



PAW PRINTS

Volume 40, Number 7

Newsletter of the Eaton Canyon Nature Center Associates

July 2022

PUBLIC CALENDAR

Docent-Led Family Nature Walk

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

A Day in Nature: Wildlife in an Urban Interface

Saturday, June 25, 9 am - 3 pm
Eaton Canyon Nature Center

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

Nature Knowledge Nights

Tuesday, Thursday, & Saturday Drop in
At Patio or Lobby 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm.

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.

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>

Homecoming on Her 30th Summer

By Emily Adamczyk



Tortoise friend reunion at Eaton Canyon

Growing up, Eaton Canyon was my home. I spent my mornings birding with my father and, on occasion, joined bird walks. I was eager to learn the calls and behavior of each bird I saw. From the laughing acorn woodpeckers who would flap and glide between oaks to the elusive California Thrasher who you would rarely see but knew was there by the loud rustling of leaves under sagebrush. In the afternoons, I would go searching for western toad tadpoles in the canyon wash, finding hundreds in little pools tucked away between the smooth granite boulders. During the evening, my mother and I would set out on night walks, finding scorpions and millipedes at dusk while listening to the cries of distant coyotes.

I loved the canyon and took pride in living so close by. In middle school, I enrolled in the Nature Center's Student Naturalist program under the guidance and mentorship of Helen Wong. She taught me and my classmates the intricate ecology of the canyon and its natural history and told of how the Native Americans lived in this place long before my ancestors settled on this land. I was enraptured by each lesson and saw how all the different pieces of information moved together, intertwining to create the canyon that I lived in.



Stream Survey 2006



Emily & Helen at Eaton Canyon Winter Camp 2005

As a teenager, I regularly volunteered at the Nature Center and embraced responsibilities including caring for the animals on display and the native plant nursery. These tasks brought me closer to the life in the canyon and deepened my relationship with the earth. I began to ask questions about what I saw: how is it that an abundance of plants survive with so little rain and how do they recover after fires? This curiosity inspired me to study

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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 August/September 2022 issue is July 15, 2022. Send submissions to Brenda Hurst eatonmember@gmail.com.

Contributors: Emily Adamczyk, Gabi McLean, Brenda Hurst, Helen Wong

Paw Prints Production

Content Editor: Brenda Hurst

Layout: Carole Scurlock

Copy Editor: Laura Joseph

DOCENT AND MEMBER CALENDAR

Bag Lunch and Mini-Inservice

Bag Lunch Mini-Inservice will be on hiatus for July, August and September. Bag Lunches will resume in October.

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.

ECNCA Board Meetings

The ECNCA board meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month at 7 pm 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.

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biology at university and earn a master's degree in that field. I knew that scientific research was my calling and I had endless questions about the natural patterns and interconnectedness that surround us, and more importantly, how we as humans contribute to those patterns.



Eelgrass Sampling 2022

My quest for knowledge and understanding led me far from the canyon to Vancouver, British Columbia where I am writing my PhD thesis on how the actions of humans affect the biodiversity of plants and animals in coastal ecosystems. My journey to this point was a winding path of inquiry fostered by thoughtful and patient mentors, including Helen. The collective wisdom of my mentors shaped my perspective of the world and taught me how to ob-

serve, listen, and ask questions.

In the 30th summer of my life, I return to the canyon. As I walk through the coast live oak groves and pass the towering sycamore trees, I reflect on how the canyon has changed just as I have. While the same trails snake through and along the wash, I notice trees have fallen and new plants have taken root. I hear the distinct call of a peacock from afar, a sound that would be unfamiliar to my childhood ear. Some of the changes I see are natural, some are due to the introduction of non-native species and the burning of fossil fuels. I think of what the canyon would look like in another 30 summers from now, or even 100. Surely the plants, animals, and landscape will change, making way for different forms of life. There are endless possibilities for how the canyon will transform and so many questions to ask about the future state of the chaparral ecosystem. But in this moment, I take a seat beneath a large oak and close my eyes taking a deep breath of sagebrush, quietly acknowledging that I am home.

PawPrints Contributor Helen's note:

Emily wrote this article after her June 2021 summer visit to the park. She is now a PhD candidate in the Biodiversity Research Centre at the University of British Columbia in the O'Connor and Parfrey labs. Her research focuses on the biodiversity of invertebrates and microbes in eelgrass ecosystems throughout the coast of British Columbia, Canada.

Here is a link to the recording of her recent presentation on eelgrass ecosystems in BC:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/16Gk9B23NvSgtKhETynYcBTPVkdZvBAYo/view>

Another highlight of Emily's journey growing from a "budding scientist" to a "nearly full-fledged PhD," as she called herself, was when she worked as an intern in 2018 with Parks Canada (Canada's equivalent of the US National Parks) on a kelp restoration project in Gwaii Haanas, Haida Gwaii. Part of the project included finding out where all the sea urchin gonads went when the urchins were culled. Emily piloted various underwater video methods to record the kind of fish and invertebrates that ate the urchins and if any part of the urchins remained untouched to decompose. The video gives a pretty good summary of the project. https://www.hakaimagazine.com/videos-visuals/smashing-urchins-for-kelp/?fbclid=IwAR1rKFq9bWj5N5-_2CYDIIpxNluq5jd5s1V7nAdYwyNOzGbrB7kze2zP_H4



Emily, left, in diving gear with her Supervisor

Plant of the Month

By Gabi McLean

Chaparral Yucca, Whipple Yucca, Our Lord's Candle

Botanical Name: *Hesperoyucca whipplei*

Family: Agave (Agavaceae)

Blooms: April through June

Lifeform: Shrub

Habitat: Slopes in Coastal Sage Scrub and Chaparral, as well as in Creosote Bush Scrub, Yellow Pine Forest, Pinon-Juniper and Joshua Tree Woodlands.



This spectacular monocot flowers in April, May, and June, when hundreds of creamy-white flowers adorn the tree-like inflorescence. Chaparral Yucca can be spotted in Eaton Canyon, the San

Gabriel Mountains, and in Southern California and Baja California, except in the deserts, up to 7500 feet in elevation.

Even when not in flower, this shrub distinguishes itself from other shrubs in that it does not have woody branches typical for most shrubs. Instead, it has tough gray-green leaves, that grow in a rosette and, over the years, form a huge spiky ball. The very narrow and fibrous leaves can reach a length of five feet and end in a hard brown needle-like tip. The strong fibrous strands in the leaves make it almost impossible to trim the spikes off to disarm the plant. It demands respect and, with its sharp spikes, defends its space very effectively.

The life cycle of Chaparral Yucca is quite unusual because it will flower only once, after having grown for several seasons before it is able to produce the spectacular flower stalk with its numerous, fragrant flowers.

In its final season, the plant sends up a flower stalk that first resembles a giant red asparagus. This stalk grows several inches per day, and in two weeks can reach its full height, usually 10 to 14 feet. Within days, this "asparagus" develops a tree-like structure with many branchlets that support hundreds of two-inch-wide flowers. The fragrant, creamy-white flowers have three sepals and three petals that look so much alike that the casual observer will



count them as six petals. Six fleshy stamens encircle the three-parted style and head-like stigma.

For the flowers to produce fruit, the plant must be pollinated by the yucca moth that has a symbiotic relationship with the Chaparral Yucca. The moth cannot reproduce without the yucca, and the yucca cannot reproduce without the yucca moth. It flies at night and therefore is seldom seen.

Once the yucca is pollinated and fertilized, it produces 2-inch-long, 3-parted capsules that contain six columns of neatly stacked black, disc-shaped seeds, the size of your pinky fingernail, and so light you might not feel it in your hand.

After the flowers have produced the fruits, the whole plant will die. The leaves turn brown and fold over and the flower stalk turns gray, the fruit capsules pop open while still on the inflorescence and spill the seeds on the ground where they get blown by the wind or washed away with the next torrential rain. The dry flower stalk may remain standing for a couple of seasons and serve as shelter for cavity nesting birds.

This plant has been much appreciated and well used by indigenous peoples in most of southern California. The roots make a nice soap when mixed with a little water and rubbed together. The young new flower stalk can be eaten after it has been cooked for many hours—from one to three days—in an earthen oven. The oven is constructed in the ground, lined with hot rocks, and covered with more hot rocks, soil, and leaves. The flowers can also be eaten, raw or sauteed.

The fiber strands in the leaves require proper preparation before they are used for making a variety of ropes, as well as constructing sandals. The ropes are extremely strong and well suited to construct tools, to tie branches together to serve as place of shelter, and to tie wooden planks together when building canoes. The canoes have been sturdy enough for ocean fishing and traveling to Catalina Island. Fibers still attached to the needle-like tip were also used to sow and mend clothing.

This attractive plant is drought resistant and tolerates clay soil with good drainage. It is also fire resistant and can resprout after a fire. When entering a burned area just a few weeks or months after a fire, you will notice the pineapple-like blackened short, stout stems dotting the hillsides, with a few green leaves crowning the naked plants.

My best memory of this glorious plant has been when hiking on Memorial Day weekend across the San Gabriel Mountains and seeing them in canyon after canyon, from Chantry to Devil's Punchbowl. To me, Chaparral Yucca's resilience and versatility are symbols of hope and recovery, and I look forward to its captivating beauty every spring.



Congratulations to the Docent Class of 2022!



Diane Lang with docents



Committee members adding names to lunch bags.

On Friday, June 17, a graduation picnic was held for our new ECNCA 2022 Docent Training Class graduates under the oaks and by the pond, at Eaton Canyon. Congratulations to all our new docents!

Graduating Class of 2022 with Diane Lang

top row l-r - Cal Walsten, Ron LaBran, Elliott Mazur, Sybella Venegas, Max Ogden, Mary Lou Langedyke, Diann Shue, Mikaela Shue, Steven McCall, Diane Lang
bottom row l-r - Trina Jaconi Biery, Russ O'Brien, Machiko Yasuda, Nina Raj
Graduate Roger Gray not pictured.

Photo: Brenda Hurst



Photo: Helen Wong



Ode to Eaton Canyon's 2022 Docent Class

by Diane Lang

You did it all! You took the hikes,
You read the notes and books.
You learned so many kinds of plants
Despite their tricky looks.

Each week you wrote of what you'd tell
To nature-learning folks.
You know the value and the traits
Of all our lovely oaks.

You learned that lighter rock has quartz,
Or bits of Muscovite.
You know how fast a yucca grows:
A foot just overnight!

You learned that leaves protect themselves
By being thick or pallid.
You know that wild cucumber
Should never be in salad!

You heard about the nettle stings
Or plant life even odder,
Like orange plants that steal the goods
From others—yes, the dodder.

Sugar bush or sumac plant?
Poison oak or currant?
Now you know the differences
From all the facts you've lear-ent.

Did you use cowboy cologne?
Or smell a mugwort leaf?
Did you touch a prickly pear?
That touch, I'll bet, was brief.

Two notable and pretty ones:
Matilija, phacelia,
Plus beauty of the penstemon
Among our memorabilia

What's that sound within the brush?
Maybe 'twas a rabbit.
Or quail with his "Chicago" call—
That tell-tale quail habit.

Those lizards! Why don't they slow down
So we have time to watch?
Was that a whiptail we just saw,
Or did it have a blotch?

A rattler? Too quick to tell.
Perhaps a gopher snake.
Was that an acorn woodpecker?
Yep, that's the sound they make!

You told your peers about a plant
And animal, as well,
Because you know your nature lore,
Like how well skunks can smell.

You shared with new friends on the trail
Some fascinating bits,
While warning of the poison oak
Or 'splaining scrub jay wits.

You took the test, and it was long!
But you loved every minute!
Because you'd mastered all the facts
Of every question in it!

Machiko, Max, and Mary Lou,
Makaela, Ron, and Steven.
You all excel and have become
New docents we believe in!

Roger, Russ, Diann, and Cal
Sybella, Trina, Nina,
And Elliott, of course, are all
New stars of Pasadena!

So now you're done; you're graduates—
Official volunteers
In Eaton Canyon's family.
We're lucky that you're here!





Docents-Class of 2022 Photo: Helen Wong

ECNCA BOARD MEMBERS

President: Brenda Hurst

Vice-President: Mary Foltyn

Recording Secretary: Marge Mayotte-Hirn

Corresponding Secretary: Mary Veselich

Treasurer: Terry Ginsberg

Membership Chair: Brenda Hurst

School Trip Docent Chair: David Kristoff

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Conservation Group Chair:

Gift Shop Chairs: Pam Edwards, Karen Mateer

Bag Lunch Chair: Mary Foltyn

Moonlight Hike Co-chairs: Ramie Case, Teresa Kirkland

Members-at-Large: Judy Jenkins, Rose Haig, Susan Hopkins

Nature Center Director: Helen Wong

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.