



Canyon News

Black Mountain Park • Del Mar Mesa Preserve
Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve
Friends of Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve, Inc.

Oct., Nov., Dec., 2011
Volume 25, No. 4

1.9 Million Gallons Not Again: Pump Station 64

Mike Kelly, Conservation Chair



Above: A dead fish found at the Los Peñasquitos Lagoon is a casualty of the sewage spill that occurred following the San Diego County-wide blackout. Photo from San Diego Coastkeeper

I was hiking with my sisters in the White Mountains of New Hampshire when the call came. It was Union-Tribune Reporter Mike Lee calling to get my reaction to the spillage of raw sewage into Peñasquitos Lagoon. I had to ask “what sewage spill?” I hadn’t been following San Diego news while on vacation and didn’t know about it. But, as Yogi Bear put it, it was “deja vu all over again,” because the old Pump Station 64 was the source of many spills in the 1980s and 1990s. The relatively new Pump Station 64 was suppose to end this sorry record of spills.

Once back from vacation I boned up on the spill. My best source for detailed information was the website of San Diego Coastkeeper. The sewage spill at Pump Station 64 and one other pump station in San Diego occurred due to the 12-hour power outage Thursday, September 8, another big event I managed to miss!

The core reason the spill occurred as it did wasn’t the power outage itself; it was the lack of a backup generator. Other pump stations had backup generators and didn’t spill; Pump Station 64 and the one next to the Sweetwater River that also spilled didn’t. The City’s Metropolitan Wastewater Department hasn’t offered an explanation as to why these plants were built without backup generators in place. The spill caused a big die-off of fish (and probably many other (see page 4)

Highlights Inside

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Nominations Are Open

Mike Kelly

It’s election time for the Friends. We invite your nominations. As called for by our revised bylaws (June 2009), we moved from electing our Officers and At-large Board of Directors members from the annual meeting (increasingly sparsely attended) to a direct mail ballot as of Nov. 1, 2011. To nominate yourself or someone else for an officer or at-large- Board of Directors position please email me at mkelly1@san.rr.com or send snail mail to POB 26523, San Diego, CA 92196. The Deadline Date for nominations is 6 p.m. Pacific Coast Time, Tuesday, Oct. 25. The person just needs to be a member in good standing, agree in writing to be nominated (email is fine), and submit a short bio of up to 125 words.

The Nominations Committee, as called for under the revised Bylaws, has polled current Officers and At-large-Board members and will put forward the following people in the ballot. For President, Les Braund; Vice President, Don Albright; Secretary, Edward DiBella; Treasurer, Pat Watkins; for At-large Directors: Anne Harvey, Mike Kelly, Mary Leuking, Janet Nelson, Brian Swanson, and Jeanie Anderson. Except for Jeanie Anderson, all are veteran Board members and long-time volunteers with the Friends. We will aim for having a ballot with all of the nominations and short bios out about Nov. 1, 2011.

Events, Meetings, Training, Hikes, And Volunteer Opportunities

All of our hikes are free. There is a fee for the Tracking survey classes. See below for details or call 858-484-3219 for more information.

Please remember to bring plenty of water and sun protection (hat, sun screen or both) any time you visit the canyon.

Hiking boots or trail sneakers are recommended when hiking the trails.

Repeating Events

Every Saturday and Sunday:

Historic Adobe Ranch Tour

San Diego County Park docents lead a free guided tour of San Diego's second oldest standing residence, Rancho Santa María de los Peñasquitos, at 11 a.m. on Saturdays and 1 p.m. on Sundays, lasting 45 minutes. See an historic Mexican era rancho with three foot thick adobe walls, settler and Indian artifacts and tour the grounds. The Ranch House is located on Canyonside Park Driveway off Black Mountain Road between Mira Mesa & Rancho Peñasquitos. Thomas Bros. p.1189 (C7)

Every month:

Wildlife Tracking Walk

Saturday, 8 AM - 10 PM: Oct. 8, Nov. 12, Dec. 10

Everyone is invited to join an SDTT tracker for a free, easy introductory tracking walk to learn about the art of tracking and the Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve. Look for tracks, scat, and further evidence that coyotes, bobcats, raccoon, deer and other wildlife have been in the area! Information at www.sdtt.org. Meet at the Historic Adobe Ranch House on Canyonside Park Drive and Black Mountain Road, Rancho Peñasquitos. Thomas Guide p. 1189 (C7)

Volunteer Trash Pickup Lopez/Peñasquitos Canyons

Sunday, 9 AM - 1 PM: Oct. 23, Nov. 27

Trash pickups in Lopez & Peñasquitos Canyon. Volunteers needed! Community service credits available. Meet at Lopez Ridge Park at 7245 Calle Cristobal in Mira Mesa. Call

Ranger John Garwood at 858-538-8066 for more info. Thomas Guide p. 1208 (J3)

Every two months:

Black Mountain Open Space Citizens Advisory Committee

Thursday, 6:30 PM: Nov 10

Public is welcome to attend this meeting to plan park activities. Meet in the Canyonside Recreation Center at Black Mountain Road and Canyonside Park Driveway, Rancho Peñasquitos. Thomas Guide p. 1189 (C7)

Peñasquitos Canyon Citizens Advisory Committee

Thursday, 6:30 PM: Nov. 17

Public is welcome to attend this meeting to plan park activities. Meeting is at the Historic Adobe Ranch House on Canyonside Park Driveway and Black Mountain Road, Rancho Peñasquitos. Thomas Guide p. 1189 (C7)

Friends of Peñasquitos Canyon Board of Directors

Monday, 7:00 PM, Nov.7

Board meetings have been changed to the first Monday, every other month. Members are welcome to attend this business meeting to plan Friends' activities. Meeting is at the historic Adobe Ranch House at Black Mountain Road and Canyonside Park Driveway, Rancho Peñasquitos. Thomas Guide p. 1189 (C7)

Quarterly:

Advanced Tracking Wildlife Surveys

Class: Wednesday, 7- 9 PM: Nov. 16
Field: Saturday, 8 AM - 4 PM: Nov. 19

The Advanced Class continues to develop your tracking proficiency. Subtle details of track identification are presented. Techniques and exercises for trailing animals through various surfaces will enable you to stay on the right track. Drills and exercises will help expand your knowledge base, point out areas to work on, and give you a preview of the tracker evaluation process. Cost: \$50 (\$10 discount for SDTT members). Pre-registration required. Go to www.penasquitos.org/classes.htm for more information or send e-mail to lpitt@cox.net to register.

Maps of Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve, Black Mountain Open Space Park, and Carmel Mountain Preserve are available at www.penasquitos.org

Upcoming Hikes

October

Miner's Loop Trail Walk, Black Mountain Open Space Park

Saturday, Oct. 15, 9:00 – 11:00 AM

Join hike leader Arne Johanson to hike the Miner's Loop trail on the north face of Black Mountain Park. Meet at the Parking Staging area at 14850 Carmel Valley Road, about 1/4 mile east of its intersection with Black Mountain Road in Rancho Peñasquitos. Thomas Guide p. 1169 (E7)

Sensory Awareness Hike with Will Bowen

Sunday, Oct. 30, 4:00 - 5:30 PM

A hike to explore our sensory experience as a way to know nature better. We will experiment with sight, sound, taste, touch, kinesthetic feeling, and fragrance in the field, contemplating and sharing our experience of the colors of the grasses or the sky, the song of a bird, the fragrance of a leaf, the taste of a berry, the texture of tree bark, the feeling of a place, etc. This practice can help one have a more profound and rich connection with the natural world. Meet at West End Parking Staging Area.

November

Carson's Crossing - Sycamore Crossing Loop with Linda King

Saturday, Nov. 5, 8:00 AM
Join naturalist Linda King on this moderately paced loop walk to the waterfall Sycamore Crossing and Carson's Crossing. Meet at the kiosk near 7107 Park Village Road at Celome Way, Rancho Peñasquitos. Thomas Guide P. 1188 (J7)

Carson's Crossing Walk

Saturday, Nov. 12, 3:00 - 5:30 PM

Join the San Diego Natural History Museum Canyoneers for an afternoon hike. We will cross Los Peñasquitos Creek twice on this loop hike that passes through grasslands and riparian habitat. Watch for deer and rabbits

on this generally level hike. Meet at the kiosk on Park Village Road at Camino del Sur. Thomas Guide p. 1189 (A7)

Miner's Loop Trail Walk, Black Mountain Open Space Park

Saturday, Nov. 19, 9:00 – 11:00 AM

Join hike leader Arne Johanson to hike the Miner's Loop trail on the north face of Black Mountain Park. Meet at the Parking Staging area at 14850 Carmel Valley Road, about 1/4 mile east of its intersection with Black Mountain Road in Rancho Penasquitos. Thomas Guide p. 1169 (E7)

Shaman's Hike with Will Bowen

Sunday, Nov. 20, 3:00 - 5:00 PM

A short hike to a power spot where we will explore shamanic traditions of the Americas. We will learn healing, insight, and wisdom. We will do some healing work, sharing and story-telling, and make some shamanic art. This is a good opportunity for self-healing and connection with spirit through nature. Please bring a blanket to sit on and a drum or rattle. Meet at West End Parking Staging Area.

December

Early Morning Hike from Camino Ruiz Trailhead

Saturday, Dec. 3, 7:00 - 10:00 AM

Join naturalist Mary Lueking for a moderately paced, 5 mile hike. Early morning is typically a good time to see wildlife. We will pass through varying habitat zones and make our way to the waterfall. Wear shoes suitable for portions of the trail that are steel and uneven. Rain cancels. Meet at the trailhead near the entrance to Camino Ruiz Park in Mira Mesa (11489 Camino Ruiz). Thomas Guide p. 1209 (B1)

Miner's Loop Trail Walk, Black Mountain Open Space Park

Saturday, Dec. 17, 9:00 – 11:00 AM

Join hike leader Arne Johanson to hike the Miner's Loop trail on the north face of Black Mountain Park. Meet at the Parking Staging area at 14850 Carmel Valley Road, about 1/4 mile east of its intersection with Black Mountain Road in Rancho Penasquitos. Thomas Guide p. 1169 (E7)

Special Event

ARCH IN THE PARK

Saturday, October 15, 2011 • 10:00 am to 3:00 pm

The **San Diego County Archaeological Society** presents an educational day of **Archaeology and Fun** at the **Ranch House in Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve**

- Find out what archaeology is all about; dig in a mock excavation; play games
- Discover the history of the Ranch House on a tour of the adobe
- Be there at 1 p.m. to meet Running Grunion, a Kumeyaay Indian, and learn about his people
- Speak to local archaeologists and see archaeology exhibits, demos on stone tool making, basket making, and more!

Bring a picnic lunch to enjoy in the shade. Fry bread, snacks, and sodas will be available for purchase.



For more information, call: 858-538-0935 visit our website: www.sandiegoarchaeologicalsociety.com or email us at: sdcas@email.com



Directions: From I-15 take Mercy Rd. west, turn right (north) onto Black Mountain Rd. and then take the first left into Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve. Follow the road all the way to the back (past Canyonside Community Park ball fields), and park in the designated parking area in the field.



Peñasquitos brand



Carson's Crossing - Sycamore Crossing Loop with Linda King

Saturday, Dec. 17, 8:00 AM

Join naturalist Linda King on this moderately paced loop walk to the waterfall Sycamore Crossing and Carson's Crossing. Meet at the kiosk near 7107 Park Village Road at Celome Way, Rancho Pensquitos. Thomas Guide P. 1188 (J7)

Shaman's Hike with Will Bowen

Sunday, Dec. 18, 3:00 - 5:00 PM

A short hike to a power spot where we will explore shamanic traditions of the Americas. We will learn healing, insight, and wisdom. We will do some healing work, sharing and story-telling, and make some shamanic art. This is a good opportunity for self-healing and connection with spirit through nature. Please bring a blanket to sit on and a drum or rattle. Meet at West End Parking Staging Area.

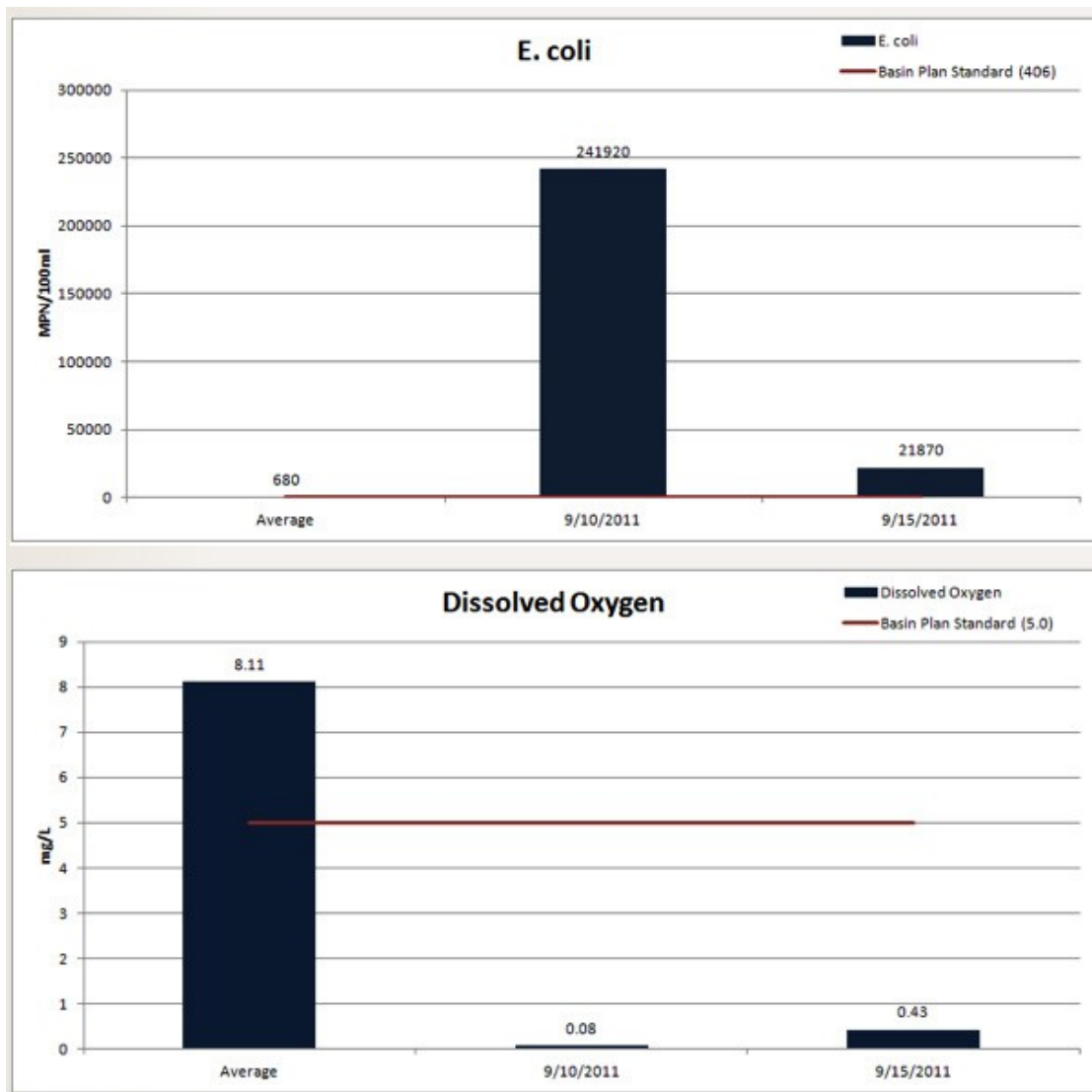
(Spill cont.)

types of organisms) and the closure of miles of beaches up and down the San Diego coast for up to a week. Entire neighborhoods were told to boil their water because of contamination of the water supply as well.

MWWD also hasn't explained why it took five days to begin pumping the sewage from the lagoon. As reported by Mike Lee, of the estimated 1.9 million gallons of raw sewage that spilled, some 1 million gallons ponded in the lagoon rather than being carried out to sea. It wasn't until Monday, September 12 that they "discovered" this fact. In fact, it was Coastkeeper that discovered and reported the initial spill and took the first measurements of the water quality.

This slow response and apparent inattentiveness by MWWD will undoubtedly factor into future deliberations by the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board as it investigates these spills. Based on past actions by the Board, if negligence or a slow response to mitigate the effects of the spill are found to have occurred, the Board will levy fines against the City.

The biggest spill to occur in San Diego was 35 million gallons of raw sewage released into the San Diego River in February, 2000. An investigation by the Regional Board after that spill led to the biggest fine for water quality violations in the history of the State of California! The fine, if I remember correctly, was ten cents a gallon, or \$3.5 million. Supplemental Environmental Projects were funded out of this fine including a project by Brad Burkhardt and I that mapped invasive plants in the City's portion of the San Diego River and developed a master plan to restore native plants in the area. This became part of an even bigger master planning project for the San Diego River.



These San Diego Coastkeeper graphs, based on their own measurements, tell a shocking story. E. coli is a harmful bacteria. The 680 number is the normal background level of E. coli in waters in this basin. The reading September 10 is **355 times** higher than the background rate! The dissolved oxygen number of September 10 is almost zero, compared to a normal background rate of 8.11. Sewage feeds bacteria that consume almost all of the dissolved oxygen in the water, oxygen needed by fish and other organisms to survive, leading to the fish die-off that occurred in the lagoon.

White-tailed Kites

Aerial Masters

Jeanie Anderson

White-tailed Kites (*Elanus leucurus*) are birds of prey or raptors in the Accipitridae family (think Coopers Hawk and Sharp-shinned Hawk). You may have seen them over the grasslands if you were in the Preserve in the morning or near dusk. This is a good time to view the White-tailed Kites as they hunt by hovering almost like a hummingbird.

From below they appear mostly white with dark patches on their under wings. When you get a closer look, they resolve into a study in black and white and gray. In fact, they used to be called Black-shouldered Kites before being renamed to White-tailed Kites, both descriptive of their plumage. Kites are known to breed throughout the preserve and are easily spotted as the white bird at the top of a sycamore tree, scrub oak or snag. They have strong site fidelity so when you spot them, remember the location for your next visit.



Kites weigh in at about 12 ounces, have long pointed wings - wingspan of about 40 inches - and can hover-hunt for about a minute depending on the wind velocity. They always face into the wind to minimize their exertion, wings held high in a dihedral arrangement (think airplane) with their tail and legs hanging down. And they flap! Both up and down and back and forth, with the amazing result of maintaining their position so they can view the field below in minute detail.

Frequently, they glide to a lower position, relaxing those flight muscles, and then hover-hunt again, using their keen binocular vision to seek out California voles or meadow mice. If they spot something of interest, they do what I call "free fall" with their wings in a V formation fluttering as they slow motion descend, with their talons out - at the ready to grasp their prey. Often, they miss the target and start over.

According to the literature, when a Kite captures prey--small mammals, birds, lizards, or insects--it emits a series of rasping sounds that can be heard up to a hundred meters away. Listen for this!

On a successful hunt, the male Kite flies back to the nest with the catch of the day in his talons and calls to his mate. Their whistling calls have been described as "*keer-keer*" or "*keep-keep*". She leaves the nest area and flies over to meet him... locking talons

and exchanging the prey. This aerial maneuvering is quite a sight to see. The behavior helps insure that predators do not find the Kite's nest, a good strategy that the Peregrine Falcon also employs.

Interview with a Bobcat

The Friends staffed a booth at the Mira Mesa community street fair held September 17th. Street fairs present an opportunity to share our passion for the preserve with the public. Some of these public have never visited the preserve, even if they've lived nearby for many years. They are often amazed at the abundance of resources on these preserved lands. Children are especially attracted to Penasquitos Bob, our street fair ambassador so Friends' President Brian Swanson used the opportunity to interview Bob.

Brian: Bob, we all know that you're a bobcat, named for your short tail. How did you come to join the Friends?

Bob: It's a bit of a blur, but I was walking across the street one day, about 25 years ago, and hear a squeal of tires and then a crash. I guess I should have looked both ways. Things have been a little fuzzy since I woke up.

Brian: What is it that you like most about the Friends?

Bob: The Friends really care about open space, especially Penasquitos Preserve and the nearby open space preserves. This includes mesas and canyons. They are tirelessly working to improve the habitat, and to educate the public about the benefits of open space.

Brian: What do you like most about the street fairs?

Bob: I really get a kick out of the small kids who try to stare me down. Watching the dogs when they see me is pretty neat too. But mostly, I just like getting out of my dusty storage room and getting a little fresh air and sunlight.



Kelly Receives Restoration Award

Mike Kelly, the Friends' Conservation Chair, is pictured holding a beautiful, handcrafted tile plaque (depicting a native prickly pear plant), awarded him by the Society for Ecological Restoration—California (SERCAL). The plaque says "Presented to Mike Kelly for Significant Contributions to California Ecological Restoration SERCAL 2011."



SERCAL is the California chapter of the International Society for Ecological Restoration. The membership of SER is made up of the many thousands of individuals, companies, and non-profits that engage in ecological restoration in countries all over the globe. SERCAL is one of the oldest chapters of this international professional organization.

The award was presented to Kelly at the annual luncheon of SERCAL held May 12, 2011 in San Diego. Mark Tucker, outgoing president of SERCAL asked Carl Bell to present the award and explain why Kelly was receiving it. This was the *first time* that SERCAL had ever made an award, ever recognized someone in the field for their contributions to restoration ecology. They have decided to recognize more such individuals in the future.

At the time of the presentation Carl Bell was the Acting County Director and Regional Advisor — Invasive Plants, UC Cooperative Extension-County of San Diego. He is a friend and colleague of Kelly's from the time they both served on the Board of Directors of the California Invasive Plant Council (www.cal-ipc.org). Bell summarized Kelly's contributions to conservation and restoration, including the Friends of Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve, his co-founding of Cal-IPC, his many years on the Cal-IPC Board and his two terms as President, his 2004 campaign for a successful TransNet ballot measure that included some \$850 million for land conservation and land restoration and his leadership as President of a coalition of 25 local and regional land trusts and conservancies in San Diego County. Bell also roasted Kelly a bit to the delight of the audience.

Kelly thanked SERCAL for the honor of being their first recipient of this award. He recounted his long membership in SERCAL, close to 20 years, and acknowledged the role SERCAL had played in his restoration education. Kelly took a restoration course taught by SERCAL's founder, John Riegler back in the early 90s.

Night Hikes

Will Bowen, PhD

Night hikes usually begin while it is still daylight. This is the last chance to see the vivid colors and crystal clarity provided by the bright light from the sun. But twilight comes, offering a short but special treat to the eyes as the colors of nature get richer, bolder, and more artistic-looking. Then comes the dark, where the colorful day transforms into a shadowy world of black, white, and gray.

It takes about 20 minutes for our eyes to adjust to the dark; visual purple builds up and the rods take over the job of seeing from the cones. Peripheral vision—what we see out of the corner of the eye—becomes more important than foveal vision—the clear center of seeing—and motion detection is emphasized. This is perfect for spotting bats zip-ping overhead or the smooth glide of an owl on a hunt.

Because we can rely less on vision at night, our other senses take over. Scents and sounds are highlighted. We smell the plants fully and deeply, Rustles in the bushes are noticed, calls of birds are heard, and the chorus of insects becomes a symphony of overlapping rhythms. We stumble for a while, but soon our tactile sense and feeling for movement begin to guide us.

The West End Night Walk starts from Sorrento Valley Blvd. then turns into the canyon. We pass traces of a once vital past in the El Cuervo Adobe and Norwood Brown's cattle corral and continue through the wetlands where deer could be spotted. We notice the nipped-off tops of plants that deer love. The thorny teasel plant grows on the edge of the wetlands. We joke that the dried teasel flower, once used to comb wool, looks like a "witch's toothbrush".

The vegetation has grown along the trail and there is almost a canopy of trees and bushes that provides the perfect habitat for Orb spiders to build their large, 2-dimensional, symmetrical webs. We watch the Orbs run up web strands and wonder how they got the thread across the trail from one tree to another. Do they swing in the wind?

We move on to the hillsides and look for two gleaming eyes reflected in the large deer-spotting spot light. Mule deer sleep under shrubs on the hillside during the day and come down to the canyon bottom at night to forage. Sometimes we catch the deer's outline and watch them move. We only see does and fawns—never any bucks.

We also sweep our flashlights over the trail to look for deer tracks. Sometimes we see coyote scat. We may see a black Pseudo Stink Bug ambling down the trail or a late night lizard sticking his head out from under a bush. Occasionally we spot a feisty scorpion or a small purple-red snake which is wet to the touch. Rabbits are often nibbling grass, but rarely is a bobcat seen.

Some flowers bloom at night. The datura has a large white, funnel-shaped flower that smells like perfume. It glows blue in the moonlight. The yellow-flowered primrose

also blooms at night. Its flowers are a tasty treat; the seeds have a good taste and are good for health.

Slowly the stars and moon come out. We point out constellations or examine the moon. Sometimes we will see a meteor or shooting star fall across the sky. Out near Wagon Wheel Crossing we stop for elderberries and look in the creek for scurrying crayfish. On the way back, we stop for a look at the black widow spider colony that lives in the road barrier along the sidewalk. The widows build crazy fractal patterned 3D webs—quite a contrast to the symmetry of the Orb Weaver. Both webs work, but why the big difference? This year, for the first time, we have some brown widows in the colony as well.

One thing noticeable on the night hike is that people start out walking fast and then begin to slow. That's good because slow hiking is the best—you see more. It is very peaceful and quiet out there in the canyon at night where the darkness envelops you. Good conversations and friendships develop easily in that atmosphere. People share experiences and insights. Everyone goes home content.



Hikers on Will Bowen's Night Walk get ready to explore the canyon.

Photo supplied by Will Bowen

Membership Application

Membership category: (circle 1 below)

Senior (62) or Student \$10 Individual \$15
 Family \$20 Sponsor \$30 Patron \$100
 Corporate \$250 Life \$1000
 Contribution \$ _____

I/We are interested in the following:

- Volunteer to help a committee (call to discuss)
 Hikes
 Indian Culture
 Educational Workshops
 School, Family, Youth Programs
 Environment (Plants, birds, mammals, geology)
 Other: _____

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City State Zip _____

Home Phone _____

Email _____

Please make checks payable to:

Friends of Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve, Inc.
 P.O. Box 26523
 San Diego, CA 92196

Thank you for your support! Your donation is tax deductible.
 Call **858.484.3219** or **858.342.8856** for more information.

Don't be left out!

Want to keep up with all the events sponsored by the Friends of Peñasquitos? Get all the latest information and details by giving us your email address.

Email your contact information to Janet Nelson at nelson.janet1@gmail.com or to Pat Watkins at pwatkins2008@gmail.com.

Friends' Directory

Officers

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| President: Brian Swanson | 760.739.5451 |
| Vice-President: Don Albright | 619.443.5937 |
| Secretary: Edward DiBella | 619.563.0717 |
| Treasurer: Pat Watkins | 858.538.2527 |

Other Members of the Board of Directors

Les Braund, Anne Harvey, Mike Kelly, Mary Lueking, Janet Nelson

Walk Leaders

Don Albright, Will Bowen, Diana Gordon, Arne Johansen, Mike Kelly, Linda King, Mary Lueking, David Robertson, Brian Swanson, Pat Watkins

Committees

Conservation Chair: Mike Kelly, 858.342.8856
 Newsletter: Janet Nelson, 619.519.3150
nelson.janet1@gmail.com
 Tracking Team Coordinator: Rick Botta, 858.672.0584
 Webmaster: Beth Williams



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If your expiration date is close or has come and gone, please take the time to send in a renewal check for your membership dues and save us the postage for reminder mailings!

Rare Canyon Sights

Photos by Jess Lacher

Right: "Battle of the Raptors"-- A White-tailed Kite battles over territory with a Red-tailed Hawk in the air over Lopez Canyon.

Below: A Tarantula Hawk (Pepsis Wasp) taking away a tarantula.

