



# PAW PRINTS

## HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Volume 42, Number 1 Newsletter of the Eaton Canyon Nature Center Associates January 2024

### PUBLIC CALENDAR

#### Park Hours:

Nov. 1, 2023 - Mar. 31, 2024

Gate Hours: 8 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

1st Sat. of the month - 8 am-10 am  
Next one: January 6  
Meet at the Outdoor Classroom

#### 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>

## Hidden Treasure

By Marge Mayotte-Hirn



Behind the Nature Center's library door lies a hidden treasure of Eaton Canyon. There are binders galore with little known facts and information, from all kinds of sources, all sorted out for your learning pleasure.

There are three blue binders with Eaton Canyon history that caught my eye and the information within presents a picture of a survivor. Some of the articles date back to 1973, a time many of us know nothing about.

There are stories about the original founders of Pasadena and Kinneloa. Names like John Muir, Benjamin Wilson, Judge Benjamin Eaton, Miss Beatrice Fox, Carlos Cruz, Dr. John Griffin, and Abbott Kinney, as well as the history of Eaton Canyon and surrounding areas. Following are a few highlights I found.

- An early use of Eaton Canyon was to create a water-spreading conservation system in the Eaton wash to retain the Eaton Canyon flood waters so they could seep into the ground table.

- Carlos Cruz homesteaded on 108 acres and sold it to Charles J. Fox for \$2000 in gold coins in 1883. When Fox retired around 1914, he built a home there for his family and called it Fox Ridge. Miss Mary Beatrice Fox inherited the estate, including part of what is now Eaton Canyon Natural Areas. In 1950, she sold part of her property to Los Angeles County for \$50,000 and stipulated that "wild animals, such as coyotes, raccoons, foxes, etc. were not to be kept in cages for public exhibition and that the natural beauty of the park be preserved in its original state." The County bought 184 acres of surrounding property in 1950. In 1959, after organizing a program of developing and pre-

Treasure 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 2024 issue is January 15, 2024. Send submissions to Brenda Hurst [eatonmember@gmail.com](mailto:eatonmember@gmail.com).

**Contributors:** Paul DiConti, Marge Mayotte-Hirn, Brenda Hurst, Mickey Long

### **Paw Prints Production**

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

### **DOCENT AND MEMBER CALENDAR**

#### **Bag Lunch mini-inservice:**

No Bag Lunch in January.

#### **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.



### **Treasure** continued from page 1

serving natural areas for public use, Eaton Canyon Park was the site of the first nature museum. It housed a Barnyard Zoo but no caged wild animals. A golf course was included in this recreation complex, with additional plans to install an equestrian center.

- But between 1941 and 1945, Eaton Canyon had to share its space with Caltech scientists and engineers who built concrete bunkers on the Kinneloa side that housed top-secret wartime solid-fuel rocket weapons for World War II.

- Neighbors and Eaton Canyon Nature Center Associates have also had to contend with a police shooting range that has been in existence there since 1927. At one point, a spending bill by President Clinton was going to allot money to build an enclosed shooting range. Eventually, homeowners and Eaton Canyon won out when the entire shooting range was abolished.

- The Nature Center began in 1958, when Louise A. Luckan moved her nature operation from the Eaton Canyon golf course to the Park, even before a building was on site. By October 1963, the buildings were dedicated and operational. It was called the Robert M. McCurdy Nature Study Center.

- 35 inches of rain in January and February of 1969 produced floods and the wash was greatly widened as a result. Trees and native plants had to be re-planted.

- In October, 1993, all seemed lost after the deadly Kinneloa fire raced through the canyon, destroying plants, the 35-year-old Nature Center, and animal habitat in 6,000 acres of the foothills. After the fire, Superintendent Mickey Long and concerned citizens showed up every day to help re-establish the Park. The Nature Center received more than \$200,000 in donations and \$75,000 in grants to help re-build. In 1998, a new Nature Center rose up from the ashes. By five years after the fire, the Eaton Canyon Nature Center Associates, under the leadership of Cynthia Null, raised an additional \$200,000 for exhibits and a library. FEMA and Los Angeles County met the bulk of the re-building costs with some funds from the state of California.

- In 1997, the Park and nearby trails were choked by non-native plants. A five-year irrigation program was funded by the developers of La Vina housing project. They were legally required to replace native wetlands lost in the clearing of their building site for the construction of 272 Altadena homes. In exchange Eaton Canyon had an irrigation system designed to help restore its native wetland environment. The plan included the removal of all those unsightly pipes once native vegetation was well-established, but it was seriously vandalized and sabotaged by citizens who thought that the stream was going to be drained or re-routed.

- Throughout the ensuing years, Eaton Canyon and its volunteers and docents and patrons have had to deal with multiple trials. County budget cuts always hung over their heads. Graffiti removal was an on-going labor of love. The persistent pleas of little leaguers and soccer moms and off-road bikers and equestrians and wild-life rehabilitation advocates for a piece of the Nature Center Park have kept docents and volunteers and concerned citizens busy defending Miss Beatrice Fox's original purpose for the Park.

As I read through these history binders, I learned so much about our beloved Park and the people who have made it what it is. Many names like Ninarose Mayer, Cynthia Null, Judy Bass, Ramie Case, Mickey Long, Laura Nicholson, and Diane Speakman, are still present, keeping a luxurious shine on our precious Park. Eaton Canyon Nature Center is also a "hidden treasure." ■

**Editor's Note:** As we were getting this Paw Prints ready to go to print, we sadly learned that Diane Speakman, a past ECNCA President and dedicated Docent-Naturalist Volunteer, passed away on December 9th. Our hearts go out to her husband, John, and their family. There will be more information to follow about Diane in the February issue.



# In Memory - Elaine MacPherson

By Mickey Long



Elaine had a long double-association with Eaton Canyon and Pasadena Audubon. She completed Docent Training at the Nature Center in 1986, became an active docent naturalist and participated in just about every event the Center hosted. When the Nature Center was lost in the 1993 fire, she was part of the group that directly assisted in the long and detailed rebuilding of the new Center.

Her interest in learning more led her to take several bird identification classes over the years. She was proud to have been a top student. For Pasadena Audubon she led many

public bird walks for many years at the Huntington Gardens with Dan Lewis, served on the Board, and participated in many field trips. She was a faithful attendee at PAS monthly meetings. Elaine also volunteered her home phone and answering machine to be the voice of Pasadena Audubon, answering untold numbers of bird questions from the calling public.

Elaine retained a spontaneous enthusiasm for nature and all things natural, often sharing something she'd seen on television or in newspapers or magazines. These often reflected scientific studies, and Elaine assisted this author in hand recording details during many bird banding sessions.

As she slowed down in later years, Elaine was still very appreciative for rides to local birding sites, from mountains to deserts to coast. Elaine MacPherson was a very giving person, caring deeply when someone was ill, or hurting from suffering a loss. We are now the ones hurting and we will long remember Elaine. ■

# On Your Way to the Falls?

By Paul DiConti, ECNCA Volunteer

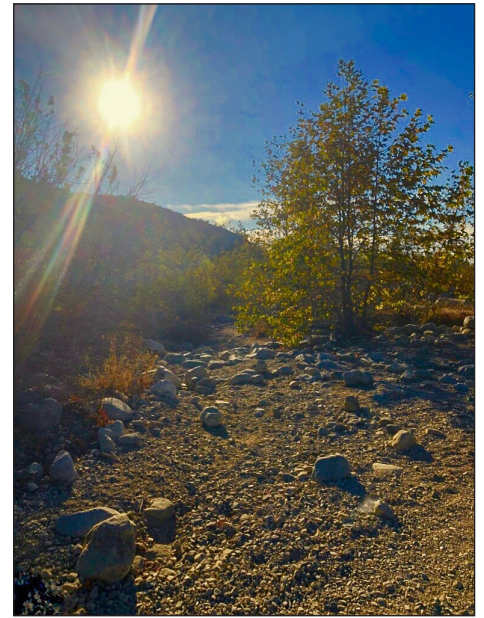


Photo: Paul DiConti

The path to Eaton Canyon Falls is not as long as you think. In fact it is a lot shorter if you take in the nature all around you as you hike. This means you can stop along the way to inhale the fresh mountain air and look for the wildlife all around you. If you go in the summer months, be sure to watch out for biting insects and the occasional snake. But be careful if it's a venomous rattlesnake and keep your distance. Don't be too paranoid, though. Rattlesnakes don't attack unless they feel threatened, so stay on the trail and be careful. Actually you only have to worry about them in the hotter months of spring and summer. They don't like the cold.

But back on the falls themselves. This is not too hard of a hike, but when you reach the inside of the canyon, beyond the white bridge, you may well find obstacles, such as needing to cross the stream several times. Depending on how much water is in the stream, you will probably be doing some rock and log hopping along the way. Please remember to pick up any trash you might leave behind. Always leave a natural place the same way that you found it. ■



**Terry Ginsberg** was awarded the **Canyon Star Award** at the 2023 Thank You Dinner.

After graduating from our Docent-Naturalist Training class in 2019 he joined the ECNCA Board as our Treasurer in 2020 and continues in that role.

Terry, you are so appreciated for all the dedicated volunteer work you do for the ECNCA. You are truly a Canyon Star!

Photo: Brenda Hurst





Photo: Carole Scurlock

### 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  
**Docent Training Chair:** Diane Lang  
**Gardening Group Chair:** Marilyn Hildebrandt  
**Gift Shop Chairs:** Pam Edwards, Karen Mateer

**Membership Chair:** Brenda Hurst  
**Moonlight Hike Co-Chairs:** Ramie Case, Teresa Kirkland  
**Museum Committee Chair:** Melanie Symonds  
**Nature-in-a-Box Chair:** Laura Nicholson  
**Park Stewards Chair:** Susan Hopkins  
**School Tour Docent Chair:** David Kristoff  
**Weekend Docent Chair:** Ramie Case  
**Members-at-Large:** Judy Jenkins, Rose Haig

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**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).