



Rancho Simi Trail Blazers



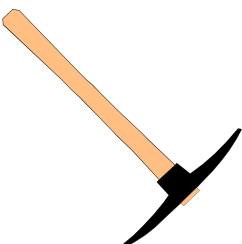
FEBRUARY WORK PARTY

Seven Rancho Simi Trail Blazers turned out to work on the Chumash Trail. We drove two vehicles up the Rocky Peak Fire Road to access the upper trailhead. Several sections of the trail received major repair. Many rocks were removed and the dirt berm was used to smooth a section at the top. Further down, we had to fill a deep erosion rut with rock as well as pulling in the dirt berm. The steep section with round rocks just below the halfway point was cleaned up. Lopping was also done along the trail above the flat rock area.

As a reward for our hard work, a mountain biker riding by grumbled that the trail was fine the way it was. I explained that all our trails were multi-use (hikers/bikers/equestrians) and that we also hiked at night. I obviously made no impression on him as he again complained to the next group working up-trail from us. Some bikers love the challenge of trail conditions that hikers and equestrians consider hazardous.

We worked from 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM and some of us met at Chuy's on our way home. Many thanks to the following workers:

Arlene Altshuler, Bill Cespedes, Tom Frye, Louise Pomes, Chuck Portoghesi, John Sabol and Don Steely.



MARCH WORK PARTY

The next Trail Blazers work party will be held on the **SECOND** Saturday of the month, **March 9**, again on the Chumash Trail. This work party will continue repair of the upper portion of the trail. Some lopping will also be required.

Meet at the trailhead at the end of Flanagan Drive in Simi Valley at 8:00 AM. We will work from 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM. Hope to see you there.

BACKPACKING TRIP

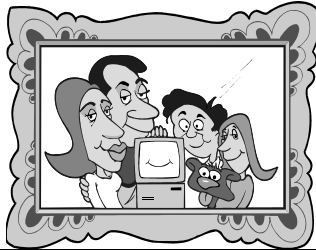
Plans have been made for our Spring backpacking trip.

When: May 3rd - 5th

Where: Bear Creek in the Sespe.

RSVP: Before the last week in April.

Arlene Altshuler



WELCOME NEW MEMBER
Caroline Carroll

RSTB CLUB MEETING

The monthly club meeting will be held at the
Community Center
Room B-1
1692 Sycamore Drive
At 7:00 PM
On
Wednesday, March 20th.

SUNDAY EVENING HIKE TIME CHANGE

Beginning in March, the Sunday Evening hike will start at **5pm**, rather than 4pm.

Arlene Altshuler, Hiking Chair

ROCKY POINTE

As you go south on Kuehner Drive, past Katherine Road, there is a large prominent rock on the right hand side. Many times in the past I have noticed a series of well cut foot holds going up the northern face at an angle. I have wondered who put them there and when. (The reason why is obvious - to get to the top!)

Jan Hinkston's 1974 interview with Joseph W. Bannon answers that question. Joe Bannon's family ran the quarry in what is now the Santa Susana (Knolls) Park for the Southern Pacific Railroad and had a 10-year lease on the Dillon Quarry east of Kuehner Drive and north of the railroad.

Joe relates that the family that lived on Smith Road, the Welches (Pat Havens, the City Historian, has indicated that a family named "Whelchel" lived on Smith Road and Whelchel probably was the name of the family of Joe Bannon's memory), had a son named Lloyd, who used to run around with Joe's older brother Larry. They used to get into mischief. Indeed, they were good at it. One day, sometime after 1910, the boys decided that they wanted to get to the top of that large rock. So Larry got hammers and chisels from the quarry and proceeded to cut foot holds as far up the rock as was necessary to gain access to the top.

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NIGHT HIKING

As most of you know, the Rancho Simi Trail Blazers hike all year round. In the winter, this means hiking in the dark. But mention hiking at night to some of our group and they recoil in horror. "We can't see", say some. "Too spooky" say others. Still others worry that "We will be attacked by coyotes or mountain lions". In reality these worries have very little basis.

First, let's consider visibility. Our eyes don't respond well to low light conditions. We lose our color vision and see only shades of gray. Also, under low light conditions our depth perception suffers. However, on most nights, even without the moon, there is a surprising amount of light. Called "sky glow", the reflection of light from the sky will light your way. In addition, the trail tends to be a lighter color than the surrounding vegetation and is easy to follow. On the really dark nights, or in areas you feel you may trip, a flashlight will solve your problem.

Second, a hike at night really isn't spooky. You have people around you and the views, especially on moonlit nights, are something special.

Third, worries of being attacked are based more on fear of the dark than anything else. Otherwise the concern of an attack would stop you from hiking during the day as well. Our hills are filled with many animals yet we rarely see any. Why? Because wild animals are far more afraid of you than you are of them.

Some of our most pleasant hikes have been night hikes.

One evening several weeks ago, as we started up the trail, a fire or ambulance siren was heard on the valley floor. Almost immediately, several groups of coyotes began to howl in response. More groups joined in until

Cont. in Col. 2



Cont. from Col. 1

On another hike we listened to 3 separate owls calling to each other. As we neared the top of the trail we were treated to a fairy tale view of a side canyon filled with ground fog. Later on, returning to the lower portion of the trail, we were greeted with the sound of hundreds of frogs. Rain was due shortly and the frogs were obviously excited.

Come out and try a night hike. I think you will be glad you did.



John Sabol

GRASSLANDS

The Grasslands Plant Community was found on portions of the valley floor before it gave way to agriculture and then to urbanization. At the eastern end of the valley, where high water table conditions abound, scattered valley oaks (*Quercus lobata*) were present, transitioning into a mixed valley oak/coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) grassland. Our earliest surveys refer to this area as "El Roblaro." Some of the relict monarchs are still present, such as those in the shopping center near the southwestern corner of Yosemite and Los Angeles avenues. Several large oaks are present along Oak Road and near the southern end of Rory Lane. The presence of scattered oaks within a grassland is referred to as an oak/grassland association. Grasslands also are and were present on upper alluvial fans and Pleistocene terraces around the valley.

Before the coming of Spanish and Mexican settlers, the grasslands were made up exclusively of perennial bunch grasses, which grew in clumps and tufts, such as needlegrass (*Achnatherum coronatum*), tripple-awned grass (*Aristida sp.*), and giant rye-grass (*Elymus condensatus*). Those grasses held the soil year after year after year, even after fires. Those of us who worked on the lower portion of the Mt. McCoy Trail can testify how hard it

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GOLDEN EAGLES AND ISLAND FOXES

It is a standing principle in biology that the introduction of alien species, especially to islands, can have dramatic effects on native ecosystems and their plant and animal communities. When predator species are involved, the whole predator makeup can change. We now have a simple example in our own channel islands.

After the introduction of an exotic prey species, the pig, to two of the Santa Barbara Channel Islands (Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa), the resulting abundance of piglets enabled a new predator species, the golden eagle, to colonize from the mainland. The eagles also preyed on the channel island pygmy gray foxes and skunks - the islands' native mammalian predators. The skunks are nocturnal, so they fared much better than the foxes, which have been reduced to near extinction. Once on Santa Rosa, it's just a short flight to San Miguel Island, where the eagles have reduced the island foxes from a population of 2,000-3,000 to 30. The island foxes have always played an important role in keeping deer mice, a reservoir for a disease (hanta virus) that can kill humans, in check, so now deer mice are over running the islands. With the decline in the fox populations, the skunk populations have increased dramatically as its dominant competitor cascaded towards extinction. The effect then of introducing the pig has had a ripple effect all the way down the food chain.

Every effort is being made to eliminate the pigs and now the golden eagles are being removed and relocated to the mainland. The foxes are being captured, and a captive breeding program has been started. Hopefully, it is not too late.

This simple model of what happens when a predator is introduced at the top of the food chain is a cause and effect that everyone can understand - largely because it is an island model.

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Cont. from Page 1 Col. 3

Getting up proved to be easy, but getting down was another matter entirely. When trying to back down the rock, you can't see the foot holds. Since they angled up the rock face, they are difficult to locate and you can't exactly lean way back to see. Eventually, they saw Larry's elder brother, Jim, and hollered their hearts out. Jim went back to the quarry and got a rope, a hammer and a star drill. He climbed up, drilled a hole in the top of the rock, left the drill in place, tied the rope to the drill and everyone made it down safely. As the eldest brother, Jim whaled the daylight out of Larry - standard fare for the day. Both Lloyd and Larry, according to Joe, carved their name on top of the rock while they were up there.

On April 3, 1999, I visited the rock in order to photograph the footholds. While there, a young man of about 19 and his two younger sisters started up the north face of the rock. The young man scrambled to the top, while his youngest sister only made it up about 10 feet. The older sister got stuck about 20 feet up the rock and wouldn't go further and couldn't back down. The brother rushed down to help his sister, suddenly sliding down the steep rock face out of control for about three feet before arresting his fall. For a moment I thought that disaster would prevail and he would be seriously injured. Fortunately, he caught a handhold and then found foothold - but then, he too was stuck. Both had precarious positions and were shaking - in no condition to wait around for a fire department rescue.

So, I had to talk both the older sister and the young man down the rock face by directing them where to put their feet to find the next footholds. They couldn't find the footholds on their own. The way down is complicated because in order to find the next foothold you must somehow cross your right leg over the back of your left leg extending far to the left, and reach

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Cont. from Col. 1

down about a foot and a half. This maneuver requires you to lower your body beyond the point where you think you can recover if you don't feel your way to a good foot hold. I had to direct them to the next foothold and assure them that it was there and that they had to trust me. To their credit, they complied and, much to my relief, neither sibling fell. The crisis/crisis management took at least 30 minutes.

How often has this same drama been repeated over the years since 1910 with good or bad results is anyone's guess? How many times have people had to be rescued off of the rock? How many people have been seriously injured?

Well, its nice to know by whom and when those hand/footholds were carved into the rock. I suppose after nearly a century, the drill hole is still up there and perhaps Larry Bannon's and Lloyd Welchel's names are there too - testimony to a minor drama so very long ago. Just as the Wright brothers should be celebrated as the first men to land safely, Larry's and Lloyd's goal, during the planning stage, should have been to get down

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as long ago as 30,000 years, man gained entry into the "New World." However, it wasn't until 11,000 years ago that the atlatl (the levered spear thrower) seemed to have crossed over from Siberia. That modest invention raised its users to the top of the food chain. Man was no longer a scavenger and modest hunter/gather, but then became a consummate killer. What followed was a dramatic collapse in the food chain with about half of the large predatory species going extinct along with their prey species. The model was certainly more complex than what happened to the island foxes since there were many more and more complex ecosystems in the Americas, but the stories are similar. Technology and man continued to change - then came the bow and arrow, then the gun, then new diseases, then pollution - and species are still falling into extinction.

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is to remove needlegrass root mats. Growing with the grasses were the variety of wild flowers that painted the hillside golden (coast goldfields and tidy tips) and purple (arroyo lupine) in the spring. Together they formed a community of plants with a remarkably high grazing capacity. The perennial grasslands gradually gave way to annual grasses accidentally introduced from the Mediterranean Basin in the wool and droppings of introduced livestock and in seed grain. Overgrazing and drought favored the new regime. Today, Sand Canyon, north of the north end of Erringer Road, and the first 1,000 feet of the Chumash Trail are good example. Our relict grasslands are quickly falling to development, because they tend to occupy less steeply sloping lands.

Characteristic plants of the grasslands include:

- Black mustard - *Brassica nigra*
- Coast live oak - *Quercus agrifolia*
- Goldentop - *Lamarekia aurea*
- Horsetweed - *Conyza canadensis*
- Mediterranean mustard - *Hirschfeldia incana*
- Red brome - *B. rubens*
- Red-stem filaree - *Erodium cicutarium*
- Rippgut brome - *B. mollis*
- Soft chess - *Bromus diandrus*
- Telegraph weed - *Heterotheca grandiflora*
- Tumbleweed (Russian thistle) - *Salsola iberica*
- Turkey mullein (Dove weed) - *Eremocarpus setigerus*
- Valley oak - *Q. lobata*
- Vinegar weed - *Trichostema lanceolatum*
- Wild barley - *Hordeum jubatum ssp. glaucum*
- Wild oats - *Avena fatua*
- Wild radish - *Raphanus sativus*
- Yellow star thistle - *Centaurea melitensis*

Mike Kuhn





March

2002



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2 Mt. Pinos See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday</i> Martin DeGoe
3 Rocky Peak 5pm hike See Schedule	4 <i>Happy Birthday</i> Natrina Hirsch	5	6	7 Chumash Trail 6pm hike See Schedule	8 <i>Happy Birthday</i> Judy Hirsch Colleen Janssen	9 Chumash Trail Work Party See Schedule
10 Rocky Peak 5pm hike See Schedule	11	12	13	14 Chumash Trail 6pm hike See Schedule	15	16 Sulfur Mountain See Schedule
17 Rocky Peak 5pm hike See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday</i> Rick Johnson	18	19	20 RSTB Meeting See Page 1	21 Chumash Trail 6pm hike See Schedule	22	23 Mishe Mokwa See Schedule
24 Rocky Peak 5pm hike See Schedule	25	26	27	28 Chumash Trail 6pm hike See Schedule	29	30 Hidden Pond See Schedule
31 Rocky Peak 5pm hike See Schedule						



Rancho Simi Trail Blazers

Hiking Schedule



- March 2 Mt. Pinos Day Hike**
Spend the day in the mountains. 2—8 MRT, depending on fireroad/trail conditions. Bring layered clothing, 2 to 3 qts of water, and lunch. Wear boots. This hike is not within the jurisdiction of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District. Meet 8am near Donut Delite at the corner of Madera and Royal. The drive is 1 1/2 hours each way.
- March 3 Sunday Evening Hike**
Meet 5pm at Rocky Peak trailhead at the end of Rocky Peak Rd off Santa Susana Pass. (Strenuous, 5 MRT)
- March 7 Thursday Evening Hike**
Meet at 6pm at Chumash trailhead. Directions - take 118 Fwy to Yosemite exit. Go north on Yosemite, turn right on Flanagan Dr. Trailhead is at the end of Flanagan Dr. (moderate, 5 MRT)
- March 9 Chumash Trail Work Party**
Help maintain one of the most traversed trails in Simi Valley. Directions - take 118 Fwy to Yosemite exit. Go north on Yosemite, turn right on Flanagan. Trailhead is at the end of Flanagan. We will be working from 8am – noon. Tools will be provided. Bring 2 - 3 quarts of water, hat, sunscreen, and gloves to work on the trail.
- March 10 Sunday Evening Hike**
Meet 5pm at Rocky Peak trailhead at the end of Rocky Peak Rd off Santa Susana Pass. (Strenuous, 5 MRT)
- March 14 Thursday Evening Hike**
Meet at 6pm at Chumash trailhead. Directions - take 118 Fwy to Yosemite exit. Go north on Yosemite, turn right on Flanagan Dr. Trailhead is at the end of Flanagan Dr. (moderate, 5 MRT)
- March 16 Sulfur Mountain**
Moderate to strenuous 6 – 10 MRT hike. This is a beautiful area in the mountains between Ventura and Ojai. This hike is not within the jurisdiction of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District. Meet 8am near Donut Delite at the corner of Madera and Royal. Wear boots, bring bug juice, snack, and 2 - 3 quarts of water.
- March 17 Sunday Evening Hike**
Meet 5pm at Rocky Peak trailhead at the end of Rocky Peak Rd off Santa Susana Pass. (Strenuous, 5 MRT)
- March 21 Thursday Evening Hike**
Meet at 6pm at Chumash trailhead. Directions - take 118 Fwy to Yosemite exit. Go north on Yosemite, turn right on Flanagan Dr. Trailhead is at the end of Flanagan Dr. (moderate, 5 MRT)
- March 23 Mishe Mokwa Trail to Sandstone Peak**
Moderate 7 MRT hike with 1500' elevation gain/loss. See a wide variety of vegetation, spectacular rock formations, and the highest peak in the Santa Monica Mountains. This hike is not within the jurisdiction of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District. Meet 8am near Donut Delite at the corner of Madera and Royal. Bring 2 qts. of water and lunch, wear boots.
- March 24 Sunday Evening Hike**
Meet 5pm at Rocky Peak trailhead at the end of Rocky Peak Rd off Santa Susana Pass. (Strenuous, 5 MRT)
- March 28 Thursday Evening Hike**
Meet at 6pm at Chumash trailhead. Directions - take 118 Fwy to Yosemite exit. Go north on Yosemite, turn right on Flanagan Dr. Trailhead is at the end of Flanagan Dr. (moderate, 5 MRT)
- March 30 Pt. Mugu State Park - Hidden Pond to Waterfall**
Moderate 9 - 10 MRT hike with approx. 700' elevation gain/loss. Pleasant hike around Hidden Pond, then follow a creek upstream to the waterfall and back to Satwiwa. This hike is not within the jurisdiction of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park district. Meet 8am near Donut Delite at the corner of Madera and Royal. Bring 2 - 3 qts. water and snack. Wear boots.
- March 31 Sunday Evening Hike**
Meet 5pm at Rocky Peak trailhead at the end of Rocky Peak Rd off Santa Susana Pass. (Strenuous, 5 MRT)

For more information on hikes/work parties, contact the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District at 805-584-4400.

Special Note: - On all hikes and work parties, bring water and wear lug-soled boots. Hikes will be cancelled if it rains.

<http://rstb.homestead.com>

RANCHO SIMI TRAIL BLAZERS

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MEMBERSHIP

Please enroll me as a New () or Renewing () member of the Rancho Simi Trail Blazers for the annual donation fee of:

Single.....\$10

Family..... \$15

Name(s) _____ Birth Mo. _____ Day _____

Address _____

Email Address _____ Phone wk/hm _____

How did you find out about the RSTB _____

Please make out tax deductible member dues check for the year Sept.-2001/Sept.-2002 to:
“Rancho Simi Foundation” mail it to **“RSTB, P.O. Box 630399, Simi Valley, Ca 93063-0399**
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