

SANTA FE DAM NATURE CENTER NEWSLETTER



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Welcome

Welcome to the first Newsletter of the Santa Fe Dam Nature Center! We have lots to share about this wonderful place so near to our cities and neighborhoods, yet so far away in wild land experience.

The Nature Center is located in the middle of the hundreds of acres of rare and unusual Natural Area of the Santa Fe Dam Regional Park, leased by the Los Angeles County Parks & Recreation Department from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. We're open Tuesday through Sunday except holidays and rain. We offer Field Trips, Trail Walks, Bird Walks, Outdoor Programs, and more.

With the 2002 Grand Opening of the Nature Center by Partnering Nonprofit, San Gabriel Mountains Regional Conservancy (SGMRC), the charge by LA County was to open and operate a nature facility that showcases the park natural areas, habitat, plants, wildlife, and history of the region.

Particularly emphasized at the Santa Fe Dam Nature Center are the rare and unusual wildlife and plants surrounding the Nature Center - the alluvial fan sage scrub plant community. It is the rarest of habitats and the last of its kind in the County.

You, friends, family, schools, churches, clubs, service organizations, businesses are all invited to enjoy this wild area treasure in the midst of the 3 million people of the San Gabriel Valley! Come on over to enjoy, learn, relax, and share the treasures: "Visit, Contribute, and Volunteer!"

Special Thanks to Editor/Volunteer Thomas Chang for his vision in starting the e-Quarterly News & Happenings at Santa Fe Dam Nature Center. We're please to introduce you to the many interests and talents of our NC Volunteers as they interpret nature, rare animals and plants, habitats, history of the

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area, native and drought tolerant gardens, and more through their newsletter writings and your visits to see and experience this wild area.

Dr. Ann Croissant, President
Board of Directors
San Gabriel Mountains Regional Conservancy

Calendar of Events

- Aug 7, Sat 10:00am - Guided nature walk*
- Aug 16, Thurs - Field Trip (Loma Alta L.A. County Park & Recreation)*
- Aug 21, Sat 8:00am - Guided bird walk*
- Aug 28, Sat 10:30 - Leadership team meeting*
- Sep 4, Sat 10:00am - Guided nature walk*
- Sep 18, Sat 8:00am - Guided bird walk*
- Sep 23 - Fall arrives*
- Sep 25, Sat 10:30 - Leadership team meeting*
- Oct 2, Sat 10:00am - Guided nature walk*
- Oct 16, Sat 8:00am - Guided bird walk*
- Oct 30, Sat 10:30 - Leadership team meeting*

Fourth Wednesdays monthly: Environment Roundtables (TBD/ask for info)

The Santa Fe Dam Nature Center Newsletter is a quarterly publication promoting the preservation and enjoyment of the Santa Fe Dam Natural Area. Please come, enjoy, learn and volunteer.

To receive a newsletter via email, Contact Thomas Chang at sfdnews@yahoo.com

Please pass this newsletter on to a friend!

Nature Center News Update

By Thomas Chang

Horned Lizard Spotted

After years of not being seen or documented, a horned lizard was recently spotted by volunteers on the nature trail at Santa Fe Dam.

Native to Southern California, the horned lizard is a small, wide-body lizard with spiked scales on a rounded body, and horns surrounding the head. It is a slow-moving lizard typically found in open sandy areas in deserts and chaparral, often seen basking on asphalt roads or low rocks in the morning or afternoon.

In California, horned lizards are considered threatened due to the decline of its principal source of food, red harvest ant. The harvester ant queen is being preyed on by the highly aggressive introduced Argentine ant. If you encounter horned lizard at Santa Fe Dam, do not disturb them. Please report all sightings to the Nature Center.

Wildlife Photo Show

Our First Annual Wildlife Photo Show on Earth Day weekend was a huge success; more than 150 visitors of all ages enjoyed learning about a variety of wildlife through this one of a kind photo exhibition.

All photos were shot locally and donated by nature center volunteer and photographer, Thomas Chang. Volunteer Terry Young



2010 Earth Day Wildlife Photo Show

Wish List

The Nature Center needs aquarium tanks, heating pads, heating rocks, heating lamps, bird feeders, bird seeds, and bird houses. Bring your donated items to nature center. We also need volunteers to pull invasive plants along the nature trail.

planned and organized the show and built the display art wall. Other volunteers, including Mike Hoare, Nancy Begg, and Karen Berube-Varga, helped setup the event.

Proceeds from the photo show sales will be used to fund various programs at the Nature Center including feeding the animals.

Snakes at the Nature Center

In January, a California King Snake and a Gopher Snake were donated to the Santa Fe Dam Nature Center by the Herpetology Society through the Whittier Narrows Nature Center.



California King Snake

Volunteers donated aquarium tanks to house the snakes. Both snakes were pre-owned and quite sociable; they have settled in their new home and doing well.

The California King Snake and Gopher Snake are non-venomous constrictors that kill their prey by crushing it in their coils. Constrictor snakes are powerful snakes with their bodies made up of single muscle fiber from head to tail.

Special adaptation has made these snakes capable of swallowing large prey even

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Santa Fe Dam Nature Center looking for volunteers

By Linda Fields Gold, Daily Tribune Staff Writer

In 1949, the Army Corps of Engineers built a flood control dam "to prevent catastrophic floods and debris flows around the alluvial fan of the San Gabriel River."

That dam is approximately 4 miles long, is covered with rocks, runs along Arrow Highway and most of us have noticed it, even if we haven't known exactly what it was. At a height of 92 feet, the water storage facility is the most visible feature of the Santa Fe Dam area, which encompasses nearly 400 acres and has a stocked pond of more than 70 acres.

For the past five years, it has been home to the Renaissance Pleasure Faire. And there is moonlight fishing and camping, bicycle trails and a picnic area.

There are three little islands in the pond and the "interior beach" formed by the dam makes Irwindale a major Pacific stopover for more than 300 species of birds, including those of aquatic, migratory and desert varieties. Plus, the Santa Fe Dam Nature Center is located on the premises.

I spoke with Ann Croissant, active locally in several nature-related projects and conservancies, about the nature center. She said that it is known for being a local spot for field trips, tours, hikes and bird walks. Volunteers are needed to help be trail guides, office personnel, program presenters and assistants.

If you like the outdoors, are friendly and interested in people, and are willing to learn new things, you fill the major

qualifications. If you have certain skills, perhaps you like to work in gardens, plant flowers, trees, shrubs, or create art or craft programs, you would be welcome.

The nature center is open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Fridays through Sundays, and is closed on Mondays, holidays or if it is raining.

As Croissant pointed out, more volunteers would mean the nature center could be open more hours. And new volunteers, with new suggestions and new energy, have added both ground and elevated bird feeders and other improvements.

Applicants would be expected to give about three hours per week of their time. They can choose to work individually or in teams. They should expect to be fingerprinted and during their interview, their fields of interest will be explored to make a good match.

There is general training and then a new volunteer will mentor with an experienced worker for a period of time. There is no age limit and hard-working parent and child teams are encouraged.

Volunteers do not have a dress code, but usually wear long pants, closed-toe shoes, and either a hat or visor to protect against the sun.

If this seems like an interesting opportunity for you, please call Croissant at 626-335-1771 or e-mail her at

glcroissant@csupomona.edu

This article was originally published in the San Gabriel Valley Tribune and related newspapers of the San Gabriel Valley News Group, on June 27, 2010.

5 easy steps to become a volunteer

1. Attend orientation
2. Review the Docent Training & Protocols
3. Complete application and fingerprinting
4. Shadow trained docents
5. Attend ongoing education classes and outings offered throughout the year



Santa Fe Dam Recreational Area

Nature Center News Update Continued from page 2...

larger than snake body size. Common food items include rodents, other reptiles, birds, and amphibians. The "king" in the name refers to their propensity to hunt and consume other snakes, particularly venomous rattlesnakes. The snakes are fed twice a month on Saturdays. The Public is welcomed to view the feeding.

Saturday Bird Walk

Santa Fe Dam is home to many birds either as year-round residents, or as migratory birds of the Pacific Flyway. It is interesting to see desert and chaparral birds alongside water birds within the park.

Cactus wren nests are commonly found on the Valley Cholla Cactus. The Valley Quail, California state bird, may be seen and heard frequently. These are some of the birds you

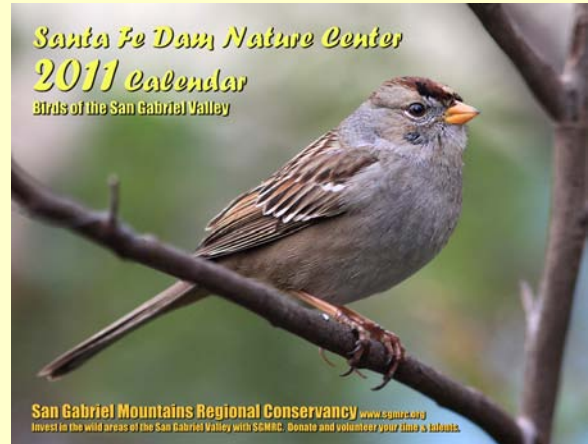


California Quail is frequently seen on the nature trail

Contribution & Sponsorship

Many big thanks to those wonderful people who thought of the Santa Fe Dam Nature Center when giving their donations.

Did you know our Nature Center is entirely operated by volunteers and money donations from the public? All donation and sponsorship of projects are welcomed. Your tax deductible contribution will benefit the environment, promote nature education, and keeps the Nature Center open. Thank you.



Coming soon... 2011 Santa Fe Dam Nature Center Calendar

will see on the bird walks offered on the third Saturday of each month at 8:00 a.m. This walk is led by an experienced bird naturalist and offered free of charge to the public.

New Drought Tolerant Garden

By Dr. Ann Croissant

Besides the original Native Plant Garden and the Ethnobotany Garden, SGMRC is planning to add a Natives & Drought Tolerant Garden, thanks to the stewardship projects at Santa Fe Dam led by Racine Ward and her Biosense Webster Volunteer Team, a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson. Racine's role on the Environmental Committee of the Irwindale Chamber has given leadership to a number of new project ideas in addition to cleanups, plantings, and stewardship. Their latest project is to adopt one of the Nature Center Gardens!

The involvement of a Member of SGMRC's Green Team & Conservation Makeovers, Graduate Landscape Designer & Gardener Nate Benesi, has resulted in a number of new garden planning ideas and expertise with natives and drought tolerant plant clustering and maintenance, plus conservation savings.

One of Nate's goals is to educate the public on how to look at native and drought tolerant gardens year round and the variations in seasons that So Cal

really does offer. Most people just haven't discovered how much more native and drought tolerant gardens can say all year! (Pick up your flyer on Conservation Makeovers on the SGMRC website at www.sgmrc.org.)

For more information on how you or your group can be involved in an Adopt a Garden, or Adopt a Project at the Nature Center, contact SGMRC via glcroissant@csupomona.edu.

Nature Trail Report

By Thomas Chang

The 1/4 mile paved and wheelchair accessible trail at Santa Fe Dam is a pleasant self-guided 20-minute walk that showcases wildlife, plants, and habitat. Interesting and informative notes on the signage tell about this one-of-a-kind natural area. Nature walks are also led by trained docents is on Saturday mornings (seasonally). Guided and interpretive trail tours may be scheduled for school or large groups.

Visitors are asked to stay on the trails and not disturb, nor pick any flowers. Take pictures only and leave no trace to help preserve this wild area in the middle of the San Gabriel Valley. The Nature Trail begins at the northwest walkway of the Nature Center.

To Help Preserve the Nature Trail Nature Trail, please obey the following rules and regulations.



Side blotched lizard on the Nature Trail



Santa Fe Dam Nature Trail

1. Visitors stay on the trail at all times
2. Dogs and pets are prohibited on the trail.
3. Bicycle riding prohibited on the trail.
4. Natural areas are protected - not to be disturbed: flowers, plants, shrubs, animal, and rocks. Collecting or disturbing natural area is prohibited.

Bug News – El Segundo Blue

By Terry Young

David Warren called me the other day to say he and other Audubon members went to El Segundo to visit the small and Federally listed El Segundo Blue Butterfly.

The little butterfly is in the Lycaenidae Family and in the sub-family of *Polyommata*. The common name or, the old name for the group, is 'gossamer-winged butterflies' which is another way of saying their markings are like, "very fine thread," or are made of something delicate like cobwebs.

Shakespeare described the fairies in *Midsummer's Nights Dream* as having "gossamer wings". Some of the Family of Lycaenidae is in the subfamily of "hairstreaks" or *Theclinae*, have fine lines on the underside of both of their upper and lower wings and have hair-like

projections on their hind wings - somewhat like itsy-bitsy swallowtails. There are blues, coppers, hairstreaks and gossamers in the Lycaenidae Family - wonderful! - They are out and about flying NOW!

The El Segundo Blue (*Euphilotes battoides allyni*) larvae live on "bluff Buckwheat" (*Eriogonum parvifolium*) common on the fragile Californian dune environments. Dunes are sandy areas where the ocean winds create hills, sometimes tens of feet high. Several species of plants make their living on the dunes - *Abronia maritima* Sand verbena, *Camissonia cheiranthifolia* ssp. *suffruticosa* Beach Evening Primrose to name a few.

However, in the 1930s people thought they could do a better job than Mother Nature of keeping the sand of the dunes from blowing around. So, they planted tons of succulents (and then dug oil wells and built houses) which did not feed the native animals and certainly did not protect the dune environments.

It seems that the little butterfly, the El Segundo Blue in El Segundo is doing much better these days and may even be eating the non-native Buckwheat. OH BUGS! You guys are GREAT!

To learn more go here:

http://www.butterflyrecovery.org/species_profiles/el_segundo_blue/.

For Sale\$\$\$

Looking for hassle free shopping? The nature center offers field guides, books, wildlife photos, calendars, scout patches, and much more! All proceeds support Nature Center Programs.

CRV Items

Bring your CRV items (i.e.: plastic water bottles and aluminum cans). We recycle these items and then use the money for the care and feeding our Nature Center animals.

Nature Center Volunteers

*Alex Begg
Nancy Begg
Nate Benesi
Thomas Chang
Taylor Chen
Juan Cuevas
Dr. Ann Croissant
Dr. Gerald Croissant
Carolyn Echeverria
Fred Echeverria
Jerry Elizalda
Judy Elizalda
Michael Hoare
Dee Dee, Hussey
Ray Jillson
Carolyn Laskowsky
Ray Lowe
Charlotte Luna
Joe Luna
June Luna
Cathie Lou Parker
Shawn Molyanyux
Janet Rodriguez
Terry Young*

The Santa Fe Dam Nature Center would like to thank all the volunteers for their hard work, dedication, and hundreds of hours donated each year.

Thank you!

Santa Fe Dam Nature Center Newsletter

*Editor: Thomas Chang
Photos by: Thomas Chang*

If you have an article you feel would follow the interests of this publication, please feel free to submit it. The deadline is the 24th of July, October, January, and April. All comments are welcomed.

*Email your article and comments to:
sfdnews@yahoo.com*