



PAW PRINTS

Volume 40, Number 1 Newsletter of the Eaton Canyon Nature Center Associates January 2022

PUBLIC CALENDAR

Eaton Canyon Gardening Group

Every Wednesday at 9:30 am and second Sundays of the month at 10 am.

Current volunteers only.

Meet by Nature Center garage door.

Nature Tails Story Hour

Every Saturday at 10:30 am. on the Outdoor Patio. Stories and activities for children.

Saturday Nature Center Discovery

Saturday mornings on the Outdoor Patio. Animal Ambassadors: 10 am and 12 pm. Nature Discovery Tables: 10:30 am to 12:30 pm

Docent-Led Family Nature Walks

Every Saturday at 9 am. Meet in front of the Nature Center. No dogs please.

The following events and meetings cannot take place at the nature center due to precautions in response to COVID-19.

Calif. Native Plant Society Plant Walk

Plant walks are held on the second Sunday of each month except July and August at 9 am. Meet in the back patio.

Audubon Bird Walk

Third Sunday of the month, 8 am. Meet leader Hill Penfold in front of the Nature Center.

Meetings:

Pasadena Group Sierra Club

Monthly meetings via Zoom are held on the first Wednesday of the month at 7 pm. Check their website for information: www.sierraclub.org/angeles/pasadena

Audubon Society

Monthly meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month at 7:30 pm. Check their website for more information: www.pasadenaaudubon.org

Calif. Native Plant Society

Meetings are held the fourth Thursday of the month at 7:30 pm via Zoom. Check their website for more information: <https://www.cnps-sgm.org/activities.php>



Happy New Year!



Owen Brown's Gravesite

By Michele Zack with Introduction and closing by Brenda Hurst

On November 3rd, we were delighted to have Michele Zack as guest speaker at our Bag Lunch and Mini-Inservice. Michele is a local historian and Chair of the Owen Brown Gravesite Committee. She shared the fascinating history of Owen Brown and his recently restored gravesite.



Photo source: Altadena Historical Society On donkeys, Owen Brown at left and Jason Brown at right. Little Round Top in background.

Owen was a son of John Brown, the famous abolitionist who raided the US Armory at Harper's Ferry, West Virginia in 1859, hoping to spark rebellion among slaves and end the "blood sin" of chattel slavery in America. Owen participated with his father, other family members, and a small band of righteous warriors on this failed mission in which several were killed—or captured, tried, and hanged. Owen, among its few survivors, escaped and lived in hiding with a bounty on his head the next two decades. He found his way to the relative safety of Pasadena around 1880, where brother Jason, and sister and brother-in-law, Ruth and Henry Thompson, had settled.

The entire Brown Family, but especially Owen, were celebrities for their abolitionist activities. Pasadena was settled by Union supporters and Temperance advocates—who threw a parade when Owen arrived. He and Jason lived hermit-like lives, homesteading land and living in a crude cabin in the Altadena foothills, where locals made pilgrimages to shake Owen's hand. When he caught a chill and died after walking home from a Temperance meeting in the rain in 1889, 2,000 people attended his funeral. He was buried near the cabin on a hill named Little Round Top after a decisive battle at Gettysburg. Funds for a proper gravestone were raised, and in 1898, the stone was placed, engraved with the words "Owen Brown son of John Brown The Liberator, Died Jan. 9 1889, Aged 64 Yrs." For decades the gravestone remained unharmed

Gravesite continued on page 2



Paw Prints is a monthly publication of the ECNCA. Articles and photographs are welcome on topics related to natural history and Nature Center activities. If you see something interesting in the canyon, please share it with us! The deadline for submissions to the February 2022 issue is January 15, 2022. Send submissions to Brenda Hurst eatonmember@gmail.com.

Contributors: Marilyn Hildebrandt, Brenda Hurst, Diane Lang, Michele Zack

Paw Prints Production

Content Editor: Brenda Hurst
Layout: Carole Scurlock
Copy Editor: Laura Joseph

DOCENT AND MEMBER CALENDAR

Notice: The following events and meetings temporarily cannot take place at the nature center due to precautions required in response to COVID-19.

Guided School Tours

School tours are conducted from October to the end of the school season. Call the office for reservations. 626-398-5420

Bag Lunch and Mini-Inservice

There is no Bag Lunch scheduled for January. The next Bag Lunch will be on Wednesday, February 2, 2022. The presentation, still to be determined, will be in person or on Zoom. Note: The link for the Zoom meeting will be forwarded by email to docents and volunteers. Click on the link a few minutes before noon and follow directions. RSVPs required.

ECNCA Board Meetings

The ECNCA board meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m via Zoom. If you are interested in joining a meeting, please send an email to eatonmember@gmail.com, at least 2 days prior to the meeting.

Gravesite continued from page 2

and accessible to anyone willing to hike up to it.

After the Brown family relative who owned the land and took care of the gravesite died in the 1940s, the site fell into disrepair. In the 1960s and 70s, it was vandalized, and the stone was rolled down the hill several times. It was always recovered nearby, and eventually a local resident set it in concrete before returning it to Little Round Top, to make it less vulnerable. This worked until 2002, when the gravestone again disappeared. This time, no one could find it. Suspiciously, its disappearance coincided with a new property owner who had been actively discouraging visits to the site. A lawsuit by Save the Altadena Trails regained and protected public access in 2004, but the stone remained missing.



Michele Zack at the newly installed original Owen Brown gravestone marker above Altadena.

Amazingly, in 2012, Ian White, son of African American artist Charles White, and his son were hiking after a rainstorm and discovered it semi-buried in a ravine. It took three men and a dolly to dislodge it. Until the summer of 2021, it was kept in a "secure" location, until a "friendly owner" gained title to the land and it was restored to the hill top.

In 2018, Owen's gravesite, which overlooks La Vina's 272 homes, became a part of settling community trail access and other grievances associated with this gated housing development at the top of Lincoln Avenue. Cantwell-Anderson, its developer, bought the six-acre gravesite at auction as part of a "land swap." He agreed to deed it to a land conservancy, and also to fund the grave's restoration, other improvements, and educational programs about the Brown Family. In exchange, the developer will receive permission from LA County to build 18 homes on the six-acre "donut hole" zoned for a school that was never built inside La Vina's gates. The deal was worked out by a subcommittee of the Altadena Town Council, that worked with the developer and was eventually approved by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors in 2019.

The Committee Michele chairs was convened by the Supervisors to ensure all conditions are met. The gravesite has been restored and now the Committee is working on educational programs, gaining historic designation, and putting the land into a conservancy.

It is open to the public: park near the end of El Prieto Road in the Meadows and walk through the pedestrian section of the gate at Lincoln Avenue Water Company, and up its driveway—you'll see the trail on the left.

Who would have known that the foothills above our little neighborhood town of Altadena would be the location of such historic significance? A site that not only memorializes Owen Brown and what he and his father stood for, but for the story told through the gravestone itself. ■

Manzanita Galls

By Diane Lang



Manzanita galls

Photo: Diane Lang

Most of us are familiar with the oak galls that appear on oak twigs and leaves—the tree's reaction to the eggs laid by various species of wasp. (The tree does not actually need to protect itself from the insects—they do no harm—but is unknowingly providing shelter and food for the wasp larvae.) But oaks are not the only plant that produce galls in this way. Among many others are manzanitas.

First, about the hosts: Manzanitas are some of our favorite chaparral plants, with their smooth, red bark and upturned gray-green leaves. Of the more than 100 species in the west, two types are most commonly found across the Angeles National Forest, occurring in various mineral soils on south-facing slopes. *Arctostaphylos glandulosa* grows in the front range from ~2,000-5,000 feet, *A. patula* in the elevations above ~7,000. A third type, *A. gabrielensis*, known by the common name San Gabriel Manzanita, is endemic to one small area in the San Gabriels, Mill Creek Summit, northwest of Eaton Canyon.

Manzanita galls are not caused by wasps, but by aphids, especially the manzanita Leafgall Aphid. These tiny insects

cause leaves to swell not into spheres, but into pod-shaped galls that appear as swollen or rolled leaf edges. Inside, tiny gray or greenish aphids feed by sucking on the tissue within.

These aphids feed only on manzanita. During most of the year adult females (winged or wingless) give birth to live young without mating. In the fall, a sexual generation of winged males and females is produced. After the winged aphids disperse and mate, the females lay eggs that overwinter on bark at the base of the plant. When eggs hatch in late winter or spring, the emerging aphids walk up to the leaves, where they settle to feed (and initiate galls). Several generations are produced each year. ■

Plant of the Month

Plant: California bush sunflower, California brittle bush

Botanical Name: *Encelia californica*

Family: Asteraceae, aster, sunflower or daisy family (the largest family too)

Blooms: February to June

Lifeform: Shrub

Habitat: Coastal sage scrub, chaparral

California bush sunflower is a rounded perennial shrub growing 1.5-5 feet tall. It is native to southern California and commonly grows near the shore in the coastal sage scrub habitat but can also be found inland along the foothills of the southern California mountains. The plant has green ovate leaves with small hairs on them.

The solitary flower heads are daisy-like with bright yellow ray florets surrounding a center of chocolate brown disk florets. While it blooms profusely between February and June, with a little water, some flowers can be found almost any time of the year. It is a drought tolerant plant and is seasonally dimorphic: it replaces its winter green leaves with small ones through the summer and fall drought conditions. Bush sunflower is an easy to grow native in the home garden. If it is dead-headed regularly and given some water in summer it will flower all year. It should be pruned back hard occasionally to look best. The flowers attract bees and butterflies. Goldfinches and other small birds eat the seeds. California bush sunflower can be seen along the drive down into Eaton Canyon and along the main trail from the Nature Center to the stream crossing.



Marilynn Hildebrandt



Bush sunflowers in bloom at Eaton Canyon

Photo: Carole Scurlock

ECNCA BOARD MEMBERS

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NCA President: Laura Nicholson
NCA Representatives: Diane Lang

Eaton Canyon Nature Center Associates (ECNCA) is a chapter of the Nature Center Associates (NCA), a non-profit support group of the natural area park system of Los Angeles County. Founded for educational and scientific purposes, its primary mission is to develop in children and adults an appreciation of the natural world and to preserve Eaton Canyon as a natural area for future generations.

The Eaton Canyon Nature Center and Natural Area Park are located within the unincorporated area of Los Angeles County in the Supervisorial district of Kathryn Barger. The Natural Area and Nature Center are operated by the County of Los Angeles, Department of Parks and Recreation, in partnership with the Eaton Canyon Nature Center Associates.

Become A Member of the ECNCA (Eaton Canyon Nature Center Associates)

Membership benefits include the ECNCA newsletter, program announcements and a 10% discount at the gift shop. To join the Eaton Canyon Nature Center Associates, fill out the form below and mail with your check, payable to the ECNCA, 1750 North Altadena Drive, Pasadena, CA 91107.

Name: _____ Email _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

Please check appropriate box and mark return envelope "Membership"

- Individual \$30 Family \$45 Senior \$15 Senior Family \$30 Student \$15
- Friend of the Canyon \$75 Sage Saver \$100 Chaparral Contributor \$250 Riparian Guardian \$500
- Oak Woodlands Protector \$750 Wildlands Angel \$1000 NEW RENEWAL

Enclosed is my MEMBERSHIP in the amount of \$_____

Enclosed is my additional DONATION in the amount of \$_____

Please make checks payable to the ECNCA. All contributions are tax deductible.