



Mission Trails Regional Park News

Willow Basket Weaving Class: A Firsthand Account

by MTRP trail guide
Fred Kramer

Over the years, I have sent out notices about basket and other classes, encouraging Trail Guides to sign up. I suggested that some hands-on experience with these types of crafts



would provide a good appreciation for the process and help in explaining it on the trail. So this time when the willow basket weaving class announcement came out, I decided it was finally time for me to participate.

Basket, continued on p. 4

Featured Ecosystem Riparian Zone

When thinking of ecosystems, what generally comes to mind are systems which can cover hundreds of thousands of square miles. These ecosystems, primarily forests, deserts and grasslands or prairies, can themselves include various ecological zones. The trees on a mountain top can be of a completely different species than those at its base. Walk a few miles in a desert and the landscape and vegetation can change considerably. Add an abundance of water to certain areas and the change can be dramatic. Although not as noticeable in a forest, a stream or river can create a linear green zone cutting through deserts and grasslands.

"A riparian zone or riparian area is the interface between land and a stream. Plant communities along the river margins are called riparian vegetation, characterized by hydrophilic plants. Riparian zones are significant in ecology, environmental management, and civil engineering because of their role in soil conservation, their biodiversity, and the influence they have on aquatic ecosystems... The word "riparian" is derived from Latin ripa, meaning river bank."

The San Diego River travels 52 miles from Cuyamaca Mountain to

Riparian, continued on p. 5

Winter Solstice Hikes on Cowles Mountain

Time: 6:00 a.m. on Saturday, December 20; Sunday, December 21; and Monday, December 22, 2008.

Starting Point: Trailhead adjacent to the parking lot at Golfcrest Dr. & Navajo Rd.

Description: The Mission Trails Regional Park Trail Guides will lead pre-dawn hikes to the area of the solstice observatory on Cowles Mountain on December 20 and 22. The Canyoneers of the San Diego Natural History Museum will lead the hike on December 21. The solstice site is approximately one mile up the trail. The age of the site is unknown. It is known that the Kumeyaay used similar sites in Southern California. For all three hikes, we hope to see the rising sun split by a peak on the eastern horizon. The ascent will be in the dark. Good shoes and a flashlight are recommended. These hikes continue to be among the most popular events in the park. A word of caution for anyone joining the hikes or hiking on their own: there is danger of eye damage if you stare directly at the sun. You can observe the sunrise safely for a very few seconds through narrow slits (such as between your fingers held together) or smoked glass. Plan on a two-hour hike.



A Message from Council President Pro Tem Jim Madaffer

It will be tough to say goodbye to so many dedicated, hardworking people who regularly donate their time and effort to make the park the best that it can be. They know it is one of our greatest assets and they want to enhance it for future generations to enjoy. I also want to recognize some key people who had the vision and determination to help turn Mission Trails Regional Park into such an incredible place – my thanks to Dorothy Leonard, Dick Murphy, and Judy McCarty.

It has been a pleasure representing you as the District 7 Councilmember. It was a wonderful experience and a joy to work with all the dedicated Mission Trails Regional Park volunteers, supporters and staff. This park is unlike any other and I think the outstanding park “family” is the reason why.

At the close of my term in office, I want to share a few thoughts with you. First, I want to say thank you for the privilege of serving you. I consider you to be a friend of Mission Trails Regional Park which makes you a member of a special group indeed.

I’m elated about all that we have accomplished since I first took office. We had an ambitious list of projects throughout the District – many of which were completed during my first term in office, and we finished the rest of the list during my second term. It reminds me of the pledge I made to my constituents when I ran for office: Promises made. Promises kept.

As Councilmember, one of my goals has been to improve and expand Mission Trails Regional Park and I share your pride in all our accomplishments. In my eight years in office, I have allocated a significant amount of funding to the park. We’ve seen volunteers help restore the trails, dredge Mission Dam, keep the campground open despite budget cuts and have supported a major rewrite of the Park’s Master Plan.

One of my own goals was completed last year when local elected officials toured the park. I held a Mission Trails Regional Park Task Force meeting at the Visitor Center; it was the first time that some of the members, who are elected officials from the City of San Diego, the County of San Diego, La Mesa and Santee, had actually visited the park. They saw firsthand the results of their efforts.

**WE
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Join the Mission Trails Cell Phone patrol. Help us keep your park safe. Please use your cell phone to report any suspicious behavior in or around our parking lots and facilities.

**Rangers (9:00 am - 5:00 pm) call
619-668-3281
San Diego Police Dept. call
619-531-2000**

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How you can become an MTRP Trail Guide

By Ranger Heidi Gutknecht

First of all, what IS an MTRP Trail Guide? The special person is a volunteer trained to lead interpretive nature walks throughout the park for both the general public and organized groups. Each year MTRP conducts a training program for people interested in learning about the natural and cultural history of the park and sharing that knowledge with the public.

The curriculum covers ecology, botany, geology, history, birds, mammals, reptiles, insects, Kumeyaay culture and more! This 10-week program involves a three-hour classroom session every Wednesday evening, from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m., and a three-hour field study session on Saturday mornings, from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. At the end of the training, students take a written exam on the material learned and demonstrate their interpretive skills by taking a veteran Trail Guide on a sample nature walk. Trail Guide graduates are expected to sign up to share their new knowledge on at least one guided walk per month, but are welcome to do more than that, of course!

In addition to leading guided nature walks, MTRP Trail Guides also help out with special events, such as our annual “Explore Mission Trails Day,” attend monthly Trail Guide meetings that include special guest speaker presentations, and enjoy monthly outings to other



Trail Guide Fred Kramer leading a hike during our annual Explore Mission Trails Day event.



Trail Guide Betty Matthews showing off one of the wonders of Mission Trails.

open space areas with fellow Trail Guides on “Trail Guide Treks.” The training program is really a lot of fun with a great group of people, and we are always looking for “fresh blood” to join the MTRP Trail Guide team.

So, if you already know and love Mission Trails Regional Park, why not learn more about it, and share your passion with others? No experience is necessary, just a willingness to learn and share. The 2009 Trail Guide Training program begins in January and runs through March. Please note there is a \$25 materials fee due at the Orientation, which is scheduled for Saturday, January 10, at 8:30 a.m. Space is limited in this once-a-year training, so please sign up early. For further information, please contact Ranger Heidi at hgutknecht@mtrp.org or (619) 668-3279.

Trial Guides lead regularly scheduled hikes Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sunday from the Visitor Center at 9:30 am. To schedule a special hike for your group, contact Ranger Heidi at hgutknecht@mtrp.org or 619-668-3279

New Identifying Panoramas Atop Cowles Mountain

Basket, *continued from p. 1*



Unidentified hiker and Paul Rhia admiring one of the new panoramas atop Cowles.

A hike to the summit of Cowles Mountain is always a memorable experience. You may run into friends or make new ones, get some much needed exercise, or marvel at the commanding view from the summit. Being the highest elevation in the City of San Diego, you can see the ocean to the west, Mexico to the south and the mountains to the east, as well as numerous local landmarks.

For years there had been two photographic panoramic images of the surrounding landscape, with identification markers, mounted atop Cowles. One could view the surrounding landscape, and with the help of the panoramas, identify the various landmarks in the distance. Over

the years, weather and sunlight had battered and baked these monuments until they looked a pale image of their former selves.

It was decided to remove these structures and replace them with newer models made of state of the art materials. The necessary photos were taken by MTRP Trail Guide Nancy Varga. Paul Rhia of Stone Imagery was contracted to fabricate the panels and install them on site.

Now, when you hike to the summit of Cowles Mountain, be sure to check out the new longer, brighter panels and point out all of San Diego's scenic spots to visiting family and friends.

There were 20 in the class, including several other Trail Guides. The class began with Ranger Heidi and Martha, the Kumeyaay instructor, bringing in huge piles of willow they had cut. Martha also brought some willow baskets she had made for sale. I looked from the pile of willow to the finished baskets and back several times. I wondered how I could ever turn a bunch of willow branches into anything that looked like her baskets.

After about two and a half hours of intense effort, I looked down at the table in front of me and all I saw was a mangled wad of what used-to-be very nice-looking willow branches. Very little resemblance to Martha's baskets. It was turning out to be a frustrating afternoon.

Nonetheless, I persevered. After many false starts, I began to get the hang of it, and my basket began to take shape. There is definitely skill involved in making a willow basket. There is also skill in selecting the right materials—branches with just the right amount of foliage to give the coils a consistent diameter; soft twigs, not too big around, for tying the coils. Not surprisingly, it takes considerable strength in the hands to do the twisting, pulling, and tying. My hands ached afterwards.

In the end, I was able to create some semblance of a small willow basket. It certainly didn't look as well-finished as Martha's, but you could tell what it was supposed to be. However, my goal wasn't just to produce a basket, but to learn some of the basket making techniques the Kumeyaay used making a living in areas like our park. I definitely achieved this goal and will continue to recommend these types of classes to other Trail Guides.

**GIFT
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This year you can make your gift dollars count by choosing from the many useful items available in our Gift Shop. We are proud to carry a wonderful selection that will appeal to lovers of the outdoors as well as those with an interest in learning and caring for our environment.

From our own Mission Trails Regional Park Official Guide Book to the selection of books for children and adults that highlight history and nature as well as our beautiful new MTRP biodegradable cloth shopping bags, you are sure to find things to please the people on your shopping list. There are gift items from Kumeyaay pottery to Havasupai jewelry, handmade tin

ornaments from Las Tigres, New Mexico, and sturdy stone trivets with traditional Native American pictographs.

We have stocking stuffers galore, reasonably priced toys that will delight the youngsters. There is a nice collection of Native American music on CD's to soothe the ear and mind, and, of course, our high-quality t-shirts and caps and walking sticks for the hiker.

Our Gift Shop is open from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM seven days a week, with plenty of free parking. Pay a visit to our beautiful Visitor Center and do your holiday shopping, too!



MTRP's own riparian zone wedged between South Fortuna and Quaa Paay

Riparian, continued from p. 1

finally arrive in San Diego entering Mission Trails at Santee, cutting through Mission Valley and ending at Dog Beach in Ocean Beach. The river did not always empty directly into the Pacific ocean. At the time of early European settlers it made a sharp turn at Old Town and emptied into a vast wetland where the airport now sits.

"Riparian zones may be natural or engineered for soil stabilization or restoration. These zones are important natural biofilters, protecting aquatic environments from excessive sedimentation, polluted surface runoff and erosion. They supply shelter and food for many aquatic animals and shade that is an important part of stream temperature regulation. When riparian zones are damaged by construction, agriculture or silviculture, biological restoration can take place, usually by human intervention in erosion control and revegetation..."

For various reasons, water supply, commerce, etc., people have always gravitated towards rivers. Nearly every major city is situated along the course of a river. Unfortunately, due to human ignorance of the river's ecological function and

importance, these water courses were straightened, and cities were allowed to grow right up to their new concrete banks.

"...The meandering curves of a river, combined with vegetation and root systems, dissipate stream energy, which results in less soil erosion and a reduction in flood damage. Sediment is trapped, reducing suspended solids to create less turbid water, replenish soils, and build stream banks..."

The riparian zones also provide wildlife habitat, increase biodiversity, and provide wildlife corridors, enabling aquatic and riparian organisms to move along river systems avoiding isolated communities. They can provide forage for wildlife and livestock.

They provide native landscape irrigation by extending seasonal or perennial flows of water. Nutrients from terrestrial vegetation (e.g. leaf litter and insect drop) is transferred to aquatic food webs. The vegetation surrounding the stream helps to shade the water, mitigating water temperature changes. The vegetation also contributes wood debris to streams which is important to maintaining geomorphology.

From a social aspect, riparian zones contribute to nearby property values through amenity and views, and

they improve enjoyment for footpaths and bikeways through supporting foreshoreway networks. Space is created for riparian sports including fishing, swimming and launching for vessels and paddlecraft."

The future of our river is up to us. Organizations, such as the San Diego River Park Foundation and the San Diego River Coalition, in which Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation and Citizens' Advisory Committee are represented, are working together to protect the river and its riparian zone. A fifty-two mile park beginning at the river's source near Julian and ending at the Pacific Ocean is a vision which is being eagerly pursued. Many miles of this park are already in place. Numerous individuals living in various communities along the river are volunteering time and energy towards its completion. It will be another scenic wonder San Diego County residents can be proud of.

Sections in quotes are excerpted from Wikipedia, The Free (online) Encyclopedia.

Art Exhibits

**October 11 -
November 7, 2008**
"A Place in the Wild"
Christine Waters

**November 8 -
December 5, 2008**
Pat Silver

**December 6, 2008 -
January 2, 2009**
Group Show
Shandel Gamer
Karen Howard
Bille Mear
Val Barnard
Eileen Mandell
Wilma Lopez
Barbara Peterson

Arbor day at Mission Trails

This year's Arbor Day is being celebrated at the new picnic area located at the main trailhead of the Oak Grove Loop Trail on Saturday, December 6, 2008, at 9:00 am. The public is invited to take part in the donation and/or planting of trees. To make your \$100 donation (per tree), please complete and mail the Arbor Day Donation Form. In order to ensure the trees are available for all donors to plant, please make your donation by November 21, 2008. To receive a donor form or for further information, call the Mission Trails Visitor and Interpretive Center at 619-668-3281.



A section of the new picnic area located at the Oak Grove Loop trailhead

Another Great Donor Opportunity

Mission Trails has a special way for you to honor or memorialize a beloved friend or relation. An individual or group can make a generous contribution to have a plaque installed on a bench or picnic table located within the park. Areas at the Visitor Center, Cowles Mountain, Kumeyaay Lake Campground, East Fortuna Equestrian Staging, and others

have been set aside for the installation of benches and picnic tables. The latest is the new picnic area at the Oak Grove Loop trailhead. As well as the plaque on the bench or table, your donation will also be recognized on the donor board at the Visitor Center. For more information on how you can take advantage of this great donor opportunity, call 619-668-3280.

Notable Donations

July - September 2008

Founder - \$1,000 - \$2,500
Francis T. and Evelyn C. Kleber
Helen Welbourn -
In Honor of Lois J. Hummon
Family and Friends -
in Memory of Eunice Bertsson
Path Finder - \$100-\$500
Pat Abbott
Family and Friends - *In*
Memory of Elizabeth Ackerman
Lynn Baer
Edmund Capparelli and
Gale Romanowski
Curtis Carlson
Pete Cuthbert
Terry Gaughen
Robert and Linda Gordon
Art and Dorothy Hester
Francis T. and Evelyn C. Kleber
Dan and Dorothy Leonard
David McLaren and
Diane Nelson
Thomas Mullaney
Dick and Jan Murphy
Stephen Seaborg
Dr. and Mrs. William Sperling
Mr. and Mrs. Leonard
Trentacosta
Rose Van Hook
Nancy and George Varga
West Hills High School - *In*
Memory of Brittany Williams
Art and Connie Wood

Nest Box, continued from back page

in San Diego to breed and rear young before returning to Baja California and Northern Mexico to winter. This spring 105 nestlings fledged from 60 houses in the park.

Fourteen volunteers and eight Pack 319, Den 1 scouts have participated this year. Claudia Erickson and her scouts monitored nest boxes in

Kwaay Paay Wash. She said "Working on the nest box project gave our scout troop an incentive to get out and spend more time at MTRP and enjoy its peaceful beauty. Moreover, the boys got to learn more about birds, nature and conservation. It was quite an educational experience and an adventure all the way around!"

Because of the scarcity of suitable nesting sites, there is fierce

competition for use of nest cavities. Monitors get a front row seat to the ongoing drama. Wrens often toss out the present occupant's eggs and take over the box for their use. People interested in volunteering to be a monitor next year or willing to construct nest boxes for the project can contact Ranger Heidi at 619-688-3279 or e-mail hgutknecht@mtrp.org.

Support Mission Trails Regional Park



The easiest way yet
to support Mission Trails



Simply go to www.escrip.com
access the "sign up" link near
the top of the page
and follow the simple
instructions.

Ways you can donate to Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation

The Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation Board of Directors extends sincere thanks to our many donors. It is owing to your continuing support that we are able to fulfill our Mission - *In partnership with the City of San Diego, to preserve and protect the natural environment of Mission Trails Regional Park and to provide and promote educational and recreational opportunities.*

In addition to traditional cash donations, there are other ways you can provide short and long-term financial support for park programs and projects.

Memorial or In Honor Of gifts

Honor a friend or family member with a donation.

Matching Funds

Identify Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation for a matching funds contribution if your

employer has a policy of matching charitable gifts.

Wills

Remember Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation in your will.

Gifts of Securities

In order to allow donors to realize full tax deductions for appreciated stock, Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation accepts gifts of stock. Please call (619) 668-3280 for further details.

Charitable Remainder Trusts

With a CRT, highly appreciated assets are placed in an irrevocable trust. Those asset proceeds provide income to the donor and/or to his/her beneficiaries for life. Contact your financial advisor for information.

The Foundation's Special Funds include education and library funds, trail and tree/habitat maintenance funds, education and library endowment funds. Call (619) 668-3280 for further information. - MTRP Foundation Federal Tax ID number 33-0285093.

Mission Trails Regional Park Donor Opportunities

Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation provides opportunities for individuals, businesses, community organizations and foundations to support a variety of programs and projects within Mission Trails Regional Park. Thank you to our many friends who make annual contributions to Friends of Mission Trails Regional Park. A variety of donor opportunities are available as indicated below. All contributions are tax deductible. Names of contributors of \$1,000 or more will be engraved on a plaque permanently displayed at the park Visitor and Interpretive Center. Donations of \$100 and above will accumulate from year-to-year for contributor recognition purposes.

Name _____
Address _____
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\$25 Individual _____	\$1,000 Founder _____	\$25,000 Benefactor _____
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Special Funds

Please check fund(s) for which you wish your donation to be used.

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Lake Murray	_____

Make check payable to MTRP Foundation and send to:
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One Father Junipero Serra Trail, San Diego, CA 92119-1008

Charge my donation to VISA _____ MC _____
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Web Site: www.mtrp.org

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Mission Trails Regional Park News

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MTRP Nest Box Project Completes Eighth Year

While hiking in the Park, you may have seen bird houses mounted on poles and trees along the trail. These boxes are part of MTRP's ongoing Nest Box Project. The Project's goals are to provide nesting opportunities for cavity nesting birds breeding in the park and public education on the life cycle of native birds.

During the nesting season, from March through June, volunteers monitor assigned boxes weekly, observe nesting progress and record observations on a data form. House Wrens and Ash-throated Flycatchers typically use the boxes, although Western Bluebirds and American Kestrels have used the nest boxes in previous years. In early April Ash-throated Flycatchers arrive



Volunteers: Doug Fenske, Debbie Giambuzzi, Daniece Moden (Coordinator), Jeanne Raimond, Richard Griebe, Wendy Easterly and Terry Easterly. Absent: Sondra Hooley, Dawn Rucker, Claudia Erickson and Scout Troop 319, John Smith, Ken Fowler, Mary Bradley, and Linda Gilbreath.

Nest Box, continued on p. 6