



PAW PRINTS

"Happiest of Holidays! 'Tis the season to find yourself in nature!"

Volume 41, Number 12 Newsletter of the Eaton Canyon Nature Center Associates December 2023

PUBLIC CALENDAR

Park Hours:

Nov. 1, 2023 - Mar. 31, 2024

Gate Hours: 8:30 am - 5 pm

Nature Center Hours: 9 am-5 pm

Gate & Nature Center are closed on Mondays

Contact: ECNC 626.398.5420

Docent-Led Family Nature Walk

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

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

Conservation Group Work Day:

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

Audubon Bird Walks are back!

1st Sat. of the month - 8 am-10 am
Next ones: Nov. 4th and Dec. 2nd
Meet at the Outdoor Classroom
Evening Bird Walk: Nov. 2nd,
5 pm-7 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>

Is the Merriam's Chipmunk (*Neotamias merriami*) Establishing a Breeding Population in Eaton Canyon?

By Tom Mills



Merriam's Chipmunk - December 2022

Photos: Tom Mills

I've been visiting Eaton Canyon Natural Area for many years and thought I had a pretty good handle on the types of mammals that make the canyon home. On December 6, 2022, I was very surprised to see two chipmunks in Eaton Canyon; Merriam's chipmunks (*Neotamias merriami*) to be precise. They were along the little footpath on the west side of the wash, foraging in a tangle of poison oak. I was able to capture a photograph of one of them as he or she stopped to eat what appeared to be a poison oak seed. I was surprised because in all my years visiting the canyon I've never seen chipmunks here.

The Merriam's are common in the San Gabriels, but typically occur in higher elevations in the manzanita dominated chaparral above the lower foothills up to approximately 8,800' elevation. The Lodgepole chipmunk (*Neotamias speciosus*) is another species of chipmunk inhabiting even higher elevations of the San Gabriel Mountains, sharing some habitat with the Merriam's (it has been recorded from 6,800' to 9,800' elevation).

Merriam's chipmunks breed from January to June. The average size of a litter is four and females have one litter per season. Like most rodents, the young are born altricial (helpless and requiring significant parental care). The adults average slightly over 5" in length. They are diurnal and use natural cavities in trees—including those made by woodpeckers—for shelter at night and to rear their young. They also may nest in burrows made by gophers and/or ground squirrels and are often found in scree slopes and rock piles. Merriam's chipmunks reportedly feed on a wide variety of food sources from over seventy

Chipmunk 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 January 2024 issue is December 15, 2023. Send submissions to Brenda Hurst eatonmember@gmail.com.

Contributors: Diego Blanco, Kenia Estrella, Heidi Friedrichs, Susan Hopkins, Brenda Hurst, Tom Mills

Paw Prints Production

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

DOCENT AND MEMBER CALENDAR

Bag Lunch mini-in-service:

Wednesday December 6, 2023

at Noon in classroom 1. **Kat High** will present the topic: **How the Native Americans Celebrated Winter Solstice** with a sample of Winter Solstice foods.

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, at least 2 days prior to the meeting.



Chipmunk continued from page 1



Merriam's Chipmunk - September 2023

species of plants and additionally consume insects and lizards, among other things. They are on the menu of a wide variety of predators, such as bobcats, coyotes, foxes, hawks, owls, rattlesnakes, gopher snakes, and king snakes.

After downloading the photos from the day and entering the observation into iNaturalist, I noted that my observation appeared to be the only observation of a chipmunk in Eaton Canyon. There were other observations of Merriam's chipmunks at similarly low elevations in various places along the mountain foothills, such as areas in and around Altadena, La Canada, Sierra Madre and Monrovia, but none in Eaton Canyon itself.

According to Mickey Long, former Superintendent of Eaton Canyon, naturalist extraordinaire, and mentor to me and many others when it comes to the flora and fauna of Eaton Canyon (and elsewhere), these Chipmunks have been rare winter visitors to the canyon over the years.

Since that first sighting in December 2022, I've personally seen the Merriam's a number of other times, but only succeeded in documenting those observations with photographs two additional times: once on April 19, 2023, in the boulders near my first sighting, and again on September 16, 2023, at the base of the boulder-strewn hillside immediately behind the Nature Center. On other occasions, I caught quick glimpses of them in the brush off the Oak Terrace Trail, but was unable to document those observations with photographs.

Interestingly, fellow Eaton Canyon Docent, David Kristoff, a frequent wildlife observer in the canyon, reports that he first began seeing Merriam's chipmunks in Eaton Canyon in 2023—never before. David's sightings included one on May 8, 2023, where he observed and photographed four juveniles frolicking in and around a large hollow tree stump just off the main trail adjacent to where the Oak Terrace Trail meets the main trail a short distance from the stream crossing. The presence of juveniles strongly indicates that this species is now breeding in the canyon. If so, we should all start seeing more of them!

So, as you wander around Eaton Canyon, keep your eyes peeled for these attractive pint-sized mammals, who apparently have decided to call it home. ■

Drop by and see our new Eaton Canyon Nature Center Demonstration Garden plant signs!

By Brenda Hurst



Creeping Oregon Grape sign Photo: Susan Hopkins



(l-r) Marilynn Hildebrandt, Susan Hopkins, Cal Walsten, Tony Mizgalski . Photo: Diego Blanco

On Sunday, November 5, Susan Hopkins (project leader), Marilynn Hildebrandt, Cal Walsten, Tony Mizgalski, and Diego Blanco, started installing our new demonstration garden plant signs! They removed old signs, dug holes, and placed the first 52 of 200 new signs that were created by Lark Label.

Susan began the project in January 2022 and did much of the initial surveying and documenting plants along every path in the garden. Marilynn worked with her to identify specific plant varieties from planting records and plans. Together, they have spent countless hours identifying and determining which plant should have signs, confirming that the common and botanical names were accurate and up to date, and were correctly spelled. The task of ordering 200 signs was a bit of a project too, determining label sizes, stake lengths, and choosing a typeface and size that would be readable to visitors. What a job!

You may want to reach out to Susan if you are interested in volunteering to help with digging some holes, dodging rocks and installing more signs! ■ Update: At press time most of the signs are now installed but still reach out to Susan to see if she would like any further help.



Diego Blanco finding a home for a new Black Cottonwood sign. Photo: Susan Hopkins



Tom Mills teaching a yucca cordage class for the November 1, 2023 Bag Lunch.



Madeline Schleimer receiving her 25 Years of Volunteer Service badge

Gift Shopping at ECNC

ECNCA's Gift Shop has a new look which offers much more display space to showcase our selection of children's books, field guides, activities, and gift items. We have gift ideas for that special nature person in your life, nature puzzles, hand puppets, ECNCA hats, t-shirts, and so much more! Be sure to stop by when visiting the canyon and support your local small business!

Gift Shop hours:
Tues, Wed, & Fri 10:30 am - 2:30 pm
(closed Mondays & Thursdays)
Sat & Sun 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Art Festival at Eaton Canyon!

With beautiful sunny weather, a one day Art Festival took place at Eaton Canyon on Saturday, November 11th started with plein air artists painting with easels out along the trails. It was organized jointly by the Eaton Canyon Nature Center and the Pasadena Society of Artists, under the leadership of Kenia Estrella. Wendy Chen's Callisto Tea House provided delicious tea for all, while the artists from both organizations exhibited art for sale and show. Two special talks were given by artists, Lily Yllecas and Victor Picou. Kids were able to do some beautiful paintings of their own as well. At the end the day, participants and guests were invited to a relaxing and rejuvenating sound bath led by Braden Pontoli.



Cyndi Bemel
Photos: Brenda Hurst



Albert Natian



Nora Koerber



Brenda Hurst



Wendy Chen, Callisto Tea House



Heidi Friedrichs



Ronna Ballister



(l-r) Marge Mayotte-Hirn, Ronna Ballister



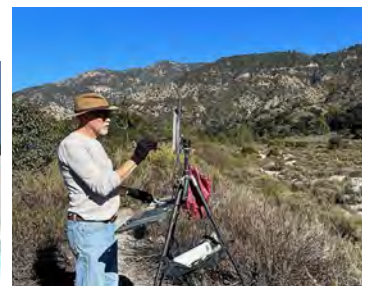
(l-r) Larry Rodgers, Debbi Swanson Patrick



Young rising artist stars!



Pam Edwards - watercolors



Lee Edwards - Plein air painter

The Creatures of Halloween were back at Eaton again!





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

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Gardening Group Chair: Marilyn Hildebrandt

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School Trip Docent Chair: David Kristoff

Weekend Docent Chair: Ramie Case

Members-at-Large: Judy Jenkins, Rose Haig

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.