

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 ecncamembership@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 October 2026 issue is September 22, 2026. Send submissions to ajgetty@gmail.com.



Photo: Grant Robinson

PARK IS CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

Photo: Joanne Bartkus



The bee that builds with flowers

by JOANNE BARTKUS

While sitting out in my yard on July 10, I noticed an insect with the most shockingly bright red wings. Or that's what I thought I had seen. I tried to identify the insect as it repeatedly entered the hollow stem of a recently pruned kangaroo paw plant, but it was too quick for me.

So, I grabbed my camera in hopes of getting a photo that I could submit to iNaturalist and ask the experts to help me identify it. I was successful, and upon looking at the photo I was surprised to find that what I thought was a brightly colored wing, was actually a flower petal being carried by a bee.

The experts at iNaturalist identified my bee as belonging to the genus *Megachile*, hence my introduction to the fascinating leafcutter bee.

There are at least 75 species of leafcutter bees (family Megachilidae) in California.

Leafcutter bees are known as solitary bees. They are non-aggressive and rarely sting.

Unlike honeybees, they do not form hives but make nests in holes in wood, in hollow plant stems like my kangaroo paw, or in other nooks and crannies that they can find.

After mating in the spring or early summer, the female bee cuts a small circular piece from a flower petal or leaf, carries it to a hollow stem or hole, and uses it to line her nest. She adds a pollen loaf, made from pollen, nectar, and saliva, lays an egg, and adds more plant material to finish wrapping the egg. *Continued on page 2*

A nest cavity can contain multiple individually wrapped eggs that may fill up the entire hole. The eggs will hatch within a couple of days up to about two weeks. The larvae develop over the winter, feeding on the pollen loaf, spinning a cocoon, and emerging as an adult in the spring or early summer, and the cycle begins again.

Leafcutter bees are very efficient pollinators. Unlike honeybees, which have pollen sacs on their legs, leafcutter bees carry pollen on brushy hairs located on the underside of their abdomen. This makes it easy for them to both pick up pollen, and also drop it, facilitating the transfer of pollen from plant to plant. They are very important pollinators of wildflowers, fruits, vegetables, and commercial crops, such as alfalfa.

I am not sure if my yard maintenance crew deliberately left protruding stems for the bees when they pruned my

kangaroo paws, but now I know to leave them in the future. Absent hollow stems or other potential natural nesting sites, bee nesting boxes can be purchased or easily constructed to provide a safe place for these gentle super-pollinators to nest. Your garden will thank you.

REFERENCES

Best Bees <https://bestbees.com/leafcutter-bee>

US Forest Service https://www.fs.usda.gov/wildflowers/pollinators/pollinator-of-the-month/megachile_bees.shtml

Backyard Pollinator <https://backyardpollinator.ca/leafcutter-bees-megachile-rotundata/life-cycle-of-the-leafcutter-bee>



Diane Lang serves on the ECNCA board. She is a Dena native who grew up exploring Eaton Canyon and has published many children's books. Her husband Robert Lang is an origami artist and physicist. They lost their homes and studio in the Eaton Fire.



SURVIVOR PORTRAIT

An excerpt from Ruth Catchen's *Without Love, What Is The Point?*

by RUTH CATCHEN

On to our second meeting. We realized that we had not talked about the fire itself. Our conversation began again, in the lovely to-be yard of their in-process rebuild. This time their sweet dog, Casey, joined us.

Much of Robert Lang's life is about transformation. He takes a flat piece of paper and makes it into something, many complex figures. His accounting of his time as the fire started and going through the next 24 hours or so is not different. He frames it as each was the next step. This narrative made it both vivid and easy to follow.

Both he and Diane filled their cars with the same idea: Let's take some things, but we'll be back in a few days. Robert was able to fill his car with a couple pieces of historic origami from past masters, plus his lifetime notebooks where he had sketched each new design.

Diane—the Altadena-raised girl who assumed she'd soon be back; that's what happens after fire— just tucked all their animals (two dogs, two tortoises, a snake, and a tarantula) into the car, along with her computer. If they knew then what they know now, the cars would have been crammed and loaded.

Heading out from their home after messages from weather watchman Edgar MacGregor, both Robert and Diane kept watch in different spots. Moving about the area a few times throughout the night.

The roads were closed and blocked but Robert knew back ways to be able to see and assess what was happening. During his vigilance over his community he was texting neighbors, reporting their property's status. Both he and Diane stayed on watch in their neighborhood, not ready to escape the smoke and flames. They took refuge in their cars re-parking to avoid the smoke.

Both their home and the studio had memories of a life. Mementoes from travel, family heirlooms, all the things we collect through our life's journey. And then there is the work of an origami master. Works that are one-of-a-kind. Work that cannot be replicated.

The human spirit has a resolve that can be remarkable. I didn't hear "What will we do now?!" or "I can't keep going." They just kept doing what needed to be done.

We drove up a narrow winding road to where the studio once stood. I never knew this place existed. I understood immediately why someone would want to do solitary creative work here—and I knew that everything surrounding me here would beckon me to it.

The view is panoramic—the National Forest in one direction, the ocean in another. And on the hillside, a row of empty patio chairs standing in a line, waiting. The quiet was complete.

Sometimes when I look out into a scene such as this, seeing what is there, what has been created, not by man, but by nature, I am humbled. This was one of those moments.

What happened here. What is yet to happen here.

That led us to the next day, and the practical matters of needing to buy dog food, find somewhere to live, and a chance for some sleep and a shower. They didn't say much about their feelings that day. What comes when reality hits and the suspense of what will happen has happened. The practical matters don't mourn or wallow. For all of us life marches ahead.

I left feeling inspired. And I left understanding something about Diane and Robert that no conversation could have fully given me. They are not just surviving this loss. They are, in their quiet and purposeful way, already imagining what comes next.

Their life has not stopped. There may be less travel now and more paperwork. Nonetheless, it continues together. Maybe different than before. But still together.

Ruth Catchen's complete portrait of Diane and Robert Lang is published on Ruth's Substack, <https://ruthcatchen.substack.com/>.



An American black bear snapped by a trail cam inside Eaton Canyon Natural Area. The park remains closed to the public.

Deer, and coyote, and bear! Oh my! The American black bear at Eaton Canyon

by **THOMAS WALTON**

Wildlife roams freely at Eaton Canyon as recovery continues. Trail camera photos reveal deer, coyotes, and even an American black bear (*Ursus americanus*) have all visited Eaton Canyon recently in search of water, food, and shelter.

While sightings of black bears are commonplace in our neighborhoods, this was not always true. In the early 1900s, black bears were native to Northern California only. When the grizzly bear population was hunted to the point of extinction in our area, black bears were brought in to fill the predator gap. In November 1933, black bears from Yosemite National Park were transferred to the Angeles National Forest, Santa Ana Mountains, and San Bernardino Mountains (Rode, 2024). Without the aggressive grizzly bears, the black bears were able to expand their territories to eventually include lower elevation areas like Eaton Canyon (Masters, 2013).

Black bears can be cream to honey brown to black in color (Department of Fish and Wildlife, n.d.). Weighing several hundred pounds, they are omnivores and appreciate the easy food offerings found in trash cans and backyards. *Continued on page 4*

Due to our mild winters, most of our black bears do not fully hibernate. Only the pregnant females do. Males and non-pregnant females continue searching for food though they will enter torpor for short periods of time. Therefore, it is important for us to remain cautious when outdoors.

Eaton Canyon is an important resource for American Black Bears. The bears can access reliable drinking water year-round and forage for diverse food sources before returning to their dens at higher elevations.

REFERENCES

<https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Mammals/Black-Bear>

Masters, N. (2013). A Brief History of Bears in the Los Angeles Area. In *PBS SoCal*. <https://www.pbssocal.org/shows/lost-la/a-brief-history-of-bears-in-the-los-angeles-area>

Rode, E. (2024, August 13). The Calif. Car Salesman Who Drove Bears From Yosemite to Los Angeles. *Sfgate*. <https://www.sfgate.com/la/article/southern-california-bears-yosemite-19651824.php>



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.

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 ajetty@gmail.com. Questions? Please reach out! Help us keep your monthly newsletter filled with great local nature content in the months to come.



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 \$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 \$_____

All contributions are tax deductible.