

Mission Trails Regional Park News

Volume 24, Number 1

-- A Publication of the Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation --

Winter 2013

Masked and Mischievous

Article and photos by Ranger Heidi Gutknecht

Which nocturnal critter of Mission Trails does the title describe? If you guessed the raccoon, then you are correct! The Northern Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*) is easily recognized by its distinctive black mask and banded tail. The bandit-like mask is very fitting for the raccoon, as it is commonly seen rummaging through neighborhood garbage cans and raiding backyard gardens at night, when it is most active. Raccoons have adapted well to urban environments and will take up residence in the crawl space beneath homes or under porches, making them a nuisance to some. To prevent this from happening, simply block off all access to such places, do not leave any pet food out to attract them, and make sure your garbage and recycle bins are properly secured.

Raccoons are omnivorous, eating both plants and animals, and have a unique habit of dunking their food in water before eating it. It appears as though the

raccoon is washing its food, which is why the word “*lotor*” is in its scientific name – it is Latin for “washer.” However, raccoons actually have very sensitive, dexterous hands, and water enhances their sense of touch, which enables them to feel for inedible parts of their food to toss aside. They have five fingers and toes, and walk plantigrade (with their feet flat on the ground), just like us. In fact, raccoon tracks look almost like human baby hand and footprints, except their toes are a lot longer and have claws.

A good place to find raccoon tracks is in the mud along the shore of a river, stream, pond or lake, as they prefer habitats where water is nearby. Raccoons are not usually found high in the mountains, since they do not hibernate, and thus, require food year-round. In fall, they will fatten up to help them survive through the

Raccoons, continued on p. 3

George Varga's Star Party

Upcoming Dates

Unless otherwise noted, all Star Parties are located at the day use parking lot of the Kumeyaay Lake Campground and last approximately three hours. In consideration of others, no lanterns or white-light flashlights near the telescope, please.

February 16, 5:00 p.m. Tonight's event is one day before First Quarter Moon. Deep sky objects like the Orion Nebula, the Little Beehive (M41) in Canis Major, Crab Nebula (M1) in Taurus and numerous Open Clusters in Auriga will keep viewers occupied. The Crab Nebula is the result of a supernova that occurred in 1054 AD and was recorded by Chinese observers. Planet Jupiter will be high up almost on the meridian.

Stars, continued on p. 6





A Message From Executive Director Jay Wilson

Thomas the Russian Tortoise is doing very well and has settled into his new Tortoise House in Alicia Berg's home. Thomas has begun visiting classrooms with Alicia as part of our educational outreach program funded by a grant from SDG&E. He will be visiting many classrooms throughout the coming years. Thomas is also scheduled to appear at our annual Explore Mission Trails Day on May 18, 2013 at the Visitor Center.

Our "Where Our Water Comes From" display has some new features. The hands-on display showing the water cycle has been installed to the left of the three flat-screen monitors in our Exhibit Hall. The long-awaited satellite image of California, illustrating the pipelines bringing water from Northern California and the Colorado River to San Diego, is on display. The satellite image is frequently updated so one can track weather patterns, and even the snow pack.

A special "thank you" to Vicky Delong, our Art Show Coordinator, for an outstanding series of art and photography exhibitions throughout the year. Over 90 artists submitted work for consideration for our 2013 program; and more than 50 artists will be exhibiting throughout the coming year, displaying a great number of media. Several exhibitions are presented by

individual artists, and other exhibitions will feature as many as eight artists. There will be ten, approximately month-long shows, during the year. Other exhibits will include our Twenty-First Annual Amateur Photography Contest in May, the second annual "Art in the Park" fund-raising event and exhibit in October, and a two-week exhibition in December showcasing art by local students.

Our monthly free concert series continues through the volunteer efforts of Charles Carter and Dr. Mitsuo Tomita. Charles works with each group to ensure that everything is set up for the performers, and volunteers at each concert. You will often see him handing out programs in the Visitor Center Gallery. Dr. Tomita, a musician himself, approached me in the spring of 2010 and offered to help coordinate a series of concerts. He selects the groups to perform from a growing list of talented musicians who would like to perform in the Visitor Center Theater. All the musicians perform free of charge. Our concerts began in December of 2010 with the Pomerado Brass Quintet, who performed for the third time on December 16, 2012, kicking off our third season. The concerts are always on the third Sunday of each month at 3:00 p.m. in the Visitor Center Theater. On the second Sunday of every month, the San Diego Native American Flute Circle meets in the Visitor Center Outdoor Amphitheater from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. They are always looking for new members, and will help you learn how to plan and enjoy the many styles of the Native American flute.

Come out and enjoy the wonders of Mission Trails.

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Raccoons, continued from p. 1

winter. During the day they sleep in dens, such as tree hollows, burrows dug by other animals, brush piles, or rocky outcroppings. Females give birth sometime between March and May to up to seven (typically four) “kits.” The eyes of the kits open after about three weeks, and when they are six to seven weeks old, they begin to feed outside of the den with their mother. The young will stay with their mother until fall or until she kicks them out to make room for her next litter.

Speaking of “kicking out,” on December 5th, Project Wildlife released six beautiful raccoons here in Mission Trails Regional Park. The

variety of habitats and the San Diego River running through the park makes this an ideal location for these new residents. Project Wildlife is a wonderful non-profit organization that rescues, rehabilitates and releases back into the wild native wildlife of San Diego. They also educate the public about ways to coexist with urban wildlife, such as raccoons. You can visit their booth at our annual Explore Mission Trails Day event, scheduled for Saturday, May 18th. Thanks to the time and dedication of Project Wildlife volunteers like Dave Hassell and Nichta Hopps (pictured below, left to right) six formerly orphaned raccoons now have a new place to call home. For more information on Project Wildlife, go to www.projectwildlife.org



From the Gift Shop Help for Happy Hikers

Spring is upon us and the days are getting longer. The weather is perfect for a good little, or long, hike. Just don't forget to take your best friend with you – your Walking Stick!

We have an excellent selection of walking sticks made from all different kinds of woods, in different lengths and different weights. There are walking sticks for children and for the tallest adult.

Some of our sticks come from WHISTLE CREEK in Colorado, and others come from BRAZOS WALKING STICKS in Texas. We even have lightweight walking sticks that are locally made in Lakeside, just down the road. They come in a great range of prices. We can help you select the stick that will be perfect for you.

So that you will be well informed before you strike out we have a beautiful map of the Park that shows all of the trails and will keep you from ever losing your way.

We also have a nice selection of books that give a good overview of hiking possibilities all over Southern California or specific to San Diego County. One book even contains recipes for delicious picnic ideas.



Thank you to our many Mission Trails Contributors of 2012

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Notable Donations

October 31 - December 31, 2012

Benefactor - \$25,000 - \$49,000

San Diego Gas & Electric -
 Sempra Energy

Steward - \$5,000 - \$9,999

Steven R. Prewitt Trust -
 Mission Trails Endowment Fund
 at the San Diego Foundation

Patron - \$2,500 - \$4,999

Pardee Homes

Founder - \$1,000 - \$2,499

Cowles Mountain Group -
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 Linda Odening -
 in memory of Walter Odening
 Kiwanis Club of Tierrasanta
 Judy and Curt McCarty

Trailblazer - \$500 - \$999

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Visitor Center Gallery

Art Exhibits

January 12 – February 8, 2013

Seven person group exhibit
Elizabeth Castillo, Photography
Sue Britt, Paper Collage
Joyce Nash, Acrylic
Ann Scott, Mixed Media
with Photography
Julia Rey, Acrylic & Pastel
Carol Roberts, Watercolor
Mark Wade, OilGraph

February 9 - March 8, 2013

Reception: February 17, 1:00 - 4:00
Jim Respass, Photography

March 9 – April 5, 2013

Reception: March 10, 1:00 – 4:00
Two person group exhibit
Nancy Everds and Joan Everds,
Photography

April 6 – May 3, 2013

Reception: April 14, 1:00 – 4:00
Connie Ho, Watercolor

Dates to Remember

Explore Mission Trails Day

May 18, 2013

9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

**Twenty-First Annual Amateur
Photography Contest**

Deadline for submitting photos

April 26, 2013

Exhibition dates

May 4 through May 31

**Photo Contest Reception and
Awards Presentation**

April 26, 2:00 p.m.

Entry forms may be picked up at the
Visitor Center or online at
mtrp.org/photo_contest_contest.asp

Stars, continued from p. 1

March 9, 6:00 p.m. The Moon will be two days short of being New. Consequently it will not contribute to light pollution. Many open clusters in Auriga, Gemini and Canis Major will be up. The Orion Nebula will be to the west of the Meridian, the imaginary great circle that intersects with the North and South Celestial Poles and passes through the observer's position. Jupiter will be in the Western sky.

April 20, 7:00 p.m. The Moon will be a couple of days past First Quarter and in good position for viewing features on the Moon. Saturn will be rising in the East and may come into view towards the end of the star party. Jupiter is setting in the West but may be visible early before it sets behind the Fortuna Range. Ursa Major is high up so it will be possible to view the Whirlpool Galaxy (M51), and Galaxies M81 and M82, Moonlight and weather permitting.

May 18, Explore Mission Trails Day. During daylight hours from **9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.** come out to the Visitor Center and view the Sun. With any luck, there will be some Sunspot Activity. Viewing is through a telescope equipped with a Solar Filter for safe viewing. Additionally, while you are in the park, take advantage of the many event activities offered during the day. Then as night approaches, the telescope will be set up from **7:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.** in the Day Use Parking Lot by Kumeyaay Lake Campground. The Moon will be one day past First Quarter. Saturn will well positioned in the Southeastern sky for viewing. The Whirlpool Galaxy (M51), Sunflower Galaxy (M63), Black-Eye Galaxy (M64) and Sombrero Galaxy (M104) are in good position for viewing but Moonlight and light pollution will degrade the view.

During the months of June, July, August and September, visit George and his telescope at the North Rim of the Grand Canyon.

October 26, 6:00 p.m. The Moon will not be a factor as it is at Last Quarter and will not rise until well after the star party. The Summer Triangle will be high up in the sky and enable viewing the Ring Nebula (M57), the binary star Albireo in Cygnus, the Dumbbell Nebula (M27) and the Coathanger (Brocchi's or Collinder 399) Cluster. Also up for viewing will be Globular Cluster M15 in Pegasus and Open Cluster M30 in Capricornus and the Wild Duck Cluster (M11) in Scutum.

November 16, 5:00 p.m. The Moon will be one day short of being Full so it will contribute to light pollution. The Andromeda Galaxy (M31) and its companion M32 are well in position for viewing. Light from these two objects takes about 2.5 – 2.9 million years to reach Earth! The Double Cluster in Perseus will be in the Northeastern sky. December 7, 5:00 p.m. The Moon will be waxing (getting brighter) and be two days short of First Quarter. Views of the Andromeda Galaxy (M31) and its companion M32 should be wonderful. Also up for viewing are the Pleiades (Seven Sisters), the Double Cluster in Perseus and numerous Open Clusters scattered across the sky.

January 11, 2014, 5:00 p.m. The Moon is past First Quarter and waxing. Jupiter will be rising in the Eastern sky. Up for viewing are The Pleiades (Seven Sisters), the Double Cluster in Perseus, the Andromeda Galaxy (M31) high overhead as well as the great Orion Nebula rising in the East.

Remember to access our online Event Calendar <https://mtrp.org/events.asp> for more great programs and events happening in 2013.

Mission Trails Regional Park Donor Opportunities

By donating to Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation, you are preserving the past and investing in the future.

Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation provides opportunities for individuals, businesses, community organizations, and foundations to support a variety of programs and projects within the park. Community support is important to ensure adequate funding to maintain the award winning Mission Trails Regional Park Visitor and Interpretive Center and the multiple amenities the park has to offer.

Special event and project sponsorship are also available. Sponsorships for Explore Mission Trails Day, an annual event held each May, range from \$500 to \$5,000. Exhibit sponsorships begin at \$2,500. Bench and table sponsorships range from \$1,500 to \$4,000 depending upon the item and its location in the park. Contact Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation at 619-668-3280 or mtrp@mtrp.org for additional information.

Names of contributors of \$1,000 or more will be engraved on the donor board displayed at the Visitor and Interpretive Center. Yearly donations of \$100 or more are accumulated from year-to-year for donor recognition purposes.

Become a Business Friend of Mission Trails

Business Donors making contributions of \$100 to \$500 are eligible for a web site link from the Mission Trails web site for a period of six months. Business Donors making contributions of \$500 and above are eligible for a period of one year.

Our Funds ... You may designate your donation for one or more of the following funds.

Friends of Mission Trails - General support for all Park programs.

Trail Maintenance

Tree and Habitat Maintenance

Education Programs

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Other ways you may donate ...

Memorial or In Honor Of gifts - Honor a friend or family member with a donation.

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Gifts of Securities - To allow donors to realize full tax deductions for appreciated stock, MTRP Foundation accepts gifts of stock. Contact us at 619-668-3280 or mtrp@mtrp.org for further details.

Wills - Remember MTRP Foundation in your will.

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 the donor's beneficiaries for life. Contact your financial advisor for information.

Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation, Inc.
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**Mission Trails Regional Park News
Volume 24, Number 1, Winter 2013**

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Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation, Inc., established January 1988, is a non-profit public benefit corporation organized for the purpose of preserving, improving and maintaining Mission Trails Regional Park.

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Roland Roberge, Editor.

A COPY OF THIS AND PAST NEWSLETTERS ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE: mtrp.org/newsletter.asp

Another Successful Arbor Day

This year's Mission Trails Regional Park Arbor Day was celebrated on Saturday, December 1st at the Kumeyaay Lake Campground day use parking lot. Joe Morse, President of the MTRP Foundation, welcomed and thanked everyone for their interest, contribution and support. MTRP staff member Carmelo Esquer gave everyone instructions on how to properly plant the ten oak trees. Cub Scout Pack 308 and Boy Scout Troop 950 assisted with planting the trees.

Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation thanks the following donors for their support of our 2012 Arbor Day: San Carlos Methodist Church and Friends of Taka Sumi-e.

The event was sponsored by City of San Diego Councilmember Scott Sherman, City of San Diego Park & Recreation Department, Mission Trails Regional Park Citizens' Advisory Committee and the MTRP Foundation.

Photo by John Haywood

