

PAW PRINTS

Newsletter of the Eaton Canyon Nature Center Associates

Docent /Member Calendar

BAG LUNCH MINI-INSERVICE:

Bag Lunch is on hiatus indefinitely.

ECNCA Board Meetings

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.

Public Calendar

■ Pasadena Audubon Society

For meeting info see their website:
www.pasadenaaudubon.org

■ California Native Plant Society

For meeting info see their website:
www.cnps-sgm.org

■ Pasadena Group Sierra Club

For meeting info see their website:
www.sierraclub.org/angeles/pasadena

■ We Explore Earth

For meeting info see their website:
<https://weexploreearth.com/>

Paw Prints Production

Editor: Amanda Getty

Graphic Designer: Diana Gonzalez

Contributors: Elaine Brown,
Lindsay Bremner

Paw Prints is a monthly publication of the ECNCA. The deadline for submissions to the August/September 2026 issue is July 20, 2026. Send submissions to ajgetty@gmail.com.



Photo: Diana Gonzalez

PARK IS CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

Photo: Diana Gonzalez



SURVIVOR PORTRAIT

Mike Reagan: The Life We Truly Wear

by RUTH CATCHEN

Sandi and I were walking through her neighborhood not long after I had come back to Altadena — temporarily, before renovations began. The rebuilding hadn't really started yet and the devastation was still fully in front of you. Unsettling.

It was the ease of it that I remember — how naturally we fell into conversation with a couple walking their dog. That's an Altadena thing, a trail thing. Strangers don't stay strangers long when they're walking the same ground. *Continued on page 2*

I noticed the man was wearing an Eaton Canyon Nature Center t-shirt. I asked about it. Within minutes I had his cell number. His name was Mike. I didn't know then what that chance meeting would become.

Sandi and I had been talking about doing a podcast — stories of survival and hope from the fire. It was her idea and she knew many people. I hardly knew anyone. I texted Mike to ask if he would tell his story. He said he didn't think his story was very interesting, but we could talk about it.

When I finally spoke with him by phone, I expected a conversation. What I got was an hour that left me in tears more than once.

It wasn't just the fire. It was what the canyon meant to them — the life he and Ann had built around it, trail by trail, year by year. They had come from the midwest, looking for a compatible place to live. Ann discovered Pasadena one day and was taken with the older homes, the brick buildings, the oak trees — so welcoming, so familiar.

Eventually the perfect home found them, on Altadena Drive near the Midwick entrance to the canyon. Their friends all came from those walks. Their purpose, their community, their daily rhythm — all of it rooted in that specific place. The canyon wasn't where they went. It was how they lived. Over 19 years as docents in Eaton Canyon.

And then January 7th.

The police came and told Mike he had maybe ten minutes to gather what he wanted from the house. Maybe ten minutes. He walked through his own rooms not knowing what to take. Picked something up, put it back down. Ann came home and did the same. All of it in minutes. He didn't say it directly but I sensed he already knew they were going to lose everything. He knew in a way I didn't when I left

my own home that night, certain I'd be back the next day. (BTW, the next day turned into 6 months or so.)

That difference — between knowing and not knowing — is its own particular grief.

The fire changed everything but could not take away what Mike knew to be true. He began working to rebuild the trails, to participate in what would come next for Eaton Canyon. His friendships were rooted in this place and so was his purpose. Both survived.

When I saw him on the first day of docent training, I felt the full circle of it. Our chance meeting that day had not been just talk. He had helped me find my way there. Standing in that room I could see the future — possibilities, options, something opening rather than closing.

He said it simply, the way true things are said: *"You know, coming home from a hard day and seeking the solace that brings. And when that's gone — it's devastating."*

I have heard many stories since the fire. Each one unique, each one heartfelt. I will be sharing some of them here, seen through my lens, rooted in this canyon we share. They are, all of them, variations on the same theme — what home means, what it costs to lose it, what it takes to return.

Home is everything. Mike said that. So did everyone else. The life we truly wear.

Ruth's podcast interview with Mike Reagan, co-hosted by Sandi Rozman, can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KGZbtQ57p0A>

Mike's portrait was originally published on Ruth's Substack, <https://ruthcatchen.substack.com/>.

A Note from Ruth, and a Call for Survivors

When I began docent training, I was unsure of where it would lead. I met Mike Reagan last fall on a walk and he was wearing an Eaton Canyon t-shirt. That was just enough to pique my curiosity. It was just the beginning of our many conversations, but after talking with Mike, I realized how much I enjoy hearing authentic stories of people's lives and experiences. We all have something to say and something to share.

I write each portrait myself, in my own words, and share it with you before anything is published — you decide what stays. You don't need a dramatic story, and you don't need to reveal more than feels comfortable. What I am looking for are the small true things — a walk that turned into a friendship, a routine the fire interrupted, one image that has stayed with you since that day. These stories may be simple everyday happenings, but they are the core of how deeply the fire has interrupted so much.

If you lost your home in the Eaton Fire, were displaced and have a connection to this canyon, or you know someone who does, I would love to talk with you.

You can contact Ruth Catchen and read more of her work at substack.com/@ruthcatchen.

Call for Submissions!

Paw Prints welcomes (and encourages!) text and visual content submissions from the ECNCA community at large. We're a small editorial team here at PP and we want to hear from you! Juicy nature gossip to share? What fascinating research about native plants and animals has been keeping you busy? How are you staying connected to our natural neighborhood while Eaton Canyon remains closed?

Please send submissions to Amanda Getty at ajgetty@gmail.com. Questions? Please reach out! Help us keep your monthly newsletter filled with great local nature content in the months to come.



Photo: Diana Gonzalez

A caterpillar spotted recently in the canyon during a habitat restoration work day. Have you seen anything interesting you'd like to share with the Paw Prints team? Reach out to us with your stories and photos.



Photo:
J.M.Garg,
CC BY-SA 3.0

Cheerful Whistler: The Red-Whiskered Bulbul

by THOMAS WALTON

It was on a hot, summer day when I first heard this bird singing its most beautiful song. It sparked my interests in both birds and conservation. It was the red-whiskered bulbul.

At approximately 7 inches in length, the red-whiskered bulbul (*Pycnonotus jocosus*) has an upright black crest, black eyes, and a red-and-white patch on its cheek. It has a brown-and-white body, white neck patch, and a rounded tail. Its red undertail coverts can be visible in flight. Its curved claws are for perching, and its long bill is for catching food. It is omnivorous. Berries, fruit, and nectar are its favorite foods, but it will also eat insects and spiders.

These highly social birds perch at the top of trees and bushes. Depending on the time of year, group size can range from three to five or even 50 or more birds. Red-whiskered bulbuls make cheerful whistles. They are most active in the early morning and late afternoon. As early risers, they are among the first birds you will hear singing in the morning. Red-whiskered bulbuls are diurnal. They can live up to 11 years. Feral cats and rats are their top predators, though snakes, crows, and jays will eat their eggs and young.

Red-whiskered bulbuls are originally from the tropical and subtropical areas of Asia. They were introduced in the 1960s, and by 1968 they were considered established at the L.A. County Arboretum and the Huntington Gardens. They are now considered naturalized. They are nonmigratory and are considered a species of "Least Concern."

These birds are adapted to urban environments and, in the San Gabriel Valley, can be seen perched on California buckwheat, toyon, backyard fruit trees, and power poles. At Eaton Canyon, red-whiskered bulbuls can be found along the banks of Eaton Creek and near the location of the former Nature Center and parking lot. However, this area remains closed as Eaton Canyon is still recovering from the fire. For now, to see red-whiskered Bulbuls, check the surrounding neighborhoods and even your own backyard.

REFERENCES:

- iNaturalist. (2026, June 22). Species profile: *Pycnonotus jocosus* (Red-whiskered Bulbul). Retrieved June 22, 2026, from <https://www.inaturalist.org/taxa/24233-Pycnonotus-jocosus>
- Red-whiskered Bulbul. (2014, November 13). Audubon. <https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/red-whiskered-bulbul>
- Red-whiskered Bulbul - Honolulu Zoo Society. (2019). Honolulu Zoo Society. <https://www.honoluluzoo.org/services/red-whiskered-bulbul/#1554507392643-58ef7896-8228>
- Red-whiskered Bulbul. (n.d.). The Australian Museum. <https://australianmuseum/learn/animals/birds/red-whiskered-bulbul-pycnonotus-jocosus/>



Photo: Kristen Ochoa

Mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) doe and fawn in the Eaton Wash, captured by a trail camera set in collaboration with Kristen Ochoa of The Chaney Trail Corridor Project. Trail cameras have been capturing the return of wildlife to the canyon.



ECNCA Executive Board Members

President: Diane Marcussen
Vice-President: Karen Mateer
Recording Secretary: Sarah Richart
Corresponding Secretary: Mary Veselich
Treasurer: Terry Ginsberg

ECNCA Appointed Board Members

Ramie Case
 Rose Haig
 Susan Hopkins
 Brenda Hurst
 Judy Jenkins
 David Kristoff
 Diane Lang
Nature Center Director: Richard Smart
NCA President: Laura Nicholson

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)

To join the Eaton Canyon Nature Center Associates, visit www.ecnca.org/become-a-member, or fill out the form below and mail with your check, **payable to the ECNCA, 1355 N. Mentor Avenue, Box 40167, Pasadena, CA 91104-9998.**

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 \$25
 ☐ 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 \$_____
 All contributions are tax deductible.