



griffith reporter

the newsletter of friends of griffith park/winter-spring 2021-22



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- ✓ LA ZOO'S VISION PLAN
- ✓ 2021'S RAPTOR STUDY
- ✓ GRIFFITH PARK'S ALMOST MASTER PLAN
- ✓ THE HISTORY OF TOYON CANYON

and more...



Gerry Hans and NWF's Beth Pratt celebrate another successful hike at the opening of 2021's P-22 Day in Park Center

As another bumpy pandemic year comes to a close with a light now shining at the end of the tunnel, we hope this newsletter brings you optimism for Griffith Park and the New Year!

There is a lot of talent within our all-volunteer Board of Directors, including the journalism skills of Brenda Rees and the design skills of Kathryn Louyse. *The Griffith Reporter* is a labor of love done 100% within our organization, short of printing. We always welcome feedback about our articles – and suggestions for others!

May I continue to crow further about our Board for a minute? It's comprised of much talent and professional experience, such as accounting, historic preservation, communications, business and art. We also have three with education backgrounds, and two with biology degrees. Importantly, the FoGP Board also has members with deep-rooted Park advocacy commitments going back two and three decades! They are instrumental in inspiring successor leadership to protect all that Griffith Park offers.

This year, Griffith Park celebrates 125 years as a gift to the City of Los Angeles. Happy Birthday! It was December 16, 1896 when Colonel Griffith J. Griffith offered 3,015 acres of rugged land to the City. According to *The Los Angeles Times*, he asked for two things in return: rail fares be kept to a nickel so the Park could be reached by all residents of “modest means,” and that it be known as Griffith Park forever. His aspiration of equitable access continues through efforts by FoGP and others, although the nickel fare did not hold up!

Protecting the Park's natural resources has been a priority for FoGP. Our scientific surveys and studies have set an encouraging tone for appreciation of the Park's flora and fauna which is now documented and published in recognized journals. Our professionally-led studies have also substantiated the need for expert guidance to help rescue species from local extinction, such as our iconic Western gray squirrel. Over the years, the Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP), as well as other City departments, have gained a better understanding of the value this amazing biodiversity that Los Angeles exudes.

For more than a decade, FoGP has been politely vocal regarding the need for a full-time RAP ecologist to manage the 17,000-plus acres within its 450 City Park system! Thanks to work done by Griffith Superintendent Stefanie Smith and RAP Assistant General Manager Matt Rudnick, with support from the Griffith Park Advisory Board, this will become a reality in 2022! We look forward to collaborating with the selected ecologist.

2022 presents potential challenges to the natural environment of Griffith Park. We recently learned the proposal for a two-mile aerial tram, studied at a cost of \$750,000, is not dead. It's just hibernating. We also have engaged the controversial expansion of the Los Angeles Zoo that displaces and destroys high-value native oak woodlands and scrub habitat.

We are proud of our accomplishments in 2021, including approval to remove a hazardous, dilapidated, abandoned water tank just northeast of the Griffith Observatory. We've lobbied for RAP's budget, including reauthorizing 140 staff positions. The effort was successful with the best RAP budget in a decade. We also continue to urge the City to hire more City Park Rangers whose efforts keep the Park safe and protect its resources.

Our volunteer events have again kicked into high gear, and we're making up for lost time. Everyone is always welcome to participate with our well-managed volunteer activities whenever you can. Come out and have fun with others who enjoy and love Griffith Park.

And above all, we are grateful that you support us however you can.

See you in the Park! 🍀

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gerry H".

~ Gerry Hans

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Photo: Kathryn Louyse

on the cover:

Juvenile mule deer in Griffith Park – article on page 3. Cover photo: Kathryn Louyse

photo above:

Taking a group of hikers along Griffith Trails earlier this year, Associate Professor Jorge Ochoa pointed out some of the fruiting trees, including this Southern California black walnut. Read more on flowering/fruit plants and how they impact the Park and species that subsist on these plants during the winter months on page 18.

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

The Only Hoofs in Town: Mule Deer

~Gerry Hans, FoGP President

How many deer make Griffith Park their home? We wish we knew.

We also wish we knew back in 2012 that mountain lion P-22 was going to set up residence in the Park; that would have been a great opportunity to quantitatively assess the impact one mountain lion would have on the Park's population of its only hoofed animal, an ungulate. A mountain lion's diet can include as many as one deer per week.

Anecdotally, it seems P-22 has had little impact on the overall deer population – these handsome long-eared mammals are found everywhere in the Park, including picnic areas, where trees offer low branches for munching. Mule deer are browsers and enjoy shrub leaves, twigs and broadleaves. In the fall, they seek out coast live oak acorns, which are rich in carbs and fats.

Like so many mammals, deer population size is limited by the amount of resources available. During droughts, sometimes the carrying capacity is exceeded, but birth rates also adjust in order to sustain a healthy stock.

Mule deer are found in the western half of the country; the white-tailed cousin is mostly present east of the Continental Divide, but there is overlap into mule deer ranges.

“Mulies” are larger and have an interesting behavioral adaption for mobility. While white-tail deer run to escape predators, mule deer perform a graceful bounding, known as “stotting.” They can get to speeds of up to 25 mph which P-22 can easily achieve, but it's a pace that presents fair sport for a pack of coyotes. Sorry, but it's a dog-eat-dog world in the wild. Stotting also may have evolved to warn predators of their size, making them look larger, or to visually alert other nearby deer.

With such colossal mule-like ears, deer are constant listeners, tuned to the enemy, as they forage. If a head goes up with tall ears, it means they are assessing the sound to determine what it might be, and how close. Disturbance from human sources, whether noisy hikers or nasty overhead helicopters, obscures their ability to assess threats, and also reduces their efficiency in foraging.

A quiet Griffith Park is a wildlife-friendly park, and these stunning creatures deserve our best behavior when they are near. ♡



Photo: Gerry Hans

What Will You Discover When You Explore Griffith Park?



scrub jay with acorn

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





Photo: Kathryn Louyse

The LA Zoo Vision Plan ~Gerry Hans, FoGP President

A multi-level parking structure for 2,000 vehicles, three visitor centers featuring sit-down dining, a California vineyard, an aerial tram, a funicular, and a climbing wall. These are some of the attractions featured in the LA Zoo's ambitious proposed Project. No doubt, the animal care facilities need to be modernized and exhibits updated for better ADA standards. That part of the Project is completely acceptable and supported.

As the LA Zoo is a public facility, it's inconceivable how so much effort (and money) went into drawing up concepts for its seven-phase proposed Project with so few Angelenos hearing about it. On October 20, 2021 however, the silence was broken by the *Los Angeles Times*' article "How LA Zoo plans may impact California wildlife and plants." Even the LA Zoo's own membership seemed shocked by the proposal.

But even with huge public outcry and hundreds of comments that have been filed with the City – the Zoo Project is more than likely on its way to becoming a reality.

Even before the publication of the *LA Times*' article, the required Environmental Impact Report (EIR) had already been completed this summer. The Zoo Commission had moved with haste to approve the full Project, and a placeholder had been created for this project to go before the

Committee for approval.

The Committee (Arts, Parks, Education, and Neighborhoods) is comprised of three Councilmembers, who can announce the agenda item upon 72-hours notification. So by the time this newsletter is printed and in possession of many residents, the controversial decision could be over. Typically, EIR approvals go to the full City Council for approval just days after the Committee decision.

How did it come to this? How did this project move so swiftly through the system?

Back in early 2019, Friends of Griffith Park was one of the lucky few community organizations invited to be interviewed for our input about their basic plan. Unfortunately, the required "Initial Study," as part of the State-mandated environmental process, contained few details.

Then, as now, FoGP has no objections to the zoo updating and creating better facilities for its animals and to offer visitors unique experiences. Our comments were drafted in a 4-page letter, constructively focused on protecting habitat areas and questioning the enormity of the expansion. Fast-forward to the release of the Draft EIR during the 2020 holiday season, with comments required by February 15, 2021. Here is where details of the Zoo's Plan were revealed in thousands of pages. FoGP made a quick but thoughtful study of the

plan; our 12-page comment letter was delivered into the record by the cut-off date. Not surprising, merely four other organizations filed comment letters. Blink, and you miss the opportunity to weigh in.

The Zoo's Final EIR was generated faster than most and posted during the 2021 summer. Part of the task of the lead agency, the City Bureau of Engineering, acting on behalf of the Zoo, is to respond to the public's comments submitted. Of course, they also work with well-paid outside consultants. Regrettably, few of our comments were taken seriously.

In fact, some responses to our comments were dismissive and inaccurate. In this respect, FoGP was not alone. California Department of Fish & Wildlife also received similar dismissive treatment, as the responses to our/their comments are included in the Final EIR!

For example, in the rebuttal response to an FoGP comment made about Western gray squirrel populations in Griffith Park being pushed to the local extinction brink, the City did not recognize this "relatively common mammal" as "threatened in Griffith Park." Pardon our surprise. Regarding "species of special concern" reptiles, Blainville's horned lizard and San Diegan whiptail lizard, the City commented, "neither species is identified as occurring within Griffith Park," and "there are no recent

What are the differences between the full Zoo Project and Alternative 1?

PROJECTIONS FOR ZOO GROWTH:

PROJECT:

Grow from 1.8M admissions to 3.0M admissions per year (+67%)

ALTERNATIVE 1:

Grow from 1.8M admissions to 2.65M admissions per year (+47%)

CITY-PROTECTED NATIVE TREES (OAK, WALNUT, TOYON AND ELDERBERRY) "ELIMINATED OR SUBSTANTIALLY ALTERED:"

PROJECT:

Loss of 201 City-protected in the Africa Planning Area, 26 in the California Planning Area

ALTERNATIVE 1:

None

BRUSH CLEARANCE:

PROJECT:

A fire buffer zone on the Park side "could result in up to six acres of disturbance or loss of native chaparral and oak woodland habitat"

ALTERNATIVE 1:

No further loss of Park acreage

RESTAURANTS AND SPECIAL EVENTS:

PROJECT:

Three new visitor centers with restaurants are planned

ALTERNATIVE 1:

One center — the 17,000 sq ft California Visitor Center and Restaurant, with "sweeping views of a California vineyard," would *not* be built

VISITOR AMENITIES:

PROJECT:

Too long to list

ALTERNATIVE 1:

Not included: 60 ft deep Condor Canyon excavated with rock climbing walls added, a California vineyard, funicular leading to the higher elevation Visitor Center

PARKING:

PROJECT:

Addition of a 2,000 car multi-level parking structure constructed on two acres

ALTERNATIVE 1:

The parking structure would be eliminated or substantially reduced in size

ANIMAL WELFARE AND CARE:

PROJECT:

Yes, the goal is achieved

ALTERNATIVE 1:

Yes, the goal is achieved.

BECOME WORLD CLASS DESTINATION ZOO:

PROJECT:

Yes, the goal is achieved

ALTERNATIVE 1:

Yes, the goal is achieved

recorded observations of these species of special concern occurring within Griffith Park." Perhaps they should read articles posted on our FoGP website regarding ongoing genetic studies with Griffith Park being part of specific study areas for both the horned lizard and the Western gray squirrel! Or, perhaps even listen to FoGP's "Species of Special Concern" lecture series which can be streamed from our website. Do any of the animal folks at the Zoo even read what the EIR says?

Absolutely yes, we're frustrated.

Let's talk about the main issue: the unnecessary loss of native habitat including protected trees, and rare flora. Since 1997, the Zoo has been its own City Department and comprises 133 acres. Roughly 25 acres remain as native habitat, although some are impacted by fuel modification measures. The current Project proposes to "eliminate or substantially alter" wildlands within two proposed development zones:

- ❖ *16 acres would be affected within the California Planning Area. The California area is mostly native scrubland and chaparral. This acreage also includes stands of Nevin's barberry, federally and state-listed as rare and endangered.*
- ❖ *7 acres are affected within the Africa Planning Area. This acreage contains oak woodland, contiguous to oak woodland on the Park side of the Zoo boundary. This area also contains protected Southern California black walnut trees.*

Collectively, these two development zones contain 227 "protected" trees, mostly coast live oak. These are Protected Tree Ordinance mature trees. If they're eliminated, the Zoo would be required to mitigate for the loss of these trees and the wildlife they supports. But many ecologists and naturalists argue that even the best mitigation could hardly replace what nature has created.

As required, every EIR offers alternatives. Alternative 1 was affirmed in the EIR as the "Environmentally Superior Alternative," the one containing the fewest adverse impacts and greatest benefits in terms of meeting project goals. This alternative protects the 23 acres of natural habitat.

FoGP makes an even stronger observation about protecting this habitat: a mere 35% of the 23 acres would actually go toward animal care purposes. Most of the acreage would become visitor-related attractions, such as the California visitor center with a view of the vineyard, and the Africa area's "safari-style adventure" zone would be carved out of the native oak woodlands.

At the time of this writing, many individual and community voices support Alternative 1. In fact, comments continue to pour into Council File 21-0828 supporting Alternative 1. There are very few comments in favor of the proposed Zoo Project.

The planning vision for the Zoo *rightly* puts zoo animals first, and both the Project and Alternative 1 do precisely that. Friends of Griffith Park is solidly in support of updating and modernizing animal care and exhibits, along with enhanced ADA accommodations for the animal exhibits.

Little will be lost under Alternative 1 in achieving the main project goals put forth by the Zoo. Yet under the current Project much would be lost, and would impact nearly all remaining native habitat within the Zoo's borders. Alternative 1 is a palatable compromise for the Zoo to accommodate.

The citizens of Los Angeles are clearly asking for the compromise. Let's see who's listening. ♣

For more information, including FoGP's response letter to the Zoo project, please go to: friendsofgriffithpark.org/la-zoo-expansion-is-taking-shape

The Mt. Hollywood Loop Hike ~Ross Arnold, FoGP volunteer coordinator

When I was a Scout, my troop would often take practice hikes in Griffith Park in preparation for weekend or longer backpack trips; a favorite was the Mt. Hollywood Loop Hike. We liked it because it was five miles — we could earn a Department of Recreation and Parks certificate — and it was fun.

To earn a certificate, we checked-in at Nature Museum, (now the Caretaker's Residence in Fern Dell) and completed a series of forms we brought along on our hike. Along the way, we dropped these forms into metal cylinders with slits on top. Have you seen these cylinders in the Park? They're still there. An easy one to find is at the top of Mt. Hollywood.

The Mt. Hollywood Loop Trail can be completed in less than four hours, even for slow hikers. Wayfinding signs keep you on the right trail.

Start at the Caretaker's Residence, a block south of Trails Café, or start at Trails. Walk north along Fern Dell Drive; at the end of Parking Lot #9, you'll see two trails. The trail on the left is the West Trail; the other is the Loop Trail. It doesn't matter which trail you take as they quickly meet up.

I usually take the West Trail; a sign up the trail lets you know you are on the right path. Continue for .8 miles. It may look like you are walking to Western Canyon Road; indeed, part of this trail parallels that road. Continue until you come to the unnamed area on your right, just before the paved road; this is a nice place to take photos and catch your breath. At the paved road, check both ways before crossing and then look for the Mt. Hollywood Trail sign.

Once on the Mt. Hollywood Trail, continue uphill. You'll walk over a bridge spanning a paved road. On the other side, a sign directs you to Captain's Roost, Dante's View and the Mt. Hollywood Summit. Take the trail indicated by the sign — *not* the short-cut directly in front of you; this unmaintained trail is steep and dangerous. Stay on the maintained trail which takes you below Mt. Hollywood.



Photo: Ross Arnold



Eventually you'll come to a sign indicating Captain's Roost (left) and Dante's View (right). Both trails lead to the Mt. Hollywood summit. I recommend going up Captain's Roost and heading down via Dante's View, just to mix things up.

Recently hiking to Captain's Roost, I found the first metal cylinders from my Scout days. See if you can find them! When you arrive, be sure to admire the work of FoGP and students from Marshall High School who planted trees and removed many large invasive plants in December 2018. At the end of the short trail, students and I also planted a California live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) which at more than 10' tall is doing quite well.

Leave Captain's Roost and continue uphill to find a sign pointing to the Mt. Hollywood Summit on your right. Keep going and... congratulations — you made it! You're now at 1,625 feet, one of the highest peaks in the Park. On a clear day, you can see Santa Catalina Island, downtown Los Angeles and Glendale. This area was recently renamed the Tom LaBonge Panorama honoring the football-carrying city councilman who often hiked to Mt. Hollywood.

Descend the summit with a stop at Dante's View. I have been visiting Dante's View since I was young. In 1969, one of our Scout leaders passed away. He used to frequent Dante's View and brought the flagpole that's still there today. To honor him, we Scouts purchased a five-gallon Japanese black pine (*Pinus thunbergia*) to plant in the garden; that tree is still going strong.

After a rest, water, and more photos, continue on the trail; you'll arrive at the sign you passed earlier. At the sign, turn left and you'll be back on the trail you hiked up to the summit. There is another trail but it's not maintained; many phantom trails come off this trail. These unregulated trails undercut the landscape and disrupt our local plant and wildlife. Don't be tempted — stay on the maintained trails!

Take the Mt. Hollywood Trail back to the bridge. Cross it and head straight uphill to the Berlin Forest for a quick rest. Near the Observatory Parking Lot, you'll find drinking fountains and restrooms.

If you have time, check out the Observatory, then head back down. While walking toward the Observatory, look to the left and you'll see Observatory Trail. At the beginning of the trail you'll see a sign directing you to Fern Dell, and soon you'll be back at your starting point.

After completing the hike as a Scout, I signed-in back at the Nature Museum indicating I completed the hike. A few days later, I would receive my certificate in the mail!

This Mt. Hollywood Loop Hike is still one of my favorite hikes, not only because of the beautiful flora and fauna, but it brings back memories from my youth.

A QUICK NOTE: If you park in Fern Dell, and hike late in the day, be aware that rangers start giving parking tickets at sundown. Always plan accordingly! ♣

Always make sure to bring plenty of water, wear a hat and sunscreen when hiking outdoors. You can pick up a Griffith Park Trail Map at the Griffith Park Visitor's Center or download one from friendsofgriffithpark.org.



Photo: Gerry Hans

The Soroptimist Connection in Fern Dell

~Marian Dodge, FoGP Board member

Enter Fern Dell from Los Feliz Boulevard and walk up the far right side of the path heading to the Observatory; here you will discover a picnic area perched up on the shady bank right near the pedestrian bridge. Soroptimist Grove. Did you ever wonder “Who are the Soroptimists and how did this get here?”

Soroptimist International is a women’s service organization with 90,000 members in more than 100 countries. The name comes from the Latin *soro* (women) and *optima* (best) – “the best for women.” These professional women grant scholarships to young women, usually awarding to the first in a family to pursue higher education. Soroptimists also support a residential program for victims of do-

mestic violence. In 2021, this organization proudly celebrated its 100th anniversary.

The first president of the Soroptimists was Violet Richardson-Ward. Thanks to her, women in many fields today are paid the same as men.

Here’s the story: Richardson-Ward taught physical education at UC Berkeley in 1911 and was paid \$20 to lead classes. Her male counterpart, who only took roll, was paid \$40. Richardson-Ward demanded equal pay and quit when she didn’t get it. The university president rehired her at \$40, but he raised the male teacher’s salary to \$60! She resigned again and waited until the regents rehired her at \$60, too. Later Richardson-Ward became the Director of Physical Education for the Berkeley School District. Because of her persistence, PE became a required subject for girls as well as boys, way ahead of state mandates. And she accomplished all this without ever having to use the shotgun she reputedly carried when she went hiking in the Berkeley hills!

In 1932, Soroptimist International- Los Angeles (SILA) celebrated its tenth anniversary by presenting a bench and planting trees at the entrance to Fern Dell. Grace Stoermer presented the gifts to the Parks Commission.

Early Soroptimists enjoyed the outdoors. In 1947, they joined with the Redwood League to purchase a 40-acre Soroptimist Grove in Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park in Northern California. SILA used to meet often in Fern Dell. In honor of the Northern California grove, they planted a redwood seedling in Fern Dell.

SILA celebrated its 28th anniversary and their Charter Day Breakfast at Fern Dell in 1950. They also celebrated the two-year anniversary of the dedication of Soroptimist House, a residence for women at the University of Southern California.

FoGP President Gerry Hans and I met with SILA leaders, Amy Poulos, and Regional Governor Lola Abrahamian at Fern Dell in September 2021. We showed them the picnic area’s newly repaired *faux bois* railings, a project that FoGP funded. Both women were thrilled to see this charming area restored.

Here’s the best footnote: they plan to celebrate SILA’s 100th anniversary in Fern Dell which will be in 2022! FoGP is delighted with the Soroptimists’ continued interest in Fern Dell and we look forward to celebrating with them. ♣

Soroptimist Sheila Tatum, FoGP’s Marian Dodge, and Soroptimist Charlotte Larchenmuller enjoy the restored *faux bois* railings at Soroptimist Grove

FoGP’s Scholarship Program Announced for 2022

~Anna Josenhans, FoGP Board member



Friends of Griffith Park will again be offering scholarships to students of color from the Zoo Magnet School class of 2022 as a way to encourage the next generation of environmental stewards.

Officially known as the North Hollywood High School Zoo Magnet Center, the school is located in the heart of Griffith Park and instructs students who have an interest in animal studies and/or biological sciences.

This year, three students will be chosen to receive a FoGP scholarship that can be used to pay for various higher education financial expenses. The scholarship application process will open the first week in January; deadline to apply will be the first week in May. All applicants are also given honorary memberships to FoGP.

Visit our website friendsofgriffithpark.org for more information about the program and how to apply. ♣

Highlights from the Los Angeles Raptor Study

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



Background

Launched as the “Griffith Park Raptor Survey” in 2017 (Cooper et al. 2017), we have officially renamed our effort the “Los Angeles Raptor Study” to reflect the larger current study area now covering most of the City of Los Angeles exclusive of the north and west San Fernando Valley, South Los Angeles, and the Harbor area.

This effort is an attempt to build our ecological understanding of the natural history of Los Angeles, and to encourage public stewardship of its resources. By documenting and tracking raptor nests across Los Angeles, we hope to understand how ecological dynamics change from year to year in the natural and built areas of Los Angeles, in particular how human activity is impacting wildlife here.

While a handful of Los Angeles-area raptor nesting sites had been documented by prior work (e.g., Allen et al. 2017) and individual nests are generally afforded protection when found during utility line replacement and other agency activities, the data contained in our annual summary reports represent the first comprehensive dataset of an entire raptor community in the urban core of Los Angeles.

Raptors are important apex predators in most of the earth’s ecosystems, and coastal Southern California supports (or once supported) around a dozen breeding species (Garrett and Dunn 1981). Of these, eight are known to nest, or formerly nested, in Griffith Park and the central core of Los Angeles.

Cooper Ecological Monitoring, Inc. has been conducting surveys on the flora and fauna in Griffith Park since 2007, when the *Griffith Park Wildlife Management Plan* (Cooper and Mathewson 2009) first documented the Park’s flora and fauna and suggested best management practices for the future, including improved species monitoring.



Great horned owl photo: Nurit Katz

Survey Methods

Cooper, McCammon and project volunteers (Nurit Katz and Gerry Hans) conducted opportunistic surveys in the Study Area during late winter 2021 to document the status of known and suspected raptor nests, which continued through the spring and summer. Unlike in 2020, streets and businesses had largely reverted to “pre-pandemic” levels of traffic and activity, and if anything, natural areas throughout L.A. were even more crowded with people. Another addition to this year’s survey was the collaboration with Cornell Lab of Ornithology through the use of *NestWatch*, a nation-wide nest monitoring program designed to track status and trends in the reproductive biology of birds. McCammon input the Griffith Park Raptor Survey nest data into *NestWatch* in order to contribute to a nation-wide data set increasing our un-

derstanding of differences and similarities among hawk species on a larger scale. While *Nest-Watch* is a citizen science tool used by the public in monitoring the fate of bird nests around the United States, the LA Raptor Study data has the location kept hidden due to the sensitive nature of the information.

Executive Summary

We continued monitoring within an “expanded” study area (including Sepulveda Basin, Baldwin Hills, and Glendale), and again increased the number of monitored nests for the fifth year of the Griffith Park Nesting Raptor Survey (2021). While investigators and volunteers monitored 188 active nests in 2020, in 2021 we confirmed and monitored 294 active nests and territories. As in 2020, we were able to confirm as active many territories by the presence of recently-fledged young and recently-used nests (particularly Cooper’s hawks), using clues learned while more closely observing known nests.

In all, we detected active nests/territories of 128 Cooper’s hawk pairs, 120 red-tailed hawk

pairs, 24 red-shouldered hawk pairs, and 22 great horned owl pairs. We confirmed no active Western screech-owls or barn owls, but found 1-2 active territories of an American kestrel and peregrine falcon. These numbers (at least the diurnal species) again more closely reflect actual numbers of active nests in the study than those in surveys prior to 2020.

Nest success was again very high (87% overall), but 20 nests apparently failed during incubation or soon after (vs. 9 in 2020), including 25% of our red-shouldered hawk nests. We noted three instances each of nest trees being severely trimmed (or removed altogether) for red-tailed hawks and Cooper’s hawks, which apparently resulted in all three red-tail pairs leaving these territories.

The 101-405 Freeway subregion (including

the Santa Monica Mountains between Ventura Blvd. and Sunset Blvd.) again had the most active nests/territories, which was greatly increased in 2021 from 69 to 117. We nearly tripled the number of nests/territories in the Griffith Park subregion (91, up from 34), and more than doubled those from the San Fernando Valley floor (70, up from 33).

As in prior years, we again found ornamental pines (*Pinus spp.*) to be the most common nest tree used. Just five active nests were in native trees other than sycamores (which had 22 nests, including ornamental sycamores and relatives).

In 2021, we analyzed re-use by territory as well as nest, which narrowed the gap

between red-tailed hawks (high nest re-use) and Cooper's hawks (high territory re-use; low nest re-use). Increased effort within known and suspected Cooper's hawk territories will likely yield even higher territory re-use.

(To read the complete results of the 2021 Los Angeles Raptor Study, visit our website, friendsofgriffithpark.org/raptor-study)

A conversation with Dan Cooper, LA Raptor Study Director ~William Hallstrom

With the results of the 2021 Los Angeles Raptor Study released, I sat down to chat with Study Director Dan Cooper, a biologist who specializes in habitat assessment of natural spaces within urban environments, to discuss what's being learned about our urban raptors. Volunteer numbers jumped to 120 this year — there were 30 in 2017, the initial year — which covered more ground, and provided more data to Cooper and his team.

First up was an overview of where nests were being built and by which species.

"I'd say that 2021 was the second year where we felt like we had found the majority of raptor nests in our study area at least for red-tailed and red-shouldered hawks," says Cooper, adding, "We don't really have a good handle on great horned owls in general." He believes nearly all Cooper's hawk nests in the urbanized flatlands have been found, but there is still work to find the locations of Cooper's nests on hillsides.

Cooper elaborated on the challenges of locating nests, a task shared among his core study team members. Red-tailed hawk nests are easiest to spot because of their size and presence. "They usually build massive nests and they're at the top of the tallest trees in the neighborhood, so consequently they're just a lot more visible," he explains, adding that from a typical hillside overlook you can usually spot most of the potential nesting sites.

Owl nests, however, are trickier to find. "Great horned owls really bury their nests in the top of trees that are not necessarily the tallest ones," says Cooper. "They're not active during the day... given how many millions of trees are in L.A. the odds of actually finding a great horned owl on your own, walking around, are very low." More local community involvement could increase the odds of finding the nesting sites of these elusive raptors.

Changing Attitudes

Attitudes about raptors and wildlife have changed dramatically over the last century, explains Cooper. "The dawn of ornithology or the awareness of birds and writing down of records coincided with a period in American history when raptors were very heavily persecuted," he says. "In the late 1800s, L.A. had a lot of farms and fields

where people raised chickens and had pastures, and the residents 100+ years ago just shot hawks on sight." Residents of this largely rural area at the time, "didn't consider them to be an integral part of the environment as we do — they had sort of the same attitude as a lot of ranchers [today] have with wolves where it's like a cockroach in the kitchen."

Hawk sightings were uncommon then, which may be attributed to humans attempting to eradicate them — an attitude that persisted up to recent times. "Up until the 1980s ... local teenagers would ride their bikes around and climb trees and take raptor eggs and young [birds] as a hobby, just like for pets," says Cooper. There's a strong correlation, it seems, between an increasing Cooper's hawk population in the past 50 years in the San Fernando Valley, and once-rural areas becoming more urbanized. Cooper also says that throughout the U.S., raptors seem to be seeking out urban habitats.

Interesting findings are coming out of the study. For instance, when trees with active nests are chopped down, different species react differently. Cooper's hawks typically find a new site close by and start over. Red-tails, though, tend to abandon the whole territory. "It's sobering that [humans] can affect the distribution of a species," says Cooper.

Interesting findings are coming out of the study. For instance, when trees with active nests are chopped down, different species react differently. Cooper's hawks typically find a new site close by and start over. Red-tails, though, tend to abandon the whole territory. "It's sobering that [humans] can affect the distribution of a species," says Cooper.

A Different Landscape

One of the raptor mysteries of L.A. involves the American kestrel; 100 years ago, that species was the most common nesting hawk found here. Today, not so much. This year, a single local kestrel pair with fledgling chicks was sighted but their nest has not yet been located.

Cooper says most local bird species, "don't require 'pristine' habitats'... they are utilizing what we give them." Many

raptors nest and perch in tall, upright trees commonly landscaped in urban areas. There has been a recent trend in science to consider the existence of ecological habitats within cities.

The L.A. Raptor Study is just beginning to resolve in greater detail the stories of these apex predators that are making their territory here in L.A. What will be learned next year? Stay tuned! 🍂

William Hallstrom is among other things, a writer, photographer, hiker, and frequenter of Griffith Park; he's based in Los Angeles and is interested in California ecology and environmental issues.

(Interested in participating in the 2022 Study? Volunteer training sessions will begin in late January and early February. Follow us on Facebook or Instagram to learn more. Or sign up to receive our monthly email blasts.)



Dan Cooper out in the field talking about the role raptors play in the natural environment

A Brief History of the Failed Griffith Park Master Plan(s)

~Valerie Vanaman, FoGP Advisory Board

Griffith Park is one of the largest urban parks in the United States — larger than the City of Beverly Hills. Yet, with 2022 about to begin, there is no modern, adopted Master Plan for managing and using Griffith Park's more than 4,300 acres.

Master Plans are essential — especially for open space environments such as Griffith Park. A Master Plan provides protection for the Park, guides and protects the Park's future, and establishes a suitable, unified mission.

Without this critical guiding document, what happens to and within Griffith Park is solely determined by elected officials and the (often changing) leadership at the Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP). In the absence of a Master Plan, it is only through the constant vigilance of dedicated community members and organizations — like Friends of Griffith Park — that we can protect and defend the urban wilderness from unnecessary developments.

While there have been at least three Master Plans for the Park developed since 1968, none of them have been formally adopted. In 1968 and again in 1978, plans were drafted but sat in limbo. In 2003, under the leadership of Tom LaBonge, City Councilmember for District 4 (the District within which the Park resides), the City contracted with Meléndrez Design Partners to update the 1978 Plan. Meléndrez went about its work, including holding public meetings, in which strong support was voiced for ensuring the Park was protected as an urban wilderness.

However, the draft presented by Meléndrez to LaBonge and RAP in October 2004 and made available to the public in March 2005 was a document that has unfortunately now disappeared from the internet. The same is true for the 1968 and 1978 plans. Gone.

The 2005 Meléndrez Draft provided for substantial commercialization in and of the Park, with considerable reduction or complete elimination of much of its urban wilderness identity. Community organizations and individual community members were appalled. The strong public opposition efforts of individuals including Gerry Hans, Bernadette Soter, Charles Soter, and many others pushed elected and appointed public officials to find another path forward. By the end of 2005, LaBonge worked to establish the Griffith Park Working Group.



Dudleya in Griffith Park photo: Gerry Hans

The work undertaken by the Working Group was extremely intense, as these volunteers logged in hundreds of hours, and financed research independently. However, the then-RAP personnel became disenchanted with the process and stopped providing the Working Group with professional assistance, and dismissed requests for help. Despite this, the Working Group continued forward and ultimately produced a Draft Master Plan for Griffith Park.

The Draft Master Plan embodied the broad public desire to retain



Griffith Park as an urban wilderness and provide available outdoor experience for passive and active Park users. When the Draft Plan was submitted to RAP, the Working Group hoped for continued collaboration and cooperative decision-making. A comprehensive and unified Master Plan for Griffith Park could have set a new standard for urban wilderness parks across the county.

It was not to be.

Eighteen months after submitting its draft, the Working Group

received back a highly edited document entitled a “A Vision Plan for Griffith Park.” Rather than move forward in collaboration, working with the community to generate a Master Plan establishing enforceable development rules for the Park, RAP undercut the Working Group’s efforts by simply re-naming the product.

Little, if any, thanks were extended to the private citizens who gave hundreds of hours and their own financial resources to work on the project. Instead, the Working Group was informed their work was unacceptable. Contrary to what they had been told throughout the long three-year period of writing the Plan, RAP now informed the Group that any Master Plan would need to incorporate environmental review and complete environmental plans.

A Vision Plan is not a Master Plan. It contains broad philosophical goals, goals easily forgotten when convenient. In the absence of an enforceable Master Plan, the issues regarding development such as the LA Zoo expansion and the aerial tram, among others, will proceed unchecked.

When adopted by the RAP Commission on January 8, 2014, the commission inserted an additional insult — drop “Plan” completely, thus eliminating any confusion regarding a lack of environmental review. RAP also established a Griffith Park Advisory Board (GPAB). GPAB is composed of individuals appointed by RAP for membership. When it began work on November 20, 2014, two of the Working Group members survived RAP scrutiny and were able to serve on GPAB. And while “A Vision” generally seeks to uphold and support the urban wilderness identity of the Park, it remains beholden to RAP and elected officials. It does not carry any of the authority and power that would be found in an adopted Master Plan.

Time has now passed. There is still neither a Master Plan (following adoption of “A Vision”) nor any indication of revising a Master Plan in the years to come. Since the Park comprises over 4,300 acres of essentially undeveloped land, there is always a new proposal for using up some of that urban wilderness for one commercial venture or attraction or another.

In the absence of a Master Plan, the supporters of the urban wilderness and current passive and active recreational opportunities available through Griffith Park must be constantly vigilant, aware of, and responsive to the various pockets of commercialization and development being proposed.

Residents must continue to exercise their voices, time, and effort, as did the volunteers who made up the Working Group decades ago, to protect and ensure that Griffith Park remains accessible as an

urban wilderness experience, open and accessible to all. ♡

Valerie Vanaman is engaged in public interest law; she founded Vanaman German LLP, the first law firm specializing in representing students in education matters. Valerie was an active member of the Master Plan Working Group and is currently on the Friends of Griffith Park Advisory Board.

Toyon: Griffith Park Lost and Found

~Mike Eberts, author "*Griffith Park: A Centennial History*"

Motorists on the 134 freeway have seen the oddly-terraced hillside that is in Griffith Park, but does not appear to be part of it. Hikers, runners and equestrians have explored it, but are not quite sure what to make of this semi-public nether world. And Friends of Griffith Park members no doubt wonder how L.A.'s grand signature park somehow became the site of a landfill.

The Backstory

August 1956. Los Angeles is awash in growth and smog. Cars were the leading culprit, but backyard incinerators were also a significant contributor. The city council—perhaps recognizing they couldn't do much about the automobile—outlawed use of incinerators and approved collection of combustible rubbish as a municipal service.

But what to do with all the rubbish that would have been burned in the past? Compacting trash into bales and sending it to the desert was considered, then rejected. And local politicians were leery of contracting with privately-owned dumps. (Some city leaders feared monopolistic practices, or even organized crime.)

With a majority on the city council favoring municipally-owned dumps, Griffith Park's rugged and remote Toyon Canyon entered the picture. The Recreation and Parks Commissioners—perhaps trying to make the best out of a bad situation—authorized "development" of the canyon in April 1957. The publicly-stated plan was that the canyon would eventually become flat land suitable for tennis, basketball, volleyball, picnicking and parking facilities. All of this was to be completed within five years.

Some saw a constructive link between rubbish disposal and recreation. *The Los Angeles Examiner* gushed that the reclaimed Scholl Canyon dump site in the hills above nearby Glendale was "a new, expansive and beautiful recreation area." Los Angeles Mayor Norris Poulson thought that trash dumps could be made downright beautiful: "The filled sites, which are now virtually useless, can become,



when completed, our most beautiful parks and playgrounds. ... This is one of the cheapest ways I know to build beautiful parks and recreation centers in our long-range program of developing Los Angeles.”

Van Griffith—Col. Griffith’s son and chief Park protector—apparently thought this was, well, rubbish. He filed suit in Superior Court, arguing that the site (originally 40 acres) would not be used for Park purposes and that the project would destroy the Toyon plant, more commonly known as California holly.

He lost.

Toyon Canyon soon became an integral part of the city’s rubbish disposal plan. By October 1959, it was handling half of the city’s combustible rubbish, about 1,200 tons a day. At that time it was estimated that Toyon Canyon could accommodate about nine million cubic feet of rubbish. In fact, things were going so well that the city was beginning to eye an adjacent canyon as another dump site.

And what became of the recreational site that was to be created atop Toyon Canyon within five years of its 1958 opening? In July 1961, a senior Recreation and Parks official told the *Los Angeles Times* that the dump could soon be reclaimed for 37 level acres of small sport play areas. A November 1964 *Westways* article held out hope that the area would soon be turned into “a pleasant picnic area.” The

Park’s 1968 Master Plan suggested a picnic area and a 2,885-yard, par 36, 9-hole golf course, punctuated by a lake and streams. A 1978 plan envisioned a 90-acre “Toyon Meadow” that would be a festival site, trail head and perhaps the location of a youth hostel.

None of it happened.

By 1985, 16 million tons (nearly double the capacity predicted in 1959) of L.A.’s waste had turned the former Toyon Canyon into a 400-foot-tall, flat-topped hill. Some of it was methane-producing organic waste. Hikers—including the author of this article—remember how the ground smoldered at the landfill. Garbage trucks were so common on the stretch of Griffith Park Drive—uphill from Travel Town—that Park regulars called it “Trash Truck Hill.” And Royce’s Canyon, which can today be accessed by a short, pleasant trail, was targeted to become the Toyon II Landfill. Pressured by the Sierra Club and others, Mayor Tom Bradley publicly urged abandonment of the Toyon II project in March 1985. The original Toyon site was shut down in November.

Eventually, the site became mostly about turning methane into electricity. In the 1980s, the Toyon Landfill powered five generators. Today, with the site producing only a fraction of the methane it once did, it can support a single one-megawatt generator, and that isn’t operating at present. A methane flare, covered by a silo-like

Toyon continues on page 14



Photo: Dora Herrera

...*Toyon* from page 13

structure, burns off gas until an outside operator takes charge of the generator.

Toyon Today

After more than 60 years, the Bureau of Sanitation has settled in as part of the patchwork of city agencies, for-profit and nonprofit organizations, citizens groups and others that comprise Griffith Park. At the top of Trash Truck Hill, the bureau operates the Griffith Park Compost Facility. Maintenance crews collect organic matter from the Park—everything from dropped leaves to elephant poop (called “Zoo Doo”)—and bring it here to blend with chipped Park greenery. The resulting compost (trademark name TOPGRO) is used around the Park and given away to the public.

From the Compost Facility, our small tour party is taken up the North Trail from Mineral Wells, past Amir’s Garden, and on to the area described rather optimistically on some Park maps as the “Toyon Canyon Restoration Project.”

Standing on one of the upper “benches,” which function as terraced access roads, one can imagine the hilltop meadow envisioned in the 1970s. Less passive uses of this manufactured land—baseball fields, let alone a youth hostel—are impractical, and will continue to be for the foreseeable future. John Hamilton, an environmental engineer with the Bureau of Sanitation, points to one of the places where noticeable settling has occurred and will continue to occur for longer than the readers of this newsletter will be alive. However, he speculates, the grid of gas pumps and pipes should be taken out of service within the next half century.

Our group stops at an unusual sight—a small tree. Couldn’t the landscape be made more attractive if trees were planted? Well, no. The landfill is covered with a five-foot layer of monofill. It is clay-like and densely packed. Roots can go down two or three feet into the monofill, but the last two feet are to remain as a barrier to the rotted refuse. In fact, foliage with root systems deep enough to

penetrate all five feet of monofill are in danger of being removed.

Native shrubs with shallower root systems that can survive in this strange artificial environment are not only possible, they are being tested at another of the city’s closed landfills, Lopez Canyon in Lake View Terrace. Miguel Zermano, a Solid Resources Manager with the Bureau of Sanitation, speaks hopefully about “healthy soils” which are the antidote to landfill soil which can become deoxygenated by the ever-present gasses. Areas in the landfill that are non-vegetated will be treated with that soil along with hydroseeding of native plants.

Despite these obstacles, some revegetation began in 2014: white sage, buckwheat, sugar bush and, yes, toyon have been planted in five-gallon pots. The hope is that toyon will reestablish itself naturally (or at least semi-naturally) on the site.

For now, there are trails and roads along the periphery of the landfill. And some equestrians, hikers, trail runners, and birders (the bird population is noticeably robust) roam the benches.

Improvement in this part of Griffith Park is likely to happen slowly. But eventually, the methane harvest—which declines every year—will decrease to a level where the power-generating facility will permanently shut down and the gas collection pumps and pipes will be unnecessary. Future generations of FoGP activists would be wise to pressure the appropriate city departments to remove what could easily become useless, derelict equipment.

Eventually, the appearance of the area—to freeway drivers, at least—should be improved. “After the shrubs come back,” Hamilton notes, “you won’t even notice the benches.” 🌱

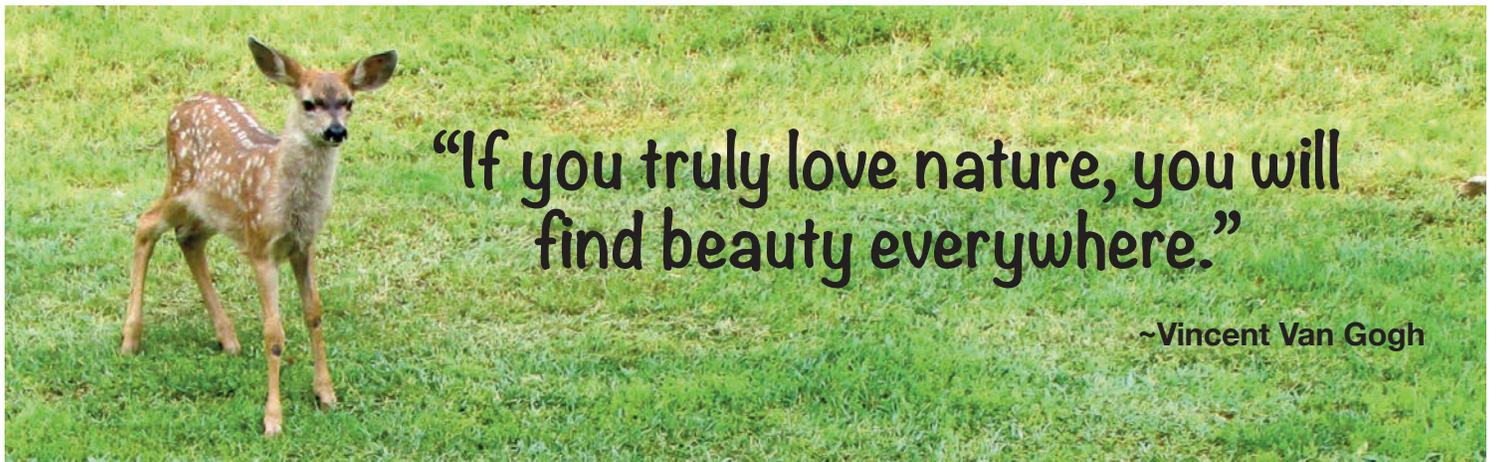


Top photo: despite the monofill which is supposed to deter trees from propagating in the landfill, pepper trees continue to emerge

Bottom: Author Mike Eberts discusses the history of Toyon Canyon and its future plans with LA Bureau Sanitation employees John Hamilton (center) and Miguel Zermano (left)

Mike Eberts is a professor of Mass Communications at Glendale Community College, a title he’s held since 1987, and author of the 1996 book “Griffith Park: A Centennial History.” He is a member of Friends of Griffith Park Advisory Board.

Photos, above: Kathryn Louyse



“If you truly love nature, you will find beauty everywhere.”

~Vincent Van Gogh

To understand the role played by Park Rangers over time in Griffith Park, I turned to Mike Eberts' *Griffith Park: A Centennial History*. I learned that long before a pilot ranger program was created in the 1950s, looking after plants and people was a job filled by gardeners and park foremen. By the mid 1960s, several rangers were delegated to visit parks across the country to learn their practices and how that care can be translated to LA City parks. By the early 1970s, a mere 23 rangers patrolled all LA City parks. Over the years, the number of rangers did increase, but 2020 was a tough year and many throughout local government chose to retire, including some employees in the Parks Division. Currently the number of Park Rangers stands at about 28.



To get a Ranger's perspective on changes that have happened over the years, I contacted Ranger Tom Mendibles who's seen his job responsibilities change from the late 1980s to today. He has over 30 years logged in as a Park Ranger working mainly in Griffith Park. Perhaps you've encountered him in the Park?

I met with Ranger Mendibles as he was coming back to Griffith Park Ranger Headquarters following an incident at the Greek Theatre: a large pine had toppled over the evening before, pinning about 30 parked vehicles along the upper

The Role Park Rangers Play in City Parklands

~Kathryn Louyse,
FoGP board member

theatre lawn and injuring one woman. Ranger Mendibles had been meeting all morning with unhappy car owners, explaining how the insurance process works in situations such as this. Takeaway lesson: Park Rangers respond to a variety of situations, from dangerous and life-threatening to the sometimes tedious paperwork!

We turned to a question I've always been curious about – namely, was the job a childhood dream?

Well, not really, he says with a laugh. Ranger Mendibles explained he was originally more interested in becoming a firefighter with the LAFD, but there were no openings at that time. At a City-sponsored job fair in 1989, someone waved him over and asked if he'd ever considered a career as a Park Ranger. He hadn't, but he filled out an application. After an interview at City Hall East, and an abbreviated training at Rio Hondo Police Academy, he was headed to his first assignment as a newly-coined supervisor.

Mendibles explained his job was very different back then; City officials were struggling to contain gang-related issues across the entire region – and parks were not immune from incidents and graffiti (tagging) on buildings, picnic benches and even trees. Fern Dell was especially targeted; folks were understandably nervous about visiting this area, and other areas in Griffith Park.

Initially Ranger Mendibles was part of the team that transitioned

from one responding primarily to gang activity to a role we know and encounter today along Park trails and roadways. It's a role where rangers can become environmental or Park history experts, lead interpretative hikes, or focus on safety and enforcement. Or, as many rangers do today, see their jobs as a combination of all of the above.

We discussed difficulties during the transition, but another shift in policing came in 1991 after the Rodney King video and ensuing public uproar. There would be a new attitude about how law enforcement would deal with the public, a policy that also extended to City Parklands. In the following years, LAPD's Safe Park Program provided park goers with a renewed sense of security that welcomed numerous visitors back to areas once regarded as off-limits.

Ranger Mendibles and I brought the conversation to today which can at times seem reminiscent of his early career dealing with gang-related incidents. I asked how people can feel comfortable and safe while recreating in Griffith Park.

"The important thing is to always be aware of your surroundings," he says. "It doesn't matter if you're crossing the street to your car, or riding your bike along the LA River. If for whatever reason you feel unsafe, turn around and go elsewhere. Or, better yet, bring a friend along when hiking or biking — not only does it make a more pleasurable outing, there's safety in numbers." Then he adds, "And also bring water. More than you think you'll need!"

I asked Ranger Mendibles to share one of his favorite Park stories. He was happy to tell this true story:

One day, CD 4 Councilmember Tom LaBonge requested a Park Ranger to accompany him and a special guest on a hike in Griffith Park; the guest turned out to be Congressman Adam Schiff. As they hiked from Mt. Hollywood to the Hollywood Sign, LaBonge asked Ranger Mendibles "Who's the most famous individual you've ever encountered in the Park?" Ranger Mendibles responded, "Well, of course, it's you Tom." LaBonge exclaimed "No, no, no!" and then pointing to his guest: "It's Adam Schiff!"

As I talked with Ranger Mendibles, I became even more impressed with his dedication and compassion; he says he's privileged every day to work in a place as special and unique as Griffith Park. "Every day in this Park is different," he says. "Sometimes days can be quite surprising, but always rewarding."

We talked about how Park Rangers can positively engage to diffuse possible dangerous situations. We both shared how Ranger Albert Torres' approach and style was inspirational. Ranger Mendibles had a great respect for the Ranger Torres who handled hot incidents with a cool head, compassion and friendly demeanor.

Ranger Mendibles relates a personal story: A few years ago, he was headed home from a day on the job when a call came over the radio. It seems an individual in great distress was up behind the Hollywood Sign. Few details were given, and no other rangers were available to take the call. So Ranger Mendibles turned the car around and headed back to the Park, eventually locating the distraught individual. Ranger Mendibles simply talked with the man for a while and finally persuaded him to climb down the hillside.

Ranger Mendibles could have ignored that radio call. He was off-the-clock and did not need to respond, but he did. He engaged with a person in obvious emotional turmoil, responding with concern and care. Taking the time to see that person as a human being.

We are lucky to have rangers like Ranger Mendibles stationed in Griffith Park, responding to calls, reacting with humanity and integrity. If you see him or other rangers on the trails, don't forget to say "Hi there!" And "Thank you!" ♣

Photo: Kathryn Louyse

Shared Values: FoPG and CNPS

~Mary Button, FoGP board member



Photo: Gerry Hans

When it comes to protecting California's native plants, Friends of Griffith Park and the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) have much in common. Both organizations strive to increase understanding of our native flora to preserve this resource for current and future generations to enjoy.

CNPS was founded in 1965 in Berkeley, CA. The Los Angeles-Santa Monica Mountains Chapter was founded as the Sierra Santa Monica Chapter in 1967 under the leadership of its first president, Helen C. Funkhouser. It became the second chapter of CNPS. Today CNPS has 35 chapters throughout the state. The current Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains Chapter includes the region of the Santa Monica Mountains and the San Fernando Valley.

Snowdy Dodson is the Co-President of the Los Angeles chapter of the CNPS. She's an active environmentalist, a member of FoGP and is also an Emeritus professor at California State University Northridge (CSUN).

I recently sat down to talk with Dodson to learn more about the L.A. Chapter of CNPS, their environmental work and activities.

CNPS' mission is to conserve California native plants and their natural habitats, and increase understanding, appreciation and horticultural use of native plants. Their future mission and strategic plan focuses more on environmental justice and outreach to a broader demographic in terms of ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender identity and age.

The L.A. CNPS conducts a native plant sale at least once a year. They also have a Native Plant Week Symposium with a wildflower show, speakers, plant sale, and plant-based activities in April. This organization has a strong conservation presence and has been instrumental in writing input letters, testifying at hearings, and litigation. They also answer numerous native plant horticulture questions.

The LA Chapter hosts monthly programs via Zoom on the second Tuesday evening each month except in July and August. CNPS produces an online newsletter five times per year, posted on their lacnps.org website.

Protecting Griffith Park Native Plants

Dodson has been involved with CNPS long before Friends of Griffith Park was formed in October, 2010. She's an avid activist, not afraid to speak up to protect the plants and the Park like she did in the spring of 2007.

On May 8, 2007 a brush fire broke out in Griffith Park near the tennis courts in the northeastern quadrant of the Park. Strong winds carried the fire toward the historic merry-go-round, which luckily was spared. However, the wind then shifted and the fire headed southwest toward residential areas; more than 300 homes in the Los Feliz neighborhood were threatened, and residents were evacuated. Eventually, the fire was extinguished, but much of the natural landscape was burned.

Recreation and Parks (RAP) General Manager Jon Kirk Mukri wisely organized a team of fire recovery specialists to assess the damage and plan for recovery. Dodson was the CNPS member on the team. She recalls horrific proposals, including one she found utterly preposterous. “They wanted to cut down 33 black walnut trees in a ravine, to create a flood control channel. It was absurd.” Dodson voiced her concerns to the plan in front of a group of engineering wonks and luckily for the Park, RAP listened. Eventually this ill-conceived proposal was scrapped. Dodson and CNPS were instrumental in keeping things on the environmental track for habitat recovery after the fire.

FoGP and CNPS are passionate about protecting the native habitat. Both organizations understand and recognize the value of native plants in Griffith Park, in Southern California and far beyond. Over the years, CNPS has been very involved in invasive plant removal and restorations throughout the Santa Monica Mountains and the San Fernando Valley, in particular.

How Can Management Play a Role?

As a part-time RAP employee in the Forestry Division, from 2003 to 2019, Bill Neill worked intermittently to control invasive weeds in natural areas of Griffith Park — a total of 420 hours over a 17-year period. As current co-president of the CNPS’s California Native Plant Society’s local chapter, he has this advice for Park managers and concerned citizens:

“Natural areas in city parks require/deserve some amount of vegetation management, in the form of invasive plant control — not as much maintenance as for landscaped areas, but more than nothing. Without continual maintenance beyond our lifetimes, the natural flora of Griffith Park eventually will become overwhelmed by invasive non-native plants.” Neill adds: “Careful, selective herbicide treatments are essential for controlling perennial invasive weeds and exotic trees in large natural areas.”

He disagrees with the current RAP ban on all herbicides, not just Roundup® (glyphosate), in natural areas. “Today we are seeing the effects of this ban,” says Neill. “For example, invasive fountain grass (an invasive) grows right along the road, and even inside the curbs, on Mt. Hollywood Drive and is encroaching onto adjacent slopes.”

CNPS’s Dodson was very influential in the Autry Museum’s “Investigating Griffith Park” exhibit. She networked with Carolyn Brucken at the Autry and advocated that the Autry loop FoGP into the focus. Thanks to Dodson, FoGP is part of this exhibit.

It is reassuring to know that CNPS is on board with many of the issues environmentalists face. CNPS supported FoGP’s acquisition fundraising for the parcels on Canyon Drive in the spring of 2020. More recently, CNPS joined FoGP and more than 30 other organizations that wrote letters opposing the proposed aerial tram.

FoGP and CNPS have joined together every year for the P-22 Festival, supporting the wildlife corridor and connectivity. We both participate in tabling events such as Natural History Museum’s Naturefest and LA River cleanups. Many of our members overlap and participate in the same hikes, events and lectures.

The recent *LA Times* front-page article by Louis Sahagún (October 20, 2021), “They’re not wild about L.A. Zoo plan” mentioned both FoGP’s and CNPS’s opposition to the current zoo expansion plan. Sahagún wrote, “Does the zoo need to consume 23 acres of native woodlands? That’s the question dividing defenders of 120 coast live oaks, 60 toyons, 22 Southern California black walnut trees and stands of federally and state-listed endangered shrubs in the proposed development zones.” Per *LA Times*, “Opposition led by the historical preservation group FoGP and the CNPS has some zoo advocates worried that the controversy will scare off funders and impede progress of the plan.”

We’re proud to partner with CNPS and join forces as advocates working in unison to protect woodlands, flora and our urban wildlife. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts when we work together to protect this habitat. ♻️

LEAVE NO TRACE!

Stay on trails – no cutting switchbacks!

Avoid fragile vegetation and riparian zones (the area adjacent to water sources)

Pack it in – pack it out!

This is a refrain generally heard in national parks but it’s also applicable in Griffith Park. If you bring your plastic bottle into the Park, make sure to deposit it properly in a trash or recycling can as you leave. Tossing it off the side of a hill... not cool.

Respect wildlife Griffith Park is *their* home... please allow distance between yourself and other animals, especially coyote. Leaving food on picnic tables encourages bad behavior and unfortunately, wildlife becomes the loser.

Dog etiquette We all love our dogs, but they must be leashed for their own safety as well as the safety of others. Dog poop must be properly trashed, otherwise bacteria will enter the Park ecosystem.

Be kind to the Park so future generations can continue to appreciate this vast urban wilderness!



Top: Pink flowering currant / fruit (*Ribes malvaceum*) bottom: golden currant flower / fruit (*Ribes aureum*)

Photos: Jorge Ochoa

Gooseberries and Currants: Griffith Park's Winter Fruits

~ Jorge Ochoa, FoGP Advisory Board member

Fall and spring are growing seasons here in Southern California and it's an active growing period for many plants in Griffith Park.

When hiking in Griffith Park, you can discover some of the earliest perennial plants: gooseberries and currants. Three are native to Griffith Park: fuchsia flowering gooseberry (*Ribes speciosum*), pink flowering currant (*Ribes malvaceum*) and golden currant (*Ribes aureum*).

(To clarify: when plants are equipped with spines or prickles, they are referred to as gooseberries and when plants lack spines

or prickles then they are referred to as currants.)

These three plants are considered the earliest bloomers that provide valuable nectar to feed hummingbirds and other wildlife. While visiting the flowers for the nectar, hummingbirds help pollinate the flowers. Once pollination is achieved, fruit can develop and grow. Reaching maturity, fruits will acquire a bright color as a signal to birds and other animals it's ready for eating.

Early fruits also provide a valuable meal for many of the Park's wildlife. In fact, the main dispersal of seeds is from animals that eat the fruit and digest the pulp; seeds pass unharmed through their digestive systems and are then deposited elsewhere in the Park. A continual production of seeds by the plants and the dispersal of seeds by animals is a very important balance that ensures healthy seeds get back in the soil to start new plants.

Seeds from gooseberries and currants can remain dormant in the soil for several years until the Park gets a good rainy season or if conditions are just right for germination and growing – and thus continuing the cycle of a healthy Griffith Park ecology.

Keep on the lookout for these plants, flowers and fruit when you are in the Park; and remember they are important food for many of the Park's wild animals. ♡

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



Ochoa and FoGP president Gerry Hans on a recent hike discuss some of the flowering plants along the route



Paparazzi and city officials were well represented at the 125th Anniversary as Tongva Cultural educator Craig Torres opened the festivities with a native American blessing

Celebrating 125 Years of Griffith Park

~Brenda Rees, FoGP Board member

To commemorate Griffith Park’s 125th Anniversary, the Los Angeles Conservancy presented a day where visitors could learn some of the intriguing backstories from some of Griffith Park’s notable — and perhaps hidden — venues.

On Saturday, November 13, 2021 volunteer educators from the LA Conservancy joined 30 different partnering organizations spread throughout Griffith Park to share stories of specific sites, from Amir’s Garden to

the Griffith Park Merry-Go-Round, from Rancho Los Feliz to Bette Davis Park on the Burbank side of Griffith Park, from the Griffith Observatory to the Griffith Golf Club House and beyond.

Friends of Griffith Park took the helm at Fern Dell and at Park Center where they met guests, answered questions and explained how these areas reflected the times they were created. Also in Fern Dell, FoGP discussed current restoration proposals that could once again see waters flowing through and among the ferns. At Park Center, FoGP shared space with City officials and members of various organizations including FoLAR, GPAB, the Sierra Club and many others who relayed the historical significance of Griffith’s bequest of this open space to the City of Los Angeles on December 16, 1896.

Local author/historian Mike Eberts led visitors from Amir’s Garden to the Firefighter’s Memorial which overlooks the 1933 tragedy that claimed 29 civilian lives and hundreds of injuries.

Throughout the Park, there were presentations, live performances, speeches and more!

All in all, it was a delightfully hot, busy day in the Park with visitors learning historical nuggets and deepening their appreciation of all that Griffith Park has to offer. If you came out, we hope you stopped by our booth in Fern Dell or Park Center.

And finally — the LA Conservancy’s Sarah Lann and team deserves enormous thanks for spearheading this day of celebration. ♻️

Photo: Kathryn Louyse

What’s Next for Griffith Park?

Friends of Griffith Park is always gearing up for some terrific events:

The 2022 LA 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... sign up on our website and we’ll alert you about upcoming events.

Hope to see you in the Park!



The Storied History of Travel Town

~Kathryn Louyse,
FoGP board member

There are many terrific venues in Griffith Park and exhibits within venues. Travel Town is a perfect example; it's a must-visit attraction, especially if you have kids. Or if you're a big kid who loves all things trains and history!

At Travel Town, you can see and sometimes explore several of the various-use locomotives on display; a L.A. Railway Horse Drawn Car from 1880, a San Francisco Cable Car, and two locomotives from the L.A. Harbor Dept. that originally hauled quarry rock on Catalina Island. These little engines were saved from the scrap heap thanks to Travel Town's founder, Charley Atkins who secured many of the locomotive wonders on display at this site.

Established in 1952, Atkins' Travel Town serves as a reminder that travel across great distances used to be difficult and arduous; up until the 19th century, your choice of transportation was limited. You could walk, bump along in wagon trains or stagecoaches, or saddle up on horseback. Traveling from one coast to the other via ship, (navigating around the Cape of Good Horn) was a journey that could take months – even in good weather!

With the advent of trains, travel became easier and even elegant. Technological advances each year made trains more popular with businesses shuttling goods across the country, and passengers who had a desire for travel and exploration.

Travel Town pays tribute to train travel across the spectrum. You can visit passenger, dining and assorted-use boxcars from around the country, including several from Hawaii. The Oahu Railway cars #1 and #36 were donated to Travel Town in 1953. There's a Southern Pacific Railway Post Office #12 built in 1890, plus a circa 1937 Union Pacific Dormitory/Club car currently undergoing restoration. Many of these locomotives and cars derive from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It's wonderful to see how well they hold up, despite age and exposure.

The oldest kid on the block is the Stockton Terminal & Eastern #1 locomotive built by Norris-Lancaster in 1864. This engine is proudly put on display for annual events like Depot Days and it always draws crowds of visitors curious to see how folks traveled “back in the days.”

The Fred Harvey Exhibit

Tucked among Travel Town's behemoths from long ago, you'll find an innocuous little building that houses the delightful Fred Harvey

exploring griffith park



Photo: Kathryn Louyse

exhibit. Have you ever seen the 1946 movie *The Harvey Girls* starring Judy Garland and Angela Lansbury? The film tells how in the 1880s, restaurateur Fred Harvey established the first restaurant “chain” and changed the way America ate, especially those in transit along the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway.

Harvey recognized railroads were quickly drawing the coasts closer together, but that travel was missing a major component — feeding passengers en route. While passengers could find food in small towns, it was an iffy proposition since there were no set standards from town to town. There was also the problem of getting passengers back on board so trains continued to run on time.

Efficiency and cleanliness was the name of the game for Fred Harvey

Through careful planning and execution, Harvey established Harvey Houses across America. Taking orders from menus on trains, and transmitting those orders in advance

of the next stop, Harvey solved a huge problem for weary, hungry travelers — finding a decent meal. His wait-staff efficiently fed customers and got them on their way expeditiously.

Even better — Harvey “girls” were recruited from among young, attractive, hardworking women around the country, and were expected to comport themselves tastefully and civilly; highly unusual in the Wild West anything goes mentality of the late 19th century.

This small exhibit at Travel Town is a labor of love and includes artifacts that would have been used or seen along the route: place servings and silverware from Harvey Houses, glasses, menus, signage, seating from restaurants, and even a replicated Harvey girl uniform.

Finally, I was surprised to learn that architect Mary E. J. Colter was hired in 1910 as *the* architect/decorator for the Fred Harvey Company. At the time, she was one of only a few female architects working in the U.S. She was well-known for blending Spanish Colonial with Mission Revival — sprinkling in Native American and Rustic elements for good measure. Colter's remarkable, extensive career included 21 projects for Harvey as well as projects in the ever-expanding National Park system.

Travel Town and the Fred Harvey exhibit are two “Don't Miss” places to visit and linger in Griffith Park.

All aboard! ♣

The Fred Harvey exhibit is currently closed to the public, but hopefully will reopen soon, so please keep checking back. Photos from the Fred Harvey exhibit will be posted on our website.



friends of GRIFFITH PARK



New! LA Raptor Study Online

Get all your Los Angeles Raptor Study questions answered when you visit the new webpage devoted to FoGP's annual raptor study.

Our webpage www.FriendsOfGriffithPark/raptor-study features information, upcoming volunteer training sessions and additional resources about raptors that inhabit the L A area. Meet the Raptor Study team, see study results from previous years, and read about the wonderful work our community scientist volunteers make every year!

LA RAPTOR STUDY

FoGP is a proud sponsor of the new

Birding Guide to the Greater Pasadena Area

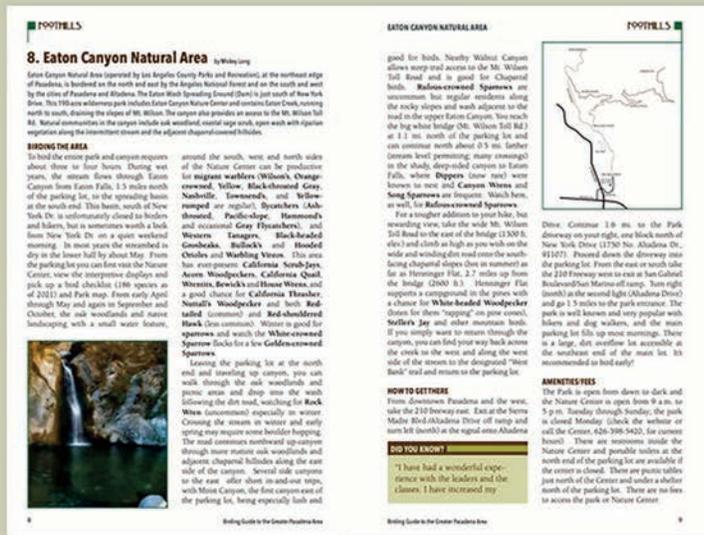
this book features...

- 30 detailed accounts of local birding areas written by members with intimate knowledge of choice locations and the birds that can be found in these locations.
- New introductory materials that provide an overview of Pasadena's unique geography, climate, flora and fauna, and conservation concerns.
- Illustrations by renowned artist and life-long Pasadena Audubon member, Catherine Hamilton.
- Full-color map of the Pasadena-area emphasizing watershed features and habitats.

This is a self-publishing guide. Pasadena Audubon Society will donate 20% of the copies to schools, libraries, clubs, etc., and will sell the remainder through retail outlets and online.

Proceeds of the sales will fund our educational programs such as the Bird Science Program, Pasadena Audubon Grants program and the Schoolyard Habitat Garden program.

Find out how to get your copy here: <https://www.pasadenaudubon.org/birding-guide>



It's fun — it's easy...

Learn and Connect with FoGP!

Did you catch FoGP's new online lecture series this summer:
Species of Special Concern?

Fear not!....All three episodes are now online!



Blainville's Horned Lizards

Sarah Wenner of the National Park Service discusses the Blainville's horned lizard – a small lizard confined by urban development to a very small region with limited connectivity. The lizard is also under threat of extinction due to a large number of variables; fire, greater urban development, low dispersal rates and habitat fragmentation.

friendsofgriffithpark.org/species-of-concern-recap-of-sarah-wenners-talk-on-horned-lizards

Western Gray Squirrel

Several years ago, Chris DeMarco worked with FoGP to study Western gray squirrels inhabiting Griffith Park. Now, as an adjunct instructor at CSULA he discusses the results of the study, focusing on the genetic, ecological factors associated with a possible local extinction of these squirrels and potential solutions for mitigating these factors.

friendsofgriffithpark.org/species-of-concern-chris-demarcos-discussion-of-the-western-gray-squirrel



Bats of Los Angeles

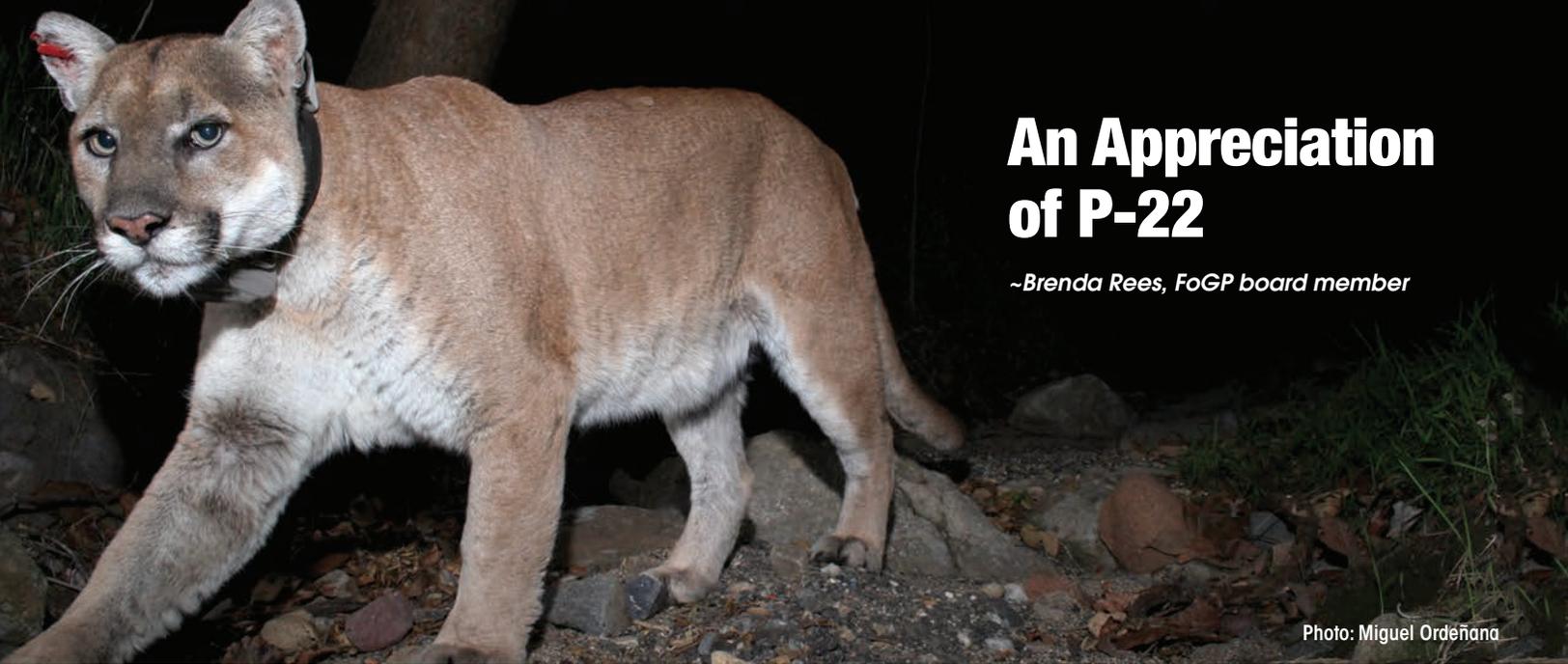
Mammal biologist at NHMLA Miguel Ordeñana discusses bat species detected during surveys in Griffith Park, with a focus on species of special concern. He shares what the ecology of these particular species and what he's learned about their current distribution as he's expanded research into other LA neighborhoods in partnership with local community members.

friendsofgriffithpark.org/species-of-concern-miguel-ordenana-discusses-griffith-park-bats



Sign up today—we'll let you know when more lectures are coming!

2022 presents potential challenges to the natural environment of Griffith Park. Recently FoGP learned the proposal for a two-mile Aerial Tram is not dead — it's simply hibernating. You can stay abreast of the latest updates at friendsofgriffithpark.org



An Appreciation of P-22

~Brenda Rees, FoGP board member

Photo: Miguel Ordeñana

Ten years ago in 2012, when mountain lion P-22 was discovered haunting the hills of Griffith Park, this wasn't just another example of nature seeping through the cracks in the big city. This story was different for me because here was a big cat trying to find his place in the world, going against the odds to carve out a territory and create a life to call his own.

Reading about his amazing journey reminded me of my own introduction to life in Los Angeles.

As a Minnesota-born and raised girl, coming to California was a leap of faith. I was young and out of college; I had a job secured and a place to live in Venice with a ragtag group of wannabe actors. But Los Angeles, the territory, was immense. My first week here, a group of us went up to the Griffith Observatory at night to see the city lights twinkling to San Pedro and beyond. I was overwhelmed. And scared. *How will I ever find anything in this place!? How will I ever find me?*

Armed with a tattered, hand-me-down copy of the *Thomas Brothers Guide Book* (this was the '80s after all!), I memorized street names (mispronouncing La Cienega as The Cigar Box), learned the freeway system, scribbled shortcuts on post-it notes. I got lost numerous times, retraced my path and kept plugging away through frustrations, banging my head on the steering wheel and not understanding that the 101 N often travels west and the 101 S is frequently eastbound.

P-22 didn't have the luxury of a Thomas Brothers. He left the Santa Monica Mountains and survived two dangerous freeway crossings by following some internal compass that led him to a place that offered food, water and shelter. Arriving as a young cougar, he had the energy to quickly settle down and get to work to make Griffith Park his home.

I imagine P-22's first days in Griffith Park were spent constantly looking over his shoulder, sniffing the ground for other mountain lions, learning places where humans congregate, discovering the best techniques to hunt deer. How many times did he fail? How

many times did he sulk back to his lair empty handed (or empty-pawed)?

Those early years in Los Angeles, I often felt like I was failing, frustrated and far away from home. In addition to learning the territory, I was also navigating the world of work; with each career and apartment move, I wondered, "Am I doing the right thing?" I wanted to discover what I really wanted to do with my life. To find a purpose.

I may have felt alone, but I was lucky to have had good friends on my side. Friends who picked me up from a freeway off-ramp when my car blew up. Helped me understand the psychology of co-workers. Offered solid advice on the numerous blind dates I went on. And lucky for P-22, he too, had – and still has – friends.

He's got biologists who track his movements and keep him healthy when he gets sick. He's got folks infusing him with a wise-cracking persona and social media account so he can be a spokescat for his kin and illuminate the plight of mountain lions everywhere. He's got world-class photographers snapping his pix and displaying his likeness on magazine covers like a true Hollywood glamour star. He's got fans around the world and there's even a movie made about him.

OK, here's where my story differs from P-22. There's no B. Rees flick or technology monitoring my every movement (wait! I do own a Smart phone...hmmm....)

But at the end of the day, when the golden sun is setting into the shimmering Pacific Ocean, I'm content in my warm house and the sweet life I managed to carve out here in Los Angeles; it took years to find purpose, love, shelter, friends and family. But well worth it.

On starry evenings, I imagine P-22 resting on a rock outcrop, licking his paw to ear to muzzle, observing the snake of traffic below, hearing the hoot of the owl above. His ears twitch and he causally bats away a fly. He half-closes his eyes.

And together, we sigh.

Home. Home at last. ♡

(The first image of P-22 was recorded on February 12, 2012 at 9:15pm; he was discovered during the Griffith Park Wildlife Connectivity Study, a project funded primarily by Friends of Griffith Park with additional support from the Hollywood United Neighborhood Council (HUNC). The study was overseen by Cooper Ecological Monitoring and conducted by biologists Dan Cooper and Miguel Ordeñana along with Erin Boydston of the USGS Western Ecological Research Center.

The study featured several trail cameras placed strategically throughout the Park; the study ran from 2011 – 2014.



Photo: Gerry Hans



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Support FoGP's Efforts to Protect the Park

Join us today...

friendsofgriffithpark.org/volunteer



**LOOKING BACK
LOOKING FORWARD**

Photo: Kathryn Louyse

Friends of Griffith Park volunteers continue to provide service to this Park. In late October, volunteers came to one of our plantings from a few years back to weed and maintain the new trees. In this way, we all help Griffith Park prosper for future generations. *Top photo:* FoGP volunteers recently hauled away debris and trash left on the recent MRCA Bronson Canyon acquisition, making the area look much cleaner.