



# Mission Trails Regional Park News

A PUBLICATION OF THE MISSION TRAILS REGIONAL PARK FOUNDATION Vol. 29, Number 2, Spring 2018



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MESSAGE FROM Jennifer Morrissey, Executive Director

## Just living is not enough ... one must have sunshine, freedom, and a little flower.

—HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN



This quote by the Danish author rings true for many of us in the Mission Trails Regional Park (MTRP) community. Our shared appreciation of open spaces, the natural world, as well as plants and wildlife brings us together. We cherish Mission Trails, a refuge that offers a reprieve from busy urban life.

As we look ahead to summer, we reflect on the thousands of San Diego County students who have visited the park through field trips and overnight campouts, taking what they've learned in the classroom then experiencing it firsthand at MTRP. Even the teachers and parents learn when they visit, and sometimes their chaperoning a group is their first trip to MTRP, or perhaps their first night sleeping in a tent. What better experience can we give our youth than one that makes them gasp in excitement, a common reaction when they spy something on the trail that they've never seen before or step out onto the Visitor Center terrace and experience the stunning, panoramic view of Mission Gorge for the first time.

Though the school year is coming to an end, we at MTRP are already looking to this fall's visiting students, coming from all corners of the County. MTRP Rangers and the Foundation partner on our education programs, and the Foundation—through grants, and corporate and individual gifts—provides bus transportation to many of our visiting students. In addition, we organize and provide youths' overnight camping experience, from the campsites, equipment, and guided nature hikes, to a visit from an astronomer and/or a Kumeyaay storyteller. To ensure that we can continue to give children the gift of a visit to MTRP, please consider making a donation of any amount to support the educational programs and initiatives at MTRP. We thank our donors and funders, including SDG&E, for underwriting thousands of students' visits to the park this school year.



*Jennifer Morrissey began as the Executive Director of the Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation in April 2018, coming to the organization with two decades of nonprofit experience. Please stop by the Visitor Center and introduce yourself to Jennifer; or you can contact her by phone at (619) 582-4502 or via email at [jmorrissey@mtrp.org](mailto:jmorrissey@mtrp.org).*

**Visitor and Interpretive Center** (619) 668-3281

**MTRP Foundation** (619) 668-3280

**Email** [mtrp@mtrp.org](mailto:mtrp@mtrp.org) **Web Site** [www.mtrp.org](http://www.mtrp.org)

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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.

**Mission Trails Regional Park News** is a publication of the Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation, Inc.

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# Mountain Lion Seen Near MTRP

BY PATRICIA SIMPSON, MTRP TRAIL GUIDE CLASS OF 2013



## IT'S OFFICIAL. THERE'S A BIG CAT AT MISSION TRAILS.

Many of us believed this to be the case, and further documentation came through dash cam video footage captured on March 29, 2018. The feline was spotted near Cowles Mountain running across Navajo Road.

If you have attended a Mountain Lion lecture by Don Endicott, you will already know these stellar mammals are among the most discreet. Despite their large size, they are seldom seen. They are usually aware of our presence long before we can detect them and are masters at hiding and camouflage.

iNaturalist, a citizen science project and online social network of naturalists, citizen scientists, and biologists built on the concept of mapping and sharing observations of biodiversity across the globe, has a fair number of Mountain Lion observations in California (388 to be exact), but 98.5% of them are trail cam photos or scat/track photos. People rarely see the felines and when they do, they probably are not too preoccupied with grabbing their camera or phone to record the occasion. In the presence of such a great predator, it's likely that self-preservation becomes the most pressing concern.

### Tips on what to do if you encounter a mountain lion:

**DO NOT HIKE ALONE.** Hike in groups, with adults supervising children.

**KEEP CHILDREN CLOSE TO YOU.** Keep children within your sight at all times.

### IF YOU SEE A MOUNTAIN LION:

**STAY CALM.** Hold your ground or back away slowly. Face the lion and stand upright.

**DO NOT APPROACH A LION.** Never approach a mountain lion especially one that is feeding or with kittens. Most mountain lions will try to avoid a confrontation. Give them a way to escape.

**DO NOT RUN FROM A LION.** Running may stimulate a mountain lion's instinct to chase. Instead, stand and face the animal. Make eye contact. If you have small children with you, pick them up if possible so they don't panic and run. Although it may be awkward, pick them up without bending over or turning away from the mountain lion.

**DO NOT CROUCH DOWN OR BEND OVER.** Biologists surmise mountain lions don't recognize standing humans as prey. On the other hand, a person squatting or bending over looks a lot like a four-legged prey animal. If you're in mountain lion habitat, avoid squatting, crouching or bending over, even when picking up children.

**SOURCE: NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

## Gary Hogue's

# 10,000th SUMMIT



**On Saturday, March 17, 2018, native San Diegan Gary Hogue made his 10,000th ascent of Cowles Mountain.** It was a momentous occasion and Gary celebrated the milestone at the top with family and friends. Gary started hiking Cowles Mountain in 1983 and has dutifully calculated his daily summits since that time. He gradually increased the number of his summits every year, and in 1999 recorded the most summits in a year at 389. After he retired as an Engineer for the City of San Diego Water Department in December 2005, Gary increased his hikes to twice daily. Now he averages about 350 summits a year. His overall number would be higher, but annual trips to the Eastern Sierra Nevada Mountains and the Anza Borrego Desert take him out of the area; but even on these trips, he hikes and bikes many miles.

Hiking Cowles Mountain and biking is all the conditioning Gary needs to climb some of the tallest peaks in California. He has summited Mt. Whitney (14,508 feet) 21 times and White Mountain (14,252 feet) 6 times. Gary Hogue is easy to recognize on Cowles Mountain with his long, white beard, Mount Whitney cap, OTL shirt, and shorts. Regardless of the weather, he always wears shorts. If you pass Gary on the trail, join us in congratulating him on this amazing, 10,000-hike feat!

# Annual Volunteer Awards

In February, the City of San Diego Parks and Recreation Department and the Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation recognized our dedicated volunteers. During 2017, more than 200 San Diego County residents selflessly donated in excess of 13,000 hours of their time to enhance, restore, and make the park an even more special place to experience.

After a hosted barbecue dinner at the Visitor Center, Councilmember Scott Sherman thanked the volunteers for their many hours of service to MTRP. The Rangers awarded volunteers with recognition certificates and the Foundation provided gift cards of appreciation. Volunteers are vital to the successful operations of MTRP, creating an extraordinary experience for all who visit.

**The following individuals were recognized for their outstanding service in the respective areas, and for longstanding service to MTRP:**

Silvie Plesim: Volunteer of the Year; Dave and Jody Rowley: Trail Guide; George Varga: Volunteer Patrol; Mary Wagner: Visitor Center; Algie and Marnie Hassler: Campground; Gerry Tietje: Gift Shop; Carolyn Barkow: Library; Shane Douty: Habitat Improvement; Cody Ambrose: Trail Restoration; Kayla Poirier: Park Beautification; Bob Graham: West Sycamore; Mitsuo Tomita, Charles Carter, and Desiree Cera: Concert Program; Terry Gaughen and Fred Kramer: 25-Year Service Awards.

**PICTURED, top, l-r:** Silvie Plesim, MTRP Volunteer of the Year, Payton Robertson, and MTRP Senior Ranger Ryan Robertson. **Bottom, l-r:** Volunteer Terry Gaughen with David Lee, MTRP Visitor Center Director and Trail Guide President Fred Kramer.



# MTRP TRAIL GUIDE GRADUATION



## THE GRADUATION CEREMONY FOR THE 24TH ANNUAL TRAIL GUIDE CLASS

was held in the MTRP Visitor Center outdoor amphitheater on March 31. Twenty-four new graduates proudly received their certificates and congratulations from the training team.

This year we were pleased to have six County park rangers and one City park ranger take the class. Everyone studied hard, completed the walkthroughs and written final exam, and, most of all, enjoyed the class.

Many thanks to the training team for their outstanding efforts that made this year's class a success. Team members included Bill Howell, Wendy Esterly, Judy Alvarez, Bill White, Fred and Linda Kramer, and, of course, Ranger Chris Axtmann. Also helping out in various capacities were Trail Guides Jim Parker, Steve Haiman (aka George Cowles), Nancy Conyers, Marty Fink, Millie Basden, and Bob MacDonald. For information about the MTRP Trail Guide program, please contact Fred Kramer at [fred.kramer@cox.net](mailto:fred.kramer@cox.net).

**TOP ROW (l-r):** Raquel Vasquez, Tonatzin Romero, Kimberly Smith, Kyle Freed, Charles Harrison, Josh Castro, Nate Pownell; **Middle row (l-r):** Nora Bodrian, Barbara Tagami, Mark James, Ron Gardner, Claire Crise, Danen Kelsey, Saree Saad; **Bottom row (l-r):** Ariana Neves, Elizabeth Praetz, Elana Stahl, Ruben Zepeda, Jason Hunnicutt, Stephanie Kowal, Cody Ambrose. **Not pictured:** Cameron Engelhart, Veronica Lavarello, Craig Newson. Photo: Wendy Esterly.





# Birds OF MISSION TRAILS

## Receives Funding

In addition to their outdoor work at MTRP, our rangers are instrumental in the creation and production of interpretive exhibits both on the trails and at the Visitor Center.



An exhibit that was conceived and is being led by Ranger and MTRP Education Coordinator Chris Axtmann is the Birds of Mission Trails, and we are pleased to announce that the project will soon come to fruition. "We're excited that we now have full funding to complete our new nest box exhibit which will educate the public on the life of birds, their importance in the scheme of nature, and highlight the work of the volunteers who monitor the health of the nest and environment," said Axtmann. The funding that enabled the completion of the exhibit came from an MTRP volunteer, making the donation in her parents' memory. The exhibit will visually and physically immerse the visitor in a tree habitat with the installation of a full-size Western Sycamore tree. Discovery boxes, nest boxes, an activity table, tools of the trade, and sample nests will be elements of the exhibit, with the goal to bring awareness and delight.

## HOT Hiking for People and Pets

BY RANGER REBECCA SMART

Even if you've hiked a trail 100 times, it's important to check the weather and trail conditions. If it's going to be warm, hike in the early morning or evening. Temperatures at Mission Trails can range from 80° to over 100° from May through November. Most trails offer little to no shade, so hiking in the heat of the day can be dangerous for you and deadly for your pet.

Imagine if you hiked Cowles Mountain in your bare feet, during mid-afternoon heat, with no shade, while wearing a fur coat, and you were not able to sweat. Would sips of water keep you safe while you climbed? No. Unfortunately, this is a dog's experience during warmer weather.

There have been many heat-stroke deaths of dogs while hiking on MTRP trails. To be safe, please **DO NOT BRING DOGS ON TRAILS DURING WARMER WEATHER**. Think you're okay if you've got drinking water for your dog? Not necessarily. Dogs are not able to regulate their body temp effectively; they do not sweat to release heat. If it's a hot day, your dog is at risk of brain injury or death from the combination of heat exposure and exertion, even with drinking water. Not to mention that violators of park safety warnings can be cited under "CPC 597 Cruelty to Animals."

A little bit of prep makes for terrific experiences on trails! For you, bring more water than you think you'll need, slather on sunscreen, wear a hat and hiking shoes, carry a phone, and bring earbuds because audible music is not allowed. Pay close

attention to your body signals. If you feel fatigued, turn around or ask for help.

If you're new to a trail, make sure to have a map. If you're hiking alone, let someone know where you're hiking and how long you'll be out there. If you see a rattlesnake or other wildlife, you're one of the lucky ones to witness natural habitat! Let them alone and chances are they will ignore you. Snakes are yet another reason to keep dogs leashed on trails. Give a wide berth to wildlife and continue on your way.



If you're unsure about trail conditions, rules, weather, or have questions, call our Visitor Center/Ranger Line at (619) 668-3281. And if you see an animal or person in distress at Mission Trails, please call us.

Lastly, don't be afraid to get to know your Rangers when you see us around the park; we're happy to answer questions and assist! If you'd like to get involved as a volunteer to contribute to hiking safety outreach in the park; we would love to hear from you. Contact Ranger Rebecca via email at [rsmart@mtrp.org](mailto:rsmart@mtrp.org)



## MTRP Amateur Photo Contest Awards Reception SUNDAY, JUNE 10, 2-4PM

The MTRP community is invited to a reception to celebrate our 26th annual photo contest as well as announce the winners from the various categories. Organized by MTRP Foundation Board Member Betty Ogilvie and her husband Mike, the photo contest is an opportunity for visitors to Mission Trails to share the images they've captured in the park with the public. Reservations for the reception are not necessary, and come early to hear a Native American Flute Circle in the amphitheater beginning at 1pm.

*Photos: Shinsuke Noda, Justin Klein, Margaret Elizondo*

## Call for Artists

The Mission Trails Regional Park Art Program offers artists the opportunity to show their work at the MTRP Visitor and Interpretive Center. The exhibitions display wall-hung, two-dimensional and three dimensional works, and the exhibition can showcase one artist, as well as small or large groups. Two exhibitions are organized each year that combine the work of artists wishing to exhibit but who are not part of a formal group and who do not wish a solo exhibition.

Artworks are on view for a period of six weeks, and the artists have the opportunity for an "opening" at the Visitor Center. Certain jurying criteria must be followed, and all funds raised are used to support programming and park improvements.

**For more information and a link to the Call for Artists application, please visit [mtrp.org](http://mtrp.org). Applications for 2019 will be accepted through June 30, 2018.**



Artists clockwise from left:  
Eileen Mandell, Jeff Yeomans,  
Helen Shafer Garcia

### ON THE COVER



**California Long-tailed Weasel**  
*Mustela frenata*

*MTRP volunteer and photographer David D. Cooksy on his encounter with a California Long-tailed Weasel*

While photographing hummingbirds one morning in Mission Trails, the unexpected occurred. From behind a rock, up popped a California Long-tailed weasel. Pun intended. As I was prepared for the next visit by a hummingbird, my camera was ready, and a good thing as the weasel took one look at me and darted off, but not before I captured several images.

The California Long-tailed weasel can be seen from southern Canada, throughout the United States and south through Central American into northern South America. Though small, it is a voracious eater and will consume a wide variety of smaller, live animals for its diet. It will also climb trees to raid nests of bird eggs or other nest dwelling creatures such as squirrels. While the California Long-tailed weasel exists within Mission Trails Regional Park, it is seldom seen.



## DONOR HIGHLIGHTS

The Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation thanks the following donors for their contributions that help to preserve and protect Mission Trails Regional Park as well as provide educational and recreational opportunities for residents of and visitors to San Diego County. This list represents contributors to the MTRP Foundation during 2017 and up to May 15, 2018.

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*\*In-kind donation*

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# MISSION TRAILS REGIONAL PARK CALENDAR OF EVENTS

This is a partial listing of the monthly events. Visit our website for the full calendar of free activities and programs: [www.mtrp.org](http://www.mtrp.org).

## GUIDED WALKS

Wildlife Tracking Walks 8:30-10:30AM

- 1st Saturday each month; meet at the Visitor Center

## GUIDED NATURE WALKS 90 MINUTES

- 9:30AM from the Visitor Center each Wed., Sat., Sun.
- 8:30AM from Kumeyaay Lake Campground each 2nd and 4th Saturday
- 8AM from West Sycamore Staging Area (Scripps Ranch area) each 3rd Sunday
- 9AM Lake Murray "Walk and Talk" every 3rd Tuesday. Meet at the boat docks on odd-numbered months and ball fields on even-numbered months

## FAMILY DISCOVERY WALKS

- 3PM on 4th Sunday of each month, meeting at the Visitor Center

## DISCOVERY TABLE DEMOS

- 10AM to 1PM, 2nd Saturday of each month at the Visitor Center

## BIRD WALKS WITH JEANNE RAIMOND AND MILLIE BASDEN

Morning Bird Walks (*starts at 8AM*)

- June 16 at Kumeyaay Lake Campground
- July 21 at Lake Murray, Kiowa Drive

## TWILIGHT BIRD WALKS

Bushy Hill Drive and Father Junipero Serra Trail

- June 16 at 7:15PM
- July 11 at 7PM

## BIRDING BASICS

- 1PM on the last Saturday of the month, meeting at the Visitor Center
- 8AM on the 3rd Saturday each month – check website for meeting location

## LIVE HAWK DEMOS

9AM to Noon, 1st Sunday of each month at the Visitor Center

## STAR GAZING WITH THE SAN DIEGO ASTRONOMY ASSOCIATION

8 -10PM on the 4th Friday of each month at West Sycamore Staging Area (Scripps Ranch area).

## MUSIC AND ART AT THE VISITOR CENTER

### NATIVE AMERICAN FLUTE CIRCLE

- 1-3PM, 2nd Sunday each month
- June 10: From 1-2:30PM in the Amphitheater and from 3-4:15PM in the auditorium

### FREE CONCERTS AT THE VISITOR CENTER (3-4PM)

- Sunday, June 3: Celtic Notes & Strings
- Sunday, July 1: Pomerado Brass Quintet
- Sunday, July 15: Yuko Maruyama, Jazz Pianist

### ART EXHIBITIONS

- May 12-June 22: MTRP Amateur Photo Contest
- June 23-July 20: Photography by Mary and Michael Peddecord
- July 21-August 17: Art Telling Group from the Spanish Village Art Center
- August 18-September 14: Blake Shaw Photography