staff does not know what

they are "seeing," what is surrounding them and what best practices should be. I want to help the Park Ranger division revamp their interpretive component. There are more than two dozen Park Rangers. I plan to take a small group of rangers for a hike every Wednesday.

Nature walks is another short-term goal. I would like to lead a nature walk once a month for the general public to attend. Educating the general park user is critical. People need to understand they can't just walk

wherever they want. They need to stay on the authorized trails. Signage is helpful. I think the Bee Rock trail restoration is an important pilot study and hope it will be an example for other trails.

I want to advise with brush clearance and let the crew know what is necessary and what is not necessary. Often native habitat takes a beating during brush clearance for no good reason. And we need biological surveys to avoid disturbances during nesting and breeding periods. Filming is also upfront for 2022. I'm reviewing special events and film shoots on a rolling basis.

MB: what about the long term goals?

CM: I am most excited about species surveys in the Park, both plants and animals. I want to bulk up the scientific knowledge. I want to know what's been done and gather it all together to assess where the gaps are and then fill them. We need to know what is here if we are going to maintain it properly. I am very motivated by the huge success of the raptor study and the wealth of knowledge; that type of data is missing in other areas of study. I want to examine the Wildlife Management Plan for Griffith Park to see what has been done and what hasn't been done and why. The last plan was 15 years ago in 2007. We need a current plan with attainable management strategies for the future. ♣

Thank Bruce for Bluebirds!

~Brenda Rees, FoGP Board Member



Photo: Gerry Hans

Have you seen one of these colorful birds in the Park? Thank Bruce Painter!

For five years, FoGP member Bruce Painter has been on a mission to attract more Western bluebirds back to Griffith Park where they once were regular residents. A Louisiana-born retiree, Bruce has been making homemade nesting boxes and getting approval from RAP to strategically place them around the Park.

Bruce keeps FoGP updated on the box activity; this last nesting season proved somewhat problematic.

“I had five boxes stolen this winter,” he writes. “I still have nine up and I will keep them up as the birds check them out during the off season. One pair that raised two broods last year hangs around their box all year round. I guess they are afraid another pair will try and claim their box.”

It’s unsettling that Bruce’s bluebird nesting boxes were stolen; what could be so enticing for a thief to scale a tree to remove a wooden box? A pair that nested in one of the stolen boxes keeps returning to the empty area; Bruce plans to move one box that hasn’t been used so the couple will have one at the start of this nesting season. As always, Bruce remains undeterred and forever hopeful.

“One box this year already has a wren nest in it. That’s the earliest I’ve ever seen,” he continues. “The wrens sang to me to assert their ownership as they usually do when I am around.”

Flycatchers and wrens also often nest in the boxes; last year wrens used five boxes and raised 30 young.

With regards to bluebirds, Bruce considers the progress made from last year’s nesting season – six bluebird nests with one pair nesting twice for a total of 17 raised birds. Bruce anticipates this year will be a “good season with these nine remaining boxes.”

Since he started his project, the bluebird numbers seem to be increasing every year; Bruce suggests maybe the young are coming back to their birthplace to raise a family.

At one time, these colorful birds were easily found in the Park; these small cavity-nesters typically carve out space for nesting in rotting or dead trees as well as in woodpecker holes to incubate their eggs. Nesting boxes are important to attract bluebirds, since dead and diseased trees are systemically removed from Griffith Park; bluebird pairs often look elsewhere to create a nest.

Overall, Bruce has one big wish for the upcoming nesting season: the bluebird pair that “took a fancy to artificial Easter grass” will find more natural nesting material.

After noticing shiny plastic strands hanging out from the box, Bruce became concerned that some of the nestlings would get tangled up in the fake grass. He was right. One nestling had swallowed a piece of the Easter grass. “I managed to pull it out of its throat and it lived,” he reports. The fake grass was replaced with pine straw.

Still, the final word on the subject came from the nesting couple: the bluebirds managed to put one piece of Easter grass back into the nest. ♣

Restoring Bee Rock Trail ~Gerry Hans, FoGP President

The hiking trails of every wilderness park in the world are critical in safeguarding the long-term relationship between humans and nature. Their proper maintenance and management is fundamental for many reasons, but can be boiled down to two important goals: protect habitat and wildlife, and ensure the safety of hikers who are enjoying the wilderness.

2022, there were five major helicopter rescues in the Park. Each rescue involved two huge LAFD helicopters and many ground resources from the Park Rangers, LAFD, and LAPD. Each rescue required hoist operations and delivery to hospitals, for conditions such as severe head trauma and severe ankle injury.

What else did these five rescues have in common? It's not surprising that each hiker was off-trail, according to the reports.

While trail maps of Griffith Park are freely accessible online and available at the Visitor's Center, maps are sometimes not heeded. There are also trailhead and trail directional signage for all designated trails at their major intersections. While we all know Park Rangers are far too few, there could never be sufficient numbers for any meaningful trail enforcement. It's largely up to hikers to be respectful and prudent, but trail improvements can also help tremendously.

Designated hiking trails are essential in protecting against increased wildlife disturbance. Going beyond the established trails reduces wildlife mobility and the reproductive success of animals which live there. "It's a form of habitat fragmentation," says our newly assigned Urban Ecologist, Courtney McCammon. Sensitive flora can also be lost. And anywhere there is disturbance, a niche opens for invasive plants to take root and compete with native flora.

The Bee Rock Trail Restoration Project

For all the above reasons, FoGP recently proposed a trail restoration project which can be the model for best trail management practices in Griffith Park. Providing the bulk of materials and labor, FoGP has RAP's support to carry out this demonstration project in stages. Visitors can expect to

see work commence in early summer and FoGP will update the progress on our social media and through our website.

The Bee Rock Trail begins at a lower fire road trail leading to a narrow trail with switchbacks, ascending steeply in places over the half-mile trek to Bee Rock. Unfortunately, the historic trail route is no longer intuitive; many hikers go onto "ghost trails" along the route believing they're still on the right trail. As a result, there has been significant habitat damage and erosion. And sometimes, hikers get into trouble on these "ghost trails!"

A primary project goal is to better define the real trail which will keep many hikers from straying off it in the first place. Closing off "ghost trails" with signage, and in some cases, physical barriers, is important in keeping hikers on the right path.

The official trail, however, needs many improvements, too, and that's the hardest work because it involves muscle and know-how. Fortunately, FoGP has close ties with two people with significant trail restoration experience, John Reyes and Ross Arnold. "Waterbars, berms, gullies" and tools such as "mattocks, McClouds, and Pulaskis" are all technical aspects of trail restoration that John and Ross know well. Of course, this is hard work, and both John and Ross will be reaching out for strong volunteers to assist when the time is right.

FoGP appreciates how RAP has embraced the Bee Rock project and the template it could provide for future trail restorations; there are over 53 miles of trails in Griffith Park, and plenty of work ahead! We need to work together to make sure these trails are the ones being trekked upon for the sake of our fellow hikers and Park wildlife and habitat. ♡



Within the first three months of 2022, there have been five major helicopter rescues in Griffith Park for conditions such as severe head trauma and severe ankle injury

On the human front here in Griffith Park, the record clearly shows a crucial need to improve trail management which begins by directing hikers to tread only on official trails. Within the first three months of

QUICK... WHAT IS IT?

Early springtime is the time of the year that this unusual pod can be seen along the Griffith Park trails. It's called wild cucumber or *Marah macrocarpa*, and while unusually lovely to some in the spring, it'll look completely different later in the season.

The curly vine that holds these pods can grow to 20' in length, attaching itself to vegetation during the winter months, and the vines will die back in the summer/fall.

Although it's called a cucumber, it's not edible as it has a very bitter taste.

Watch our website for information on lectures by Jorge Ochoa and others.

Visit our website friendsofgriffithpark.org



L.A.'s Urban Bats Fill the Night Sky

-Brenda Rees, FoGP Board Member

This year, FoGP is helping fund a project that will shed a light on one of the most unfairly maligned creatures around – our urban bats.

“I like animals that are misunderstood and a little controversial,” says FoGP Board Member Miguel Ordeñana who is overseeing the project through the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. “Being able to fly, bats are great to study in the dense urban core because they aren’t hampered by obstacles on the ground like other terrestrial creatures such as bobcats, coyotes and even mountain lions.”

Starting small in 2017 with only four bat detectors, the Backyard Bat Survey now employs 30 devices in various sites around the Los Angeles basin; this year the small unobtrusive boxes have been placed along the Los Angeles River from Griffith Park to South Los Angeles. In the Park, detectors have been set up near water sources (i.e., Lake Hollywood and near the L.A. River) that often attract bats.

Some sites, especially in densely populated neighborhoods, are in residential backyards – places where scientific research isn’t typically done. Usually, studies are conducted in natural wilderness areas which, explains Ordeñana, doesn’t give researchers an accurate portrait of bat species. You have to go where the bats go – and many of them are using habitat and resources in L.A.’s urban core. “A lot of people assume they don’t have bats on their property,” says Ordeñana. “They tell us, ‘We never see them,’ but these detectors tell a different story.”

Unlike a camera trap that snaps a photo of the animal, a bat detector records high-frequency noises; each bat species has a specific noise patterns of echolocation so it’s easy for researchers to determine which species was flitting overhead. Data collected so far shows numerous instances of bats co-existing near human populations. They are found flying through communities and roosting in man-made structures.

Enlisting community scientists to open up their backyards for a bat detector provides richer data which can, among other goals, help guide land planning as well as spark enthusiasm for the natural world. “Previous hosts told us they enjoyed being a community scientist,” says Ordeñana. “They liked learning about local wildlife

and, for families with young children, the experience exposed them to a potential career or lifelong field of study.”

Why bats?

Bats play an important role in the world’s ecosystems; they pollinate, disperse seeds and keep insect levels at a sustainable number. In Southern California, the majority of bat species are insectivorous and are amazingly effective in pest control. Consider this: bat colonies can eat a million insects every night and one of their favorite snacks is mosquitos. These buzzing insects are not only a nuisance when you get bit, but they also transfer diseases, some deadly. Additionally, bats save the agricultural industry billions of dollars a year in pesticide costs and crop damage.

Finally, bats are good indicators of environmental health. For instance, a species like the hoary bat only roost in foliage; their presence or absence reveals a lot about the habitat quality. Of the 12 bat species that have been detected in the study, four of them are California Species of Special Concern. The bat most common in the L.A. Basin: the Mexican free-tailed.

In addition to filling major data gaps for the L.A. area, the data collected in this project will be incorporated into the Bat Acoustic Monitoring Portal (BatAMP), providing insights for the broader bat research community to develop an improved understanding of seasonal and migratory patterns across North America. ♡

Have you seen bats emerging from structures around your neighborhood? The Natural History Museum wants to know! Currently they’re mapping bat roosts; if you see these winged mammals heading out for the night, please email them at bats@nhm.org.

Bats are most active on warm nights. Head out about 30 minutes before dusk and check out palm trees, old or dead trees, rock outcroppings as well as human structures like houses, underpasses and bridges. Stay your distance – about 15 feet – as you quietly observe.

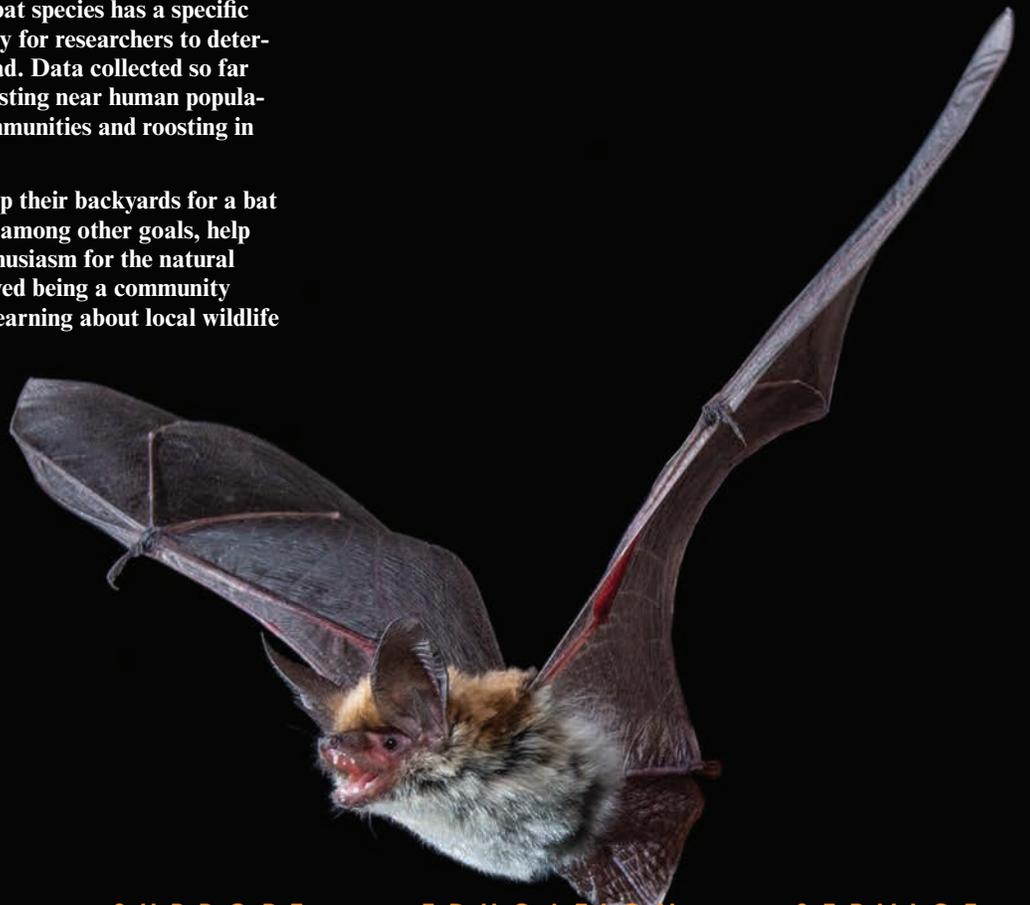


photo: courtesy of Miguel Ordeñana and LA Natural History Museum

100 Years of Soroptimists

—Marian Dodge, FoGP Board Member



Photo: Kathryn Louyse

Soroptimist International of Los Angeles (SILA) will celebrate its 100th anniversary in June – and visitors to Fern Dell will reap the rewards

Soroptimists is a volunteer service organization of professional women that supports young women. (*Soro* = woman; *optima* = best. The best for women.) They have organizations in 121 countries with 72,000 members. As advocates for human rights and gender equality, Soroptimists empower women through education. They give scholarships to promising young women who would otherwise not be able to finance a college education and they provide subsidized housing such as Soroptimist House at USC.

The first Soroptimist chapter was founded in Oakland in 1921 by Violet Richardson-Ward, a pioneering woman who organized a Women's Gymnasium in 1912 and fought for and won equal pay at UC Berkeley. Later, as Director of Physical Education for the Berkeley School District, she made physical education a requirement for high school girls long before it was mandated by the state.

The following year, a chapter was organ-

ized in Los Angeles. Fond of the outdoors, members of SILA worked with Save the Redwood League to purchase the 40-acre Soroptimist Grove in Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park in 1947. That year SILA dedicated Soroptimist Grove in Fern Dell and planted a redwood seedling to honor the northern grove. Soroptimist Grove is located on the east side of Fern Dell Drive just below the intersection with Red Oak Drive where the newly renovated foot-bridge is located.

SILA also dedicated the grove to another pioneering woman, Minnie Barton, L.A.'s second policewoman. Barton was more than a beat cop – she offered rehabilitation programs to girls who came to the big city seeking a better life and ended up in prostitution with venereal diseases. When the women were released from detention, they were sent to Los Feliz Hospital on Riverside Drive near Allesandro for treatment. Barton founded the Minnie Barton Home which evolved into the Big Sister League and is now a United Way agency.

Fern Dell Upgrades

SILA usually celebrates their anniversary with a picnic in Soroptimist Grove. When

they learned of Friends of Griffith Park's efforts to rehabilitate Fern Dell, SILA individuals began donating to the Fern Dell Fund. Last year FoGP hired *faux bois* expert Terry Eagan to make major repairs and restore the delicate sycamore log designs in the concrete railings (see *Griffith Reporter Summer/Fall 2021*).

This year, in honor of their anniversary, SILA wanted to do something special. A group of officers toured the site to survey the greatest needs. They saw that the existing metal barbecues were so badly rusted that hot coals could fall through to the ground, posing a high fire risk. Noting the three tiers to Soroptimist Grove, the members realized that only the first level had picnic tables. In the end, they decided to purchase two new large concrete barbecues and another picnic table with FoGP purchasing an additional picnic table; additionally, the decrepit metal fire-hazard grills will be removed.

Thank you, Soroptimist International of Los Angeles for your very kind donation which will be enjoyed by many visitors to Griffith Park! May you celebrate many more anniversaries in Soroptimist Grove! ♣

When the Sky Was the Limit: Aviation in Griffith Park

~Kathryn Louyse, FoGP Board Member



CA National Guard hangars and plane, Griffith Park Airport, L.A., circa 1928 / LA Times Photo Archives

Mike Eberts' book *Griffith Park: A Centennial History* opens with a 1935 map of the Park, created by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Look closely — in the northeast quadrant is a small field that features a small biplane, hanger and runway referenced as the National Guard Airport.

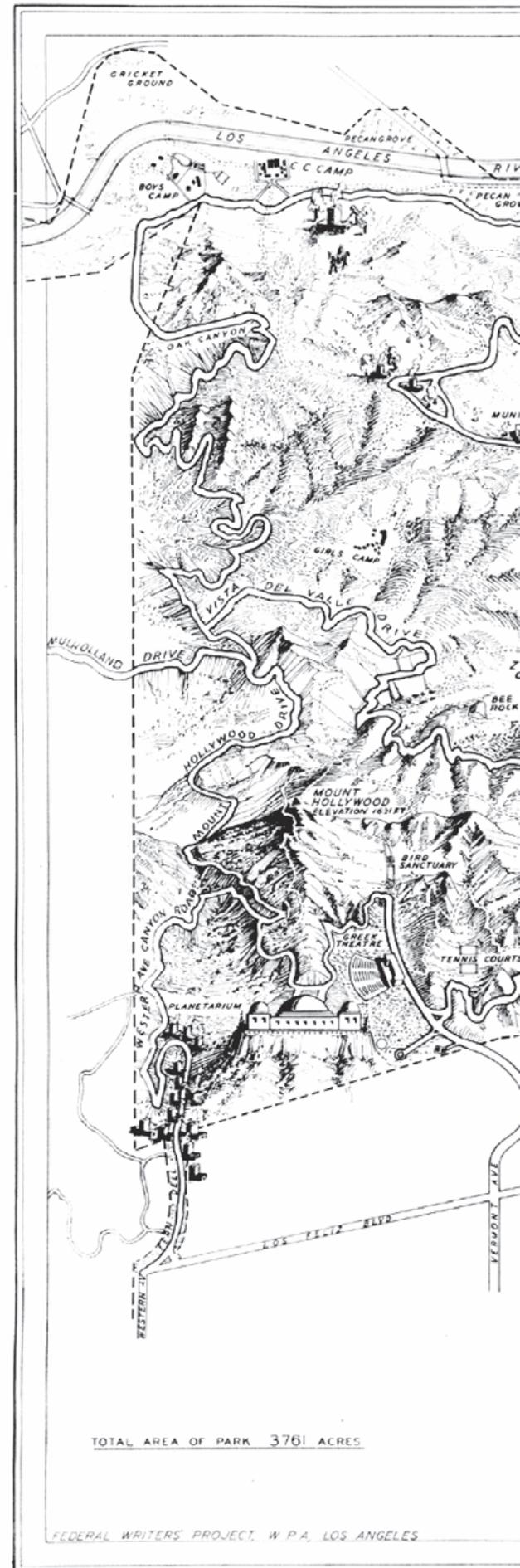
An airfield? In Griffith Park? My interest is piqued!

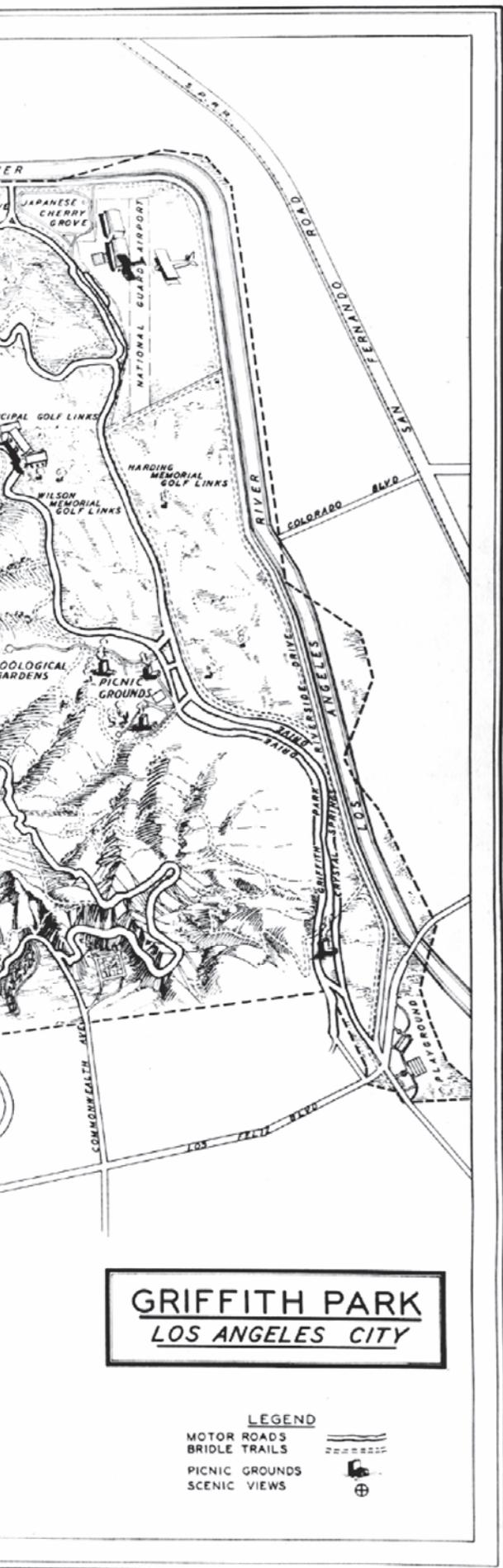
This was my first realization that an airfield existed, at least briefly in this part of Griffith Park which has seen many realignments over the decades. Unfortunately, every single structure related to this airfield is long gone — swept away by time, by freeways and by the reconfiguration of the Park. It's all vanished into thin air.

According to Eberts, Col. Griffith's son Van had been bitten by the lure of the wide open skies and the burgeoning aviation industry in his youth, becoming "an accomplished glider pilot and balloonist." Eventually Van veered toward the business side and in 1911, founded a magazine called *Aviation* which lasted a year.

Around this time, Van also became involved in the creation of a flying field on the Griffith Reservation — a property that remained under ownership of the Griffith family when the original land grant was gifted to the City in 1896. This particular area was perfectly suited to an airfield since it consisted of broad, flat land, unlike the steep, deep canyons of Griffith Park.

The newly constructed Griffith Park Aerodrome catered to early aviation pioneers like Glenn L. Martin who in 1912 established the Glenn L. Martin Co., and operated out of this location until 1916 when he left for the greener pastures of New Jersey. Martin's departure from Los Angeles, left the airfield without sufficient resources and the field quickly fell into disrepair. In 1921, The City of Los





Biplane flying near Griffith Park Airport, L.A., circa 1928 from the LA Times Photographic Archives

Angeles purchased the Griffith Reservation property, making it an official part of Griffith Park. During this period several failed attempts were made to revive the airfield, and in 1924 the property was leased to the California National Guard, and used to train military pilots.

In 1929, the airfield lease was extended for an additional five years, but by now things were beginning to radically change. The land was now part of Griffith Park and Van Griffith was becoming increasingly disillusioned with the National Guard occupying this space. As a Park commissioner, Van had voted against reauthorizing the lease, although he was overruled by other committee members. By the early 1930s, he had become more vocal, commenting, “The temporary use of a part of Griffith Park granted to the California National Guard should be considered TEMPORARY in every sense of the word...”

At the same time, another situation was emerging — the National Guard airfield was interfering with approaches to Grand Central Air Terminal — a small commercial airport located in nearby Glendale. Both fields were using the same air-space and the possibility of mid-air collisions were increasing.

By 1939, the L.A. City Planning Division concluded that the National Guard field violated the original land grant terms, the airport was shuttered, and the National Guard’s 40th Air Corps Division was moved elsewhere. By 1959, the Glendale airport was also shuttered, and flights were moved to the larger Burbank Airport facility.

After WWII, the National Guard field became the site of Rodger Young Village, housing returning vets and families, due to a city-wide housing shortage. The Village closed in the mid-1950s and beginning in 1956, construction of the I-5 freeway consumed a large portion of the area. This was followed by construction of the 134 freeway in 1971 which consumed even more of the former National Guard field. The remainder of the area is now occupied by a portion of the LA Zoo parking lot, the Griffith Park Ferraro Soccer Fields, and the dog park, all sandwiched between two freeways, and the L.A. River.

Little remains of the fascinating aviation history in the Park.

On the crest of the tall peak adjacent the I-5, a revolving beacon once warned pilots to steer clear of the steep hills and deep canyons of Griffith Park. All is completely gone. The peak — Beacon Hill as it’s called — still exists and the trail up and around is now used by hikers who may not know they’re walking on the last remnants of the storied aviation history in Griffith Park. ♣

Want to hike Beacon Hill? Go to page 23 and learn how!



Wildness in the Metropolitan Area: A Dream in Search of a Plan

~Alexander Rader and Valerie Vanaman

“Deep in the forest a call was sounding, and as often as he heard this call, mysteriously thrilling and luring, he felt compelled to turn his back upon the fire and the beaten earth around it, and to plunge into the forest, and on and on, he knew not where or why; nor did he wonder where or why, the call sounding imperiously, deep in the forest.”

~Jack London, *The Call of the Wild*

Wilderness has the potential to connect city dwellers with something more than the trappings of the urban environment. Residents can escape the cacophony of the urban world for a moment of peace in a different setting which Los Angeles has in abundance. From Griffith Park to the Santa Monica Mountains, from the Ballona Wetlands to the Verdugo Mountains, we are graced with land that can remain (or be remade) natural and wild.

But how, those in power may ask, can a park in the middle of a megalopolis be wild? Isn't "Urban Wilderness" an oxymoron? Who defines the term and how does the concept translate to actual spaces in the city? With sufficient time and effort, answers are available. The benefits of establishing and preserving natural settings cry

out for, and deserve, that time and effort.

To find the wild, most people look outward to the fringes, those remote and desolate spaces often hours and days away from home, as demonstrated in the 2006 study, "Defining Wilderness With Pictures: An Exploratory Study" by professors at Western Illinois University. In contrast, cities bring people together to live side by side and interact constantly; it is people and their everyday needs that drive the wild away from daily life. Metropolitan living has roads and restaurants and food carts and music and shopping and cars... lots and lots of cars. Still, we can – and should – preserve and maintain a piece of wilderness amid the bustle.

Internationally, the German organization Deutsche Umwelthilfe (Environmental Action Germany (DUH)) is working to in-

corporate the wild into built environments. They actively juxtapose "Wilderness" with a stand-alone concept of "Urban Wilderness," as described in the chart. This effort provides urban areas with the flexibility to carve out a wild space from an urban setting on any scale.

In the United States, the concept of urban wilderness is an almost entirely localized phenomenon that has variable definitions and approaches to preservation and issues of access.

For example, Knoxville, Tennessee takes an activity-first approach in its urban wilderness program. Constructed to protect the natural environment, Knoxville provides a host of outdoor activities to visitors, from biking to swimming, hiking to climbing. Educational components – boardwalks with artwork about animal tracks, etc. –

provide guests with information as they explore this natural area.

Likewise, Broward County, Florida integrates the call for urban wilderness into its municipal code. Creating an oversight board to work with the local parks department, the County mandates a continually updated inventory of wild spaces so they can be, according to its code, “managed in such a way as to protect and enhance their basic natural quality for public enjoyment and utilization as reminders of the natural conditions that preceded modern civilization.”

Bringing Urban Wilderness Home

What does this mean for Griffith Park and what guidance does it offer for the Park and its caretakers?

Ultimately, “Urban Wilderness” is defined by our ambitions. At the purist level, the Park would be kept sacrosanct and untouched other than by the wildlife that inhabit the Park; anyone who wanted to enter would only do so on foot and would have to pass guards at the entrance. At the capitalist level, the Park would be a haven for sales and paid sports activities with snack bars and souvenir stands in every canyon, assuming the stands can be viewed beyond the zip lines and gondolas.

We urge citizens and policymakers to work together to find the best balance between these extremes, building from a deep understanding of the need for nature within the metropolitan area.

A pure wilderness solution is out since a metropolitan area of more than 10 million people cannot surround thousands of untouched acres. Nor is a metropolitan area without green space a viable solution; peo-

ple need open areas for mental health as much as physical health.

Understanding the possibilities, continual efforts need to find an optimal balance. Here is where the DUH chart provides a valuable guide; it evaluates how we can protect Griffith Park and its urban wilderness value. This approach helps us bring rigor

essary for a robust ecosystem throughout the rest of the Park boundaries.

Fragmentation: Topography splits the Park naturally, not human borders. Once again, the innate characteristics of the land dictate how it can be creatively designated to protect the wild. Flat land allows for ball parks and accessible picnic areas, while mountains and canyons allow wildlife privacy and on-trail hikers the freedom to find seclusion.

Intensity of Maintenance: Griffith Park finds itself in yet another unique position demanding that best efforts be used to ensure it is fully protected. Surrounded by homes, the Park must be carefully maintained if for no other reason than fire safety. But that brush clearance does not preclude wild spaces. With care to protect its borders, the interior of the Park can exist in a nearly untouched state, allowing both visitors and animals that call it home to experience the land in its wild state.

Natural Processes: With fire safety paramount, natural processes must be controlled at the borders to protect the city in which the wilderness sits. Disturbing natural habitats of course requires informed land management to mitigate the impact of

unintended consequences.

Relevance for Biodiversity: The Park’s native chaparral eco-system can be fostered to help the natural biota survive and thrive. Careful reintroduction of lost species and diligent work can restore natural food chains.

Biotope Connectivity: Genetic studies can reveal wildlife population risks due to loss of habitat connectivity. Long-term studies

COMPARISON BETWEEN WILDERNESS AND URBAN WILDNESS

Criteria	Wilderness	Urban wildness
Size	Sufficiently large	Often rather small
Fragmentation	Undissected, not fragmented	Often fragmented
Intensity of maintenance	Free of maintenance	(preferably) no maintenance, but usually strongly influenced by adjacent surroundings
Natural processes	Natural processes can occur, no human influence	Natural processes can only partially occur, e.g. spontaneous vegetation/natural succession
Relevance for biodiversity	Wilderness areas are of capital importance for biodiversity protection	Considering the continuing biodiversity loss in cultural landscapes around many (European) cities, urban wildness is indeed significant for biodiversity protection
Biotope connectivity	Wilderness areas are important components in the large-scale network of ecologically valuable habitats	Urban wildness should complement habitat networks connecting ecologically valuable habitats.
Relevance for environmental education	Important for environmental education, but often situated in remote and thinly populated areas	Important for environmental education: Situated within agglomerations, it offers the opportunity to experience nature without the need for travelling.
Habitat type	Wilderness development areas, e.g. old-growth forests, rivers and flood plains	Urban wildness development areas, e.g. relicts of old-growth forests and river beds (“Nature of the first kind”, see below)
Human impact	Largely untouched nature, but also formerly used and strongly modified areas such as abandoned military training grounds (e.g. “Nature of the fourth kind”, see below)	Wildness indevelopment, also on formerly intensely used and strongly modified areas such as brown fields (“Nature of the fourth kind” or “urban-industrial areas”, see below)

Table 1: A comparison between wilderness and urban wildness (from a European perspective). The stronger the yellow highlight, the more important the characteristic of this category is as compared to the corresponding characteristic of the other category (for habitats, only similarities are represented; weighting does not make sense in this case, therefore there is no colored highlight).

and discipline to the complexities of protecting the wilderness of Griffith Park.

Size: The DUH chart notes Urban Wildernesses tend to be small. That is not, of course, the case with Griffith Park with its 4,310 acres, nearly seven square miles. Size in this case works to our advantage. Vast area allows the best of both worlds! Visitor amenities and paid activities are possible in contained spaces near roads and entrances, permitting the landscape and wildlife nec-

Wildness article continues on page 16



P-22'S DECADE IN GRIFFITH PARK

Screenshot from Friends of Griffith Park's P-22 page: courtesy Steve Winter

A Decade of P-22 in Griffith Park

~Brenda Rees, FoGP Board Member

Born in the Santa Monica Mountains.

Made famous in Griffith Park.

There is no doubt that mountain lion P-22 is the most famous cougar of all time. And for a variety of reasons.

He embarked on a remarkable 50 mile journey and crossed two Los Angeles freeways before settling in Griffith Park. He survived a bout of rodenticide poisoning. He's the only big cat that currently makes a home in Griffith Park. And he is super handsome.

P-22 was first captured on film ten years ago in 2012. Did you know the study that discovered him was funded by FoGP? Scientists wanted to track the types of wildlife that came in and out of the Park – no one expected to find a major predator like P-22! Overall, the study proved that

Griffith Park is not an island.

To celebrate a decade of P-22 in Griffith Park, FoGP has created a webpage highlighting all the memorable moments of having a mountain lion residing in our urban wilderness. It's a great resource for students and teachers, nature lovers and enthusiasts. And big cat people.

Check it out

<http://friendsofgriffithpark.org/p-22>

Long Live P-22!

Wildness article continued from page 15

of mountain lions in Southern California have documented the lowest genetic variation of any mountain lion population, except the Florida panther subspecies. According to data from a FoGP-sponsored study, Western gray squirrels in Griffith Park are impacted by genetic factors of endangerment and extinction. This genetic status is the result of isolation, lack of genetic richness, and high relatedness within the three remaining subpopulations.

Relevance for Environmental Education: Griffith Park is a star, as is only fitting for the hills above Hollywood. Accessible from much of the city, there is no better place to teach the importance of protecting wild spaces. From Crystal Springs to the Observatory, from the Greek Theatre to Travel Town, established learning centers are al-

ready in place. Expanding curricula to further stress the Park's value as an ecological haven will help our communities grow with health and intention.

Habitat Type: The Park shows what the hills throughout the region looked like hundreds of years ago. With no pylons or pillars holding up mansions, the habitat is preserved for everyone to enjoy.

Human Impact: The Park is undeniably not an untouched wilderness, but it has so many elements of the wild remaining that can be protected. Existing roads and buildings can be maintained to provide amenities to visitors without the need to further invade into the remaining wilderness.

Griffith Park cannot become the place where developers, of whatever type, dream of added acreage, and City officials dream

of adding extra coins into the coffers. To preserve the now well-recognized need for access to the wild, even in the urban setting, its value as an urban wilderness must be recognized and protected.

As Broward County, Florida demonstrates, avenues and legislation exist that can ensure Griffith Park continue to be the wild in the urban setting of Los Angeles; every effort must be undertaken to make this a reality.

Valerie Vanaman is on the Friends of Griffith Park Advisory Board; Alexander Radar, her son, has a varied career as a photographer and publisher who has also worked in technology related fields and has recently earned a Master of Urban Planning degree from USC. ♣



Digging With LA Compost

~Anna Josenhans, FoGP Board Member

Seven months ago, Michael Martinez' grand endeavor to spur the city of Los Angeles to locally recycle its food scraps added one more to its growing network of composting hubs. L.A. Compost, the brain-child of Martinez, has taken residency near the Griffith Park Merry-Go-Round and provides a working space where the public is invited to work in the muck and learn about the process of organic waste decomposing into soil.

LA Compost is a grassroots organization run mostly on volunteer power, focused on building community and public education. Every week more than 5,000 pounds of food waste is collected from local farmers' markets and public donations; many of these contributions are made by apartment dwellers who don't have access to green bins. Seasoned volunteers then build and maintain compost mounds; later the finished compost is offered back to the community. It is the second composting set-up to reside in Griffith Park.

The first, more established facility began in 1996 and is located at 5400 Griffith Park Drive. This facility, run by L.A. Sanitation, is a full-scale operation with heavy machinery as well as city money and resources behind it. The webpage proudly boasts, "This facility and the recycling plant are the first of their kind in the United States." Although both enterprises use the same simple process to create their compost, one major difference exists: the ingredients.

Instead of adding food waste to their compost piles, L.A. Sanitation utilizes "zoo doo," (making good use of every contribution made by the L.A. Zoo's four-footed friends), as well as "biosolids," a.k.a. organic matter recycled from sewage. TOP-GRO – the finished trademarked result – is then made available to all residents at their site.

For many years I've made good use of this compost facility located at the northern end of the Park. Shoveling up mulch for my home garden and scooping buckets of TOPGRO for my fruit trees. I would often gaze across the street and see the steam rising from the LASan facility and wonder "How does it all work?" Well, I got a chance to better understand composting when I recently volunteered at LA Compost.

Roll up Your Sleeves

I arrived onsite with other volunteers on a windy Sunday morning; we were enthusiastically greeted by event leader Kenny Derieg who pointed out the 20 or so bins of food waste collected from the Atwater Farmer's Market. Here was our plan: create a "lasagna"

design pouring tree/mulch matter over a layer of food waste, and dampening the pile as we worked.

Everyone had a task: tipping food waste on to the pile, raking the decomposing foods to create a flat-topped mound, wheel-barreling mulch, and cleaning and stacking the emptied containers. It was a well-oiled machine, owing in great part to the dedicated volunteers. It's messy, smelly work but at one point after dumping a particularly heavy container and nearly tripping into the mess, I stepped back and observed, "It really is kind of beautiful!" Other volunteers, checking out the three-foot tall piles, agreed.

We finished our first batch in less than an hour and as we waited for the second delivery, Kenny gave us some composting facts. At a nearby mound, he stuck a giant thermometer in it, and dug a hole to show us decomposing black matter covered in a whitish ash.

Kenny explained that compost needs four ingredients: nitrogen, carbon, H₂O and oxygen. Foodstuffs are rich in nitrogen while mulch (tree matter) supplies the needed carbon. Throughout the process, water must be added. The mass also needs to be exposed to the air which happens periodically when the raw materials are manually mixed. The temperature of a compost pile can reach a steamy 150 degrees as it decomposes. Once compost is properly cooked, which can take from three months to a year, it is "screened" to separate materials that have not fully decomposed from the good stuff that is ready to spread on the ground and fortify your garden.

Kenny continued to tell us how compost regenerates soil health as a natural fertilizer. He also described how mycelium (the whitish ash) breaks down food and plant matter to create a giant web-like network that allows plants and trees to communicate with each other, especially helping to route minerals and nutrients to those in need. As the afternoon wrapped up, there was a feeling of camaraderie and a shared sense of a job well done. We had made a giant stinky mess but one day it would metamorphose into a dark, rich soil nutrient.

I spoke later with Michael who relayed his enthusiasm at seeing his organization now working alongside the many diverse enterprises already operating within Griffith Park. "There are so many other incredible experiences here and we are excited to be a small part of the fabric of all that goes on in the Park," he explained.

If you're interested in gardening, community, science, environmental issues, problem-solving or are just a curious person, please consider signing up to volunteer some Sunday afternoon. Michael says that family-friendly events are planned soon where everyone can get their hands dirty. Take it from me, you will love it! ♣

*www.lacitysan.org



Photos: Jorge Ochoa

Mariposa Lilies of Griffith Park

~Jorge Ochoa, FoGP Advisory Board Member

Among the beautiful wildflowers you may see while hiking the trails of Griffith Park are the mariposa lilies. You can see the resemblance of the flower's namesake – *mariposa* is Spanish for butterfly – when, from a distance, you spy a colorful fluttering of the flower's petals in the wind.

When rains are plentiful, mariposa lilies awaken from their slumber and begin an active growing period. A very thin stem emerges from an underground bulb and grows for several weeks eventually producing several flowers at the tip. Each bloom remains open for several days and a single plant can have a blooming period of several weeks.

Mariposa lilies continue their active growing period well into the middle of summer until temperatures rise and the soil becomes very dry. Heat and lack of water in the soil forces the plant to take refuge underground.

Mariposa lilies – and many other plants in Griffith Park – are geophytes (Earth

Three different species of mariposa lilies are known to occur naturally in Griffith Park:

Catalina Mariposa Lily (*Calochortus catalinae*) can be observed while hiking the many trails of the Park. The Catalina Mariposa Lily blooms March through June. (photo above)

Plummer's Mariposa Lily (*Calochortus plummerae*) can also be observed while hiking the many trails of the Park. The Plummer's Mariposa Lily blooms May through July. (photo below)

Slender Mariposa Lily (*Calochortus clavatus* var. *gracilis*) is only known from one locality in Griffith Park and thus is the most unusual of the three. This slender mariposa lily blooms from March through June.



Plants) which means they take shelter from the severe heat and dryness by going dormant; they survive as bulbs hidden below the ground.

Insect friends from mariposa field observations reveal that many insects, including beetles, flies, moths, many types of bees, visit mariposa lilies. The base of the flower has noticeable nectar glands which secrete an enticing nectar that will attract insects with a free and easy meal.

While the insect moves around the flower searching for the nectar, it gets covered by the plant's pollen. When the insect flies to another flower for more nectar, it inadvertently spreads the pollen around providing a valuable pollination service. After pollination, seeds will be produced which, upon maturity, will be released with the hopes for new generations of mariposa lilies filling up the Griffith Park landscape. ♣

(NOTE: To protect the mariposa lilies, please do not dig or harvest any of them; also when you hike on designated trails, you avoid trampling and/or injuring plants.)

Jorge Ochoa is on the FoGP Advisory Board and is currently a professor of Horticulture at Long Beach City College. He often leads botanical-themed hikes in Griffith Park.



FoGP board members Al Moggia, Marian Dodge and Rex Link at an L.A. Zoo event a few years back.

In Memoriam *~Carol Brusha, FoGP Board Member*

Rex Link, a founding member of FoGP, died April 22, Earth Day, at age 97. He was active on the board of directors until his passing and will be missed for his many valuable contributions.

Rex had an impressive life. He served in the U.S. Merchant Marines during WWII and became a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy Reserve. He was working on a memoir of his wartime experiences when he died.

Before his career as a professional parking consultant, Rex was the supervisor of traffic at the Hollywood Bowl. When his parking lot career took off, major firms and attractions hired him to design parking lots throughout Southern California, from LAX to Disneyland. He was a member of the National Parking Association in Washington, D.C. and on its Consultant's Council.

Rex was active in the Los Angeles Breakfast Club and on its Foundation and enjoyed activities at the Griffith Park Adult Community Center. A Los Angeles High School graduate, he served as a director of the Alumni Association.

All of us at FoGP will miss Rex; we were honored with his insight and the boundless energy he brought to every meeting and project. Thank you, Rex, for being you. ♡

Advocating Park Access for all Angelenos *~Kris Sullivan, FoGP Board Member*

When David Geffen prevented the public from accessing the beach across from his Malibu mansion for 22 years, people were outraged. It took years of constant pressure to right this wrong. When the Sierra Club finally won its suit against him in 2007, the public once again had access to a beach that is rightfully theirs to enjoy.

We have a similar situation at a long-standing, main access point into Griffith Park's western side.

During 2014, Recreation and Parks installed a \$250,000 electric gate at the top of Beachwood Drive to prevent cars from going up on a road that has an easement for the Sunset Ranch Horse Stables. The small parking lot above the gate was being overwhelmed by visitor cars and management from Sunset Ranch complained. This wider electric gate for the Ranch traffic also features a separate walk-in gate, open for access to Hollywood Trail.

Today that expensive gate has essentially become a private gate for Sunset Ranch clients. No one can access Griffith Park from Beachwood Drive even though this had been a public trail since the 1920s. The original developers of the area even promoted the advantages of being close to this Park in their sales literature for Hollywoodland. Many people moved to this area for the simple reason they could walk out their front door and into the Park.

So why is this gate still preventing folks from entering and enjoying this Park? In 2015, Sunset Ranch sued the City to keep pedestrians from using their "easement road." The judge's decision – two years later – affirmed that the public should have pedestrian access to the Park at a reasonable distance from the current access. The City



Photo: Kathryn Louyse

interpreted the decision to mean that people could access the Park from Canyon Drive which it assumed fit the bill of being "a reasonable distance."

While a reasonable distance "as the crow flies," it is a full three miles away, whether on foot or car! Reasonable? We don't think so. Worse, the hike from the Canyon Drive entrance to the Hollywood Sign is a steep, difficult six mile round trip.

There have been many unintended consequences of the decision to close this access point. Many visitors now travel to other areas to get into the Park, areas where streets are narrower and with few parking options.

Cars still continue to overwhelm residential neighborhoods, and there are no public bathrooms or water sources available. Despite studies of the issue, there is neither signage nor information for visitors who may be coming to the Park for the first time. It is time the City moves aggressively toward meaningful long-term solutions, rather than band-aid approaches.

We believe in the original mandate of Griffith Park: there should be free access for everyone into this very public park. FoGP continues to advocate with other organizations to get the City to reopen our Park to the public from Beachwood Drive. An even bigger worry: if this trend continues, what other areas of the Park could also be gated to keep out the public?

Please support the effort to re-open Beachwood Canyon. Drop a line to Council District 4, Helene Rotolo, Special Projects for Councilmember Nithya Raman at helene.rotolo@lacity.org. Let's keep Griffith Park open to all! ♡



Rodger Young Village, the Local United Nations

~Marian Dodge, FoGP Board Member

At the end of World War II, thousands of servicemen and women returned to Los Angeles and looked for a house to rent. Thousands of workers who came earlier to the Los Angeles area to work in aircraft factories already occupied the affordable homes. Two thousand homeless veterans were sleeping in MacArthur Park. (Sound familiar?) This was no way to treat soldiers who had fought to defend their country. Housing had to be found.

Mayor Fletcher Bowron favored converting the National Guard Airfield in Griffith Park into a site for temporary housing for vets in 1946. Located where the Zoo parking lot is now, it had many positive features: it was flat and it already had gas, water and sewer lines. Remember that in 1946 there was no I-5 and no St. Rte. 134 so the site was much larger than the current zoo parking lot. The two large airplane hangers could be adapted into a school and a market, and 1,500 Quonset huts could house 5,000.

This proposal created a quandary for Van Griffith. He was generally a progressive person and favored subsidizing housing for the vets. However as the son of Griffith J. Griffith, the donor of Griffith Park, he was charged with protecting the Park. Van Griffith formally opposed using the parkland for a housing project because it was not a recreational use of the park per his father's deed of gift and filed a lawsuit. He also feared the project would become permanent and be lost to the Park forever.

Griffith suggested an alternative. The city had 30,000 parcels of foreclosed property at the time. He proposed renting the properties to vets and putting a Quonset hut on each property. That way the vet could eventually acquire the property and begin building generational wealth. He understood that many landlords would not rent to families with children so there were few options available to them.

The judge denied Griffith's lawsuit. Opposing housing for vets was a highly unpopular position to take at that time. Griffith's stand to protect Griffith Park cost him; Mayor Bowron removed Griffith from the Police Commission.

The City Housing Authority gave \$1,040,000 which was matched by federal funds. The city provided streets, sidewalks and utilities. City Council waived all zoning and building codes and issued a permit to operate the housing project for three years.

The City quickly put up 1,500 Quonset huts, corrugated metal buildings used frequently by the military during the war. (Quonset stands for 'Quick On Site.')

Each family got half a Quonset hut, roughly 40' by 20' with two bedrooms, a kitchen with a stove and icebox, and five feet of lawn in front. Rent was \$34 a month for an unfurnished unit, \$40 for a furnished unit. The village was completed in a little more than two months.

Why was it called Rodger Young Village?

Noted Hollywood songwriter, Frank Loesser (*Guys and Dolls*, *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*) was a private in the Army's Radio Production Unit during the war. Loesser's 1942 war song, *Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition*, became a big hit. They asked him to write an infantry song to encourage the troops. Loesser decided to base the song on a Medal of Honor recipient. He searched the list of recipients, a logical place to find a hero worthy of song. He could have chosen Arnold L. Bjorklund, Ernest H. Dervishian, Jose M. Lopez, Shizuya Hayashi, or Peter Tomich, medal recipients all, to show the ethnic diversity of America's armed forces, but he did not.

Loesser admitted that he wasn't really looking for the greatest hero but for a name that – to his professional songwriter's ear – would scan well. Fitting the bill was Private First Class Rodger Young who was posthumously awarded the medal for single-handedly charging and taking out an enemy machine gun nest in the Solomon Islands allowing the rest of his platoon to survive. *The Ballad of Rodger Young* was sung by such noted singers as Burl Ives, Nelson Eddy, Earl Wrightson and The Four Lads, and although it was popular with the infantry, the tune never became a big hit.

The grand opening

Mayor Bowron pulled out all the stops for the dedication of the village on April 27, 1946. This is Hollywood after all. The event featured Jack Benny, Don Wilson, band leader Phil Harris, Bette Davis, Lena Horne, Dinah Shore, and Governor Earl Warren. Dennis Day sang *The Ballad of Rodger Young*. Of course Young's mother was flown in from Baltimore for the occasion.

Who lived there?

As you might imagine with returning vets and all those war brides, Rodger Young Village (RYV) was full of small children. The on-site elementary school had more students than Los Feliz Elementary School.

One of those kids was Peter Aguilar in his sombrero. He enjoyed a happy childhood in Griffith Park playing with all the other little kids. The village featured a market, church and shops. Many residents planted flowers in front of their Quonset hut. The Fuller Brush man regularly knocked on doors offering his wares. A man with a camera, pony, and a little cowboy outfit came regularly to take pictures of kids on the pony. Peter's little brother Victor, age 3, wasn't too sure what to make of the pony. Peter lived in RYV so long that his uncles, who were fighting in the Korean War, came to visit when they were on leave.

Chuck Levin only lived in RYV until he was three years old, but his mother Sylvia helped preserve his memories. She invited a photographer from the local newspaper, *The Mirror* to cover Chuck's second birthday party in 1949. The United Nations had just been formed in 1948. Sylvia observed the United Nations atmosphere of the party where all the neighborhood kids attended

regardless of race or religion.

The Mirror returned to RYV to photograph Chuck's third birthday party with headline: "Small Fry UN: Kids' Party Welcomes All Creeds." Half a dozen races and creeds were represented at Chuck's home at 1073 Rodger Young Village. Among the excited guests were Sarah Dawson, Lester Bond, Dennis Pearce, Deri Brown, Bobby Leon, Karen Epstein, Martin Epstein, Patricia Naritomi, Doris Skiffer, John Calvin Brown, Jr. and Karen Topolnak.

The Mirror commented that "Sylvia Levin might have what statesmen are trying to find." Sylvia was quoted: "We want our son to see all people on the same level. We've always lived peacefully among people of all races and religions and we want our children to learn to treat everyone alike."

Chuck is very proud of his mother. She came to California with only an elementary school education; however as *The Mirror* noted, she had plenty of wisdom. During World War II while her husband served in the Army in Italy, Sylvia worked at an aircraft factory in Los Angeles. After the war the family moved to RYV where Sylvia, now a single mom, raised Chuck and his little sister. The natural integration of the residents of RYV obviously had an impact on Sylvia who instilled a sense of civic duty in her children. Chuck expresses his current humanitarian ideals by providing food and cushions to homeless people living on the streets.

After the war a new slogan was circulating around the country: "Old enough to fight; old enough to vote." The 26th Amendment to the US Constitution passed in record time lowering the age to vote from 21 to 18. Chuck became a deputy Registrar of Voters to sign up all those new potential voters. (He still has that card!)

Chuck asked his mother to help him in the summer of 1973. She too became a deputy Registrar of Voters and went to work signing up people to vote. And she never stopped; she actively registered voters until she died in 2009 at the age of 92. She registered more voters than anyone else in Los Angeles County. As a matter of fact, Sylvia Levin registered more voters than anyone else in the country! 47,000! She is scheduled to be honored by Councilmember Paul Koretz with the dedication of Sylvia Levin Democracy Square near Canter's Deli.

There was a high turnover rate in RYV as vets found homes elsewhere. The Levins left after a few years to share a home on Western Avenue with their former RYV neighbors, a Black family. By 1953 the federal Housing and Home Finance Office declared the housing emergency over. The Recreation and Park Commission extended the lease to RYV until 1954 on the condition that they accept no new residents. But the final blow to the village was the coming of the new freeway which would run right through RYV. Rodger Young Village was formally closed on March 14, 1954.

Do you know anyone who lived in RYV? We would love to hear from them about their experiences. Please contact us at: newsletter@friendsofgriffithpark.org. ♣

Photos, top: Sylvia and Chuck take in the LA sights in 1997, photo, courtesy Chuck Levin

bottom: Peter Aguilar dons his sombrero for the camera, courtesy LFIA



Trash Hiking With Poop Fairies

~Brenda Rees,
FoGP Board Member

“Hey guys! Over here!” I holler from the thick branchy understory alongside Oak Canyon trail on the northern side of Griffith Park. “I found TVs! Three of them!”

Yes, old television sets. The kind with dials and tubes. Wearing thick gloves, I dislodge the ancient electronic carcasses from the caked mud they’ve been encased in for goodness-knows-how-long. I drag them out from the bushes as I hear my fellow volunteers crunching leaves down the hillside.

Of course, I am simmering with anger that someone thought Griffith Park would be the place to get rid of their junk. But I’m equally excited because it’s a new type of trash. “Check it out!” I say proudly as others slide down to examine my discovery as if it was an artifact from a previous dynasty.

We haul the sets up to the road, adding them to our bags brimming with ordinary litter: beer bottles, fast food boxes, cigarette butts, energy drink cans, diapers, balloons and more. We take a photo of ourselves with our booty. Click. Proud Trash Hikers of Griffith Park.

When you sign up for FoGP’s monthly Trash Hikes, I can’t guarantee that every hike will yield a thrilling new find, but for those who regularly participate, we always uncover a certain joy and satisfaction of ridding Griffith Park of human-made objects.

When I was young, I spent summers with my grandparents in a small town on the Western Minnesota prairie. I would often accompany my grandmother Caroline as she cleaned the Catholic church. Once a week, we walked past sunny open fields and headed up to the small church on the hill.

My job was to dust the statues, arrange the hymnals, and pick up Kleenex stashed in the pews. Grandma mopped the vestibule



Photo: Kathryn Louyse

floors, filled the holy water dispensers, and scraped away melted wax from the metal stand of flickering red votive candles. We worked silently under the watchful gaze of St. Anthony, and all I could think of was ice cream and homemade cookies back at Grandma’s house when we were done.

Back then, I imagined we were getting a holy place ready for human guests, which is, in a way, how I think today when I’m picking up litter – whether it’s in Griffith Park, other public or national parks, the empty lot above my street or anywhere I happen to be walking.

During the early months of the pandemic in 2020, I met with other FoGP board members Dora and Kathryn for weekly hikes in the Park – mainly to escape into nature, but then something happened. As we walked up and around the lush green hills of spring, we started casually picking up plastic bottles, greasy hamburger wrappers, discarded masks, and the ubiquitous dog poop bags. Our trash collecting hikes quickly became a habit.

And we were not alone. On these weekly hikes, we often met kindred spirits, regular folk who were also on trash duty as they hit the trails.

Today, as I trash hike, I wonder why people

leave things in wild places. Sure, some items fall unknowingly out of backpacks and strollers – chewy toys, water bottles, baby socks – but others are perplexing.

Especially personal items that seem to have drama attached. Pink hats tossed in trees, scarves in the ditch, wilted rose bouquets crushed alongside the trail, backpacks and wallets stashed under bushes. Were they stolen? Tossed away in sorrow? Hidden in grief?

But most items are easy to understand, like a collection of Styrofoam food containers, cigarette butts and beer bottles which suggest an impromptu party where guests leave and expect that remnants will magically disappear.

We once caught a fellow leaving a warm poop bag by the side of the trail. “Hey, you forgot this!” Kathryn hollered to the guy as he gathered up the dog leash and turned away. “Oh, they will come and get it,” he shouted back over

his shoulder and continued on his run.

“THERE IS NO POOP FAIRY!” Dora screamed back but he was too far up the trail. We collectively tossed our hands in the air, dumbfounded with humanity’s lack of interest in the ramifications of their own actions.

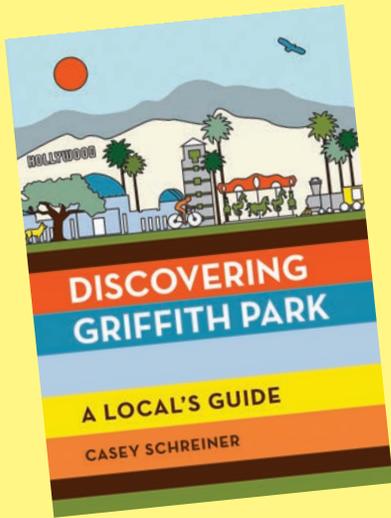
I don’t know how to tell people how to be responsible for their own trash – other than to shove their faces directly into it and I’m not that forcefully aggressive.

But I do know there will always be idiots who will continue to toss junk and litter our landscapes – from Tootsie Roll wrappers to tank tops to television sets.

And I do know that even when we say there is no such thing as Poop Fairies, much like Santa Claus, the burden of that persona rests on our ability to transform and bring those mythical beings to life. Yes, Virginia there *IS* a Poop Fairy. And guess what?

It’s you and me.

I hope all you Poop Fairies will fire up your wings next time you hit the trails or join FoGP on a Trash Hike where you will find camaraderie and satisfaction that will leave you smiling afterward for days. ♡



Hike to Beacon Hill ~Casey Schreiner, founder/author Modern Hiker

Editor's note: The founder of the Modern Hiker website (modernhiker.com), Casey Schreiner details the hike to Beacon Hill in his latest book, *Discovering Griffith Park* which we are reprinting here.

Hike the peaceful, relatively quiet Cadman and Coolidge Trails to the summit of Beacon Hill – the easternmost peak in the Santa Monica Mountains – for phenomenal views of the city and nearby mountains. In earlier times,

this summit held a literal beacon to guide airplanes flying in and out of the old Griffith Aviation Park.

Begin at the intersection of Griffith Park Boulevard, Shannon Road, and Cadman Drive. Griffith Park Boulevard dead-ends straight ahead of you—veer to the left to walk on Cadman. There are no sidewalks here and the street is narrow, so even though it's a short dead-end street, be sure to keep an eye and ear out for cars. The pavement of Cadman ends at 0.2 mile where you'll pass through a gate and into Griffith Park proper.

Ignore the two user trails to your left near the 0.3-mile mark as the partially shaded trail wraps its way around the Marty Tregnan Golf Academy to the east. Just past the 0.4-mile mark, keep left to start climbing on the Coolidge Trail (if you had to park down near the train and pony rides, you'll meet up with this route from the Lower Beacon Trail here).

The shade thins out past here as you start to climb up the ridge to

the south of Beacon Hill, but the views will also improve significantly. You'll get better views of the golf academy, sure, but you'll also start to get some great views of the San Gabriel Mountains. Keep going up, and soon you'll spot the Silver Lake neighborhood, downtown Los Angeles and the twin ribbons of the Los Angeles River and the 5 freeway snaking through the river's former non-concrete-bound channel. On an exceptionally clear day, you might even be able to see prominent Santiago Peak down in Orange County, too.

At 1.3 miles, the trail meets up with several other routes at a location known as 5-Points. Keep to the right to follow the Upper Beacon Trail—a very clear, steep fire road that heads to the summit of Beacon Hill. A few quick, steep bumps and you'll be standing at the summit at 1.5 miles where you can vaguely make out the remnants of the foundation of the beacon for the airfield for Griffith Aviation Park. It was said that pilots could only take off if they could see the beacon from the airstrip—and it also helped prevent pilots from crashing into the hill.

The views from here can be truly spectacular—especially after a good winter rainstorm has cleared the air. You may be able to make our peaks in the Verdugos and San Gabriels and see all the way down to Catalina Island if you are lucky.

You may think you see some faint trails heading down from the summit, but they're unofficial (and incredibly steep) trails that are not maintained or approved by the park. Using them can cause more erosion, so give the mountain a break and return to Cadman Drive the way you came in.

Schreiner's other books, including "Day Hiking Los Angeles," can be found at Skylight Books in Los Feliz. Shop and support local businesses! ♡

What Will You Discover When You Explore Griffith Park?

We're here to help you navigate Griffith Park... follow us on social media, or friendsofgriffithpark.org





Photo: Kathryn Louyse



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SAVE THE DATE – SAT. OCT 22, 2022
Celebrate P-22's Decade in Griffith Park
with the return of P-22 DAY!



Photo: Kathryn Louyse

Big puffy clouds, sizable crowds, and mix of state and federal officials welcomed folks to the groundbreaking event. Noise from the 101 freeway was a constant reminder of the need for the Wallis Annenberg Wildlife Crossing. Many in the crowd will be even happier when the longest-in-the-world crossing is finally installed and wildlife can safely cross this busy stretch.