



Mission Trails Regional Park News

Volume 16 Number 4

Fall/Winter 2005

On The Right Track By Ranger Luanne Barrett

Why bother to learn tracking? What's the big deal about deciphering unintelligible shuffles of dirt, chewed up plants and poop in the road, for goodness sake? Well, it's all about connections. Human beings of the past lived within a worldview in which everything was interconnected; people had responsibilities to act in certain ways to ensure nature's generosity and abundance would continue. In just the past century, sixty percent of us have moved from rural villages to large cities; we don't have to worry about day-to-day survival and our world is largely made of concrete and steel. Urban children today don't know where water and electricity comes from or where our garbage ends up. They are warned not to touch something because "it might bite" or "it's dirty" or simply "Yuk, that's disgusting!" We've become blind to our connection with nature and, therefore, have lost our sense of responsibility; it's putting our future at risk. Tracking brings back that connection.

There is something magi-

cal about the transformation that can take place when following a series of tracks, decoding, not just the animal, but what's he's thinking, where he's going and what happened to him. It's almost as if you become what you are tracking; there is an intensity and clarity of your senses and emotion that is unlike anything else I've found. That ancient bond is renewed and a feeling of connection with everything is formed. Paws, plants and poop can do all that...and more.

In Mission Trails we perform transect surveys quarterly to monitor our three wildlife corridors. A transect is a sample area set up in a way that is representational of the entire park's activity. Mission Trails and San Diego Tracking Team members have been collecting transect data since October 1999 to prepare for the eventual widening of Hwy 52. Our goal has been to document the "facts and figures" needed to make sure that the wildlife of the area and the importance of our only corridors

Tracking, continued on pg. 4

Featured Park Inhabitant American Kestrel

We normally think of birds of prey or raptors as being large formidable creatures; huge killing machines with long wingspans. However, that image is not always the case. The American Kestrel, smallest of the North American



falcons is about the size of a large pigeon and can be just as deadly as his larger cousins and, like other raptors, has all the necessary weapons; a sharp hooked bill, and large talons. Besides its small size, its ability to hover also distinguishes it from most other raptors. Kestrels do not catch their prey on

Kestrel, continued on p. 4

What Goes Around - Comes Around

It's that time of year again, when the leaves of deciduous trees turn a beautiful yellow, fall to the ground, then turn brown and dry up, leaving the trees to stand "naked" throughout the winter. To some, this time of year is a

"bummer," as it means much raking of leaves; to children, it is a wonderful time, as it means joyous romping through piles of raked leaves. To others still, it is a contemplative time, to gain a greater respect and

Around, continued on pg. 3



A Message From Councilmember Jim Madaffer

If you have driven on Highway 52 recently, you may have noticed the new signs that say Mission Trails Summit. Coordinating our efforts with Caltrans, we were able to have new signs installed reflecting the name change to that area.

The Lake Murray Street Fair recently took place and of course was the perfect venue for all of the vendors, entertainment and activities of the day. If you haven't attended in the past, mark your calendar for next September. It is a great community event.

The Lake Murray entrance to the park has two Mission Trails Regional Park signs that were recently installed. They help identify that the lake is part of Mission

Trails Regional Park. The signs were installed as part of the Alvarado Water Treatment Plant project and are one of several improvements along the Kiowa Drive entrance to the park.

SDG&E deserves to be commended for their support of our favorite park. As you may have heard, they have organized a public awareness campaign in which SDG&E customers can pay their bills on line, thereby conserving natural resources. Customers may select the MTRP Foundation to receive a donation from SDG&E. The special campaign runs through November 1st.

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 where you may sign up to receive my electronic newsletter.

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Park Foundation*

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California State Senator, retired*

Cowles, continued form back page

Service to clear brush and trim trees and park staff and volunteers removed the accumulated silt. Although the sign was strengthened, cleaned and repainted by park staff, it will have to be replaced soon.

Maintenance of the park with its numerous facilities is a never-ending venture. Park Rangers, Grounds Maintenance workers, supporting staff and volunteers work long, demanding hours to ensure the park is clean and safe for the enjoyment of the public. They also provide information and education to the thousands of visitors and schoolchildren who enter the park every week. The Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation Board, as well as donating time and expertise, is dedicated to giving monetary support to the park and its staff and volunteers. In this time of governmental fiscal austerity, it is important to have those of

generous spirit donate what they can to promote and support our park.

A hearty thank you goes out to those who have donated to Mission Trails in the past. Your donations have helped to keep it one of the finest open-space parks in the nation. If you are new to the area and/or have been considering donating, please use the form on page seven of this newsletter. With the acquisition of land north of Rte. 52, our park is still growing and we need to ensure it will remain a vital and well maintained part of our community for years to come.



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

Proceeds go to MTRP Foundation.

Visitor Center

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

Theater

When visiting at the center ask one of our friendly volunteers to show one or all of our exclusive presentations. "Trails of the Kumeyaay" is a 15 minute program featuring Stan Rodriguez, from the Santa Isabel band of the 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 "Mission Trails Regional Park - A Natural Beauty."

Gift Shop

Start your holiday shopping early at our gift shop in the quiet, 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.

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

F3: Feathers, Fur & Foliage

Artworks by Shandel Gamer
And Roger Heglar

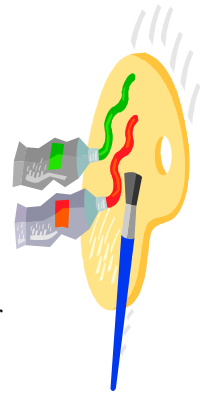
Through Oct 29, 2005

San Diego Seven Oil Paintings - Landscapes

Betty Blount
Sandra Hayen
Richard Johnson
Robert Kelsch
Grace Schlesier
Nancy Tschopp

*October 29 through
December 10, 2005*

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



Around, continued from pg. 1

appreciation for the adaptability of nature through the cycle of the seasons.

Though the trees may look "dead" without their leaves, they are very much alive and are merely in a dormant state, to conserve energy during a time of less available water and sunlight. Their dropped leaves do not go to waste either, as the nutrients are recycled back into the soil during decomposition. Here at Mission Trails Regional Park, the deciduous trees can be found in the riparian habitats along the San Diego River and around Kumeyaay Lake. These trees are primarily cottonwood, willow and sycamore. Many plants found in Coastal Sage Scrub, Chaparral, and Grassland environments also go dormant.

Not only do many plants go dormant during the winter,

many wildlife species do, as well, in order to survive. For example, frogs and toads will bury themselves in the mud and hibernate until the spring rains arrive. This is a great time of year to go hiking, for those who are not fond of seeing snakes, as they also hibernate during the winter. Those pesky mosquitoes and gnats that like to fly up your nose are also, thankfully, taking a break at this time. Ground squirrels can be seen scurrying about, gathering materials to insulate the inside of their burrows, where they will be spending the majority of the winter.

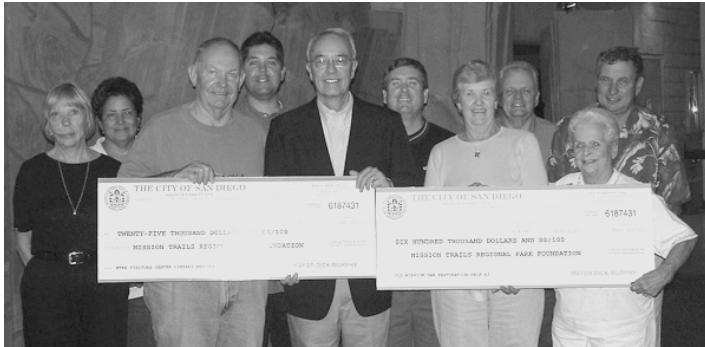
For avid bird-watchers, this is an exciting time of year to see and hear all the winter migrants. At Kumeyaay Lake, for example, they may encounter various migratory waterfowl. At the Old Mission Dam, they may be treated to the sight of birds which prefer a more wooded environment. Oak Canyon, the Grasslands and many other areas of

the park will harbor numerous species of birds either wintering over or just passing through.

Come spring time, we bid our winter visiting birds farewell until next year, and welcome back those critters that have been hibernating all winter. The croaking of frogs and toads can be heard once again, along with the songs of amorous birds in the air. The Riparian trees seem to "come back to life," as buds of new leaf growth appear. And so nature's cycle of life continues on its merry way. John Muir sums it up quite nicely: "This grand show is eternal. It is always sunrise somewhere. The dew is never all dried at once. A shower is forever falling. Vapor is ever rising. Eternal sunrise, eternal sunset, eternal dawn and gloaming. On sea, and continent and island, each in its turn, as the round earth rolls."

Ranger Heidi Gutknecht

City Donations



From left to right: Foundation Vice-President Nancy Acevedo, Connie Wood, Foundation President Joe Morse, Carlton Morse, former San Diego Mayor Dick Murphy, Johnnie Perkins, Foundation Secretary/Treasurer Dorothy Leonard, Jim Austin, Marjorie Ferrante and Gary Krueger

Former Mayor Dick Murphy presents Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation Board of Directors with two ceremonial checks from the City of San Diego – one in the amount of \$25,000 for the Library Endowment Fund and one in the amount of \$600,000 for the Old Mission Dam restoration project.

The Library Endowment Fund will be used for the purchase of books for and help in the maintenance of the Visitor Center Library.

The Old Mission Dam Restoration Project will help to preserve one of San Diego's historical treasures. The project includes dredging the area behind the dam to remove silt that has accumulated over the years. This silt build-up is allowing trees and other vegetation to grow too close to the dam allowing their root system to eventually cause damage to the dam's structural integrity.

Tracking, continued from pg. 1

to the "outside world" were taken into consideration when decisions were made as to how this construction will take place and what will be left when the job is completed.

Well, the time has finally arrived - the money has been approved, the highway project is on the fast track and we are making a difference! As has happened in many areas in the City and County of San Diego, tracking transect data is being presented to planners and biologists to support our contention that wildlife and habitat needs must be factored into every phase of construction and its aftermath. People are listening and our tracking work is having an impact.

So a heartfelt thank you to all the trackers out there who have braved early morning hours in the "tunnel of love" or scrambling over "scat rock" to make a difference. And our call goes out to more people who would like to experience the wonders of the tracking connection and, at the same time, help us continue to make a difference in that delicate balance of park preservation and urban growth. A whole new world is waiting for you!

Kestrel, continued from pg. 1

the wing, but by using rapid wing beats, will hover above their target, drop down upon the unsuspecting victim and pin it to the ground. Another method of hunting is by dropping down from any available perch. Being a small raptor, it subsists mainly on large insects and small creatures such as mice, lizards and sparrow-sized birds. Although birds or sparrows are generally not the main part of their diet, the American Kestrel is also known as the Sparrow Hawk.

The American Kestrel is a very pretty bird with distinguishing markings. Its back and tail are rust colored with the male having slate-blue wings and an unbarred tail. The female, while not having the slate-blue wings, does have a barred tail. Other striking features are the two black vertical stripes and large eye on either side of their white face. These black stripes along with the supra-orbital bony ridge help to reduced glare. It can be a noisy bird with its high-pitched cries of alarm, especially when protecting its young.

Although distributed widely throughout North American, they prefer areas with few trees such as open deserts, grasslands and woodland borders. In spite of this, kestrels

generally use cavities in trees for nesting. Barring that, holes in other structure will do. Permanent pair bonding seems to be indicative of this species. Once a male takes over a certain territory, a female will hunt and associate with the male. Courtship feeding of the female by the male, aerial displays and the search for a nest site will help to strengthen the bond between the pair. Very little or no lining is added to the nesting cavity. Nesting will begin around mid-March with the laying of 3 to 5 white or pinkish eggs blotched with brown. The female is the main incubator while the male hunts for food. Young Kestrels will fledge from the nest in about a month. Young Kestrels stay with the parents for a while after they have fledged and then go off on their own.

Like other species of raptors, the American Kestrel has adapted well to the presence of humans and their cityscapes. This means you could possibly see a Kestrel hunting in the city. They would most likely be seen above city parks or ball fields helping to keep the area clean of insects and rodents.

Roland Roberge

Selected MTRP Events and Activities

For outdoor activities, bring water and wear sturdy shoes.

Outdoor activities canceled if raining.

This is only a partial list of events and activities in the park. For current, additional and updated information, visit mtrp.org or call the Visitor Center at 619-668-3275



Old Mission Dam Nature Stroll

Join Trail Guides at the Old Mission Dam parking lot on the first Tuesday of every month at 10:00 a.m. for a NATURE STROLL! This adventure is designed for those with limited mobility and for nature enthusiasts who want to take time to immerse themselves in the natural ambience of Mission Trails. This hour-long walk will focus on the history of the dam, the ecology of the park, and the close relationship of

the local plants, animals, and the elements. The stroll is surrounded by lush stream side (riparian) and planted transition zone habitat.

The distance covered will be less than 1/4 mile of flat terrain on an excellent trail, except for a 30-foot slope (max. 12% grade) to and from the parking lot. This event is wheelchair friendly.

Tracking Team

Join members of the Mission Trails Tracking Team for a nature walk focusing on the discovery and identification of track and sign from some of the many animals that inhabit Mission Trails. Meet at the Visitor Center front kiosk on the second Sunday of every month at 8:30AM. Canceled if raining."

Winter Solstice Hikes on Cowles Mountain



The Mission Trails Regional Park Trail Guides will lead pre-dawn hikes to the area of the solstice observatory on Cowles Mountain on the 22nd and 23rd of December. The Canyoneers of the San Diego Natural History Museum will lead the hike on Wednesday the 21st. All hikes begin at 6:00 a.m. The starting point is the trailhead adjacent to the parking lot at Golfcrest Dr. & Navajo Rd. 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.

Bird Walks

With David Kisner, Kerry Kenwood and Jay Rourke. All walks are the third Saturday of the month, 8:00-10:30 a.m.

December 17, 2005

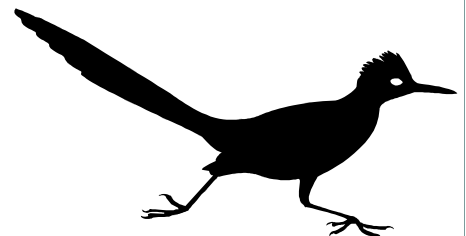
Lake Murray

January 21, 2006

Grasslands - East Fortuna Equestrian Staging area

February 18, 2006

Oak Grove Loop Trail



Trail Guide Training Class

Trail Guides are MTRP volunteers trained to lead interpretive nature walks in the park. 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, and Kumeyaay culture. This 10-week program involves a three-hour classroom session every Wednesday evening and a three-hour field activity on Saturday mornings. At the end, students take a written exam on the material and demonstrate their interpretive skills by



taking a veteran trail guide on a sample walk. Trail Guide graduates are expected to lead at least one walk per month.

The next session begins in January 2006. Please contact Ranger Luanne Barrett 619-668-3279 for further information.

Notable Donations

July – September 2005

Director - \$100,000 and above
F. Helen Pratt-Kurz

Steward - \$5,000 – \$10,000
County of San Diego Community Enhancement Funds

Patron - \$2,500 – \$5,000
Pardee Homes

Founder - \$1,000 - \$2,500
Pete Cuthbert
Kiwanis Club of Tierrasanta – San Diego

Trailblazer - \$500 - \$1,000
Robert and Linda Gordon

Path Finder - \$100-\$500
Pat Abbott

John and Ann Aydelotte
Lynn Baer
Mrs. W.W. Bemis – *In Memory of Capt. W.W. Bemis, USN Ret.*
Edmund Capparelli and Gail Romanowski
Barbara and Michael Carr
Ted Daub
Gary B. Hogue
Dan and Dorothy Leonard
David McLaren and Diane Nelson
Charles Nichols
Philip Pryde
Sheryl and Bob Scarano
Stephen Seaborg
Harold Stone
Jean Tomcavage
Len and Jan Trentacosta
Rose Van Hook
George and Nancy Varga
Vertical Hold

Arbor Day

This year's MTRP Arbor Day celebration will take place at the new East Fortuna Equestrian Staging Area at the intersection of Mast Blvd. and State Rte. 52 on Saturday December 3rd, 2005, starting at 9 a.m.

This year we are also looking for individuals to volunteer their time to pull weeds and help with general landscape maintenance of the area.

Information on how to join the festivities will be sent out shortly and will be posted on our web site mtrp.org in November. You may also call the Visitor Center at (619) 668-3281



Star Gazing

With George Varga

Meet at the campground day-use parking lot

29 October, 6:30 to 9:00 p.m.
Venus should be high enough for viewing before it sets behind the Fortuna Range. No Moon this evening enables viewing of a number of Globular and Open Clusters in the Summer Triangle and Sagittarius. Hercules Cluster well positioned for viewing in the West.

19 November, 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.
Moon will not rise until about 8 p.m. Andromeda Galaxy, Open Cluster M35, Double Cluster, Ring Nebula and Dumbbell Nebula are in good position for viewing. Mars visible to the East.

10 December, 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.
Moon will be bright, waxing and gibbous. Mars and Andromeda Galaxy almost overhead.



Support Mission Trails Regional Park

Volunteer Opportunities

There are numerous volunteer opportunities available. No prior experience needed. We provide any training necessary.

At the Visitor Center
Front Desk
Gift Shop

Within the park
Trail Guide
Park Patrol
Work Crews



**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.
All it takes is five minutes.

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 because of 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 * 33-028509.

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. Persons donating \$100 or more will be given a certificate of contribution. 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 _____
City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____
Home Phone _____ E-mail _____

Donor Levels

\$25 Individual _____	\$1,000 Founder _____	\$25,000 Benefactor _____
\$50 Family _____	\$2,500 Patron _____	\$50,000 Trustee _____
\$100 Path Finder _____	\$5,000 Steward _____	\$100,000 Director _____
\$500 Trailblazer _____	\$10,000 Sponsor _____	Other _____

Special Funds

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

General Park Support	_____
Library Fund	_____
Library Endowment	_____
Education Program Fund	_____
Education Program Endowment	_____
Tree & Habitat Maintenance	_____
Trail Maintenance	_____
Lake Murray	_____

Make check payable to MTRP Foundation and send to:
Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation, Attention Secretary/Treasurer
One Father Junipero Serra Trail, San Diego, CA 92119-1008

Charge my donation to VISA _____ MC _____

Card No. _____

Expiration date _____ Signature _____

Office Use Only

Check Date _____ No _____ Amount _____
Data Base _____ Letter _____ Donor Book _____
\$100+ Certificate _____ Newsletter _____
Web _____ \$1000+ Donor Board _____



**Mission Trails
Regional Park Foundation**

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Visitor & Interpretive Center: (619) 668-3275
MTRP Foundation: (619) 668-3280
E-mail: mtrp@mtrp.org
Web Site: www.mtrp.org

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Mission Trails Regional Park News

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Mission Trails Regional Park News is a publication of Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation, Inc., published four times a year.

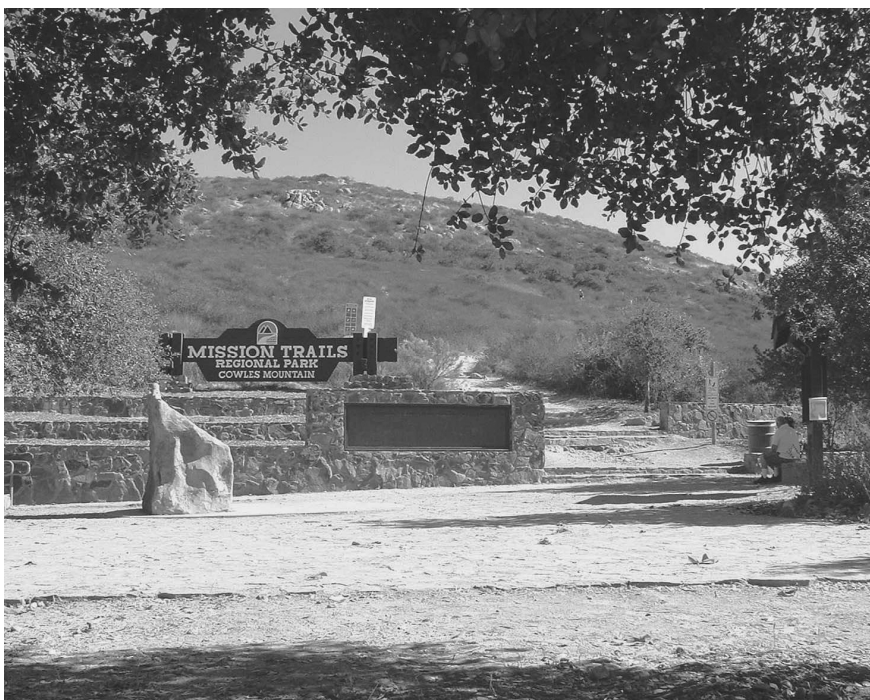
*Editor: Roland Roberge
Distribution: Marjorie Ferrante*

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Cowles Mountain Staging Area Clean-up

The staging area at the Navajo Rd. and Golfcrest Dr. intersection is the most frequently visited entrance to the park. Any time of day, any day of the week, there is a constant stream of hikers, joggers and others just walking their dogs. Although Cowles Mountain trail work and maintenance is an almost ongoing project, little attention was being paid to the trailhead. Recently it was noticed that the vegetation was slowly overtaking the area and eroded silt from the mountain was covering the stone-work patio at a depth of up to four inches! The large Mission Trails sign was also in need of major repair.

The problem was brought before the Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation Board of Directors who immediately voted to assist staff to correct the situation. Foundation funds were made available to pay for the clean-up project. Park Staff contracted with Aztec Tree



Cowles, continued on pg. 2