



# Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council

Protect • Preserve • Maintain

Fall 2019

## Numerous Awards Received at Our 50th Anniversary

Our 50th anniversary was a huge success with over 100 guests attending the celebration at Calamigos Ranch in Malibu. Members and friends came from as far away as Orange County, San Diego and Santa Clarita. There were representatives from the California Senate and Assembly, land agencies, (NPS, SP, SMMC, MRCA, MRT), Agoura Hills and Santa Clarita City Councils, Los Angeles County, and the organizations Sierra Club and ETI 36 who all came to support this momentous occasion.

The festivities included a catered buffet lunch on the island by the lake. There were many posters placed on the island of the Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council's achievements and history over the past 50 years.

**Congressman Brad Sherman's Deputy, John Alford**, presented us with a Flag Of The United States Of America that was flown over the Capitol and a Certificate Of Recognition.



**David Szymanski, Superintendent Of Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area**, presented a plaque of Appreciation on the occasion of the Santa Monica Mountains Trails Councils 50th Anniversary.

**Los Angeles Supervisor Shelia Kuehl's deputy, Nicole Englund**, presented a plaque in honor of our 50 years of outstanding efforts to maintain and protect the Santa Monica Mountains.



**California Senator Henry Stern's deputy, Jeremy Wolf**, 27th District presented a Certificate Of Recognition for our 50 years of trail work in the Santa Monica Mountains.



*Continued on page 4*

## President's Vision

Each and every one of you is an owner of the public lands we call the Santa Monica Mountains. The National Parks Service, California State Parks and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy are stewards who manage the land for you and me.

As owners, we must be responsible for our lands and be committed to the Leave No Trace principles. When you were last out in Nature did you utilize these outdoor ethics? Plan ahead and prepare; Travel and camp on durable surfaces; Dispose of waste properly; Leave what you found; Minimize campfire impacts; Respect wildlife; Be considerate of other visitors.

Challenge yourself with a personal goal of working a Saturday with us on a work party repairing a trail. Work at your own pace with supervision and instruction on how to use the tools that we provide. All our work parties are on our website [smmtc.org](http://smmtc.org) so you can choose which trails you would like to work on.

We can use more people on Saturdays who will help work on the trails digging, cutting, moving rocks, lopping and doing whatever it takes to make a nice safe trail. After 100 hours of trail work, CPR/First Aid, and the Trail Course, you can be certified as a trail crew leader. There are just a handful of trail crew leaders, so please come join us.

The budgets and staff of SP and NPS are very limited regarding trail work, not near enough for maintaining the hundreds of miles of trails. Volunteers are the life blood of keeping trails open and safe. Come join us to enjoy the camaraderie of the trail work party. During the past year – we racked up 5,000 hours plus with over 900 volunteers!!

The devastating Woolsey Fire and extreme rainfall of 2018/2019, gave our trails a real beating. Our trail crew leaders worked with the land agencies to repair the trails most commonly used. The public was quickly able to get back into the mountains and see how the burned landscapes started regenerating immediately – burned trees and shrubs with greenery sprouting days after the fire.

For those who choose to help us in other ways, your donations are a major source of assistance. Your collaboration with us on projects is also most helpful. There are so many ways that you can help the Trails Council improve trails while at the same time benefitting yourself. Take a friend or a child on a trail and let Nature be the teacher to instill a love of the land and all it gives us.

*Ruth*

## Saddle Peak—Ten Year Effort To Eradicate Spanish Broom is Completed!

Several years ago, the Trails Council, supported by the National Park Service (NPS), undertook a challenging restoration project on Saddle Peak. The aim of this project was the removal and restoration of a roughly 10-acre area heavily infested by Spanish Broom. On a recent work day at the site, it was actually difficult to find the offending plants. After 10 years of effort, we can claim success.



Spanish Broom (Lat; *Spartium junceum*) is a very attractive non-native plant which grows from a small shrub to a small tree, 15 to 20 feet tall. The main trunk of the plant can be up to 6 inches in diameter. In spring, the plant blooms with bright aromatic flowers and produces thousands of seeds - with up to 70% easily germinate! Once introduced into an area, the Spanish Broom can spread rapidly and squeeze out native plants. The total infested area on Saddle Peak was about 10 acres and the 3 or 4 acres on top of Saddle Peak had become a dense impenetrable monoculture. As in most restoration projects, our success results from persistence and a lot of hard work, both of which we contributed continually for years. We gave this project over 100 work days spread over 10 years - 300 volunteer work days totaling over 1,500 volunteer hours. Our dedicated trail crew, augmented by Sierra Club Task Force and many community volunteers, labored for many work days, often under grueling conditions, to accomplish this remarkable success. NPS provided technical support, materials and many labor hours by the SAMO Youth.

This project began in 2009, when our trail crew joined with NPS to clear the connector trail from the Backbone Trail to the beautiful view point on Saddle Peak, which had become almost impassable because of the overgrowth of Spanish Broom. After clearing the trail, we took aim at

the Spanish Broom monoculture covering the peak, blocking the view points and movement around the area. We decided we needed to continue the project. NPS agreed to support us with training, materials and other technical support. It was up to the Trails Council to recruit volunteers, organize and manage the project. The initial phase of the project, lasting 2 years, focused on the removal of the existing, massive amount of infestation, so thick a person could not walk through the area. As a result, volunteers spent many hours on hands and knees to get at, cut and treat the offending plants. They did most of the work with hand tools. We have focused the past several years on dealing with new growth. The most recent years have also included planting and tending to native oak tree seedling provided by NPS.

Despite several years of drought, the area is now showing signs of recovery. The absence of Spanish Broom has created an opening and many native plants are now flourishing on their own. The drought reduced the survival rate for the oak tree plantings, but there are about 10 trees surviving, some are now over 8 feet tall.

Spanish Broom, like many other invasive plants, takes root and flourishes in disturbed soil. During the Cold War era, Saddle Peak was the location of one of several Nike Missile sites in the Los Angeles area. This site, designated as LA-78 was active from 1963 to March 1974. In 1993, Saddle Peak burned in the Old Topanga Fire. The structure/ground clearance and soil disturbance resulting from the 1974 deactivation and the 1993 fire together set the stage for the Spanish Broom infestation. During the intervening years, NPS was busy with many other priorities and the infestation received little attention until the Trails Council's project. The site is now well on its way to returning to a natural state.

By Jerry Mitcham



## What's the BUZZ all about



Yellowjacket

wasps and never assume you have docile, ground bees.

Yellowjackets nest in the ground, and like bumblebees, often move into old rodent burrows. Some solitary wasps are ground nesters, as well. Make sure you know the differences between bees and



Ground Bees Nests

Ground bees become active in the spring but rarely sting. These bees also dig nests in the ground, often in bare patches of dirt on trails. If you find mounds of dirt that look like anthills but with larger openings, these may be the nests of ground bees. Watch for bees flying low over the ground and entering their burrows. The male bees lack a stinger entirely. Nesting season is limited to springtime. Leave the nest alone and let the bees do their pollinating in peace. Ground-nesting bees include the digger bees (family Anthropoidea), sweat bees (family Halictidae), and mining bees (family Andrenid). Females are solitary creatures, excavating nests in dry dirt. Each one will fastidiously mound the loose dirt around her nest entrance, then provide her home with pollen and nectar for her offspring. Despite their solitary nature, it's not unusual to find dozens of ground bee nests in one area. Males may fly over the burrows, patrolling for potential mates. Female ground bees can sting but, being non-aggressive by nature, rarely do. However, they will sting in defense if threatened. Males of some species may behave aggressively but cannot sting.



Ground Bee



Bumblebee

see a single bee coming and going, or multiple bees entering the nest?

Bumblebees live in social colonies, and they also nest in underground burrows, though they typically use abandoned rodent burrows rather than excavate new ones. Observe a bee nest from a safe distance. Do you

### FYI

Legal Campfires in legal campgrounds have never caused a fire in the Santa Monica Mountains.

## Golden Eagles Found In The Santa Monica Mountains

A golden eagle chick was recently discovered in a remote area at the western end of the Santa Monica Mountains. This is the first time since the 1980s that a nest of golden eagle chicks has been confirmed in these mountains, a male and female. When discovered at 12 weeks old they were banded for identification as part of

the USGS Bird Banding Laboratory to help scientists.



## Trail Maintenance Statistics

From September 01, 2018 through August 31, 2019 a total of 919 volunteers performed 5,065 hours of trail maintenance in the Santa Monica Mountains and nearby areas. State Parks and NPS budgets are not near enough to maintain the hundreds of trails we have.

Agency	Events	Vol #	Hours	Feet	Miles
COSCA	5	31	135	11,560	2.19
NPS	21	203	1,153.00	57,144	10.82
State Parks	64	685	3,777.00	95,318	18.05
<b>Totals</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>919</b>	<b>5,065.00</b>	<b>164,022</b>	<b>31.06</b>

## Stats Through the Years

Year	# of Events	Vol #	Hours
2018/2019	90	919	5,065.00
2018	72	721	4,302.50
2017	78	740	4,181.50
2016	74	718	4,367.50
2015	87	916	5,532.50
2014	84	746	4,577.00
2013	74	517	3,496.50
2012	70	645	4,159.50
<b>Totals</b>	<b>629</b>	<b>5,922</b>	<b>35,682.00</b>

### Understanding the Trail Triangle

Mt Bikers **yield** to hikers/horses  
 Hikers **yield** to horses  
 Horses **always** have the right of way!



**COURTESY ON THE TRAIL is THE BASIC POLICY**

## Boy Scouts to Construct Picnic Tables At Danielson

We purchased 5 picnic tables with benches to replace some of those burned at Danielson Campground in the Woolsey fire of last November. We buy them from the Sonoma Probation Department in Northern California as they are approved by State Parks. They come unassembled and need to be put together. We have arranged with Boy Scout Troop # 111, from Ventura, for them to be able to camp at Danielson free over a weekend and in exchange they will put the tables and benches together. Win win—Danielson Campground gets tables and benches—the boy scouts get a free weekend camping. The boy scouts will be accompanied by their scoutmaster and some parents and Trails Council trail leaders.

Additionally, we are working to purchase more picnic tables and benches through a matching grant program. There were so many picnic tables burned throughout the State Parks.

We have been fortunate to receive some extra funding so we were able to buy the tables and benches/ due to our recent benefactors.



### *Awards Received at Our 50th Anniversary continued*



**Craig Sap, Superintendent of California State Parks, Angeles District,** presented us with a Certificate Of Recognition for our 50 years of trail work in the Santa Monica Mountains.



Rorie Skei  
David Szymanski  
Laurene Weste



**Robert Ettleman, Planner, Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation** attended to help celebrate our 50th anniversary.

Jodie Hubbard  
Ruth Gerson  
Debbie Lopez  
Joanne Hubbard



**California Assembly Member Richard Bloom** 50th District. Presented a Certificate Of Recognition in appreciation for the past 50 years of trail work in the Santa Monica Mountains.



Jeremy Wolf  
Ruth Gerson  
David Szymanski



*Ruth Gerson, Sheryl Phelps and Kris Amantia*



Lunch on the island at Calamigos Ranch



## Mountain Lion News



P-61

Sadly, we have to report the recent death of 3 of the mountain lions in the National Park Service's study. P-61 died September 7th trying to cross west at the 405 freeway at Sepulveda/Bel Air. He had recently made a successful crossing but this time he was being chased by an aggressive, uncollared male puma east of the 405 chasing him: in trying to get away he ran west across the 405 freeway and was killed.

P-47 died on March 21, lab results indicated he had succumbed to poisoning from anticoagulant rodenticide. The discovery was made after his GPS collar sent out a mortality signal. Testing showed he had been exposed to anticoagulant compounds, and a necropsy conducted found internal hemorrhaging in his head and lungs.

P-38 was illegally shot and killed in Simi Valley in July by a local man. He is being charged with killing a protected mammal and vandalizing its collar, according to the DA's office; both charges are misdemeanors.

The mans attorney stated that the mountain lion was discovered at night actively hunting just yards from children attending a popular summer camp.



## Changes on the Board of Directors

**Kris Amantia:** Kris is our recording secretary, joining the board in March of 2019. Kris is looking forward to working with the board in helping to preserve our wonderful trails in the Santa Monica Mountains.

### **Departing Board Members:**

**Georgia Farinella:** Thank you for your many years of service on the board. Georgia has served as Recording Secretary since 2006. In 2017 she received the Hank Grateful Award for her many years of service maintaining access to trails. You are greatly missed!

**Susie Niebergall:** Equestrian trails advocate. Thank you for your service.



### **50 YEARS AND COUNTING!**

Founded in 1969 and still going strong, the Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council remains true to its roots of providing a voice for trail users along with a healthy dose of trail repair and maintenance. If you are a trail user, you should make plans to come out for a day or two each year to work the trails with us. There is no better way to give back to the trails you love!

## **Upcoming Events**

- **Annual Dinner Meeting — Thursday, October 24th**  
6pm social, 7pm dinner, 7:45pm meeting  
*Complimentary dinner for the trails community.*

*Agoura Hills/Calabasas Community Center, 27040 Malibu Hills Rd, Agoura Hills.*  
**RSVP at [smmtc.org](http://smmtc.org) or (818) 222-4531**

- **Backbone Trek — May 2nd thru 9th, 2020**  
*registration opens February 1st, 2020 and closes April 8th, 2020.*  
**RSVP at [smmtc.org](http://smmtc.org) or (818) 222-4531**
- **39th Annual Santa Monica Mountains Trail Days April 24th thru 26th, 2020 Pt. Mugu State Park**  
**RSVP at [smmtc.org](http://smmtc.org) or (818) 222-4531**

### **Trails Council Board Meetings**

Board Meetings are open to the public and are on the 4th Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm. They are held at Diamond X Ranch, 26412 Mulholland Highway, Calabasas, CA 91302, There are 4 exceptions: April, meet on 3rd Thursday; no meeting in August; Nov & Dec, meet on 1st Thursday.

## A Big Thank You To Our Newest Benefactors



The Ranch's acclaimed results-oriented, fitness and wellness programs are designed to recalibrate the mind and body through an intense fitness and wellness regimen paired with a highly structured plant-based nutritional diet.

Whether you opt for the signature 7-day stay at our tranquil Malibu Ranch or the spectacular Italian Dolomites, a 4-day jumpstart at Four Seasons Westlake Village, a combination of both Malibu and Westlake Village with our 10-day Ranch 10.0, expect to shed inches, lose unwanted pounds and clear the mind.



## CALAMIGOS GUEST RANCH

Quietly nestled in the heart of the Santa Monica Mountains in Malibu Wine Country, Calamigos Ranch is a destination event ranch for weddings, conferences, company picnics, private getaways, and more. Since 1937, Calamigos Ranch is a unique chapter in Malibu and it is known worldwide as a getaway for celebrations, relaxation, and wellness. Experience over 250 acres of Calamigos Ranch with a footprint from the hills above Malibu all the way to the Calamigos Beach Club and the sandy shores of the Pacific. For over 80 years the Gerson Family has welcomed guests to Calamigos Ranch.

## PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Dues are on a rolling 12-month basis. Membership dues are effective the first of the month following receipt; membership will be effective for 12 months. Please make your check payable to SMMTC and mail it to PO Box 345, Agoura Hills, CA 91376 or you may use your credit card with PayPal. <http://smmtc.org/membership/>

*Thank you for your continued support.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Check to have newsletter sent by e-mail

### MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

#### Individual Memberships

- Annual Membership — \$35
- Life Membership — \$360  
 Life membership may be paid in three consecutive annual payments of \$120.

#### Business Memberships

- Supporter — \$100
- Patron — \$250
- Benefactor — \$500

Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

SMMTC is a tax exempt, non-profit organization under IRS code 501(c)(3).

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

#### Officers

<b>President</b> Ruth Gerson	<b>Secretary</b> Kris Amantia
<b>Vice President</b> Barb Thomas	<b>Treasurer</b> Sheryl Phelps

#### Directors

Don Brusselars	Jerry Mitcham
Steve Clark	Charlotte Pattison
Jeffrey Davidson	Anne Russell
Mike Epler	Lylene Sheets
John Kross	George Sherman

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The Trails Council newsletter is published twice a year, in the Spring and Fall.