



Mission Trails Regional Park News

Volume 15 Number 4

Fall/Winter 2004

New Mission Trails Tracking Team

After four years of working with members of the San Diego Tracking Team on monitoring critical wildlife corridors in Mission Trails Regional Park the Mission Trails Tracking Team (MTTT) has been born! It started as a data-gathering mission to help insure proper wildlife protection in the event of future widening of SR 52 adjacent to Mission Trails. Now it has blossomed into a twenty-two person team of enthusiastic trackers chomping at the bit to hit the trails, learn new skills and make a positive difference. Our new tracking team, many of whom are experienced Trail Guides, will join the core of dedicated trackers and bring their unbridled enthusiasm to our team. This should help us expand from three transects to many more throughout our ever-expanding park.

This is a critical time for Mission Trails with open space expansion plans and land acquisition in high gear. Now is the time to get it all in place to have a baseline to monitor future changes. The MTTT program brings people from all walks of life, with a common love of California's unique habitats and wondrous critters together to learn and then share their knowledge with park patrons from all over the world. Tracking skills enhance their insatiable curiosity. Without the Penasquitos/San

Tracking, continued on p. 4

Welcome to David Lee



David Lee joined Mission Trails Regional Park in May 2004 as Center Director I at the Kumeyaay Lake Campground. His responsibilities include managing the operation of the Kumeyaay Lake Campground as well as assisting the Ranger staff. He has worked for the City of San Diego Park and Recreation Department for eight years. David spent three years working as an Assistant Center Director for the Martin Luther King Jr. Recreation Center and Mountain View Recreation Center. He enjoys playing basketball, spending time with family, friends, dog and pet lizard and being part of the Mission Trails Team. David is a valued addition to our staff and we welcome him into the MTRP family.

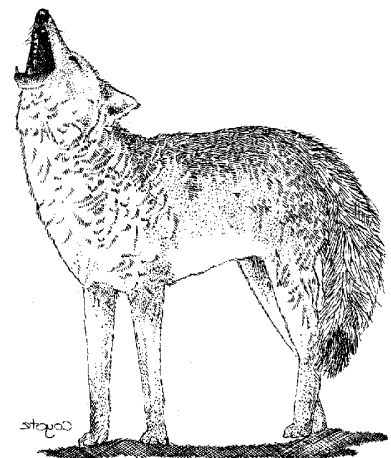
Featured Park Inhabitant

Coyote

You gotta love Wile E. Coyote! His antics and misadventures, trying to catch the speedy roadrunner, have entertained us for years. As ridiculous as he may seem, he manages to cheat death as he exhibits his cunning and stamina. But Wile E. inhabits a cartoon world and possesses only a few of the positive traits of his real world brethren.

Coyote cunning and craftiness are legendary as is evident in countless Native American stories and songs. These tales usually tell of the coyote using his talents to get the better of various wildlife neighbors or of their beating him at his own game. Its innate intelligence and opportunism have enabled the coyote to prosper and expand its territory, from the prairies and arid west, by capitalizing on the European people's expansion

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A Message From Councilmember Jim Madaffer

We rely on grants and private funding as well as allocations from the City of San Diego

for Mission Trails Regional Park (MTRP). As you can imagine, it was very alarming when the State of California recently decided to renege on promised funding for parks. The State Controller rescinded \$15 million in unspent money on park projects. The State Controller is trying to change the rules from requiring that projects receiving state funding be completed in three years instead of five years. This applies to grants that already have signed contracts. This action will affect 14 projects. These contracted state-funded projects are now under way, on time, and a priority to our communities.

He also singled out four grants for in-depth audits. One of those four in question is a \$985,000 grant to the MTRP Foundation. The allocation was for the first phase of the new East Fortuna Equestrian Staging area.

The situation may have changed by the time you read this. However, what I want you to know is this. 1) Ultimately, it appears MTRP won't be severely affected. We, meaning the City of San Diego and the MTRP Foundation have already spent a majority of the state grant money and the project is steadily moving forward toward completion. I am optimistic that the audit will show there are no problems with this project. I should point out that the state did withhold the final installment of nearly \$100,000 for this project. 2) In partnership with State Assembly-

member Shirley Horton, I am urging our California legislators to oppose the Controller's rescinding of grant funds and support returning of those grant funds.

While I applaud the State's efforts to be fiscally responsible and demonstrate good stewardship over taxpayer's money, I believe they have gone overboard in this case by changing the rules in the middle of the game. It's clear this is more an issue of the State Park and Recreation Director and the State Controller locked into a fight with our park caught in the crossfire. The MTRP Foundation has done an exceptional job in applying for, receiving and administering grants. Dorothy Leonard, Secretary/Treasurer of the Foundation, deserves special kudos. Also, I think that the City of San Diego staff who work at the park as well as those who work on behalf of the park are outstanding.

There is no justifiable reason for withholding state grant money awarded to MTRP and I intend to fight on behalf of our treasured park. I urge you to as well. Please write your legislator and tell them you want funding restored to all park projects in the City of San Diego.

As always, I welcome hearing your comments regarding Mission Trails Regional Park or any other issue. Call me at (619) 236-6677 or send an email to jmadaffer@sandiego.gov. I invite you to visit my Web site at JimMadaffer.com.

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**Recycle your glass, plastic
and aluminum at Kumeyaay Lake
Campground. Containers are located
in the day-use parking lot.**

Kumeyaay Lake Campground

Closed to camping
Tuesdays & Wednesdays

Tracking Tidbits

Mission Trails "speaks" to us all the time. There isn't a trail that doesn't tell us something about the wildlife that live here. Tracks and signs are everywhere; we just have to open our senses to "hear" it. Sometimes it's a whisper - a bent twig showing a deer stopped to nibble on some mustard; sometimes it's a shout - a distinct bobcat track in mud or deep deer rubs on a willow trunk. Of course, my favorite is scat! What easier way to engross (and gross out!) the younger set on your interpretive walks than to

break apart that jumbled mass of hair and bones to find all the assorted treasures that tell us where the animal has been, what he has been eating and how healthy his home range is right now?

Best of all, it's something everyone can find! The trick is - it always comes back to this - listening with all our senses; becoming more aware and-sensitive to our immediate environment.



Squirrel Tactic

I'd like to share a study I read recently from the California Academy of Sciences/UC Davis. It seems that our cuddly, "defenseless" California ground squirrels have developed a warning that only a rattlesnake could love; the first deliberate animal signal known to be communicated via heat!

Squirrel, continued on p. 4

Visitor Center

Open 7 days a week 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. except major holidays

Theater

We are proud to announce a new addition to the exclusive presentations we show in our theater. "Trails of the Kumeyaay" is a 15 minute informative video featuring Stan Rodriguez, from the Santa Isabel band of Kumeyaay, discussing the Kumeyaay people today and their link with the past, their culture and the land.

Our three other offerings include two videos, "Mission Trails Regional Park, Link with the Past, Experienced Today", a fifteen minute informative film on MTRP; "Stewardship Through the Ages", a twenty-four minute presentation depicting the ownership and usage of the land we now call MTRP; and a ten minute inspirational slide show "MTRP - A Natural Beauty."

Gift Shop

Start your holiday shopping early at our gift shop in the quite, relaxed setting of the Visitor Center. We are proud to offer merchandise geared to those who love to explore the out-of-doors. Whether a guide book or a walking stick, our merchandise will help you to enjoy your excursions into nature.

Besides our own "San Diego's Mission Trails Regional Park: Official Guide Book", you will find various books dealing with the geology, history and ecology of the San Diego region. There is also a wide range of children's books dealing with nature.

The gift shop also continues to carry crafts made by the local Native American people. Numerous pots and baskets are available for your purchase and enjoyment.

Art Exhibits

Oct. 30 to Dec. 11

Celebrate Trees

Artist Joan Boyer exhibits a selection of oils and water-colors.

Reception Saturday, Nov. 6th, 1 to 3 p.m.

Dec. 11 to Jan. 22

Doris Regan is a wonderful wildlife artist who works in watercolor.



A percentage of proceeds from the sale of art work goes to MTRP.

Coyote, continued from p. 1

west. Preferring habitat that does not contain wolves, the coyote quickly and easily filled the void once this predator was eradicated.

The coyote is basically a wild dog of medium size, which varies in weight, coloration and length of fur depending upon its geographical location. Due to scarcity of prey and difference in climate, desert coyotes weigh about 20 to 25 pounds and have shorter, lighter, thinner fur than their mountain and northern cousins, who can weigh up to 50 pounds and have a longer, darker, thicker coat. Coloration can vary from grayish brown to yellowish gray with buff underside. The coyote has pointed triangular ears, sharp pointed snout and a bushy tail. This tail is helpful in distinguishing the coyote from dogs and wolves because a coyote will carry its tail low when running, whereas wolves' and dogs' tails are high.

Although quite family oriented, coyotes prefer to hunt alone using their keen senses to locate and capture game, and then bring the spoils home to share. While not pursuing the elusive roadrunner, Wile E. must be subsisting on more traditional coyote food like rabbits, rodents and carrion. Birds provide only about 3.5% of the coyote diet. They will also eat snakes, lizards, insects and even fruits and vegetables if necessary. Closer to populated areas, domesticated animals such as chickens, sheep, small dogs and cats and even garbage can refuse can become part of the coyote diet. It is highly recommended not feeding coyotes, or any other form of wildlife because they will lose their fear of humans and become a nuisance and



Coyote print

at times dangerous.

Coyotes usually dig their own dens, although they have been known to enlarge and use the dens of other burrowing animals and will use the den for numerous years. Coyotes generally stay mated for years unless something has happened to incapacitate one of the pair. Breeding occurs in January and February with a gestation period of 63 days. An average litter of six pups is born blind, but within a week or two, their eyes will open and allow them to leave the den a few days later.

Until they can hunt for themselves, coyote pups are fed regurgitated food brought to them by their parents.

If a pup can keep itself from being killed by eagles, mountain lions or dogs, it can live upwards to 10 to 12 years. An adult is more likely to succumb to diseases like parvo enteritis, distemper, rabies and heartworms. That is one thing Wile E. has over his real world relatives, he will be around for quite some time.



Senior Ranger John Barone, on behalf of Mission Trails Regional Park Rangers, awards Sgt. Dale Shockley with a plaque in appreciation for his continued support and dedication to Mission Trails staff and volunteers.

Tracking, continued from p. 1

Diego Tracking Team and the terrific transect leaders we have had guiding us throughout these years, none of this would be happening. We excitedly look forward to our now "official" partnership with San Diego Tracking Team and envision a great adventure ahead of us! For more information about joining the MTTT, contact Ranger Barrett at 619-668-2746

Squirrel, continued from p. 3

When up against a rattlesnake, the squirrels held their tail hairs on end, lashed the tail back and forth and emitted a distinct heat glow (noted using an infrared camera). Interestingly enough, the squirrels had no heat response when up against a gopher snake, differentiating between enemies and using a warning that only the heat sensitive pit organs of the rattlesnake could understand!

The hypothesis is that this response is used to distract rattlers from the squirrels' more vulnerable young.

Ranger Luanne Barrett



**Mission Trails
Regional Park Foundation**

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New Staging Area to Open December 4

This is an exciting time at Mission Trails Regional Park. The new East Fortuna Equestrian Staging Area will be dedicated and opened to the public on Saturday, December 4, 2004, in conjunction with our annual Arbor Day. The public is invited to attend the festivities which begin at 9:00 a.m. This new staging area provides improved access to the East Fortuna Region of Mission Trails, as well as to the proposed expansion of the park north of State Rte. 52 and northward to the newly added West Sycamore region of the park near Poway.

The staging area includes parking and picnic areas for hikers, bicyclists and equestrians. The parking accommodations include a 48-space regular lot and 15 spaces for vehicles with horse trailers. Space is also provided for periodic horse rentals and pony rides. The project is substantially complete at this time but will not be opened to the public until the end of a 90-day project maintenance/plant establishment period.

The project is being funded, in part, by a \$1 million State of California grant the Foundation received in 2001 with support from Senator Dede Alpert. This project has also been made possible by a donation of land from San Diego Landfill Systems/Allied Waste Industries.

Prior to the start of construction, the Army Corps of Engineers completed a sweep of this area for unexploded ordnance. While no ordnance was found, they did uncover old tank parts, horse shoes, fencing, etc.

This new staging area is a joint project of Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation and the City of San Diego Park and Rec-



recreation Department. The second phase of the project, which is not yet funded, will include a building with space for staff offices and maintenance facilities as well as an information area, restroom, large covered picnic area, and small kitchen to be available on a rental basis for public use.