



# the griffith reporter

the newsletter of friends of griffith park/winter-spring 2022-2023



**JOIN TODAY!** *Your Membership Helps to Preserve & Protect Griffith Park!*



John Reyes and Gerry Hans celebrate another productive day on the Bee Rock Restoration.

**“Public parks are a safety valve of great cities.”**

~ Colonel Griffith J. Griffith

The Colonel was speaking of accessibility for all, to share Griffith Park’s bountiful nature and beauty, for the mental and physical health of the people in Los Angeles. In the early decades, the Park benefited from built features such as the iconic Griffith Observatory and Greek Theatre, both part of the Griffith Family’s directive. Later, during the depression, CCC and WPA workers crafted roads, trails and water control systems laden with artistic stonework, adding to the Park’s availability to enjoy.

How could his quote be any more eloquent and accurate today than it was over a century ago? Yet, what is different now is that the balance between the natural environment and the temptations of creating more revenue streams for the City has become so fragile. Recent examples include a proposed aerial tram strung more than two miles across the natural landscape, and

an expanded Zoo facility that would create more special events and restaurant space with new Visitor Centers. (See page 6)

The Park is at a crossroads with little real protection afforded to its wildlands, aside from the power of an engaged public. This is what Friends of Griffith Park strives for: be the strong voice for the public and residents of the entire City who cherish this natural gift. During 2022, our increased membership provided us with greater influence downtown. Also, our growing ties with like-minded non-profits gave us additional science-based knowledge to advocate for the Park with confidence.

During 2022, Park safety was another major theme. Helicopter rescues are becoming far too frequent, most often off-trail hikers with serious injuries. Keeping the growing number of hikers on safe trails, not on sensitive habitat, is an increasing challenge, and FoGP is beginning to get the attention of Park management in dealing with it. Some portions of the Park, such as heavy tourist usage areas, have become a proverbial free-for-all, to the detriment of flora that needs protection. Drought conditions in the Park only make matters worse. It’s a double whammy: lower vegetation makes it possible to go off-trail, plus this damaged habitat has a more difficult recovery time. (See page 12)

FoGP made a special effort to celebrate P-22’s ten years residency in Griffith Park through an in-depth chronology on our website. Many local reporters, schools, and the public have used this tool to find factual information on P-22 and the plight of mountain lions living in the Santa Monica Mountains Range.

P-22 became the talk of social media in November when he tugged away a small dog from behind a dog walker. As this newsletter goes to press, his change in behavior warrants caution from dusk to dawn until he is captured and evaluated. In times like this, facts matter, and FoGP trusts the judgement of the National Park Service which has studied these animals for more than 20 years, along with Fish & Wildlife who has jurisdiction over this top predator species. The “Coexisting” webinar arranged by Beth Pratt of the National Wildlife Federation was timely, and is posted for viewing on FoGP’s P-22 page, <https://friendsofgriffithpark.org/p-22>. Everyone wants the best outcome for P-22. Don’t discount the possibility that he overdosed on rodenticides again, as he did in 2014. Stay tuned.

And more late-breaking news – the Griffith Park Pony Rides, a 74-year tradition – was abruptly shuttered by the City. FoGP had been closely monitoring animal care upgrades at this concession but the decision is final. We will closely watch the space to ensure this Park facility is replaced with an attraction along the same lines: serving low- and middle-income children.

During 2022 FoGP accelerated its public volunteer efforts. Our volunteer coordinators have expanded activities with outside corporations, organizations, and schools to facilitate private volunteer events. In addition, our litter and invasive removal teams are active on a weekly basis. Having Park Ecologist Courtney McCammon on the job has also opened new opportunities for collaborating with RAP. If you’re interested in volunteering time, or you’re associated with an

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LUCY GONZALEZ

ANNA JOSENHANS

SARAH NAPIER

MIGUEL ORDEÑANA

ALEX PHILLIPS

KRIS SULLIVAN

### newsletter team

BRENDA REES, editor

[brenda@friendsofgriffithpark.org](mailto:brenda@friendsofgriffithpark.org)

KATHRYN LOUYSE, newsletter production

[klouyse.friendsofgriffithpark@gmail.com](mailto:klouyse.friendsofgriffithpark@gmail.com)

### contact info

FRIENDS OF GRIFFITH PARK

P.O. Box 27573

Los Angeles, CA 90027-0573

☎ 323-521-9399

[friendsofgriffithpark.org](http://friendsofgriffithpark.org)



Photo: Nurit Katz

### on the cover:

As numbers continue to dwindle, the Western gray squirrel may face elimination from Griffith Park unless something radical occurs. Story on page 2

Cover and page 3 photos: Gerry Hans

### photo above:

The Raptor Study encountered some unexpected surprises along the way. An injured/rehabilitated Red-tailed hawk was released near Barnsdall Park after being struck by a vehicle. Full story on page 9

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

# Species Alert: Western Gray Squirrel ~Gerry Hans, FoGP President

It seems as though Griffith Park’s Western Gray Squirrel population has dwindled further from the already low level of a decade ago. FoGP supported a genetics study (2014-2016) which compared the Park’s “Grays” in three known subpopulations within Griffith Park. The results, published in Conservation Genetics, were not encouraging. The lack of genetic richness, and the relatedness within the three subpopulations “limit the ability for the species to maintain viable populations,” per the researchers. Is a local “extinction vortex” in progress, and if so, what can be done to alleviate this destruction?

Genetic diversity and gene flow are the urgent issues in the fragmented habitats of our urban area. Long term viability of our only native tree squirrel is at stake, just as it is for mountain lions and bobcats. Adding to the problem of habitat fragmentation, super-competitor Eastern Fox Squirrel was unwisely released and quickly integrated into the wild, about 120 years ago. This pushed the Western Gray into the LA area’s foothills and mountains, where they have managed to hold out and fend for themselves, although only in scattered pockets. The Eastern Fox Squirrel dominates the residential basin now.

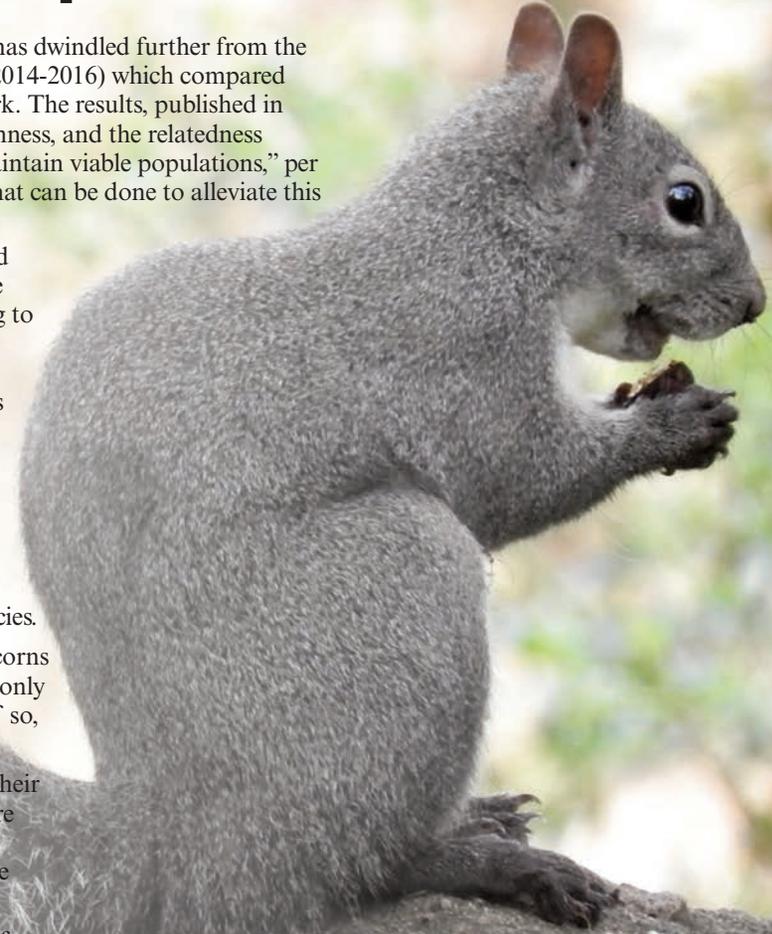
For decades, Fern Dell boasted the most significant numbers of Grays within the Park. More recently, though, you are lucky to see even one or two if you walk from Los Feliz Blvd. to the upper parking lot. In that same short walk, it’s typical to see a dozen of the Eastern Fox species.

This fall, I watched a particularly busy Western Gray packing away acorns into the crevices of the historic rock walls of lower Fern Dell. I could only hope that it finds a mate, one not in its own family genetic tree. And if so, perhaps there will be a new young family in the early spring?

Although they don’t hibernate, the squirrels retrieve the acorns from their caches later, as winter food is less abundant. Their nests, or “drays,” are high above in the trees, made mostly of leaves. While their non-native competitors sometimes raise two litters per year, Grays breed and raise young only once per year.

FoGP is pursuing a closer watch on the population and distribution of the Western Gray Squirrel in Griffith Park. The more we understand and document this species within the Park, the sooner we can explore potential conservation management options. This is one of the few urban populations of Grays left within the state.

You can help, too, by reporting sighting of Grays within the Park. We are especially interested in sightings outside of their mainstays, Fern Dell and Vermont Canyon. It’s easy to take a photo and post on *iNaturalist.org*. FoGP and our science team can access the data from there. It’s simple to become an *iNaturalist* “community scientist.” Or, send us your observations directly, via our website.



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organization interested in volunteer activities, contact us: <https://friendsofgriffithpark.org/volunteer/>

For all those who treasure the Fern Dell area, FoGP received final grant approval under LA County’s “Measure W” for the \$300,000 Fern Dell Restoration and Stormwater Capture Project feasibility study. This study which would eventually lead to restoration of Fern Dell’s water flows and historic infrastructure is slated to begin soon.

2023 will be an important year for Griffith Park. FoGP’s dedicated board hopes your voice can be counted and be a part of it!

We hope you enjoy this year-end edition of the *Griffith Reporter*. Your feedback is always welcome.

Gerry Hans, President



Click the QR Code...  
go directly to website!

# Memories of Bernadette Soter



Photo: Jan Wesley / courtesy Chuck Soter

**“Bernadette leaves behind a legacy of activism in the Park. She inspired many members of Friends of Griffith Park who continue to carry on her vision.”**

~ Marian Dodge  
FoGP board member

Bernadette Soter, a long time champion for Griffith Park, passed away on October 4, 2022 after a 2 1/2 year battle with cancer. For many years, she had put her heart and soul into protecting Griffith Park.

Bernadette was active with the Greater Griffith Park Neighborhood Council (GGPNC) where she headed its Parks, Rivers, and Open Space Committee (PROS). She also served on the Master Plan Working Group made up of ordinary citizens who loved the park and who completely rewrote the master plan, after the Melendrez Master Plan had been rejected by the community. She aligned a small army of petitioners to gather more than 12,000 signatures for the Save the Park campaign which was instrumental in leading to historical

analysis to make Griffith Park – in its entirety – Historic-Cultural Monument #942 in 2009.

Over time, it became clear that Griffith Park needed a friends support group so Bernadette and others on the Working Group put their heads together and in 2010 created Friends of Griffith Park. Nowadays, the fruits of her labor can be seen everywhere in the Park, from the revitalization work done in Fern Dell, to the Anza Trail dedication by the National Park Service, and L.A. City’s acceptance of *A Vision for Griffith Park*, which embraces the Park as an “Urban Wilderness,” – all of it!

*Colleagues and friends have added comments regarding the impact Bernadette had on their lives and on the environmental movement... read on...*

"When asked why keeping a few more trees in Griffith Park mattered, the answer was often grounded in the reality that Bernadette Soter said it should matter. She matters and her legacy lives on in every tree, rock, swale and blade of grass that survives the bulldozer and development in and around Griffith Park. She matters because Bernadette was an exemplar of the best of community service and activism in a time when such exemplars are hard to identify. She matters because those who come after must know what courage, conviction, passion and compassion can bring to a cause.

My total knowledge of Bernadette is bookended by approximately 36 months of intense work when Bernadette and her beloved husband Chuck Soter, shepherded us all through the politics of keeping Griffith Park as much like an urban wilderness as possible. Bernadette and Chuck were among the first to recognize that Griffith Park was about to become something resembling a dumping ground for the development aspirations of politicians and money folks alike. The Soters went to work to keep that from happening.

Bernadette's considerable knowledge, coupled with her incredible energy and drive, made it impossible to say no. While she managed to produce the Master Plan for Griffith Park, it was never formally adopted, yet remains a sterling example of what a volunteer with courage, drive and transparency can do to help a community come to realize the best of itself."

– Valerie Vanaman  
FoGP Advisory Board

"Bernadette reminds me of Van Griffith's mother in her fierce defense of the Park. Bernadette is a force of Nature."

~Clare Darden  
Griffith Charitable Trust

"Bernadette was already lead defender of Griffith Park when I first became active with Park politics. She was not shy to stand up for the principle that the Park was for the 'plain people,' per its benefactor. She readily became my mentor, which continued into the formation of FoGP.

Her depth of knowledge of the Park's history and seeing change in front of her eyes stoked relentless energy and passion. It sometimes consumed her.

In those earlier times, projects were attempted in the Park, with little outreach. She led the charge, sometimes successfully. The year 2003 brought hope with the possibility of an enlightened Master Plan; yet the product shown to the public in 2005 was highly defective. Bernadette would serve on the Working Group to re-write the plan, playing a key role in its evolution which later became *A Vision for Griffith Park*.

The formation of the Greater Griffith Park Neighborhood Council (GGPNC) led to the Parks, River and Open Space Committee (PROS), which Bernadette chaired for several years. It was decided, a "Friends" group for all of Griffith Park was overdue! She was driven to create the non-profit as a founding board member.

I will always have the greatest respect for Bernadette, as she applied her talents and brilliance as an activist and a community leader. We all benefited from her work."

~Gerry Hans  
FoGP President

"I have such fond memories of Bernadette. In 2005, I started attending the PROS Committee meetings because I wanted to protect Griffith Park. I knew very little at the time about all the ins and outs of city politics and how the public can make a difference. She became my champion, encouraging me to run for neighborhood council and to get more involved. A few years later, I came to her with the idea of starting a group to help protect Griffith Park. With her leadership, Bernadette spearheaded Friends of Griffith Park. She was my inspiration."

~Laura Howe  
FoGP Board member

"Bernadette was a champion with great passion at bringing the community together for the greater good."

~Joe Salaires  
former GP Superintendent

memories continue ▶ ▶ ▶



Top: One of the many projects undertaken by Bernadette and others to insure the protection of Griffith Park – the Fern Dell Landscape Rehabilitation. This draft document, presented to Recreation and Parks in 2014 lays out restoration details for the entirety of the Fern Dell area, which was originally developed during the early 20th century.  
Center: FoGP's Sarah Napier joins Bernadette at the Los Feliz Beach Cleanup in 2007. This event took place just after the Griffith Park fire which burned nearly 1,000 acres.  
Bottom: Early community meeting included environmentalists from areas across the Los Angeles region. Photos: Kathryn Louyse



"I am deeply saddened to learn about Bernadette. She was so talented overall, and in so many particular ways. I love reading her story about Fern Dell—and sharing it with all the folks whom Marian and I have led through the ravine in reality and historically."

~Richard Stanley  
FoGP Advisory Board

"Bernadette wrote the excellent *The Light of Learning*, a rich illustrated history of the Los Angeles Public Library from 1872 through the 1986 fire and the renovations. She was an encouraging supporter of the Los Feliz Branch Library."

~Pearl Yonezawa  
Senior Librarian, Los Feliz Library

"Bernadette was a dedicated, passionate and forceful protector of Griffith Park. We enjoyed helping her save it...She had strong ideas that we respected. We wish we could have known her longer."

~Ron and Carol Brusha

"I worked with Bernadette on the Greater Griffith Park (now Los Feliz) Neighborhood Council. She was untiring in her efforts... She had a great repository of knowledge of the Park, and had friends who would turn out to assist with time, expertise and money... She made an enormous contribution to the Park and to the community at large..."

~Kenneth Owen  
former GGPNC Board member

"While we worked with other organizations and individuals to ensure the preservation of Griffith Park, Bernadette, Dora Herrera and I would occasionally roam through various parts of the Park and it was during these small treks that I understood how deep was Bernadette's depth of knowledge and desire to preserve the space. She was indeed a force to be reckoned with, and like others have said, the void left by her passing leaves a sadness that will not be easily filled."

~Kathryn Louyse  
FoGP Board member

## The Latest: Aerial Tram and L.A. Zoo Expansion ~Gerry Hans, FoGP President

The aerial tram proposal and the latest iteration of the L.A. Zoo expansion are topics that remain top on our watch list. FoGP took a large role in sounding the alarm for these developments inside the Park that will destroy habitat and disrupt wildlife.

There's the \$750,000 study for the aerial tram strung more than two miles across the most remote wildlands of Griffith Park. And, the LA Zoo's proposed expansion which demolishes undeveloped Park land that includes native trees and upends already struggling species.

Each proposal became broadly exposed to the public and even caught the scrutiny of the *Los Angeles Times*. Instead of being quintessential behind-closed-door projects, citizens were able to react powerfully with concern and opposition. And with continued apprehension because the door isn't completely shut on these projects.

**Here's a summary of where each proposed development stands as of now:**

**AERIAL TRAM** The study called the proposal an Aerial Transit System (ATS), "Transit" being a misnomer. Rather, it's simply a ride to the Hollywood Sign, nothing more. The project concept seemed to be fading away, just like every other proposed gondola sketched on paper for Griffith Park since the 1960s. That is, until March when the Mayor's Office unveiled the Los Angeles Tourism Master Plan.

Regrettably, the gondola is now marketed



as the second of four recommendations in the Plan's "Destination Development" chapter. This is especially disturbing with the 2028 Olympics coming. Adding insult, the flashy Master Plan names Friends of Griffith Park as a partner! What? FoGP protested, but city brass didn't care enough to apologize or respond to our letters pointing out the errata. Los Angeles citizenry, however, knows we aren't partners, and that's what's important.

Since any aerial tram would ultimately need approval by the RAP Commission, (which previously approved the \$750,000 study by Stantec), we recently asked for an update. The response from executive management: "I anticipate no near term movement on the Stantec report or on the concept in general." While this is music to our ears, often projects lay in wait. Stay tuned.

**ZOO EXPANSION** Following Titanic opposition to the original proposed Project as described in the Environmental Impact Report (EIR), the LA Zoo scaled back its

original proposal. In July, a revised EIR was recirculated which sets aside some of the most valuable habitat in question, but not all of it. Also, restoration of habitat in various areas of the Zoo was written into the new proposal which is labelled "Alternative 1.5."

The Zoo, however, continues to include the 18,000 sq. ft. California Visitor Center and the Condor Corridor with its massive excavation under the new Alternative 1.5. This means that 16 acres of scrub/chaparral

are vulnerable, such as City-protected trees, various special-status species, and at least one species which has Federal and State endangered status. In addition, the revised proposal promises no real improvement in the traffic concerns broadly expressed earlier by the public.

Alternative 1.5 re-opened a window for public comment, and again many voiced concerns about the expansion onto undeveloped habitat and the resultant traffic from a plan which still remains enormous. The cost is an estimated \$650 million for the first three, alone, of seven phases!

When it comes to Zoo improvements, many still believe that upgrading the existing developed footprint and enhancing the level of animal care should be the main focus. While FoGP supports the Zoo's conservation and education mission, its plans for modernization should not come at the expense of altering undeveloped Park land and disrupting wildlife. ♣



## Road Closures Now & Then

~Mary Button, FoGP Board member

Photo: Kathryn Louyse

### Have you experienced the sounds of silence?

Friends of Griffith Park fully supports the recent road closure on Griffith Park Drive, between Travel Town and the top of the hill near the Mt. Hollywood Drive gate. Instead of cars zooming by, now hikers, walkers and cyclists have reclaimed the road to experience a quieter and safer Griffith Park.

The idea for this closure had been around for years, but the impetus for expert guidance came when bicyclist Andrew Jelmert was killed by a motorist on Crystal Springs Drive as he neared the end of a 67-mile training ride on Saturday, April 16.

RAP had launched the Griffith Park Safety & Mobility Improvements Feasibility Study a few months before the accident. This study was spearheaded by CD4 Councilmember Nithya Raman, along with the Department of Recreation & Parks (RAP). They hired the well-respected traffic consultant, Kimley-Horn and Associates. Among the key issues, the study focused on cut-through traffic, vehicle speeding, and safety for pedestrians and cyclists. The initial study has proposed short-, medium-, and long-term improvements. On August 19, the two-thirds mile stretch of Griffith Park Drive was permanently closed to private vehicles with the vote by the Board of Recreation and Parks Commissioners. A trial closure period preceded the permanent closure.

Previously, about 2,000 vehicles traveled this segment of Griffith Park Drive per day. Many drivers were using the road as a freeway bypass to avoid traffic on Interstate 5 and 134 Freeways. One concern was that the closure might increase traffic on other routes within Griffith Park, but that didn't happen. The number of cars on Zoo Drive declined during the pilot project. Officials speculate drivers decided to stay on the freeway since they could no longer use Griffith Park Drive as a shortcut.

That's an important lesson: When park roads are prioritized for safety and enjoyment of park users, motorists looking for a speedy route will go elsewhere.

In addition to eliminating cut-through traffic, the study addresses

recommendations to lower driving speeds and enforcement of the 25 mph speed limit. Another goal of the project is to improve bike and pedestrian infrastructure with upgrades such as protected bike lanes and raised crosswalks. Many of Griffith Park's roads lack bike lanes, and some of those that exist are obstructed by parked cars or have faded over time, consultants noted.

For many years, FoGP has been concerned about the numerous wildlife – such as coyotes, deer, and yes, even snakes – that have been hit and killed along this road and others. The closure will allow wildlife better connectivity across their habitat – and will save lives.

Did you know that Griffith Park Drive is not the first Park road to be closed? Back in the 1930s, Depression-era work crews built two paved roads in the undeveloped interior of the Park: Mt. Hollywood Drive and Vista Del Valle Drive.

FoGP credits the late Councilmember Tom LaBonge for one of the finest gifts ever given to Griffith Park: the closure of these two long and winding roads. It was a young LaBonge who lobbied for it when he was field deputy for his predecessor, Councilmember John Ferraro. Due to LaBonge's efforts, both Mt. Hollywood Drive and Vista Del Valle were closed to public vehicles in 1992, a total distance of more than five miles.

FoGP President Gerry Hans recalls multiple reasons for the closure such as littering, smoking and lewd behavior. But the real benefit at the time: an unexpected transformation when these carless roads are embraced by hikers, bicyclists, runners and families pushing strollers.

Today, these closed roads are a mecca for passive recreation. Folks can now appreciate Griffith Park's natural, quiet surroundings, unmatched vistas, plentiful adjacent flora, and occasional glimpses of wildlife – all without worrying about cars bearing down on them. We hope for additional road closures especially in sensitive habitat areas of the Park while still providing ample accessibility. ♡

# Highlights of the Los Angeles Raptor Study 2022



Photo: Gerry Hans

~Original report by Dan Cooper, Courtney McCammon, and Nurit Katz

(Editor's note: Here we reprint some of the highlight results of our 2022 LA Raptor Study. To access the entire LA Raptor Study 2022, visit our website at [www.friendsofgriffithpark.org/raptor-study](http://www.friendsofgriffithpark.org/raptor-study).)

## BACKGROUND

Launched as the “Griffith Park Raptor Survey” in 2017, we renamed our effort the “Los Angeles Raptor Study” in 2021 to reflect the larger current study area now covering most of Los Angeles exclusive of the north and west San Fernando Valley, South Los Angeles, and the Harbor area. 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 in the past, 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.

In 2022, we continued monitoring within our 2021 study area (including Sepulveda

Basin, Baldwin Hills, and Glendale), and again increased the number of monitored territories for the sixth year of the Griffith Park Nesting Raptor Survey.

As in prior years, 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.

We again confirmed no active Western Screech-owl or Barn Owl nests, and while we confirmed a single Peregrine Falcon nest, we confirmed no nests of American Kestrel in 2022. As in 2021, these numbers (at least the diurnal species) more closely reflect actual numbers of active nests in the study than those in surveys prior to 2020 when our efforts reflected lower numbers.

## LOCATION

The Study Area originally centered on Griffith Park, was expanded in 2020 to include additional portions of the San Fernando Valley and coastal plain that were not covered in prior years. As of 2022, the Study Area extends to the 405 Freeway/Sepulveda Pass in the west (with an extension to include Sepulveda Basin), Sherman Way/Vanowen Blvd. in the north, Slauson Ave. in the south, and East Los

Angeles in the east. A handful of raptor nests just outside this area were monitored by volunteers (e.g., Encino, Pasadena, Calabasas), but we did not specifically search for nests in these areas.

## NEST USE, RE-USE AND SUCCESS

By 2022, our rate of finding new nests within the study area has slowed from 2020 and 2021, such that we added new nests in 2022 as follows: Red-tailed Hawk (6), Red-shouldered Hawk (4), Cooper's Hawk (26), and Great Horned Owl (7). These numbers don't include new (for 2022) territories where nests were suspected, or known territories where we had pairs (or even juveniles) in the past but only discovered physical nests in 2022. Looking at territories (some of which had nests, but not all), we located additional territories for 27 new Cooper's Hawk pairs, 13 for Great Horned Owl, 9 for Red-tailed Hawk, and 5 for Red-shouldered Hawk (not including species switches, such as an owl taking over a hawk nest). This may be contrasted with 2021, when we found 35 new Red-tail nests alone.

This year (2022), we re-analyzed our data from all six years of territory re-use and success for the three focal hawk species and for Great Horned Owl in order to present these results in a more consistent, quantitative manner. Importantly, our nest-searching effort increased greatly starting in 2020, so the years 2017-19 may be thought of as preliminary compared to the years 2020-22. In particular, we searched for and located few urban Cooper's Hawk nests in the San Fernando Valley or mid-City area prior to 2020, before we learned some of the tricks to finding them there.

We intend to analyze nest structure re-use in the future... as the multiple years of the study are presenting unexpected analytical challenges; for example, determining how to best consider a nest structure re-used, particularly if a pair skipped using it for a year or more, then returned to use it, re-built nests, and those built a few feet away in the same tree.

Looking at each species, we found that Red-tailed Hawks maintained fewer active territories in 2022 than the year prior, and 2022 saw the fewest fledged nests over the past three years, with several dozen pairs either absent from known territories, or abandoning nests midway through the season.

Cooper's Hawks also maintained fewer ter-

territories in 2022 than in the two prior years, and fledged fewer young than in 2021, but proportionately more of these 2022 nests fledged young than in prior years.

For Red-shouldered Hawk, 2022 saw more active territories, but roughly the same number of active nests fledged young, resulting in proportionately lower fledging rate per nest.

For Great Horned Owl, 29 active territories were monitored (the most since the start of the project), and as in prior years, many (28) were deemed to have fledged. However, most owl territories were identified by the presence of young; we did not attempt to search for owls during the study.

### NEST PRODUCTIVITY – FACTORING IN PRECIPITATION

Across all focal species, nest productivity peaked in 2020, but the differences between years was slight, and likely not statistically significant. Cooper’s Hawk consistently fledged the highest mean number of chicks per successful nest, with an average of 2.43 young from 2018-2022. Red-tailed Hawk had the next-highest rate (1.92), followed by Great Horned Owl (1.89), and

Red-shouldered Hawk (1.6).

There are many ways to measure nest productivity – one is the proportion of single-chick nests (nests where the maximum number of chicks was believed to be just one, versus all other nests where chicks were produced), which could indicate a shortage of food that year. Assuming that Red-tailed Hawks would be most sensitive to change in precipitation (since they take more native prey species from wildland areas than, say, Cooper’s Hawk, which are well-distributed in urban areas), we examined the relationship between precipitation the prior year, and the proportion of 1-chick nests in Red-tailed Hawk.

Evidently, the years following the driest winters (i.e., 2018, 2021 and 2022) all saw >20% of Red-tailed Hawk nests with single chicks (no such pattern was observed with Cooper’s Hawks), which conforms to recent findings looking at precipitation and Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) nests.

### FAILED NESTS

As in past years, it may be instructive to review why the few failed nests did so. We

summarize all Red-tailed Hawk nests believed to have failed, that were never initiated (within known territories), and that were apparently abandoned mid-season. Unlike last year, when three Red-tailed Hawk pairs had their...nest trees removed, only one Red-tailed Hawk nest tree had been trimmed prior to the start of the 2022 season.

We were also notified of the illegal trimming and removal of a long-standing Red-tailed Hawk nest in the Mt. Washington area shortly after fledging...and of another trimming incident involving an active Cooper’s Hawk nest in Los Feliz...

### RAPTOR MORTALITY, RESCUE, AND REHABILITATION

One of the leading causes of death for raptors in urban areas are collisions.

Interested in volunteering for the 2023 LA Raptor Study? We will need community scientists to help monitor nests. Watch for announcements about upcoming workshops. ♡

# Urban Raptors Surviving on the Streets: the Los Angeles Raptor Study

~Nurit Katz, Outreach Coordinator, Los Angeles Raptor Study

Over the six years of the Los Angeles Raptor Study, a community science supported by Friends of Griffith Park, more than 600 raptor nests have been found in locations that range from natural areas in open space to trees right next to the freeway. In our dense urban environment, raptors are finding ways to make their home in backyards, and even on buildings in busy downtown areas.



Injured juvenile Red-tailed Hawk rescued from crosswalk across 101 Fwy. Photo, courtesy Asa Shumskas-Tait

The study was first launched in 2017 as Griffith Park Raptor Survey and has expanded since then. More than 100 trained study volunteers monitor

these nests in the Spring, tracking whether they are successful and how many chicks they have. “This data-gathering is vital to biologists because it represents a specific,

comprehensive dataset of raptor habits over multiple years,” says Dan Cooper, the Study Director, who also serves as Senior Conservation Biologist for the Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains.

The life of our urban raptors in Los Angeles can be dangerous and difficult. Vehicle and building strikes, poisoning from rodenticides, disturbance from noisy construction

projects, tree trimming and illegal nest removal, even diseases carried by pigeons, are all threats our hawks and owls have to navi-

raptor survival story continues ▶ ▶ ▶

gate. On June 15, Courtney McCammon, Volunteer Coordinator for the Los Angeles Raptor Study, and Urban Ecologist for Recreation and Parks, got a call from Frances Tait, one of the Raptor Study volunteers. While walking her daughter to school, her husband Asa had found an injured juvenile Red-tailed hawk on a freeway overpass in Hollywood. Courtney was able to capture the hawk, and Outreach Coordinator Nurit Katz transported it to Ojai Raptor Center, a specialized rehabilitation center in Ojai. “We knew the bird would be in good hands, but we were very anxious for updates,” Tait explained to the *East-sider*, who covered the rescue.

The young hawk had suffered a right femoral fracture, bilateral coracosternal luxations (coracoid dislocated from the sternum) and mild right eye trauma, likely from a vehicle strike. Many rescued raptors do not survive because the injuries are too severe. In this case, with veterinary care and after weeks of rehabilitation, the young Red-tailed hawk was fully healed and able to be released. In mid-August volunteers and raptor study staff gathered and released the hawk in a park not far from its nest territory, one of the most urban nests in the study, located in a tree right at a freeway ramp, surrounded by rushing traffic. Some nests are found by the study staff who track flying hawks back to where the nests are located, but for many nests the study relies on community science data from *iNaturalist* and *ebird*, and tips from neighbors who have noticed the raptors or their nests and hear about the study via NextDoor or other social media outreach. Many residents in LA walk their neighbor-

hoods every day without realizing there is a hawk or owl raising its young right above their heads, but for those who do notice, they often get excited and even connect with the raptor family long term, watching their progression over the years. Hawks and owls often pair for life and will nest in the same territory year after year, and often in the same nest location. One neighbor fondly called his neighborhood Cooper’s Hawk Anderson, for Anderson Cooper. Study staff have heard all sorts of interesting stories from residents, from hawks bathing in pools and fountains and accidentally flying inside the house, to a young Cooper’s Hawk plucking a towel or playing with a pine cone as it practices hunting.

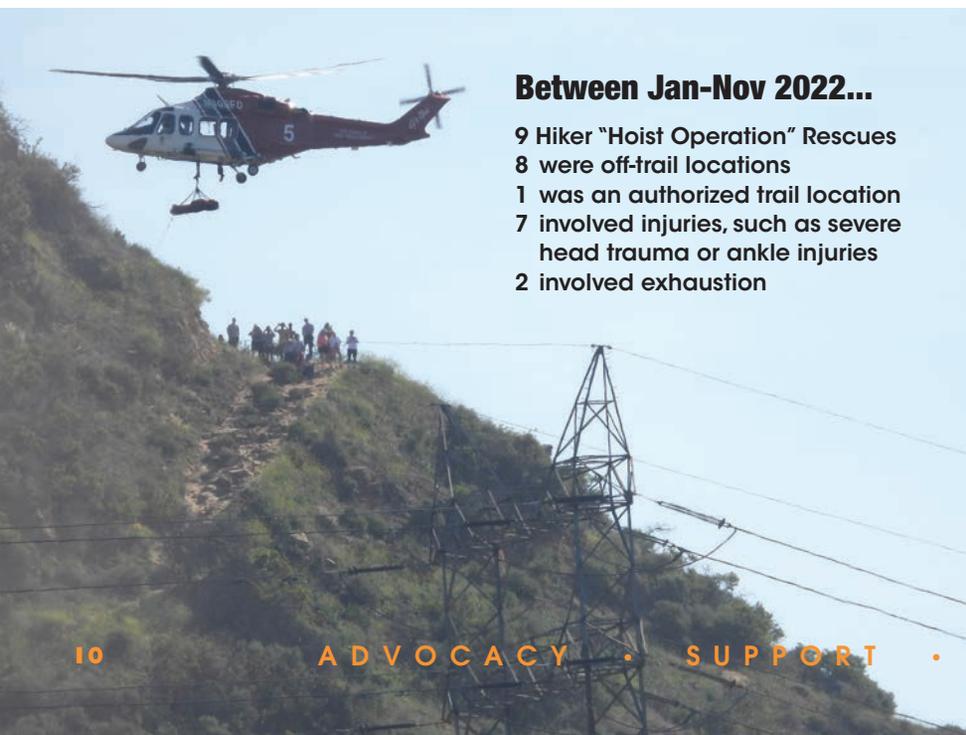
In July, the study Outreach Coordinator received frantic calls from multiple residents of a Mt. Washington neighborhood. The residents had observed a long standing pair of Red-tailed hawks nesting on the street for over 10 years, watching multiple generations of young hawks take flight, and considered the hawks part of their community. A tree trimmer had come in and heavily trimmed the nest tree during nesting season, which is illegal, and ended up removing the nest despite neighbors trying to stop them. The neighbors were distraught and the hawk family was clearly distressed. Raptor Study staff were able to report the violation to the CA Department of Fish and Wildlife, and educate residents about the Cal Tip hotline for future. If you ever see a violation in progress you can call 1-888-334-CALTIP (888-334-2258), 24 hours a day, seven days a week. To avoid these kinds of problems in the future, study staff also assisted in teaching a workshop for ar-

borists across California on Tree Care for Birds and Wildlife. Helpful resources can be found at [treecareforbirds.com](http://treecareforbirds.com).

Through the raptor study we continue to learn how these important indicator species are adapting to our urban environment. Continuing this work to better understand our urban ecology, and ensuring their survival, takes a village. Although human activity causes environmental harm, people can also work together to support raptors and other wildlife. Not trimming during nesting season, making sure not to use rodenticides, reporting illegal activity, taking care not to disturb nesting birds, and contacting a wildlife rehabilitator if you see injured wildlife, can all help these incredible birds have a better chance of survival. Educate your friends and neighbors and help build a community that is more supportive of raptors and biodiversity.

You can help the Raptor Study by reporting nests or frequent raptor activity in your neighborhood to [raptors@friendsofgriffithpark.org](mailto:raptors@friendsofgriffithpark.org) or to Outreach Coordinator Nurit Katz at 818-384-9493. You can also contact Nurit by text or call for assistance if you are unable to transport an injured raptor. If you would like to get more involved – volunteer for the 2023 season. You can fill out the application on the Los Angeles Raptor Study website. Volunteering requires attending a training workshop and then checking an assigned nest once every two weeks. ♡

**(This article originally appeared in the LA Audubon’s Sept/Oct 2022 *Western Tanager* publication.)**



### Between Jan-Nov 2022...

- 9 Hiker “Hoist Operation” Rescues
- 8 were off-trail locations
- 1 was an authorized trail location
- 7 involved injuries, such as severe head trauma or ankle injuries
- 2 involved exhaustion

## Rescue Operations Continue to Plague the Park

The number of rescue operations by Park Rangers and LAFD during 2022 illustrates the serious problem affecting Griffith Park.

As noted, nine rescues have required helicopter hoist operations, according to LAFD reports. Each hoist operation rescue includes up to a dozen ground personnel, and two (sometimes three) heavy LAFD helicopters, sometimes circling and hovering for more than an hour and the financial cost to the City is excessive.

The use of precious emergency resources expended for rescuing off-trail hikers can only be reversed by keeping hikers on safe, authorized trails. And hikers should always carry water for themselves and their furry friends, bring a hat and always wear proper shoes (no open-toed).

Photo: Gerry Hans

# Red-shouldered Hawk, R.I.P. ~Gerry Hans, FoGP President

During the L.A. Raptor Study 2022 nesting season, we were once again reminded that rat poisons (rodenticides) don't just kill rats; they are also effective killers of birds, especially hawks and owls which prey on rodents. It's ironic that people and pest control professionals still unintentionally kill Mother Nature's own best rodent exterminator. When will this stop?

A red-shouldered hawk pair (RSHA-561) was raising a family in a park-adjacent hillside neighborhood. They settled into their newly-built nest in a eucalyptus tree very close to the tree where they had nested the previous year. Two chicks hatched in mid-May, and the parents worked together to bring them food and watch over them. Parent hawks share nest-sitting and hunting duties, more or less, without gender bias.

Sadly, I was called by a resident whose gardener had just found a hawk dead in the backyard. I identified it as a red-shouldered. Knowing a nest was just two blocks away, I surmised it was the father of the nearby chicks. I collected the carcass and arranged transport for lab testing.

I wondered whether two chicks can survive with only one parent since our Raptor Team's own field experience and scientific literature suggested a single parent is usually only able to raise only one chick on its own. After two weeks of close observation, with help from a capable volunteer, this again proved to be the case. The more dominant chick continued to thrive and fledged three weeks after its father died.

UC Davis Veterinary Medicine Laboratory (San Bernardino) is where FoGP transports carcasses for testing. During the 2021 Raptor Study, a juvenile great-



Upper photo shows two chicks, with only one chick surviving (lower photo) with only one parent to provide for them. Photos: Gerry Hans

horned owl was confirmed dead as a result of anticoagulant poisoning. This time, the red-shouldered hawk lab results showed three different anticoagulant agents in liver tissue, two of which were the potent, second generation type. Although coagulation was not detected in the necropsy to prove cause of death, it is highly likely the anticoagulants sickened the colorful male hawk.

This leads us to once again go over the basics of eliminating rodent problems, while protecting birds and other wildlife from succumbing to rodenticides. In fact, our website contains nearly twenty articles regarding rodenticide data, dating

back to 2012 which is accessible if you use the "search" feature in the menu.

**Primary Rodent Control**  
*Fundamental to rodent control is discouraging their presence by removing sources of food, water and shelter:*

- Don't leave pet food and water outdoors.
- Seal all gaps around air vents, sub-areas, attics and other small openings.
- Remove ivy as it provides shelter and food for rodents, and creates "rat ladders" to homes.
- Keep compost piles far away from structures; keep yard and garden trimmed.
- Bird feeders need squirrel guards; don't let seeds accumulate on the ground.
- It's also important to clean up trash that could be providing shelter for rodents.

**Secondary Rodent Control – Traps, Old and New**  
*Only when it becomes necessary, the best secondary method to control rodents is by using traps:*

- The best trap is the cheap, old-fashioned, wood-based "snap trap," which kill instantly and are less cruel than a slow death from rodenticides.

Read online for tips.

- A new type of trap that seems to work well is the electronic trap, also causing quick death at a high voltage. These aren't cheap, shop online at \$30-50.
- Don't use glue or live traps.

**When in Doubt, call a Professional**

If these hands-on pest control methods do not appeal to you, by all means call a professional. Be sure to stipulate that the method of eradication used does not involve anticoagulant rodenticides and is otherwise safe for pets, children, wildlife and the environment. ♣

Use of rodenticides has greatly impacted wildlife as well as the health of our pets over the years, and we continue to see the long-term effects. FoGP has published numerous articles which are available on our website. If you're interested in obtaining more information, go to [www.friendsofgriffithpark.org](http://www.friendsofgriffithpark.org) and search for "rodenticides."

# F

riends of Griffith Park formally proposed the Bee Rock Trail Project to the Department of Recreation and Parks in March, 2022. Improving trail conditions has not been high priority in recent decades, except for wide fire roads where emergency vehicles must be accommodated. In late July, FoGP's plan was approved. Work quickly began during the first week in August.

As planned, FoGP garnered the trail restoration expertise of John Reyes and Ross Arnold to lead the project. Reyes has more than a decade of experience and credentials. He's done trail work with the Channel Islands National Park, The Nature Conservancy, and Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. Ross Arnold, FoGP's Volunteer Coordinator, has led trail crews across the country with "Trail Boss Level" certification at the highest level with the Boys Scouts and National Forest Service. He's worked on trails at Mt. Shasta, New River Gorges (West Virginia), and our local Angeles National Forest.

Equipment was purchased, including McClouds, mattocks, and Pulaskis, special trail tools that RAP does not own. While the planning phase was tedious, when the work started, it was at a gangbuster pace, even though it was during the very hot summer months!

Reyes is credited for bringing his small trail crew and executing most of the work. By November, the project logged 350 volunteer hours, remediating more than 500 yards of trail. At the time of publication, the final stage will include sandbagging several erosion areas, and placing new signage to encourage hikers to use the restored trail, and not take the one of the many "ghost trails" created over the decades.

# Bee Rock Trail

-Gerry Hans, FoGP President



# Trail Renewed



“The Bee Rock Trail Restoration has been a wonderful project, and the transformation of the trail has been greeted with genuine praise and gratitude from avid and casual hikers alike,” says Reyes.

“The Bee Rock Trail Restoration has been a wonderful project, and the transformation of the trail has been greeted with genuine praise and gratitude from avid and casual hikers alike,” says Reyes. “Requiring a skill level that is not readily available in an average volunteer pool, this special project, highlighted by a geological allure, has had many hurdles, but nonetheless, has been an opportunity to help bridge the gap between RAP and FoGP in relation to project confidence and reliability.”

Reyes sums up: “Our team is honored to be contributors of this opportunity and we look forward to its progression and preservation.”

Skilled in swinging a Pulaski, Arnold organized a special team of volunteers to hand-carry and place sand material along the trail. Both team leaders advocated for the use of natural materials as remedies for steepness, such as moving rocks into position to serve as steps. They are pros in using natural materials for erosion control and barriers, too, which RAP staff much prefers.

FoGP hopes this serves as a template for future trail restoration on other trails in the Park. By better defining and making the legitimate trails safe, there will be less habitat damage by people taking “ghost trails.” In recent years, many areas of the Park are witnessing higher levels of destruction from these unsanctioned trails. It is a threat that RAP can no longer disregard. Here’s a selection of photos that highlight the hard work of trail restoration. ♣

Photo, top: the Pulaski used along the trail combines an axe bit with an adze-shaped grub hoe. This tool was very important to the restoration as it’s effective in root-bound or hard soil. The trail erosion can clearly be seen in the photo. While volunteers have made great strides in this project, the effort is still ongoing.

Bottom, left: prior to restoration, portions of the trail were badly eroded, unstable and dangerous for trail runners and hikers.







◀ ◀ ◀ PREVIOUS PAGE PHOTO

I don't consider myself a good photographer. A friend and former art studio owner wanted one of my wildflower photos, but told me I "break all the rules." Spending a lot of time in Griffith Park, I'm drawn to those ephemeral subjects. Timing is everything. The pink blossoms of chaparral currant on the day of its best showing, California toads spawning in a pool of water, or Southern California black walnut in full fall yellow color. This photo caught mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus betuloides*) freshly tasseling in the warm summer sun. The large seeds are at the base of the tassel, also known as a plume. When the time is right, the plume allows the wind to carry the seed a further distance for planting itself. Mother Nature is very artistic in her designs. ~GERRY HANS



GARY REGISTER

Photography takes our 3D visual experience and flattens it into a wall. Every square molecule is precious and had better tell clearly tell the viewer the larger story. If not, re-compose and/or eliminate any detractors. AND separate the subject from background by focus, texture, color. dark/light Make it clear what you are trying to achieve. Your list – shadows/darkness/light, depth of field, composition, intimacy – is more important than the camera and the lens.



KAT HALSEY

I am enamored with coyotes, and while this may not be the most stunning photograph, it's always been one of my favorites. After a night of rain, this coyote stood motionless, eyes closed, under the warmth of the morning sun. I was on my way to work and caught this fleeting moment. It was a quick spontaneous snap, but sometimes an opportunity arises to capture more than just an image, and when I see this photograph I can almost feel the sun gently hitting his wet fur.



BRENDA REES

When I'm out in nature, I look for movement. The shake of a leaf, a limb bouncing, a slight fluttering of wings. I found this painted lady enjoying a moment in a shaft of warm sunlight off the Oak Canyon Trail. Had it been recently hatched? It allowed my camera to capture its image before it took off, zig-zagging to the sky. What we see of the Park's tiny creatures is probably only a small percentage of what lives under fallen leaves, under the soil and in the cracks of trees. Griffith Park is more than just what we see; I keep training my eyes to see under the next layer.



KATHRYN LOUYSE

One evening after a huge rainstorm had drenched Griffith Park, I dashed over to grab a couple of images before all the water vanished. The area between Crystal Springs Picnic Area and the golf course presents the perfect setting, especially as the sun begins to drop behind the hillsides. I had been photographing the golf course and turning around, I spotted this black-crowned night heron softly stepping through puddles, looking for insects. Since I was standing next to my car, I quietly started taking photos. S/he was completely focused on the hunt, so I was able to shoot a number of images before the sun finally set.

# The Joyous Return of P-22 Day in Griffith Park

~Brenda Rees, FoGP Board member

Donning the P-22 costume on P-22 Day was a remarkable experience for me for many reasons, but the outstanding confirmations were that: People Love to be Photographed and People Love P-22! I lost count of the times I was asked to pose with families, children and adults. My favorite moment was posing with a giant snake from a booth featuring local reptiles!

The number of attendees to the event was spectacular. From the moment hikers arrived with Beth Pratt from the National Wildlife Federation, who organized the event, to the musicians and dancers on stage celebrating urban wildlife, P-22 Day 2022 was a joyous morning and afternoon in the Park. I even got on stage to dance as P-22 which is a memory I'll never forget!

Wandering among the booths, I was also impressed with the depth of participating organizations – from California Condors, Free and Wild to the Ojai Raptor Center and numerous others – each sharing resources and information about co-existing with local wildlife. Again, here was validation that Southern California has an amazing diversity of plant and animal life because of our variety of habitats from seashores to deserts, from alpine forests to wild open chaparrals.

Griffith Park is part of that distinct kaleidoscope of Los Angeles habitat and wildlife where each plant and animal – like P-22 – plays an important role. P-22 Day is a good reminder to everyone that we all are a part of something bigger, and that our combined efforts make a difference.



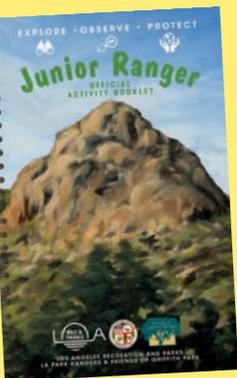
**There's more to come in 2023...**

**In the meantime, check out our website for more photos of P-22 Day!**

## FoGP Helps Create RAP's Junior Ranger Booklet

This summer, the creative team at Friends of Griffith Park assisted LA Recreation and Parks (RAP) and Park Rangers in developing and designing a new booklet that will introduce kids to the wonders of the outdoor world. Spearheaded by Park Ecologist Courtney McCammon, this new RAP Junior Ranger booklet is filled with information, games and original illustrations by local artist and FoGP member Andrew Birch.

The 28-page booklet features pages devoted to identifying local plants, birds, wildlife and more. Readers will learn about Leave No Trace and the Food Web along with pages to interview a Park Ranger, draw a favorite tree and other fun activities.



The Junior Ranger booklet will be available at the Griffith Park Visitor Center and other locations. Park Rangers leading tours from visiting school groups will also hand out the booklet.



**Griffith Family Trust members Mike Eberts and Clare Darden extend a warm welcome to the new Park Ranger Quarter horse "Archie" at P-22 Day**



## Urban Woodpecker Granaries in Griffith Park ~Jorge Ochoa, LBCC

Griffith Park serves as home to a large number of native plants and animals. Over thousands of years, the animals and plants have established mutualistic relationships in which they help each other and where both benefit.

One such relationship includes the Coast Live Oak, found throughout the canyons of the Park, and woodpeckers. Oaks produce thousands of seed known as acorns every year. Acorns drop to the ground when they reach maturity and are ready to germinate. Acorns that remain under the canopy and shade of the parent tree will have very little chance of surviving.

The oak tree wants to disperse its acorns as far as possible to give young seedlings an opportunity to find an open space for germinating and growing into a mighty oak. To disperse its seeds, oak trees hire woodpeckers.

Each acorn is loaded with carbohydrates – a perfect meal for a hungry woodpecker. Woodpeckers will eat many acorns on the spot but when they’ve had their fill, they will carry many of the acorns away from the tree and store them for eating later through the fall, winter and spring seasons.

Woodpeckers store acorns in a granary which they typically make out of dead trees. When not harvesting and storing acorns, woodpeckers spend many hours tending their stored acorns and protecting it from thieving animals.

But not all acorns stay in the granary. Untended acorns often fall from its storage gallery, dropping to the ground, thereby giving seedlings inside the acorn opportunities to survive and germinate. Stolen acorns are also dropped by larcenous animals during a possible squabble with



The mighty Acorn woodpecker has quickly adapted to the human-created landscape, utilizing metal sign poles for storage of acorns in the same fashion as they would utilize fallen trees. All photos: courtesy of Jorge Ochoa except as indicated.



Photo: Kathryn Louyse

the protective woodpecker.

From the thousands of acorns that are produced by oak trees in Griffith Park each year, a very large number of them will end up in the stomach of a hungry animal and a very small amount will be lucky to survive to germinate and grow into a tree. In the mutualistic relationship between the oaks and the woodpeckers, the trees benefit from seed dispersal and the animal benefits with a nutritious meal.

What could happen when people interfere with this plant and animal relations?

What happens when for the safety of the public, large dead trees are removed from the Park and the woodpeckers are left with no trees to build their granaries?

The answer is as amazing as the wildlife that calls Griffith Park their home. Wildlife has adapted, reimagined and figured out how to take advantage and use the few resources that people have left for them. For example, woodpeckers are now using human-created traffic sign posts as granaries. Almost all the traffic signs along Vermont Ave are now granaries for woodpeckers and are being filled with acorns.

Wildlife in an urban environment must adapt in order to survive and the modern-thinking woodpeckers of Griffith Park have abandoned the wooden granary and replaced them with steel cages which offer better protection for their valuable food. But what of dispersing oak seeds for future generations?

It took people just a few years to break the oak tree-woodpecker relationship that was in place for thousands of years. The consequences of the human these actions toward the wildlife in Griffith Park will be seen many years from now. ♣



Rendering, courtesy National Wildlife Federation

## Watch the Wildlife Bridge Being Built

Follow the progress of the construction for the Wallis Annenberg Wildlife Crossing virtually by tuning into their new live camera feed. You can watch in real time how the 101 freeway near Liberty Canyon in Agoura Hills will be transformed into the country's largest wildlife bridge. <https://app.oxblue.com/open/NWF/WallisAnnenberg-WildlifeCrossing>

With a ceremonial groundbreaking on Earth Day 2022, the bridge will connect two open spaces and allow animals to cross safely while providing more opportunities to mix up the gene pool. It's estimated to be completed in 2025.

FoGP is excited that our local wildlife will have more range to roam and a safer passage to do so. We are tired of seeing mountain lions being struck and killed by cars on the freeway. This crossing will save lives and help create vibrant and biodiverse habitats in our local mountain ranges.



Wade Thoma takes on invasive castor bean plants

## Weed Warriors Tackle Griffith Park

A vigilant volunteer group shows Griffith Park its love every week by arriving in the early mornings to whack, dig, chop and uproot some of the Park's most notorious invasive weeds.

This informal group – with many FoGP members participating – focuses their attention on removing castor bean, tobacco plant and black mustard. Volunteers often have to remove seeds – which are noxious – to make sure they don't make their way into composting facilities.

Currently, plans are underway for restoring some areas that are now clean of invasives. The group is working with Park Ecologist Courtney McCammon on bringing the appropriate native plants back to these parklands that have been choked with weeds for so long.

If you're interested in joining this or other volunteer efforts, go to [www.friendsofgriffithpark.org/volunteer/](http://www.friendsofgriffithpark.org/volunteer/)

# FoGP scholarship 2022 recipients; fostering the next generation of environment stewards

~Brenda Rees, FoGP Board member



FoGP scholarship recipient, Emily Reyna

Over the summer, Friends of Griffith Park announced the recipients of our annual scholarship program which supports students of color who attend the North Hollywood High School Zoo Magnet Center, (known as the Zoo Magnet) located inside Griffith Park. At the school's end of school award ceremony, FoGP board members Miguel Ordanana and Anna Josenhans shook hands with our 2022 scholarship recipients: Jennifer Aliaga, Madison Carranza and Emily Reyna.

The scholarship was established in 2021 and is awarded to students who demonstrate academic excellence and a desire to become environmental stewards. The money can be used to pay for various higher education financial expenses.

Aliaga and Carranza are currently enrolled at Cal Poly Pomona while Reyna is at UCLA.

Reyna recently shared her current professional goals as well as her passion for protecting and preserving the natural diversity.

Pursuing a degree in biology with maybe a minor in Education, Reyna is a first-generation Latina college student who grew up in a low-income household with her single mom and grandmother in North Hollywood.

In middle school, Reyna recalls wanting to be a veterinarian. Once in high school, she took advantage of opportunities to interact with animals at the nearby L.A. Zoo in addition to leadership programs through Upward Bound and the zoo.

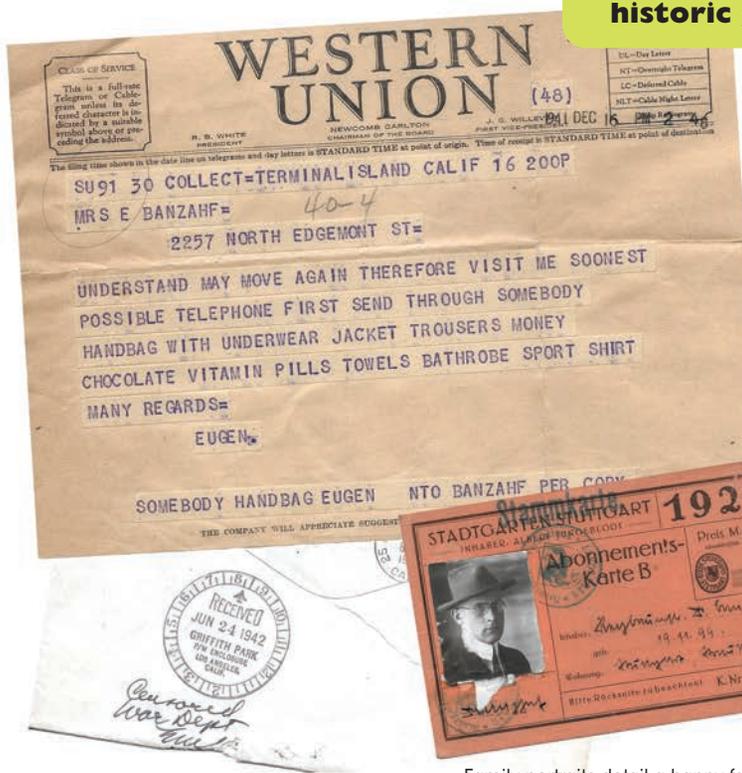
"I was a part of the Los Angeles Zoo Student Volunteer program during my sophomore year," she says. "This program helped me further develop my interest in biology and education because I was able to tell zoo patrons about the wonderful wildlife in Griffith Park and the many conservation projects the zoo is a part of."

While she was engaged in schoolwork and with extra-curricular activities like interacting with wallabies at the zoo, Reyna tutored kids in the Latino neighborhood, a self-directed community service she had been doing for years. "Education is my passion," explains Reyna about helping local kids with their English and understanding their homework assignments. She still has dreams of attending veterinarian school and sees biology as "a good foundation."

Reyna has fond memories of being in Griffith Park as a kid, going to the pony rides and meeting cousins at playgrounds. "I've always enjoyed being in nature and for me, Griffith Park was a safe place," she says. "It's familiar and every time I go, I see new things – wildlife, coyotes, deer and more." ❀

*The FoGP Scholarship application process will be open the first week in January; deadline to apply will be the first week in May. All applicants will be given honorary membership to FoGP.*

*Visit our website [friendsofgriffithpark.org](http://friendsofgriffithpark.org) for more information about the program and how to apply.*



STATEMENT OF INVENTORY

NAME: BANZHAF, EUGENE (NONE) ISN: 20-4-6-31-01 SEX: MALE NATIONALITY: GERMAN

PORT OF EMBARCATION: GRIFFITH PK. INTERNMENT CAMP

DATE: JULY 4/42

PERSONAL PROPERTY	Amount	Value	Country of Origin	Personal Effects	Personal Property
1 POCKET KNIFE					
35 CIGARETTES WITH CIGARETTE PIPETS					
1 DIARY					
1 WALLET WITH WATCH					
1 WALLET w/COINMENTS	\$197.00		CASH - U.S.A.		
1 ENVELOPE w/PICTURES	\$30.00		MONEY OR PAPER		
	\$167.00				



Family portraits detail a happy family before WWII. During the war, Eugene was interred in various camps across the country. Opposite page: June Aochi shares stories and photos with Linda Barth.

# The Many Roles of Travel Town: Griffith Park Internment Camp

~Marian Dodge, FoGP Board member

**L**ike a good character actor, Travel Town has played many different roles throughout its existence in Griffith Park. And like any good character actor, it is sometimes tapped to play the good guy and sometimes the bad guy, but in every play or film, its role is critical to the success of the project.

You are all familiar with today's Travel Town. Located in the northwest section of Griffith Park, it's full of historic trains. It's where you take your kids for birthday parties and to ride the train that runs around its perimeter.

Travel Town did not always have such a joyful role.

One of its earliest roles was that of a Prison Farm. From 1917 to 1920, the Los Angeles Police Department operated the camp as a progressive experiment to reduce recidivism. Boys who had fallen out with the law were given training and worked jobs that would give them skills to get a job when they were released and hopefully stay out of trouble. They grew alfalfa to feed the Fire Department horses, but soon horses were being replaced by trucks with engines so there was little need for alfalfa.

During the Depression the barracks from the Prison Farm were used to house men in President Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). There were two camps in this area. One was at Travel Town. The other one, located where LA Live Steamers is now, was washed out when the LA River flooded in 1938. The camps could house 500 to 700 men.

The men who worked in the CCC and Work Progress Administration (WPA) programs were responsible for much of the Park infrastructure that you see today. They built miles of trails and roads. A statue "Spirit of the CCC" in Travel Town honors these men.

The federal government had a variety of facilities in the area from 1939 to 1947. The Army Corps of Engineers built a Hydraulic Model Yard on 15 acres where LA Live Steamers is now located. Not part of the war effort, it was to study the flow of water in the LA River in order to design flood control measures.

Tucked in south of the old CCC camp and the Hydraulic Model up against the hill was the 19-acre Camouflage Experimental Laboratory and Yard. The nearby Photo Experimentation Laboratory produced a few Army training films.

Then came World War II and Travel Town took a more sinister role. Even before Pearl Harbor, the FBI had been monitoring certain Japanese that they thought might have seditious leanings – Buddhist priests, Shinto priests, judo teachers, Japanese language teachers.

After Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt issued Presidential Proclamation 2525 authorizing the arrest and imprisonment of immigrant Japanese considered threats to national security. Some of these individuals were confined in the Griffith Park Internment Camp, which made use of the former CCC camp and its facilities.

The Japanese were not the only ones targeted. Presidential Proclamation 2526 addressed German enemy aliens and Presidential Proclamation 2527 addressed Italian enemy aliens.

## One Los Angeles family's ordeal

Eugen Banzhaf came to America in 1927 as a sales representative for Stahl Union, a large German steel company. He had a Ph.D. in political science and a degree in civil engineering. He brought his lovely bride Emmy to the US in 1929. Later he became an independent sales agent for Stahl Union in Los Angeles.

Eugen dealt primarily with sheet piling used in harbor walls in New York, Seattle, San Francisco and Los Angeles. Their daughter Sigrid was born in 1937 in Los Feliz. Her parents had applied for US citizenship. During his business trips back to Germany, Eugen had noticed the shocking changes that had taken place. They were reluctant to visit Germany, but grandma really wanted to see her new granddaughter.

War in Europe broke out in 1939 while the Banzhafs were in Germany. Eugen was able to finagle passage to New York on an Italian ship. The liner was packed with refugees frantically fleeing Nazi policies – artists, intellectuals, Jews, homosexuals and businessmen.

As soon as the ship entered international waters, the French boarded the ship and removed all German men, including Eugen, and sent them to a concentration camp in North Africa. German women and children were sent back to Germany. Sigrid saved her mother; Emmy was the sole caregiver of a two-year-old American citizen so she was allowed to stay on the ship.

Upon her return, Emmy immediately contacted a friend who reached out to Senator Alben W. Barkley. Through diplomatic channels Barkley was able to negotiate Eugen's release a year later.

The family's joy was not to last. On December 7, 1941 FBI agents arrested Eugen under PP 2526 at his home on N. Edgemont Street. Since steel was a valuable war materiel, he was considered a risk. Eugen was sent first to Terminal Island Federal Prison and later transferred to Tuna Canyon, another former CCC camp, then to the camp at Griffith Park and finally to Stringtown, Oklahoma. His business assets were confiscated and never returned; his personal assets were also confiscated and held in custody by the government.

Emmy was forced to move to an apartment on Vermont Ave. She was unable to get a job because no one would hire a German woman whom they feared might be a saboteur. She was often spat upon on public transportation so Emmy spoke infrequently to hide her German accent.

Eugen was paroled two years later, but the damage had been done. The stress of the entire experience sent Emmy to the hospital a couple of times. With time, Eugen started a new business, and the family was able to return to Los Feliz where Eugen and Emmy lived until their deaths.

The Banzhaf family never discussed their father's internment. As a grandmother, Sigrid realized that although most Americans were aware of the internment of Japanese Americans en masse, few were aware of the internment of individual Germans and Italians. She wrote the script for a short film, "Black & White" directed by her son Frederick E. O. Toye. The film highlights the effects of the war years on the children and grandchildren of internees.

In July 1943, the Griffith Park Internment Camp was briefly repurposed as a prisoner of war processing station, but because it was used so little, the station was abandoned after less than a month.

### Uncovering another family history

Russell Endo, a retired professor of Asian American studies and sociology at the University of Colorado, has been researching the wartime arrest and imprisonment of enemy aliens in Southern California. Some of his work focuses on Griffith Park and on the Tuna Canyon Detention Station in Tujunga, where his grandfather, Heigoro, was held.

Most of the internees at Griffith Park, including Eugen Banzhaf, were transferred from Tuna Canyon. Professor Endo created a 30-

minute video for Tadaima, an annual virtual multi-week program about the wartime experiences of Japanese Americans. His video describes what happened to enemy aliens, using as an example the Japanese communities in Santa Barbara County and the Tuna Canyon detention camp:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5OPqph6dljY>

One of the things conveyed in Professor Endo's video is the distinction between what happened to enemy aliens and another wartime tragedy with similar characteristics: the later mass incarceration of West Coast Japanese Americans, including American citizens, authorized by President Franklin Roosevelt under Executive Order 9066.

### Here is one family's story, recounted from memories by someone who lived through the upheaval.

Ten-year-old June Aochi was living with her parents near Hoover St. and Temple St. when the war broke out. Born here, she was a U.S. citizen. Her father, Chujiro Frank Aochi, who came to America in 1899, had a gardening business. Her mother Kei laundered

costumes for the Drunkard Theatre in Hollywood. Neither parent was a citizen.

When June's entire family was rounded up, they were sent to the detention center at the Santa Anita race track where they were housed in stables. Internees there were making camouflage cloth. A fire broke out in the fabric and June remembers everyone running to escape the flames. (We hope the Camouflage Lab in Griffith Park was developing nonflammable

fabric!)

Later June's family was transferred to Camp Rohwer in Arkansas, since there was great fear about having Japanese living close to the Pacific Coast. Her parents put smiles on their faces and said, "We're going on a train ride. Won't that be fun?!" They did their best to shield their children from the horror of what was happening to the Japanese.

June's 16-year-old brother Yas was a "train car monitor" on the Zephyr train. He was allowed to get off at stations and would buy candy and snacks for the other detainees.

They ate delicious food in the fancy new Zephyr dining car. In the evening, Yas hung out in the rear of the train with the porters and cooks – all Blacks. They would move furniture out of the way, bring out musical instruments and play music and dance.

Internees were advised to wear brown boots in camp. June didn't want ugly brown boots; she wanted white majorette boots! When she got to Rohwer, she met Takayo Fischer, also 10 years old, who had asked her mother for a baton. With a book she ordered from Sears Roebuck, Takayo taught herself and June baton twirling. Majorettes were very popular in the camps; June thinks it was a good way to keep girls occupied.

Takayo later went to Hollywood where she played numerous small parts in films such as *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End* with Johnny Depp. The two women are best friends to this day.

There was a small upside to the camps. In Los Angeles, June spent



Travel Town continues ▶▶▶

▶ ▶ ▶ Travel Town continued

her Saturdays at Japanese language school. In the camps, it was forbidden to teach Japanese so kids had their Saturdays free to play. Although she loved the free time, she now regrets that she did not learn Japanese.

As the war was coming to an end, some internees were able to leave the camps with \$25 and a train ticket if they had a sponsor. But they couldn't return to their homes on the coast because the government still feared Japanese living on the coast.

American Quakers sponsored June's sister Kay to go to a beauty school in Michigan. Another Quaker family sponsored Yas to work at a paper factory in Chicago. He had to stand on the train all the way from Arkansas to Chicago because all the "white" seats on the train were full. Ironically, Yas was not allowed to sit in the rear car, which had plenty of empty seats, because it was the segregated car for Blacks.

After the war, the Aochi family went to Denver where father Chujiro and Yas had a Japanese confectionary store. With the Civil Rights Act of 1953, Japanese were finally able to become citizens. The entire family got their citizenship papers in Denver and returned home to Los Angeles more than 10 years after being forced to leave.

Today, June is active in the Japanese American National Museum in Little Tokyo where she is a docent. Duncan Williams, USC Professor of Japanese Religion and Culture, has created a giant book that lists the names of 125,284 Japanese who were incarcerated in 75 sites during World War II. The book is the Ireicho or "record of consoling ancestors." June speaks to young people to share her experiences in the camp.

Both June and Sigrid hope that by sharing their stories, people will recognize the injustice of incarcerating people solely on the basis of their nationality.

**Getting on track**

After World War II, Griffith Park resumed and expanded its role as one of the country's greatest city parks.

The Griffith Park and Southern Railroad at the Riverside Drive entrance to the Park was created for children. The area changed its barracks and POW costume and got ready for its next role as Travel Town, an outdoor railroad museum in 1952.

Next door, model railroad enthusiasts developed LA Live Steamers in 1956. Both facilities have been delighting children ever since. Griffith Park was once again able to star as a place for the people to escape from urban cares. ♣

More photos are available on our website.

# My Griffith Park Memory

~Carol Brusha, FoGP Board member

In the 1980s, I had a wonderful, magical, exciting job at UCLA (yes, excessive exaggeration yet it was all that) but it was also stressful and exhausting. I lived in Burbank so there was that commute. I'd come home after work, hungry and tired, to dissolve onto my sofa to eat and watch TV.

I was aware there were Sierra Club sanctioned night hikes in Griffith Park but I was not interested until one day I tried one and soon became addicted. Nighttime became my favorite time to hike. It was an invigorating stress reliever.

I started in the spring during daylight savings time; there was light for a good hour or more during the ascent but on the return, as the sun set, darkness descended. I learned how to navigate the terrain without a flashlight because they were then prohibited to avoid night blindness, especially to those hiking behind the bobbing lights.

My eyes were ready for late fall/winter hiking when everyone walked off into darkness from a lighted parking lot to go into the hills. It only took a minute for my eyes to acclimate.

The hikes were led by certified leaders who had passed the Leadership Training Course. Since I'd been hiking in the Park for years, I thought I knew every trail but some leaders showed me wonderful new areas to traverse.



My favorite nights were when there was a cloud cover that allowed more reflected light on the trails. What thrilled me the most was to end up at Mt. Hollywood and look down into the gleaming lights of the city. I would feel so lucky to be looking at perhaps millions of people who did not know there were a few people staring down at them. (Well at least one, me.)

There were several major perks to my night hiking: I started out not knowing anyone but soon I had friends and some of them are now life-long buddies and one became my husband 39 years ago. Ron and I also became leaders, leading strenuous hikes for several years.

Oh, I also lost unneeded weight!

All this occurred in the 1980s and well into the 2000's. When Ron retired and I was no longer working full-time, we did not have to adhere to starting a hike at 7 p.m. We began going earlier first by ourselves, but then some of our night friends joined in, so we were group hiking just like before.

When I started night hiking in Griffith Park, I did not expect this would lead to a new life with a wonderful partner. As I write this, I am looking back at some wonderful memories. ♣

*Editor's note: To experience Griffith Park at night, please join a sanctioned group, such as the Sierra Club Los Angeles. Remember, Griffith Park closes at 10:30 pm.*

## We all have a favorite hiking spot in Griffith Park, so where's yours?

*If you're interested in sharing your story, please reach out to [Brenda@friendsofgriffithpark.org](mailto:Brenda@friendsofgriffithpark.org)*

# You Have Questions? We Have Answers

Here's some typical questions that folks have asked FoGP about Park rules, visiting the Park and upcoming FoGP activities. Do you have a question about the Park? Let us know! Send your questions to: [Brenda@friendsofgriffithpark.org](mailto:Brenda@friendsofgriffithpark.org)

**Q: I filled out the Raptor Study Volunteer Application online. When will I hear if I am accepted?**

**A:** You will hear from the Raptor Team in January. By then, we will have the February training date decided. Raptor nesting season kicks in around then! Nests will be assigned immediately following training.

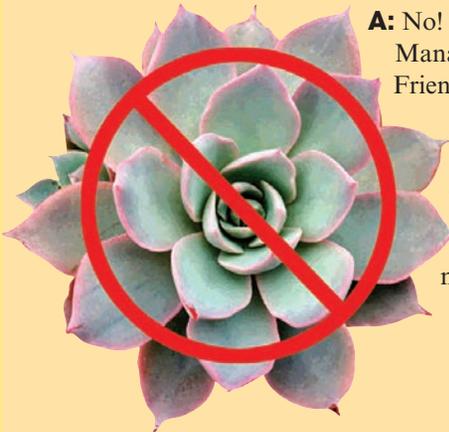
**Q: Aren't rodenticides off the market now thanks to passage of AB 1788?**

**A:** While State legislation restricts the most potent of the anticoagulants from use in most situations (e.g., residential), there are still other rodenticides which remain on the market. It's up to the public to protect wildlife from these poisons.

*(See Red-shouldered hawk article on page 11)*

**Q: Can I plant a tree or flowers in Griffith Park if I make sure they get enough water?**

**A:** No! Unless it is approved by Park Management, this is not allowed. Friends of Griffith Park is also required to coordinate plantings with management. Rogue gardening is a big problem in Griffith Park, especially cacti and succulents. Plantings are now strictly scrutinized.



**Q: Isn't the Aerial Tram a dead deal?**

**A:** There has been no definitive decision from downtown. In Los Angeles, pending proposals often lay in wait. Ear to ground!

**Q: Why are horses allowed to poop on trails? It's smelly and causes flies. People have to clean up after their dogs, so why not horses?**

**A:** Horse poop is barely-digested hay and sometimes alfalfa. It has a lot of easily digestible proteins that are desirable to birds and rabbits. There are no known diseases you can get by stepping in it. In just a short time in the sun, horse poop disintegrates into a dried grass pile which can fertilize and mulch plants around it. Horse manure is sold in stores for gardens and lawns.

While horse poop helps both animals and plants in the Park, dog poop carries diseases which shouldn't be eaten by other animals. Dog poop is a serious threat to the Park's ecosystem and needs to be removed by dog owners.

There is insufficient staff to pick up bags of dog poop left along the sides of trails. While we encourage you to walk your leashed dog, your dog's poop is your responsibility, so pack it out.



**A joyful, peaceful 2023 to all from Friends of Griffith Park!**



Friends of Griffith Park  
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## Support FoGP's Efforts to Protect the Park

Join us today...

[friendsofgriffithpark.org/volunteer](http://friendsofgriffithpark.org/volunteer)



Photo: Kathryn Louyse

Volunteers can make quick work of any project in Griffith Park. A dedicated group willing to get a little dirty can achieve greatness. This mulching effort will eventually lead to a native planting across from the Greek Theatre. (Photo, top: late season buckwheat continues to blossom)