



Mission Trails Regional Park News

A PUBLICATION OF THE MISSION TRAILS REGIONAL PARK FOUNDATION Vol. 30, Number 1, Winter 2019

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Welcome Visitor to the Grasslands

NORTHERN HARRIER – *CIRCUS CYANEUS*

Photos and text by David D. Cooksy

The Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) is a medium-sized raptor and is migratory and common throughout North America, including Southern California. It is the only member of a group of hawks known as harriers in North America, although there are other types of harriers in Europe and Asia. All harriers hunt flying close to the ground to overtake and surprise their prey; they seldom pursue prey from the air or while quietly perched watching from an exposed tree limb.

While the Northern Harrier may reside in San Diego County year-round, it is more likely seen in Mission Trails from mid-October through February. The Northern Harrier nests on large mounds of dead reeds and grass along marsh or shrubby meadows.

Harriers have a keen sense of hearing produced by the disc-shaped face which amplifies sound. Females are a chestnut, rusty red, and brown with streaks, while males are grey with black wing tips. The photograph at right of a juvenile female was taken in Mission Trails' Grasslands.

Species identification and habitat information through *National Audubon Society Field Guide to Birds, Western Region*; Second Edition 1994; Published by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.



Esprit de Corps

TEN AMERICORPS VOLUNTEERS recently spent six weeks at Mission Trails Regional Park, working on a range of projects including habitat restoration and trail improvement. Though from a range of backgrounds and nine different states, the volunteers share a common goal: to dedicate a year of their life to improve sites around the country and help people (and places) in need of the focused attention of a dedicated group. Thank you, Class 25, Green 1, the MTRP community appreciates your support.



Visitor and Interpretive Center (619) 668-3281

MTRP Foundation (619) 668-3280

Email mtrp@mtrp.org **Web Site** 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.

ON THE COVER

Kwaay Paay, photographed by helicopter by Chris Szwedo, is one of Mission Trails' five peaks. With an elevation of 1,194 feet, Kwaay Paay is a favorite location for local rock climbers who use the zig-zag Climbers Loop Trail to access its climbing routes. Kwaay Paay—which means "Big Chief" in the Kumeyaay language—had been "No Name Mountain" until 1994 when then MTRP Senior Ranger Randy Hawley suggested four possible names. The MTRP Citizens Advisory Committee and Task Force approved the name Kwaay Paay later that year.

PHOTOS CREDITS Cover: Chris Szwedo; Page 2: David Cooksy and Gerry Tietje; Page 3: Angie Ollman; Page 4: Gerry Tietje; Page 5: Gerry Tietje; Page 6: Angie Ollman; Page 8: David Cooksy

MTRP Volunteers Recognized at Ceremony

IN RECOGNITION OF THEIR DEDICATED VOLUNTEER SERVICE to the public and Mission Trails Regional Park (MTRP), City of San Diego staff and the MTRP Foundation staged the 23rd annual Volunteer Awards Celebration, an opportunity to acknowledge the service of the 1,744 individuals who volunteered at Mission Trails in 2018. These volunteers worked a total of 17,345 hours of service, the equivalent of \$428,248.*

At the event, a dinner, hosted by the MTRP Foundation, preceded an awards ceremony where volunteers were recognized for their dedicated service to the Park.

Senior Ranger Ryan Robertson provided updates about the park—including the good news that an updated Master Plan for Mission Trails Regional Park will likely be approved this year. Rangers presented awards in their respective focus areas, and individual volunteers received awards, certificates from the City of San Diego and Councilmember Scott Sherman, and gift cards from the MTRP Foundation.

VOLUNTEER AWARDS

- Volunteer of the Year:** Dorothy Leonard
- West Sycamore Crew:** Roy DeRego
- Habitat Restoration:** Terry Gaughen
- Trail Improvement:** Bob Graham
- Park Beautification:** Vance Mills
- Trail Guide:** Robin Hampton
- Park Patrol:** Marty Fink
- Nest Box Program:** Richard Griebe
- Visitor Center:** Donna Lupinacci

*Value determined with the *Calculating the Economic Impact of Volunteers* formula at www.pointsoflight.org.



Volunteers of the Year included (clockwise, from left): Volunteer of the Year Dorothy Leonard with Senior Ranger Ryan Robertson; Visitor Center volunteer Donna Lupinacci with Visitor Center Director David Lee; Trail Patrol volunteer Marty Fink with Ranger Rebecca Smart. Kumeeyaay Lake Campground hosts Mike and Judy Wade and Gaylene and Steve Simmons are recognized by Rangers Julie Aeilts and Mansour Habis.



Clockwise, from left: MTRP Nest Box Program volunteer Richard Griebe with Ranger Chris Axtmann; Trail Guide Program President Fred Kramer; West Sycamore Crew volunteer Roy DeRego with Ranger Andrew Miller; Trail Guide volunteer Robin Hampton; Trail Guides Tonatzin Romero and Claire Crise.

Gerry Tietje

PHOTO EXHIBIT AND LECTURE

Last fall, the inaugural lectures of a new series, *In Focus: Perspectives on Photography at Mission Trails* were offered, and the series continues on Thursday, March 14, with a presentation by Gerry Tietje. An MTRP volunteer, Tietje's photographs have appeared in *Birds and Blooms* magazine, several San Diego-based publications, and have been exhibited at the MTRP Visitor Center, San Carlos Library, and the San Diego office of the Audubon Society.

Taking place in conjunction with his solo exhibition at the MTRP Visitor Center, Gerry Tietje will present a lecture titled "The Technical Side of Nature Photography." It will cater to photographers who want to learn how to use their own camera settings to take better photos of landscapes, wildflowers, and birds. Gerry will discuss his settings for each of these subjects, and also include tips about composition and capturing appealing images.

A Wisconsin native, Gerry Tietje obtained degrees in Electrical Engineering from Valparaiso and Purdue Universities, and moved to San Diego in 1973 to work for the Navy. Gerry has always had an interest in nature, especially in birds. He began experimenting with Pen and Ink drawings and watercolor in 1997, and with photography a few years later, taking photographs of birds to aid in identifying them and provide subject matter for his artwork. His photographic interest evolved to include wildflowers and landscapes. He honed his photography at Mission Trails, and enjoyed photographing nature so much that it became a primary pursuit.

Gerry Tietje's Field Classes will be held March 16 and March 23 with sign ups available at the lecture.

Gerry Tietje has waived honoraria for this engagement, choosing to have the proceeds from the program benefit the initiatives of the MTRP Foundation. The \$10 event ticket price includes attendance at the lecture and a Field Class organized to complement the presentation.



IN FOCUS: PERSPECTIVES ON PHOTOGRAPHY AT MISSION TRAILS

LECTURES AND FIELD CLASSES

Gerry Tietje: The Technical Side of Nature Photography

LECTURE: Thursday, March 14, 7-8:30PM

FIELD CLASS DATES: March 16 and March 23 at 8:30AM. Sign up and meeting location available at the lecture.

INDIVIDUAL LECTURE WITH FIELD INSTRUCTION: \$10

Reserve your space at mtrp.org/photo

Nature in Focus, an exhibition of photographs by Gerry Tietje will be on view at the MTRP Visitor Center from February 16 through March 29, 2019.

5-Peak Challenge Tops 10,000!

By Ranger Heidi Gutknecht

On Thursday, January 10, a mother and daughter duo, Annette and Shelby Bojevsky, finished the 5-Peak Challenge and stopped by the Visitor Center front desk to be processed as “walk-ins.” Little did they know, or us for that matter (until later), that they were numbers 9,999 and 10,000 to have successfully completed the 5-Peak Challenge! Way-to-go, ladies! To honor and congratulate them on this milestone, the MTRP Foundation gave them each a 5-Peak Challenge T-shirt to wear with pride. The local Adventure-16

ON THEIR WAY UP THE “STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN,” A WOMAN IN HER 80’S PASSED THEM AND INSPIRED THEM TO PUSH ON TO THE SUMMIT.

store in Mission Valley also generously donated a \$50 gift card and hiking-related merchandise, and REI donated items as well. Back in September, Annette first heard about the Challenge from an elderly patient at Kaiser, where she works, and thought if he could do it, so could she. Her daughter, Shelby, completed the Challenge with her, and both agree that South Fortuna is by far their favorite hike. On their way up the “stairway to heaven,” a woman in her 80’s passed them and inspired them to push on to the summit, where they were rewarded with an awesome view.

Since the Challenge began back on November 7, 2015, there has been an average of 263 people per month completing it. Created by former MTRP Park Ranger Levi Dean and current MTRP Park Ranger Heidi Gutknecht, the original intent of the

Challenge was to help get the word out that there is much more to Mission Trails than just Cowles Mountain. As one of the most popular hikes in San Diego, hordes of people tackle the mountain every day (and night), rain or shine, and as a result, the trails take quite a beating. Those who cut switchbacks for “short-cuts” also create unauthorized “trails,” which contribute to erosion and further destruction of the official trails. By letting people know that there are four other peaks in the park to hike, the hope was to spread out some of the heavy foot traffic on Cowles, and thus decrease the rate of damage to the trails.

The 5-Peak Challenge has been very successful in getting hikers to explore the park’s other trails, but in doing so, has brought more hikers to the park, resulting in more wear and tear on the trails. In addition, many people have been going off-trail to shorten the distance of completing all five peaks in one day. If you are currently working on the Challenge or planning to complete it in the near future, please be sure to stay on the official, authorized trails at all times. We need to work together to protect and preserve this beautiful park we all love so much. Remember, “it’s not about the destination; it’s about the journey.” Happy hiking and congratulations again to Annette and Shelby for helping to mark this 5-Peak Challenge milestone!



Mother and daughter hikers Annette and Shelby Bojevsky were numbers 9,999 and 10,000 to have successfully completed the 5-Peak Challenge! Shelby, pictured left, was number 10,000 and shared that her favorite of the peaks was South Fortuna.



Arbor Day

EACH DECEMBER, we celebrate Arbor Day at Mission Trails Regional Park to beautify the park, recognize the importance of trees in our environment, and create more shady areas for current and future visitors.

Our annual Arbor Day tree planting effort offers the opportunity for community members to underwrite the planting of a tree at MTRP, and they can do so in honor or in memory of a loved one. This year's call for Arbor Day donors resulted in the largest number of donors to Arbor Day since 2000!

On December 1, families and friends gathered at Kumeyaay Lake Campground to plant 14 trees, and another tree planting was done on January 12, also at the campground. In total, 20 new Coast Live Oak trees were planted at Kumeyaay Lake Campground (KLC), with the remainder of the 34 sponsored trees to be planted by MTRP staff as needed.

Many thanks to the community members who came forward to bring more trees to Mission Trails. We look forward to watching them grow.



ARBOR DAY 2018 – DONORS

- Mary Aeck** – In memory of sons Michael and Jason Welke
- Axtmann and Christ families** – In memory of Tyler Christ
- David Ayzenshteyn and Riva Kogan**
– In memory of son Mark Volf Ayzenshteyn
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- Ten Strands** – In memory of Claire Marie Schell
- Helen Tkacik** – In memory of Noel Brown
- Don and Anne Wemple** – In memory of Jill Morton and Kevin Brian Morton



DONOR HIGHLIGHTS



We are grateful to the following community members and organizations that made gifts to support Mission Trails Regional Park (MTRP) through the MTRP Foundation during 2018. If you see any inaccuracies, please contact the MTRP Foundation at 619-668-3280 or email mtrp@mtrp.org. If you would like to join friends and neighbors who support the MTRP Foundation, you can make a donation online at mtrp.org or by using the envelope inserted in this newsletter. Thank you!

TRUSTEE \$50,000–\$100,000

City of San Diego
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SPONSOR \$10,000–\$24,999

Susan and John Fratamico in memory of our parents Paul and Virginia Mezynski

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Thanks to the following for their donations to the Volunteer Awards Celebration raffle: REI, Sunbelt Publications, The Natural History Museum, Panama 66, La Jolla Playhouse, Blind Lady Ale House, Nicolosi's Italian Restaurant, JuicePress, La Jolla Cosmetic Medical Spa and Waters Fine Foods & Catering.

 Denotes gift made through the San Diego Foundation.



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MISSION TRAILS REGIONAL PARK CALENDAR OF EVENTS

All events meet or take place at the MTRP Visitor Center unless otherwise noted. For more information on these or other events, please visit our website at www.mtrp.org.

WILDLIFE TRACKING WALKS

8:30-10:30AM, 1st Saturday of each month

GUIDED NATURE WALKS (90 MINUTES)

9:30AM 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

DISCOVERY TABLE DEMONSTRATIONS

10AM-1PM, 2nd Saturday of each month

March: Photosynthesis

April: Bird Nests

May: Plant Parts

MORNING BIRD WALKS

With Jeanne Raimond and Millie Basden, beginning at 8AM

March 9 at Lake Murray (meet at Ball Fields)

April 20 at Old Mission Dam

May 18 at Visitor Center (VC) for VC Loop Trail

BIRDING BASICS

1PM on the last Saturday of the month at the Visitor Center in Classroom A

LIVE HAWK DEMOS

9AM to Noon, 1st Sunday of each month

STAR PARTIES

Kumeyaay Lake Campground Day Use Lot

March 1, 9: 6-9PM

April 5, 13: 7-10PM

May 3, 11: 7:30-10PM

West Sycamore Staging Area (Scripps Ranch area)

March 15: 5:45-8:45PM

April 19: 7:15-10:15PM

May 3: 7:45-10:30PM

NATURE STORY & CRAFT WITH A RANGER

10-11AM on the 3rd Saturday of each month

Kumeyaay Lake Campground

Children ages 5-10 are invited to join Ranger Heidi for a nature story, followed by an arts-and-craft project. RSVP required: 619-668-3279.

MUSIC AND ART AT THE VISITOR CENTER

NATIVE AMERICAN FLUTE CIRCLE

1-3PM, 2nd Sunday each month

ART EXHIBITIONS

Gerry Tietje: Nature in Focus

February 16-March 29

TIERRA SANTA ARTISTS

March 30-May 10

MTRP PHOTO CONTEST

May 11-June 21

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