



Santa Susana Mountain Park Association

Volume 30, Issue 29

A Non-Profit 501(c)(4) Organization
Incorporated August 31, 1971

August 2003 Newsletter

Devil Canyon

Experience by Teena Takata

Imagine asking four friends to meet you and willingly subject themselves to our hot July weather for half a day. Would it surprise you to hear they all said yes? The target of this hike was Devil Canyon, and we were looking for a certain unusual plant that was about 3-4 miles from the 118 Freeway, the nearest point of access.

Devil Canyon has a variety of springs, and even now shows water and seepage from the ground in several low places. In June, when we made the first summer trip into this riparian wetland along the canyon floor, some parts of the main trail were several inches under water. Although the trail now is dry, the moist canyon floor provides habitat for plants that enjoy the damper environment. We recently saw Scarlet Monkey Flowers in bloom, although the spectacular Humboldt Lily that grows in the canyon now has passed for this year.

A benefit of the terrain is that due to often steep and narrow canyon walls, and a canyon floor that is covered in oaks and willows, the temperature drops by about 15 degrees as you get past the initial dry land hike to access the trail. The cooler temperature continues as one follows the trail through the canyon floor. After the first ½ mile or so, the trail is generally almost level. If you consider going, be sure you can identify poison oak, which is a frequent native in areas such as this and is prevalent in Devil Canyon. Watch for rattlesnakes, two weeks ago one let us know in no uncertain terms that we disturbed it.

As you progress up the canyon, you will find a gate. Make sure you leave it latched and closed; longhorn cattle graze north of it. And, I hesitate to say, but two other groups of hikers made the same comment, so I'll say it - both male and female longhorns have horns; do not assume a horned bovine is a bull - it seems

most of the free range cattle are cows, not bulls. However, all cattle should be treated with caution; cows that become separated from their calves may be very aggressive, and all cattle in the area are untamed range cattle, and therefore should be given a wide berth.

Note: The access route to Devil Canyon, although long established and shown as a "dedicated" trail on County documents, is under threat by the Poema condominium development that in present configuration will eliminate access through the

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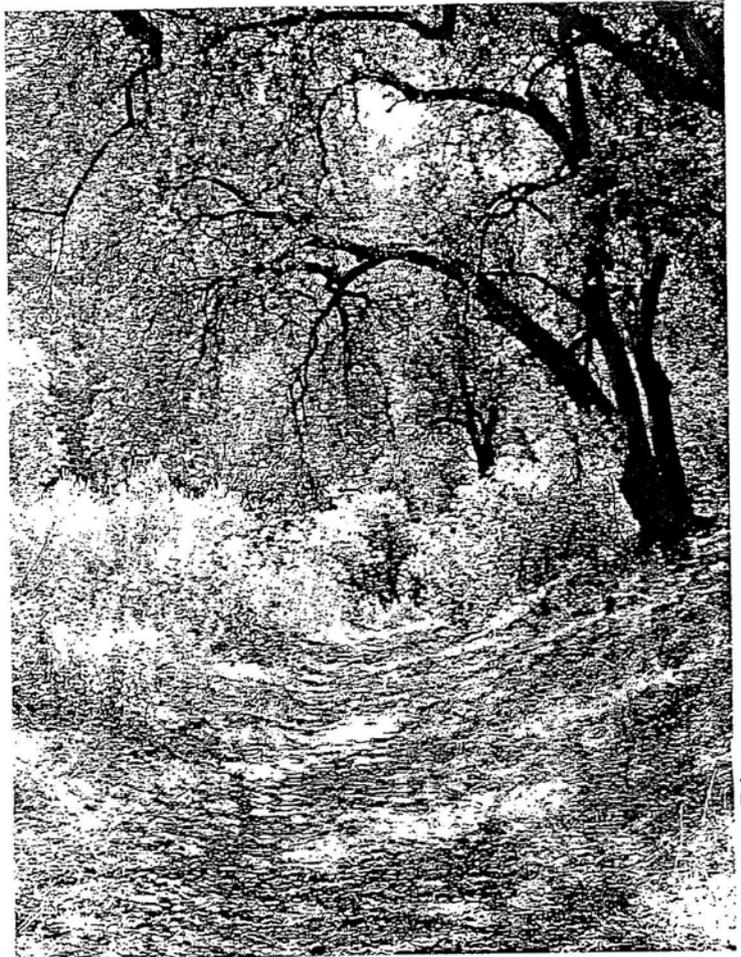


photo by Teena Takata

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existing paved drive on the old "church" property east of Summerset Condominiums. Trail access has been shown through part of the Deerlake Ranch property, but there is no parking proposed that will be near the revised trailhead. Hearings continue on these two projects, but if you use these trails, or value their availability and ease of access, you might drop a line to the Los Angeles County Regional Planning Department, attention Ellen Fitzgerald, who is the Planning Department's representative on both these cases, and let Supervisor Antonovich's office know of your concerns, too. Their downtown deputy is trying to address the various concerns, but more input from the public always helps!

Dayton Canyon Suncal Companies Project

On or about July 7, 2003, the Suncal public relations rep said it looks like they "might start grading either in the middle or latter part of this summer. Grading will take 4 to 5 months, so we are talking next year before there will be any houses in the marketplace." Interestingly, the message given last year at this time was exactly the same.

The City approved 175 single family homes to be built on 68 acres at the NW corner of Roscoe Blvd and Valley Circle Blvd. in West Hills. It will be a non-gated community. 214 acres will remain in permanent open space. P. 3-17 of the Final Environmental Report: "The developer will ensure public access for passive recreation such as hiking and horseback riding." However, there remains a question as to whether space will be made for public parking.

Equestrian Parks/Trails/Grants by Teena Takata

The meeting on June 11th was heavily attended by East Valley residents. Residents of Chatsworth and Granada Hills also attended. Also participating were Emily Gabel Luddy, LA City Planner, Dianne Kartiala from LA City Council District 12's office and Griffith Park reps. Chatsworth was represented by Jerry England, Linda Menaire, Charlotte Brodie and Teena Takata.

Trail mapping is underway under some guidelines. Ten million dollars is being spent in Hansen Dam, but a lot is on buildings and soccer fields instead of trails.

There is no funding for maintenance. There is grant money available via <http://www.parks.ca.gov>, and a table of possible grants was passed out showing some guidelines for various programs. As indicated under "Urban Parks" (one of the programs), if one offers matching funds or labor or equipment, it raises one's priority for consideration, as does working with multiple groups. A 501 (c)(3) status is needed, as well as "land tenure on public land" to qualify on some programs (not Urban Parks).

The City's goal likely is to form a group of 9 to 12 people to consider the various ramifications. People noted that multiple areas should be represented, multiple organizations (as well as those not with an organization),

and possibly local groups could separately meet to develop goals. Another general meeting is being planned.

As City Parks still has broken swimming pools, leaking gym roofs, etc., it is hard to get money for trails from them. Local volunteers can help maintain trails (even relatively large projects): they need to (a) coordinate their project and set the scope with the Dept. of Parks & Rec., and (b) provide their group name to the City. Local groups may also supply equipment. To the extent grants are made to a local group, they can have work done more inexpensively than the City, which has many rules and wages limits/union contracts involved with jobs that are issued, but one would need to coordinate/meet with City Parks at the beginning of the work to set the scope.

Local Council offices should be able to provide demographic information for population requirements for some grant applications.

Save Chatsworth, Inc. News by Vanessa Watters

Members of Save Chatsworth, Inc. are planning an evening for a community presentation regarding the **Deerlake Ranch development project**. We have been working to prepare a plan for a reduced density alternative that will be presented to the developers and to county officials the week prior to the community meeting.

The community meeting will be held on **Thursday, August 14, at 7:00 p.m., at Sierra Canyon School, 11052 Independence Avenue** (at the corner of Independence and Rinaldi), Chatsworth. Anyone who lives or works in Chatsworth, or hikes or rides in Devil Canyon, is urged to attend this meeting to get the latest information on the Deerlake Ranch project and also the proposed **Topanga Canyon Blvd. condominium project**. Reducing the density of both of these projects is crucial to the preservation of the local lifestyle. The Deerlake Ranch project goes before the **Regional Planning Commission on Wednesday, September 3, 2003**. This project has been continued for about a year and a half, and this may be the community's last opportunity to press for significant changes.

Deerlake Ranch is a proposed 388-home development in LA County, north of the 118 Freeway and east of Topanga Canyon Blvd., west of Canoga Ave. The community has already had success in reducing the project - the original number of homes presented was 484 - but the project is still much too large. Among the major concerns are increased traffic, air and water pollution (the developers propose to dump the storm drain water from the project into Devil Canyon), and trail access.

The Topanga Canyon Blvd. condominium project, originally proposed at 159 units and now reduced down to 65, would be located right at the top of Topanga Canyon Blvd., just to the west along Poema Place. The developer is also in a continuance situation with Regional Planning.

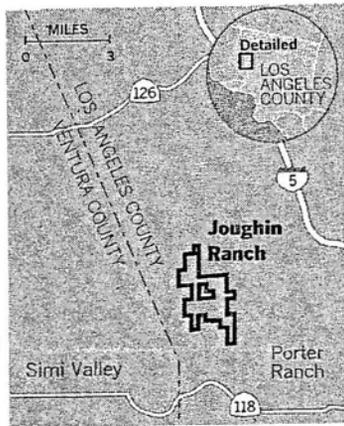
Come to the meeting on August 14 and hear the latest information about these projects and how you can help the effort to prevent the overdevelopment of our hills.

Contact **Vanessa Watters** at (818) 341-4554.

SMMC Purchases 3-Square-Mile Joughin Ranch

"It's the best, wildest chunk of land adjacent to the San Fernando Valley," said Paul Edelman, deputy director of natural resources and planning for the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. The \$8.5-million deal was announced July 29th. The bulk of the funds came from the California Wildlife Conservation Board and a 1996 LA County park bond. Part of the funds will go toward improving public access to the land in forming a large regional park with a network of hiking trails that will offer sweeping ocean and valley views. The park will connect Rocky Peak (6,000 acres) and the Santa Clarita Woodlands (4,000 acres).

The Joughin Ranch land lies in the Santa Susana range and helps form a link between the Sespe Condor Sanctuary in Los Padres National Forest and the San Gabriel Mtns. Existing there are mountain lions, deer, black bears, bobcats, coyotes, coastal sage scrub, grasslands, chaparral and woodlands of oak, ash, walnut and sycamore, as well as several threatened plant species, including the mariposa lily and the Santa Susana tar-plant. The land encompasses headwaters of natural streams that run through Devil, Ybarra and Browns canyons.



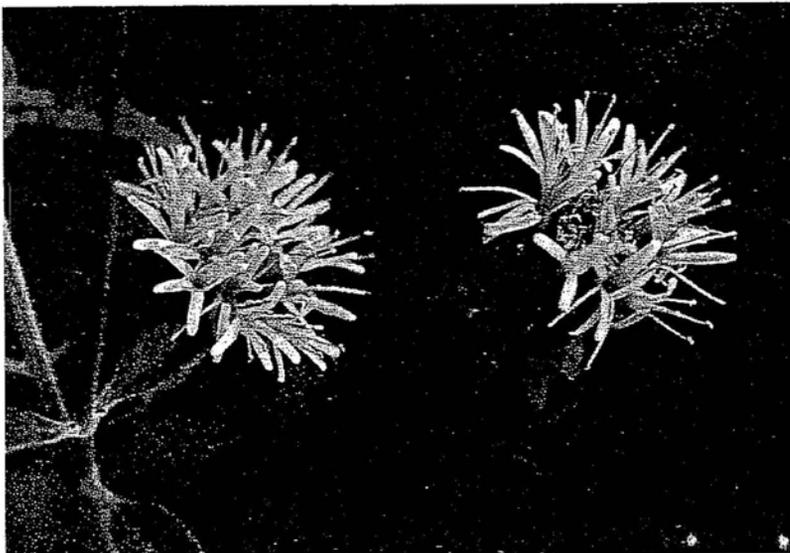
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VIP Tours

On July 2nd, SSMPA president Jan Miller, along with FPSSM president Pearl Turbush and FPSSM treasurer Chuck Turbush, gave a tour of the Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park to Ron Schafer, the new District Superintendent of the Angeles District, and Kathleen Franklin, Park Superintendent III, Angeles District. The guests were shown our Visitors Center, then driven up the Santa Susana Pass Road, where they stopped at a turnout and viewed the stagecoach road and Lilac Lane. The group walked to the plaque before proceeding to Box Canyon.

On July 23rd, SSMPA president Jan Miller and past president Judy Garris gave a tour to three Caltrans biologists. Everyone met at the Rocky Peak offramp, and Caltrans was given handouts on wildlife corridors and information about SSMPA. SSMPA has a concern that the development of an offramp in this particular wildlife corridor will open up residential and other development within the corridor, threatening the existence of the local wildlife. At the Lilac Lane part of the tour, a woman who lives in the area walked by with her children and joined in the discussion. She mentioned that she sees bobcats, coyotes, skunks and raccoons, plus deer come to her yard on a daily basis. Her neighbor said that a small mountain lion goes through their property each evening! This spontaneous contribution by a resident was perfectly timed to educate Caltrans about the richness of our local wildlife. Jan and Judy then took the biologists to the stagecoach road and to see the plaque. Along the way, they were shown several acquisition properties. Foreign "fountain grass", which had been planted along the freeway years ago and has now spread to the park, was shown to the visitors. Measures were discussed for eradication of exotic plants, which threaten to crowd out the California native plant communities.



Mustang Mint

Monardella lanceolata Gray.

Mint Family. LAMIACEAE (LABIATAE)

Mustang mint (monardella) is a branching aromatic annual from 6" to 2' high. The few narrow leaves taper at both ends and are 1-2" long. The small, blue-purple flowers with purplish bracts underneath mass in crowded terminal heads over an inch across. It is found in dry soil. Rare. It flowers from May to August.

Mustang mint occurs in oak woodlands. There is a pungent fragrance to this plant.

THE LAND ETHIC

Author: Aldo Leopold
from A Sand County Almanac (1949)

All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts. His instincts prompt him to compete for his place in that community, but his ethics prompt him also to cooperate.

The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land.

This sounds simple: do we not already sing our love for and obligation to the land of the free and the home of the brave? Yes, but just what and whom do we love? Certainly not the soil, which we are sending helter-skelter downriver. Certainly not the waters, which we assume have no function except to turn turbines, float barges, and carry off sewage. Certainly not the plants, of which we exterminate whole communities without batting an eye. Certainly not the animals, of which we have already extirpated many of the largest and most beautiful species. A land ethic, of course, cannot prevent the alteration, management, and use of these "resources," but it does affirm their right to continue existence, and, at least in spots, their continued existence in a natural state.

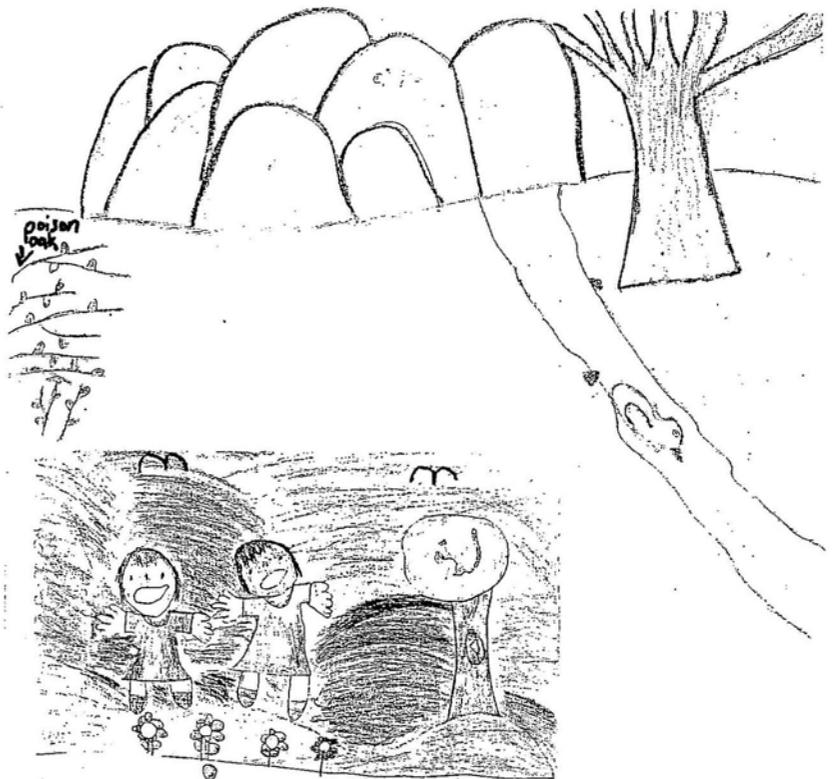
In short, a land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such.

A land ethic, then, reflects the existence of an ecological conscience, and this in turn reflects a conviction of individual responsibility for the health of the land. Health is the capacity of the land for self-renewal. Conservation is our effort to understand and preserve this capacity.

It is inconceivable to me that an ethical relation to land can exist without love, respect, and admiration for land, and a high regard for its value. By value, I of course mean something far broader than mere economic value; I mean value in the philosophical sense.

Perhaps the most serious obstacle impeding the evolution of a land ethic is the fact that our educational and economic system is headed away from, rather than toward, an intense consciousness of land.

The evolution of a land ethic is an intellectual as well as emotional process. Land is not merely soil.



These 3 drawings were done by school children following a field trip in 1995 into what is now known as the Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

- WHAT? A Rally in the Park! Lots of fun!
WHEN? Saturday, September 20 - come at 10:30 a.m.
WHERE? Chatsworth Park South
WHY? To show community support for funding for the Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park
SPONSORED BY? SSMPA, FPSSM & the Chatsworth Women's Club
WHO IS COMING? 1. Members of the community - YOU!
2. Local elected officials
3. Chumash leader Charlie Cooke
4. Etc. - To Be Determined!
- (see our September newsletter for further information)

SANTA SUSANA MOUNTAINS TASK FORCE (SSMTF)

The task force supports the protection of the Santa Susana Mountains and the Simi Hills as the primary wildlife corridor linking the Angeles and the Los Padres national forests to the Santa Monica Mountains. This narrow corridor is important for genetic mixing of wildlife between the adjoining mountains. Task force members work to preserve this unique land by attending meeting of government agencies and other groups and by submitting written comments. We train hike leaders in the land use issues, history and natural science of the Santa Susana Mountains and the Simi Hills. We work with the Santa Susana Mountain Park Association (SSMPA).

Meetings: 5 times a year at the Chatsworth Park South Nature Center at the west end of Devonshire Blvd. in Chatsworth. Call (818) 346-7654 for times and dates.

CANADA GOOSE PROJECT / MIGRATION FOUNDATION

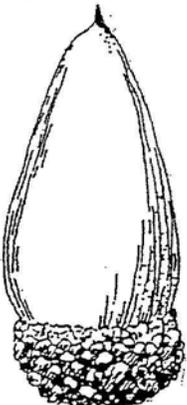
We are looking for a fundraiser-type person and also a recording secretary to join us at our meetings and take minutes. Our next meeting will focus on the coming migration season, which begins around October 1st. New goose counters are always welcome. These trained volunteers are privileged to see nature in areas where most people are not allowed to go. If you are interested in any of these volunteer opportunities, please call Rosemarie White at (818) 769-1521 or send an e-mail to: canadagooseproj@aol.com.



Great Blue Heron

SANTA SUSANA MOUNTAIN PARK ASSOCIATION

WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN / RENEW / REJOIN S.S.M.P.A. (Please circle one.)



Valley Oak

Investing in the future of our communities and its resources is probably one of the best expenditures of our time and efforts. Return this cutoff with your contributions to help ensure our futures. Please make checks payable to SSMPA and send to SSMPA, P.O. Box 4831, Chatsworth, CA 91313-4831.

- Senior or Student (\$5.00) Individual (\$10.00) Family (\$15.00)
 Business or Organization (\$25.00) Life Member (\$100.00)

Name: _____ Phone: _____

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The purposes of the Santa Susana Mountain Park Association are the protection, preservation, restoration, and enhancement of the Santa Susana Mountains and Simi Hills as open space lands and wildlife corridors linking the Los Padres National Forest and San Gabriel Mountains, including the Angeles National Forest, to the Santa Monica Mountains; as habitats for plants and animals native to the Santa Susana Mountains and the Simi Hills; as locales of unique geologic formations; as sites of ethnological, archaeological and historical interests; to provide passive recreational opportunities and environmental education opportunities; and, to support the acquisition of new public parks, open space and conservation easements, the expansion of existing parks, participate in the planning of park infrastructure and programs, and support said programs. To find out how you can participate, contact Jan Miller at (818) 702-0854.

Message from our Board of Directors:

We're excited about our program speaker lineup for next season's general meetings, which commence September 15th at 7:15 p.m. We try to have timely, new, interesting, and sometimes unusual lectures for you, our members. Please refer to the September newsletter for info about our September 15 program.

The focus of our August 4th board meeting (joined by board members of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Santa Susana Mountains): Plans and preparation for the September 20th "Rally in the Park."

Members are welcome to attend our board meetings, held the first Monday of each month. Come to the Visitor Center in the Parks & Recreation Building in Chatsworth Park South at 7:30 p.m.

Thank you for renewing your SSMPA membership! Gail Boudreaux, Marie Burdick, Dorian & Dalia Keyser, Marilyn Stout, Hollace Wood, Mike Stevens, Debra Hetrick, Richard Klotz, Jeff Pomerantz and Bob Goldberg. **Welcome new members!** Leland Gassert, Unna Lassiter, Collette Bertrand and Mary Thompson. **New Life Member:** Rodney Harding.

If you would like to contribute an article for the newsletter, please call Susan Gerke, Editor, at (818) 704-9304.

Please note the renewal date on your label and send in your dues if you wish to continue your SSMPA membership and receive the newsletter. If you are current with your dues, kindly disregard this notice. Life Members, we thank you and invite your continued support with periodic donations to help meet production costs.



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