



Mission Trails Regional Park News

Why “Explore Mission Trails Day” Matters

By Pam Crooks

Explore Mission Trails Day (EMTD) was held on Saturday, May 16. The park welcomed over 2,500 visitors who celebrated unparalleled outdoor opportunities within the confines of a major city. Mission Trails Regional Park (MTRP) is one of the nation's largest urban parks. The biodiversity represented here, because of the variety of habitats located within its bounds, is astonishing.

Mountain biking, hiking, fishing, horseback riding, camping and even rock climbing, all happen in MTRP routinely. People picnic, hike or fish around the remnants of the Old Mission Dam, observe a geological timeline in a rock outcropping and show their children where and how the Kumeyaay lived on the land. They also take free guided nature walks or self-guided walks on one of dozens of trails in this area, ranging in difficulty from easy to very challenging.



The Visitor Center itself is alive with interactive exhibits for kids, telescopes on outside viewing decks, knowledgeable volunteers, and video programs about the Park are a “must-see” for first-time visitors.

The East Fortuna region has much gentler terrain and is popular with young families. Bird watchers comb the native grasses with their binoculars seeking that elusive meadowlark, a covey of quail or a juvenile night heron. Multiple trails crisscross the area.

But we know all this. We use the park frequently and enthusiastically introduce friends, house guests, our own children, nieces, nephews or grandchildren to the places and activities we love most. But many San Diegans have no idea this incredible resource exists.

This is why, once a year, dozens of free, child-friendly activities are organized by Park Rangers, volunteer Trail Guides and numerous community organizations for EMTD. A big thank you to the corporate sponsors: Republic Services, Inc., SDG&E, Olive Garden Restaurants, Superior Ready Mix, and San Diego Family Magazine. The City of San Diego supports EMTD through its Special Promotional Program Fund as does the County of San Diego through its Community Enhancement Fund.

Since the first event was held in 2003, Explore Mission Trails Day has introduced tens of thousands of young families to a whole new world of natural wonders - right in the heart of San Diego. Fortunately for those who have yet to discover this treasure, all of its charms will still be here tomorrow. □





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A Message from Executive Director Jay Wilson

The annual Taste of Navajo fundraiser for the Green Elementary Foundation was recently held at the Visitor Center, and 275 people attended to help raise funds to revamp the school's lunch arbor. I am pictured with Erin Laidell, this year's chair for the Taste of Navajo. Erin commented "This is an incredible venue for an after-hour event. The Visitor Center and its terrace offer a unique place for a function like Taste of Navajo. It is one of San Diego's best-kept secrets, particularly for events such as ours, weddings, etc."



Looking for a Unique Venue for a Private Event?

The Visitor Center and the Amphitheater offer distinctive and unique venues. You may now book such after-hour private events as weddings, anniversaries, retirement parties, birthdays, celebrations of life, and Bar Mitzvahs in the Visitor Center or amphitheater. Information about renting the facilities is available on-line at mtrp.org. Click on Visitor Center, then Bookings. You can also call Maggie Holloway at 619.668.3280.

20 Years Young

The MTRP Visitor Center recently celebrated its 20th anniversary. Approximately 1,500,000 people have toured the Visitor Center since it opened in February of 1995. On April 20th we celebrated the 20th Anniversary with donors and government officials who helped make the past 20 years a success. Please read Audrey Baker's article about the event on page 4.

Support the MTRP Foundation through Amazon Smile

You may now support the MTRP Foundation each time you purchase something through Amazon. Simply go to smile.amazon.com, select Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation, and every eligible purchase you make at smile.amazon.com will result in a donation by Amazon to the MTRP Foundation at no additional cost to you. You may use your existing Amazon account to participate in the Amazon Smile program. All your settings will remain the same. □

Calling All Nature Photographers!

You are encouraged to enjoy the park and pause to take that special picture to be entered into Mission Trails Regional Park's 23rd Annual Amateur Photo contest which is now on through August 2015. We are opening the contest early this year so everyone can take advantage of all the spring growth and blooms provided by the gentle rains. Deadline for submitting photos is Friday, August 31, 2015. For more details and entry forms visit our website: mtrp.org.



Photo by Daren Sefcik

AmeriCorp's Team Gold 6 Lives Up to It's Name

By Jay Wilson and Ranger Dean

A 10-person AmeriCorps crew worked diligently on Cowles Mountain and Pyles Peak for 10 weeks this Spring. Team Gold 6 was the second AmeriCorps crew to have worked at Mission Trails Regional Park (MTRP). They are part of the National Civilian Community Corps, which is designed to strengthen communities and develop leaders through direct, team-based national and community service. It is in partnerships with nonprofits (secular and faith-based), local municipalities, state governments, federal government, national and state parks, Indian tribes and schools. Members complete service projects throughout the region to which they are assigned. AmeriCorps members sign up for 10-month stints and are assigned to a team that works from 6 to 10 weeks on projects throughout the United States.



Team Gold 6 arrived in mid-January and camped out at the Kumeyaay Lake Campground. "They worked on two projects, reclaiming the impacted habitat along the Cowles Mountain Trail and Pyles Peak," Ranger Dean stated. "Due to the heavy use of the Cowles Mountain Trail, the habitat adjacent to the trail is often heavily impacted."

Team Gold 6 closed off unauthorized trails, removed invasive plants, replanted native vegetation, added to and replaced peeler log fencing, and performed erosion control measures along the trail. Their other project was on Pyles Peak, where they worked on a complete restoration of the Pyles Peak Trail, which is approximately 1.5 miles long. They also worked with Ranger Heidi Gutknecht to remove invasive plants throughout MTRP. In addition, members of Team Gold 6 worked with Ranger Chris Axtmann and assisted with weekly educational school field trips.

"We really appreciated the work and dedication of all the members of Team Gold 6," Ranger Dean said. □

What bird is that? If you were a MTRP Trail Guide you'd know.



Welcome to Our New Trail Guide Graduates

By Ranger Chris Axtman

We are pleased to announce that we've had another successful Trail Guide Training Class this year, with 23 new Trail Guides graduating on Saturday morning, March 28. This was the 21st annual graduation ceremony. We were pleased to have five new city rangers from other parks take the class. Congratulations to all the students. As usual, they studied hard, completed the walkthroughs and written final exam, and, most of all, enjoyed the class. They will be a great addition to our Trail Guide program. □

Top row (l to r): Ranger Carey Goldstein, Dave Cleesattle, Madir Cuddy, Greg Häusler, Neil Tedeschi, Marlin Burke, Andrea Navagato, Mark Warner, Mary Todd; Middle row (l to r): Diane Elias, Ranger Josh Lambdin, Linda LeNeve, Dave Rowley, Tiffanie Glaze, Alison Moss, Mike Brown, Ranger Melanie Fontana; Bottom row (l to r): Koa Lavery, Eric Williamson, Sally Davis, Ranger Steve Smith, Sho Drake, Ranger Joe DeWolf. Photo: Wendy Esterly.



Visitor Center Celebrates 20 Years of Community Service!

By Audrey F. Baker

Since opening in 1995, Mission Trails Visitor and Interpretive Center has welcomed nearly 1.5 million visitors. Our award-winning facility, built as a joint endeavor between the MTRP Foundation and the City of San Diego, stands ready to assist in providing the full nature experience found at Mission Trails Regional Park.

On April 21st, the MTRP Foundation hosted its "20 Years Young" anniversary celebration, recognizing the "VC's" role in the community. It was an opportunity to thank those who contributed to its creation and to recognize the generosity of our donors who insure its continued success.

Welcoming anniversary celebrants on behalf of the Board of Directors was Joe Morse, President of the MTRP Foundation. Thanking all for "making a positive difference," he affirmed, "We are all community volunteers. Each contributes unique qualities to the success of MTRP, ultimately making this evening possible."

Citing important contributions the Visitor Center has made to the San Diego community, District 7 Council member Scott Sherman spoke of its role in providing healthful opportunities and educational experiences derived from connecting with nature.

Councilmember Sherman presented a proclamation on behalf of the City of San Diego. MTRP Foundation President Joe Morse then oversaw the presentations of additional anniversary proclamations. On behalf of District 2 Board member Dianne Jacob, Field Representative Taylor DuPont presented for San Diego County, and California State Assembly recognition, on behalf of Assembly member Brian Maienschein, District 77 was pronounced by Rob Kneudson, Senior Field Representative.

Our 20th visitor center anniversary party also honored the community spirit that created and sustains Mission Trails Regional Park. The cooperative effort of citizen organizations working with government and the private sector to preserve California's majestic, historic and culturally-pertinent landscapes for the enjoyment of future generations was celebrated.



Food for the anniversary event was provided by Olive Garden Restaurant and by Morse High School's Culinary Arts Department Program. Under the tutelage of Sara Smith, students created a gourmet banquet featuring their signature "cucumber-scaled salmon." Wine donations were the courtesy of MTRP Foundation Board member Neil Mohr.

Our celebration truly mirrored the wide scope of organizations and individuals supporting Mission Trail Regional Park and its Visitor Center's commitment to nature and community.

Among the City of San Diego officials attending were The Honorable Dick Murphy, Mayor, City of San Diego, retired and Superior Court Judge, retired, whose long-term commitment to MTRP began when he served as the City of San Diego Park and Recreation Board representative to the MTRP CAC, prior to his election to the San Diego City Council; Mario Sierra, City of San Diego Director of Environmental Services, who formerly served as project manager overseeing construction of the Visitor Center; and Stacey LoMedico, City of San Diego Assistant Chief Operations Officer, who, during tenure with the City of San Diego Park and Recreation Department as a grant writer, helped raise funding for the building.

Representing MTRP Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) was Chair Dorothy Leonard. MTRP Task Force members and MTRP Foundation Board of Directors, staff, advisors and honorary directors were also in attendance.

Ambitious Beginnings!

Crucial to the park's physical integrity was the 1974 purchase of Cowles Mountain, creating a cornerstone linking proposed City and County park lands and curtailing urban development. This City-County effort led by Council member Jim Ellis, Supervisor Dick Brown and Dorothy Leonard of the citizen-based Navajo Community Planners, provided the impetus to develop the area as a joint City-County and citizens' group effort, and led to the 1976 completion of the Initial Master Plan. Today, an estimated 2,000 hikers climb Cowles Mountain each weekend.

At its 1980 dedication ceremony, Mission Trails Regional Park covered nearly 3,000 acres, with 2,500 additional acres incorporated in 1984. With the 1989 hiring of our first park ranger, Randy Hawley, agendas were set in place to accommodate school field trips and interpretive programs (1990).

Dramatic and welcoming, the two-story Visitor Center provides majestic views of Mission Gorge. As a major gateway to the park, it has become a San Diego landmark. Here guests interact with rangers, chat with staff volunteers to plan the perfect hike best suiting personal requirements, and learn about our extensive roster of recreational, camping, and nature events for all ages and interests.

Our Trail Guide-led nature walks, engaging museum exhibits, and film presentations express the natural and historic heritage of our region. Free concerts and cultural events enliven our indoor theatre and outdoor amphitheater, and our extensive nature library enlightens.

Visitors enjoy revolving nature-related art expositions displaying works of local artists, view our historic gallery that presents a photographic history of the park, and stop at the gift shop to scan for books, supplies and nature-themed souvenirs. □



Notable Donations January 1 – April 30, 2015

Sponsor – \$10,000-\$25,000
REI

City of San Diego Special Promotional Programs

Steward – \$5,000 – \$9,999
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MTRP Foundation Board member Neil Mohr gave celebrants insights into future projects that will further enhance the public's nature experience. For the Visitor Center these include an enhanced geology exhibit, a new "techy-touchscreen" wildlife exhibit, and informative terrace area display panels. We can also anticipate vital facilities improvements at the East Fortuna Staging Area. In announcing a new donors' board is in the plans, Councilmember Scott Sherman gleefully chimed, "Thankfully! The other one's filled up!" The crowd responded with laughter and spontaneous applause, crystallizing the exuberant mood of the celebrants.



Field Notes from the Gift Shop Burrowing Owls

By Patricia O'Reilly

Have you ever seen a Burrowing Owl? If you haven't, that's not unusual. They are small birds, between 7-1/2" and 9-1/2" inches tall and they live in burrows beneath the ground. They love their burrows and stay close to them for protection. They build their own burrows but also like to move into burrows created by other small animals. They are the only owl in North America that lives underground and, although they do hunt between dusk and dawn, they are usually nocturnal. They eat insects, small animals, and some small reptiles and amphibians. Nesting takes place in late March to early April when between 6 and 12 eggs may be laid, with about half of them surviving to hatchlings. Do not expect a Burrowing Owl to "hoot." They make a series of noises, including a rather high-pitched "chittering" sound, but they also mimic other creatures and can do a respectable imitation of a rattlesnake if you come too close to their burrows.

It is illegal to disturb or harm Burrowing Owls as they are protected by both Federal and State laws. However, they are under serious threat from urbanization and development. US Fish and Wildlife has been working to create more habitats for them in San Diego county.

In our Gift Shop we have delightful Burrowing Owl hand puppets from Folkmanis. They are charming little fellows and even have a band around one leg to show that they have been counted! It is a good way to remind children and grown-ups about the importance of learning as much as we can so we are better able to protect our wildlife heritage. □



Photo by Catherine Zinsky

Summer Safety Tips

By Ranger Heidi Gutknecht

1. Keep well hydrated. Always carry extra water on warm days, as your body loses more water when perspiring; "it's better to have it and not need it, than to need it and not have it." Who knows – your extra water may even help save the day for a less-prepared fellow hiker/biker or dog.
2. Avoid the midday heat, when the sun is directly overhead, by hiking/biking during the cooler morning or later afternoon hours.
3. Don't forget to wear sun protection – hat, sunglasses and sunscreen. Even if it's a "May Gray" or "June Gloom" day, you can still get sunburned!
4. Keep yourself cooler by wearing lighter-colored clothing, which reflects sunlight; darker colors absorb heat and actually attract mosquitos and ticks.
5. Speaking of mosquitos and ticks, it's a good idea to bring along insect repellent, just in case the mosquitos are biting. Be sure to check yourself for hitch-hiking ticks when you get home, so you can catch them before they burrow into your skin.
6. Stay on designated trails and watch out for rattlesnakes, as they are most active and commonly seen during the spring and summer. If you happen to come across one, stop, back away, wait for it to finish crossing the trail, and continue only when it is safe to do so; never encroach on or try to move a rattlesnake with a stick – your attempt to be a "hero" may end in an embarrassing hospital visit instead.
7. And finally, for the love of Dog, leave your four-legged friend at home when it's hot! Dogs cannot cool themselves through sweating like we can, and are extremely susceptible to heat exhaustion, which can rapidly lead to heat stroke and death. □



Our Funds...

- Friends of Mission Trails
- Trail Maintenance
- Tree and Habitat Maintenance
- Education Programs
- Library Books and Supplies
- Lake Murray
- Endowment Funds
 - General
 - Library

Other ways you may donate....

- Memorial or In Honor Of Gifts
- Matching Funds
- Gifts of Securities
- Remember MTRP Foundation in your will
- Charitable Remainder Trusts
- Become a Business Friend of MTRP

Donor Levels

- \$25 Individual
- \$50 Family
- \$100 Pathfinder
- \$500 Trailblazer
- \$1,000 Founder
- \$2,500 Patron
- \$5,000 Steward
- \$10,000 Sponsor
- \$25,000 Benefactor's Circle
- \$50,000 Trustee's Circle
- \$100,000 Director's Circle
- \$1,000,000 Visionary Circle

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

Become a Friend of Mission Trails Regional Park

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 sponsorships 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 mholloway@mtrp.org for additional information.

Name _____

Business _____

Address _____

City _____ State/ZIP _____

Email _____ Phone _____

You may designate your donation for one or more of the following funds. Please indicate the amount.

\$ _____ Friends of Mission Trails - General support for all MTRP programs and projects.

_____ MTRP Foundation Endowment Fund - Earnings used for programs and projects

Special Funds

_____ Education Program Fund - Funds used for education programs

_____ Library Fund - Books and supplies for the library

_____ Library Endowment Fund - Earnings used for library books and supplies

_____ Trail Maintenance - Trail maintenance and improvement projects.

_____ Tree and Habitat Maintenance - To help maintain the park's habitat

_____ Lake Murray - Special projects at Lake Murray

\$ _____ **Total Donation**

Make check payable to MTRP Foundation and mail to:
**Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation, One Father Junipero Serra Trail,
San Diego, CA 92119-1008**

To donate securely online, visit our website at mtrp.org

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Visitor and Interpretive Center:

619-668-3281

MTRP Foundation: 619-668-3280

Email: mtrp@mtrp.org

Web Site: mtrp.org

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Maggie Holloway, Editor

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Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation

One Father Junipero Serra Trail

San Diego, CA 92119

Address Service Requested

Free Events at the Park!

Offered every month. No reservations. Check website, mtrp.org, for updates and more information.

Guided Walks in the Park

Guided Nature Walks Walks last 90 minutes.

9:30 AM from Visitor Center every Wed., Sat. and Sun.

8:30 AM from the Campground Day Use Lot every 2nd & 4th Sat.

9 AM Lake Murray boat docks every 3rd Tues.

Bird Walks 8-10 AM with Birder, Jeanne Raimond.

July 18 Lake Murray, Aug 8 Evening Walk (TBA) and Sept 19 Old Mission Dam

Wildlife Tracking Walks 8:30-10:30 AM

July 4, Aug 1 and Sept 5 front of Visitor Center

Summer Twilight Walks Kumeyaay Campground

July 18 @ 7:15 PM, Aug 15 @ 6:45 PM

and Sept 19 @ 6 PM

Nature Workshops at Visitor Center

Bird Basics 1-2:30 PM Join Birder, Winona Sollock.

July 25, Aug 29 and Sept 26 Classroom A

Discovery Tables between 10 AM - 1 PM Lobby.

July 11 - Owl Pellets, Aug 8 - Critter Camouflage and Sept 12 - Bird Beaks

Astronomy Kumeyaay Campground Day Use Lot

Stars at Mission Trails Sunset until 10 PM. San Diego Astronomy Association. Telescopes available.

July 10, Aug 14 and Sept 11

Star Parties 7:30 PM with MTRP guide and amateur astronomer, George Varga. Telescope available.

July 18, Aug 22 and Sept 12

Music & Art at Visitor Center

Concerts 3-4 PM in Theatre. Seating is limited (93).

July 5 - Many Strings, hammer dulcimer & guitar

July 19 - Peter Sprague, jazz guitarist

Aug 2 - Lillian Palmer, vocalist

Aug 23 - Amy Kanner, Celtic Harp

Aug 29 - N. Scott Robinson, world percussion

Sept 6 - Peter Puppini, guitarist

Sept 20 - Carol Pelkner/Jim George, marimba & vibes

Flute Circle 1-3 PM Outdoor Amphitheater.

July 12, Aug 9 and Sept 13

Art Shows displayed in the Gallery.

July 26 Art Telling Group Reception 1-4 PM

Aug 16 Dolwain Green Reception 1-4 PM

Sept 20 Amateur Photo Contest Awards 1-4 PM

