



# PAW PRINTS

Volume 41, Number 9-10 Newsletter of the Eaton Canyon Nature Center Associates Sep-Oct 2023

## PUBLIC CALENDAR

**Nature Center Hours:** 10:30 am-7 pm  
(Saturday 9 am -7 pm)

**Gate Hours:** 8:00 am -7:30 pm.  
CLOSED ON MONDAYS

**Contact:** Eaton Canyon Nature Center 626.398.5420

**Park Hours change on November 1st.**

**Operating Hours:** 8 am to 5 pm.

**Staff and Programming Hours:**  
9 am to 5 pm

**Restroom Hours:** 8:30 am to 4:30 pm  
CLOSED ON MONDAYS

### Docent-Led Family Nature Walk

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

### Conservation Group Work Day:

Second Saturdays from 9 am-12 pm  
Sign-up to receive notifications:  
<https://tinyurl.com/eatoncanyonconservation>

### 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

### Meetings:

#### Pasadena Audubon Society

Meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month at 7:30 pm in the Eaton Canyon Nature Center Auditorium.

<https://www.pasadenaaudubon.org>

#### California Native Plant Society

Meetings are held in the Eaton Canyon Nature Center Auditorium, the fourth Thursday of the month at 7:30 pm. <https://www.cnps-sgm.org>

#### Pasadena Group Sierra Club

Program meetings are held on the first Wednesday of the month in the nature Center Auditorium.

<https://www.sierraclub.org/angeles/pasadena>

## The Refurbishing of the Eaton Canyon Nature Center Museum

By Brenda Hurst, ECNCA President



Museum Committee (missing Judy Bass) l-r - Karen Mateer, Susan Gilliland, Melanie Symonds, Pam Edwards  
Photos: Brenda Hurst

This issue of Paw Prints is dedicated to a wonderful group of Docent-Naturalist Volunteers who have been outstanding in cleaning and redesigning the Eaton Canyon Nature Center Museum this year. The Co-ECNCA Museum Committee Chairs are **Melanie Symonds** and **Susan Gilliland**. Other members are **Judy Bass**, **Pam Edwards**, and **Karen Mateer**.

In February 2023, after a multi-year hiatus, the Museum Committee reconvened and started working closely with Lorraine Lazarus, ECNC's Superintendent with her positive attitude, energy, trust, and ideas, to evaluate the cleaning, repairing and improving of the Nature Center's museum and lobby displays. Melanie Symonds stated, "With an eye to providing effective public education through hands-on displays, accurate information and clear messaging, their plan was to convey to visitors the importance of Natural Area stewardship and to give them meaningful, direct knowledge and experiences of their local environment that stays with them for the rest of their lives."

The volunteers immediately started making changes to improve the visitor experience. The de-cluttering of lobby walls, reworking displays in the smaller glass cases, making general repairs, and cleaning was underway. Ideas emerged for displays that change seasonally or with current Canyon events, provide clearer more coherent "story telling" in the permanent displays, and give more opportunities for hands-on experiences to visitors of all ages.

Then they brought their ideas to life! Here are some of the key accomplishments:

- **Melanie Symonds** had clear ideas about the visual look/redesign of displays; wrote, edited, formatted and printed texts, re-did everything on the map cube; directed the work.
- **Susan Gilliland** came up with the big picture themes: Walk Through

**Museum** 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 November 2023 issue is October 15, 2023. Send submissions to Brenda Hurst [eatonmember@gmail.com](mailto:eatonmember@gmail.com).

**Contributors:** Pam Edwards, Brenda Hurst, Susan Gilliland

**Paw Prints Production**

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

**DOCENT AND MEMBER CALENDAR**

**Saturday, Sept. 9, 2023**

**NCA Annual Meeting and Recognition Awards Ceremony, 9:30-11:30am** at the Eaton Canyon Nature Center. Members please vote and rsvp to attend. Contact: Marie Scerb, [ridgeroutes@gmail.com](mailto:ridgeroutes@gmail.com).

**Bag Lunch and Mini-Inservice** will be **October 4, 2023** at Noon in Classroom 1. **Rose Ramirez** will present her Award winning documentary **"Saging the World"**

**Saturday Oct. 28 - Save the date!**  
**Creatures of Halloween at Eaton Canyon**

**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.

**Guided School Tours**

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

**ECNCA Board Meetings**

The ECNCA board meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month at 6:30 pm in the Nature Center. If you are interested in joining a meeting, please send an email to [eatonmember@gmail.com](mailto:eatonmember@gmail.com), at least 2 days prior to the meeting.

**Museum** continued from page 1

History, Hike the Canyon and Step Into the Wild. She had great ideas for the Children's Corner, drafted most of the text and "cleaned like a wild woman!"

- **Karen Mateer** pulled materials from the nature center archives and pursued new research for use in upcoming history displays and a slide show. She also coordinated adding images from Tom Mills and Cliff and Gabi McLean, to the monitor as well.
- **Judy Bass** proofread all the text to be used for new signage.
- **Pam Edwards** purchased needed supplies—she's so great at purchasing just the right thing.
- **Pam Edwards, Karen Mateer, and Judy Bass** lent a critical eye to all decisions and happily dismantled things!
- **Tom Mills** joined the team as an artisan and refurbished the live animal display tanks, windows and backgrounds. He built a new rock fascia, boulder, and added oak branches for the Mountain Lion's perch in the "Living with Wildlife" diorama.
- A new TV Monitor showing **Tom Mills'** beautiful wildlife photography was installed.



I-R - Judy Bass, Rich Benson, Tom Mills

- A hand crafted wood bench was donated by Altadena artisan wood worker, **Rich Benson**, for those wishing to sit while viewing the monitor.
- New exhibits were added, including the Condor Display and the European History 1895-1917 display.
- Staff members **Kenia Estrella** and **Dan Barsever** designed the labels for the live animals and taxidermy. They also designed the Woodpecker Granary display banner for the patio.
- Other staff members, **Dywaun Lewis, Jose Torres, Brian Gonzalez, and Edgar McGregor** lifted heavy stuff, climbed ladders, found tools, and cleaned.
- A large Eaton Canyon burned oak tree stump was installed in the Fire Ecology Display area, after beautiful refinishing by **Rich Benson**.
- And, the baby bear taxidermy was returned to the diorama!

I have left out many improvements due to space limitations. I invite you to come to the Eaton Canyon Nature Center, walk inside and experience for yourself our beautiful nature center and museum, made possible by a remarkable team of volunteers and staff. What an enormous amount of work the Museum Committee has contributed! Thank you to **Judy Bass, Pam Edwards, Susan Gilliland, Karen Mateer** and **Melanie Symonds!** Tom, thank you for sharing your many talents, including photography and carpentry! Thank you **Rich** for your beautiful wood working skills. Thank you to the Eaton Canyon Nature Center Staff. Thank you all for your generosity with your time, skills, and your love of our Eaton Canyon Nature Center. ■

See highlights of the refurbished museum on the following page. Photos by Susan Gilliland.

# EATON CANYON NATURE CENTER MUSEUM

Photos by Susan Gilliland



# Ringtail

## *Bassariscus astutus*

By Brenda Hurst



Mickey remembers this ringtail being brought in as a road kill on Angeles Crest Hwy., by Bea Simpson and her husband. The nature center staff froze it and funded the taxidermy.

well and he had never seen one. He did let me know that about 20 years ago he had talked with a hiker who had been up to the falls at dusk and saw a ringtail (by description) moving around the rocks. He has recently checked iNaturalist for any sightings in Eaton Canyon, but only three observations (all with a photo) showed up. The observation dates were July 13, 2012 (on a waterfall hike with kids somewhere on a hillside), July 12, 2019 (north of the bridge), and July 15, 2019 (in the waterfall area). Mickey thinks it's interesting that the sightings were all in the month of July.

Karen Mateer, our nature center librarian, loaned me some mammal research books from the library collection. One of these is a somewhat recent book, *Ringtail: Miner's Cat* by Joyce Markovics, published in 2013.

The other older fiction book is *Blinky; A Biography of a Ringtail*, by Agnes Akin Atkinson. Ms. Atkinson was a local author who lived on the edge of Eaton Canyon in the 1930s and published this book in 1933. The *New York Times* reviewed it in Sept. 1935. The author and her husband kept water and food outside for wild animals, and had ringtails as frequent visitors. One pair lived in the Atkinson house attic and raised their young there.

Side Note: Eaton Canyon gained international notice when Agnes Akin Atkinson's 1932 article about the Canyon's wildlife appeared in *National Geographic Magazine*. This led to the City of Pasadena designating the area as the Eaton Canyon Bird and Game Sanctuary in the 1930s.

Here are a few interesting facts about the ringtail.

- In Southern California, they live in the Pacific slopes, from the Mexican border, north-west at least to Ventura County. They live in foothills and mountain canyons, up to about 5,000 feet.

- They are not rare but nocturnal (usually active after midnight), secretive, and greatly prefer rocky areas near water, where they can get a drink.

- Ringtails find their prey using their special whiskers, superb sense of smell, and large eyes and ears for seeing and hearing. They like to eat mice, woodrats, fruit, nuts, leaves, bird and reptile eggs, birds, snakes, lizards, as well as dead animals they find. They also like to eat grasshoppers, crickets, beetles, and spiders – and lots of them!

- Ringtails are not cats, but a relative of the Raccoon. In the 1800s, California and Arizona miners did keep them as pets in their cabins as mouse hunters. Hence the sometimes used common name, Miner's Cat.

- They are agile at climbing and jumping due to sharp claws on their front and back paws. They also have back feet that have an ankle joint that

# ECNCA's Volunteer Supported Gift Shop

By Pam Edwards

We're excited to offer the beautiful art of Lily Yllescas, a talented young artist whose love of wildlife and sense of detail is evident in her drawings. We now have her matted 5"x 7" prints and note cards available at the gift shop! ■



## Ringtail continued

can rotate 180 degrees. As a result, their back feet can turn forward, sideways, and all the way backward! The long tail provides balance for negotiating narrow ledges and tree limbs, even allowing individuals to reverse directions by performing a cartwheel.

- The mating season is in late winter or early spring. They have a litter of two to four babies.

- Ringtails are still numerous in most undisturbed areas of California and are very adaptive to new homes.

So are there ringtails in Eaton Canyon? I'm guessing, yes. They are just really good at hiding from us and/or they have moved away from areas with a lot of hikers. ■



ECNC Museum Photo: Susan Gilliland

## ECNCA BOARD MEMBERS

**President:** Brenda Hurst  
**Vice-President:** Diane Marcussen  
**Recording Secretary:** Sarah Richart  
**Corresponding Secretary:** Mary Veselich  
**Treasurer:** Terry Ginsberg

**Bag Lunch Chair:** Mary Foltyn  
**Bus Grants Co-Chairs:** Mary Foltyn, Judy Jenkins  
**Conservation Group Chair:** Max Yasuda  
**Gardening Group Chair:** Marilyn Hildebrandt  
**Gift Shop Co-Chairs:** Pam Edwards, Karen Mateer

**Membership Chair:** Brenda Hurst  
**Moonlight Hike Co-Chairs:** Ramie Case, Teresa Kirkland  
**School Trip Docent Chair:** David Kristoff  
**Weekend Docent Chair:** Ramie Case  
**Members-at-Large:** Judy Jenkins, Rose Haig, Susan Hopkins

**Nature Center Director:** Lorraine Lazarus  
**NCA President:** Laura Nicholson  
**NCA Representative:** Terry Ginsberg

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 of \$\_\_\_\_\_

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

You may also join and/or donate online at [www.ecnca.org](http://www.ecnca.org).