



Santa Susana Mountain Park Association

Volume 30, Issue 49

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

October 2005 Newsletter

General Membership Program Meeting: Monday, October 17, 2005

Most of us love to garden. Brian Houck, Horticulturist and Manager of the Botanic Gardens and Green-house at CSUN, will give us a hands-on, informal gardening talk, gearing it toward natives so we can share the trials of being on a learning curve of growing them. Bring in examples of any of your problem plants, natives or not, making sure they are good-sized cuttings of a "bad" part of the plant, along with a "good" part, if possible. Brian will also bring examples to pass around. There will be lots of questions and answers! It should be fun and a time to unwind after the thrills of the recent local fires.

SSMPA General Membership Program meetings take place every third Monday of the months during the months of September through November and January through May. Program meetings begin at 7:15 p.m. and generally conclude by 9:00 p.m. at the Rockpointe Clubhouse, 22300 Devonshire, Chatsworth, on the south side, one block before Chatsworth Park South. Refreshments are served at program meetings.

Fire - An Evolutionary Process

An interesting and timely conversation in 2003 between a local chaparral ecologist and a wildlife biologist in a burned open space in Southern California:

Rick, Chaparral Ecologist: Fire in the chaparral is as normal as turning leaves in the East is.

Renee, Wildlife Biologist: In fact, the Southwest Chaparral is really the most flammable habitat more or less in the nation, so even though, it certainly causes a lot of stress to humans when there is a fire. It's part of the ecosystem.

Rick: In the natural backwoods, this, in a sense, is a beautiful system that has magnificent ways to adapt to horrendous disasters and to come back.

Rebecca, Reporter: The fiery wrath that wreaked havoc on people's lives over several dry late October days sketched its own charcoal pattern over the natural world. Some call it destruction. Rick calls it renewal. So where most people just see blackened landscape, you see a seed bank?

Rick: Right. In all the areas in the chaparral that have burned over the last 20, 30, 40, 50 or 100 years, plants have been dropping seeds and building up a seed bank. Right now these seeds have been waiting for this moment their entire lives.

Rebecca: Rick sees infinite potential in the ash-laden landscape. He has been studying Southern California's Mediterranean chaparral habitat for more than two decades. In an ironic twist, the shrublands thrive on fire and some plants depend on it for survival.

[Continued on next page]



Rick: Plants and animals don't typically want to burn to death so that's not the purpose of these plants. They wanted to survive, but in order for the system to survive the seeds in the system itself has adapted to allow for deep dormancies or adaptations to survive fires so that when fire does come, the entire ecosystem will regenerate and it will be fresh and green and new, living proof the same fires that devastate parts of the country rejuvenate Southern California's most characteristic wilderness. In fact, the field biologist says more than half of the plants in a chaparral ecosystem need fire cues -- flames, heat or smoke -- to germinate.



This plant will not germinate at all, the seeds will not germinate unless it's been affected by the charcoal deposit and the seed coat will be chemically modified and then the seeds will germinate. Otherwise there will never be any seedlings. Some chaparral seeds live in the soil for 120 years. Re-growth provides opportunity for biologists to study plants that have been dormant for decades and spring up in the aftermath of a burn. Deerweed is called a fire follower, since it only grows after heat activates its seeds. The seeds have to be heat treated to germinate. After about 2 or 3 years - 4 at the most - this plant will disappear from this area. So it will come back next time there is a fire. It's a unique opportunity to see some of these species. Some will germinate sometimes without fire, but some only after fire. The fire cues for some are not heat but either smoke or charcoal.

Fire is part of the evolutionary process for wildlife as well as plant life. Biologists say animals are well adapted to fire in a chaparral ecosystem. All native species' survival is testament to the fact local wildlife have developed a high tolerance to heat and smoke. But despite adaptations, wildlife populations sometimes take a big hit in a huge blaze. Fire can be destructive for animals in the short-term but beneficial to species in the long run. For wildlife, the bounty of a blaze comes in the form of new vegetation, since fire re-introduces rich minerals back into the soil.

Renee: When a fire goes through and everything starts growing all over again, things have just germinated, there are new seedlings, you get a lot more nutrients and food from this lush new growth, and so it's really a system of death and re-birth is the ultimate cycle you see from the fire.



Rick: This is a normal situation where yes, a lot of animals were killed. A lot of birds have been sent away, but that's a normal part of the system and they will come back. In fact, there are plants here that will exist that haven't existed for 100 years.

We live in this incredible environment and most people aren't even aware it's called chaparral. It's just a natural place to be. My motivation is to educate people about the system, to be prepared for this, to understand its incredible power but also be able to rejoice in the fact that this is one of the most unique environments on earth and surprisingly, California's Mediterranean chaparral habitat is the most preserved and best example of this kind of habitat on the planet.

SSMPA BOARD OF DIRECTORS - 2005

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Mule Deer
(*Odocoileus hemionus*)

Horner Park

Save Chatsworth, Inc. seeks to apply for grant money to fund a revitalization and reforestation project on the site of the 13-acre Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy open space park at Canoga Ave. and the 118 Freeway, commonly known as "Horner Park".

Save Chatsworth's vision for this natural park area, which is widely used by equestrians and hikers, includes the removal of invasive, non-native plants, tree trimming and brush clearance, trash clean-up, graffiti removal, the planting of new native plants and trees, and the establishment of a central rest area on the flat mesa, including benches, trash receptacles and hitching rails, and also informative and educational signage about the wildlife and birds that frequent the park. Our goal is to accomplish these improvements in several stages, over a period of time.

Many grants require "matching" funding from the community, which may come in the form of monetary donations, donation of merchandise and supplies, use of equipment, and volunteer effort. If you are interested and can be of help with any of the above, please contact info@savechatsworth.org for more information. You may also visit our website at www.savechatsworth.org for more details.

Foundation for the Preservation of the Santa Susana Mountains
Help Save Our Local Natural Areas

on

Saturday, November 5, 2005

- Join us at Casa de Carlos from 5:30-6:30 p.m. for a "Meet & Greet" social hour
- Buy your own drinks
- Stay for a wonderful Mexican buffet dinner at \$15 per adult, \$7.50 for children under 10 years old, starting at 6:30 p.m.
- Casa de Carlos will give a percentage to FPSSM

Ask a Casa de Carlos Hostess for a flyer!

If you have any questions, please call:

- Pearl Turbush, President of FPSSM (661) 242-5506
- Nancy Razanski, Vice President of FPSSM (818) 341-3512



RSVP by October 15, 2005

Make checks payable to FPSSM

Mail to P.O. Box 4831, Chatsworth, CA 91313-4831

Thank you, Casa de Carlos, for your generous support!

FPSSM is a 501(c)(3) organization. If you are unable to attend this fundraising event and would like to give a tax-deductible donation, we would greatly appreciate it!

NATIVE PLANT SALE!

Saturday & Sunday, Oct. 15 & 16, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Sponsored by the California Native Plant Society, a non-profit 501©(3) organization
Admission FREE

Sepulveda Garden Center, 16633 Magnolia Blvd., Encino

Expert Planting Advice - Teacher Information - Children's Activities

Books - Posters - T-shirts - Yummy Food

See www.lacnps.org for plant list. Questions? (818) 881-3706

Thanks for renewing your SSMPA membership: Margaret Vernallis, Bob Galletly, Bernie Leytus, Michael & Barbara Haas, Charlene Vincent. Welcome new member: Mimi Gross, Donna Timlin & Al Cutt. New Life Member: Janet Appel.



Santa Susana Mountain Park Association

invites you to JOIN / RENEW (circle one).

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 contribution lend your support. Make your check 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)
 Life Member (\$100.00) Business / Organization (\$25.00)

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Street Address: _____ E-mail: _____

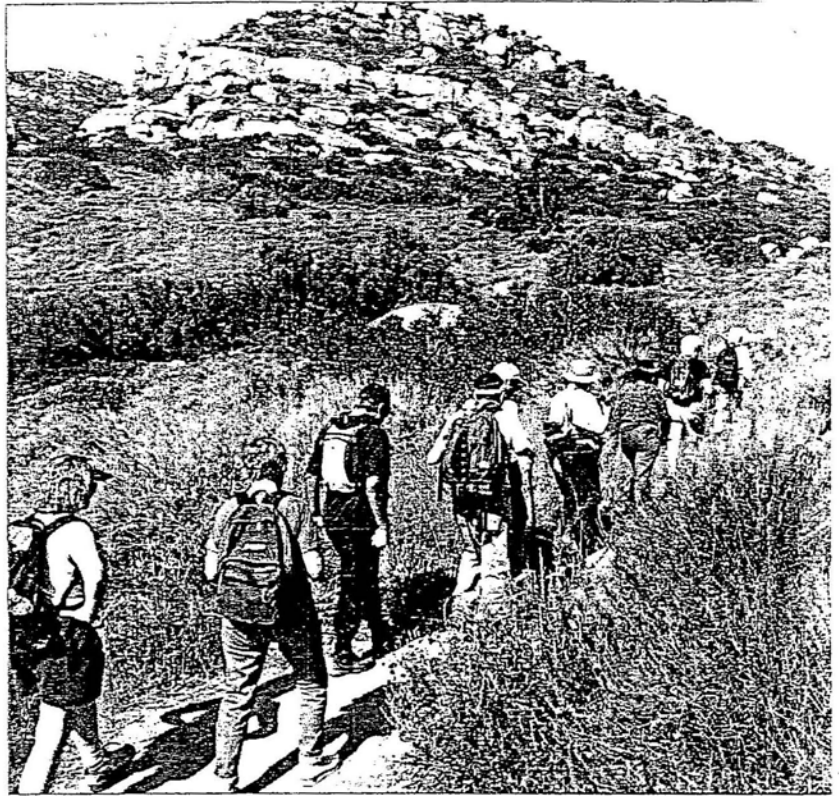
City / State / Zip: _____

Special Interest / Expertise: _____

OCTOBER HIKES

Sunday, 10/16 - Stagecoach Trail: Interpretative hike into history in our Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. Hike up the Devils Slide and learn the colorful history of the park. Meet 9:00 am for a 4 mi (700' gain) loop up the Stage Coach Trail. Hike is not for beginners as the trail in some places is partially washed out. From Topanga Cyn Blvd., turn W on Devonshire, drive into Chatsworth Park S to the 2nd parking lot. Wear long pants, lugsoles are preferred, bring water & snack. Rain cancels. Ldr: Lee Baum, (818) 341-1850. Assts: Judy Garris & Bob Galletly. (Santa Susana Mountain Task Force hike)

Thursday, 10/27 - Chumash Trail to Fossil Hill: 8:00 a.m. Join us on this moderate (and moderately-paced) 8-mi (10-mile opt.), 1,500' gain hike in the rolling hills of the Santa Susana Mountains. Meet at trailhead (118, exit Yosemite, go N 1/2 mi, R on Flanagan and go to end). Bring 2 qts. Water, lunch, lugsoles, hat, sunscreen. Ldr.: Vera Salomons. Asst.: Bob Galletly.



Hikers in the Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park

Members, we appreciate you! Please note the renewal date on your label. If you are a Life Member, we thank you and invite your continued support with periodic donations to help SSMPA meet costs. If you have questions regarding this newsletter, please contact Susan Gerke, Editor, at (818) 704-9304.

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.

Santa Susana Mountain Park Association &
Foundation for the Preservation of the Santa Susana Mountains
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