



Rancho Simi Trail Blazers

A Division of the Rancho Simi Foundation



MARCH WORK PARTY

The March work party focused on the creek-side portion of the Hummingbird Trail. The work was completed, although the trail may require weed whipping as soon as the grass and herbaceous plants finish growing. Thanks to Mike Kuhn for his efforts. **We need more people out on work parties!**



California Buttercup
(*Ranunculus californicus*)

Found on
Eagle Spring Hike

Photo by John Sabol

TAPO

One of John Peabody Harrington's Fernandeño informants stated that the proper forms of Tapo are "ta'apu and ta'apu a." The " a" ending is a Fernandeño way of ending words. Although, curiously, he cited Topanga ("tupa' a") as a Chumash name. Harrington noted that the "u" is possibly an unaccented "o".

Mike Kuhn

RSTB LOGO T-SHIRTS

Are your old logo T-shirts worn out?

We still have short sleeve, long sleeve, and sweat shirts in assorted sizes and colors. Prices are:

- short sleeve \$12
- long sleeve \$14
- sweat shirt \$18



Please call Marty if you'd like to place an order: 805-526-4414.



**Rick Ehrecke & Yasa Rasakhoo
David Lanelda, and Alyssa Mummert**

APRIL 1ST WORK PARTY

Trail Blazer *volunteers are needed to supervise* work in Corriganville Park and on the Lower Stagecoach Trail for Saturday, April 1, 8:00 a.m. to Noon. The Simi Valley Presbyterian Church hopes to provide more than 100 volunteers.

Tasks to be accomplished will be the watering of young oak trees (children), the removal of castor beans, tree of heaven shoots and Arundo grass (a bamboo-like plant) and rehabilitation of the Lower Stagecoach Trail.

Volunteers are needed to supervise the work efforts to ensure safety and, in the case of the trail work, that the trail is repaired properly. *It is critical that we have enough people to supervise.* If you have any questions, please call Mike Kuhn (805) 583-2345.



RSTB CLUB MEETING

This month's club meeting will be held at the Community Center

Room B-1
1692 Sycamore Drive
at 7:00 PM
on
April 19, 2006

UPCOMING EVENTS

SUNDAY EVENING HIKE TIME CHANGE

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME IS HERE

Starting April 2nd, the Sunday evening hike will begin at **5pm**.

APRIL 1ST

Trail Blazer volunteers are needed to help supervise trail work. See article in column 2.

APRIL 8TH

Wildflower Walk – Antelope Valley – It's flower season again! This will be an ALL DAY event.

MAY 24TH - MAY 29TH

Yosemite Hiking/Camping Trip

This very special event is limited to **Trailblazer members only**. Space is limited, so **RSVP as soon as possible**. We will be camping at the Upper Pines Campground. There will be a campground fee, and a \$20 per car park entry fee.

JUNE 9th, 10th & 11th

Deer Group Camp Backpack Trip – Big Bear Lake

Space is limited. Please **RSVP before May 19th**.

JUNE 24th

Santa Cruz Island

Space is limited and fills up quickly; please **RSVP before May 12th**. The cost is \$46 per person. We must be at the Island Packers dock no later than 7:30.

More information on these events can be found at

<http://simitrailblazers.com>

To make reservations, please email Mark Gilmore at markinthepark@sbcglobal.net.

MT. McCOY TRAIL

Mt. McCoy is the prominent hill west of Madera Road with the cross on top. The trail to the Mt. McCoy uplands, where the Park District owns more than 200 acres of natural open space, begins at the western end of Washburn Street at the base of the hill. Street parking is available.

The moderate 1.3 mile climb to the upland area, through a series of switchbacks, includes a 500 to 600-foot elevation gain. The trail to the top affords magnificent views of Simi Valley, Wood Ranch and the mountains. The highland area provides vistas to the west and north, including the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and the Channel Islands.

The trail starts in natural grasslands, with native bunch grasses, climbs through coastal sage scrub past a densely wooded canyon into dense chaparral, transitioning into coastal sage scrub with grasslands on top.

The geologic formations encountered include the non-marine Sespe Formation, dominated by very soft sandstone near the base of the trail, then up through a basalt-based portion of the Conejo Volcanics and finally into an andesitic-based portion of the Conejo Volcanics. The three different geological formations result in differences in soil and vegetation.

The upland area has very high-clay acid soils and some very unique plants. Those plants include one federal and state designated endangered species (Lyon's pentachaeta), one federally threatened species (Conejo dudleya) and a plant that is considered rare and endangered in California and has not been reported elsewhere in Ventura County (white-stemmed filaree). During the late-winter and spring period the wildflowers can be spectacular.

The cross on Mt. McCoy is a Ventura County Historical Landmark. A cross is thought to have been placed on the mountain during the Spanish Period. A wooden cross is indicated on an 1858-59 map of the area, and the Runkle family reported the presence of a stone cross on the hilltop when they came to Simi Valley in 1904. A large wooden cross was placed on the hill in 1921. That cross was replaced by the present day concrete cross in 1941.

The cross and the immediately surrounding land belong to the Simi Valley Historical Society. The public has legal access to the cross.

Hike the Mt. McCoy Trail and enjoy the wonders of nature so near our urban environment.

Mike Kuhn

YUCCA ROASTING

Our local yucca (*Yucca whipplei* ssp. *intermedia*), sometimes referred to as Spanish dagger and as our lord's candle, was a major food resource for the Chumash Indians. While the seeds, fruit, pulp in the flower stalk were used, the primary use for food was to roast the "buds" of the plant in a roasting pit in the ground. Thus, the plant could be harvested year round for food – even during the winter and during droughts.

The plant grows as a basal rosette of spine-tipped, sword-like leaves one to two feet long. To harvest the "bud", the plant was removed from the ground using a long digging stick. The leaves were then removed from the base – usually by burning them off - and then roasting them in the ground over night.

An excerpt from *A Historical, Political, and Natural Description of California* by Pedro Fages, written for the Viceroy in 1775 (translated by Herbert Ingram Priestley), page 50, contains a description of how this was done. Fages accompanied Gaspar de Portola into upper California in 1769 and then remained in California, traveling widely, for many years. He served as *comandante* of the "New Establishment" and was promoted to lieutenant colonel. Now his description:

"...There is a great deal of century plant of the species which the Mexicans call mescale. The mode of using it is as follows: They make a hole in the ground, fill it in compactly with large firewood which they set on fire, and then throw on top a number of stones until the entire fire is covered but (not?) smothered. When the stones are red hot, they place among them the bud of the plant; this they protect with grass or moistened hay, throwing on top a large quantity of earth, leaving it so for the space of twenty-four hours. The next day they take out their century plant roasted, or tlatemado as they say. It is juicy, sweet, and of a certain vinous flavor; indeed, very good wine can be made from it."

While the "century plant" is referred to, no century plants, as they are known in Mexico, grow wild in California. Agaves do exist in the eastern Mojave Desert, but they clearly are not what are being referred to here within the area dominated by the mission system. The only plant that Fages could be referring to is the yucca. We know that the Venturo Chumash word for yucca is *ta'apu* and the Barbareno Chumash word for yucca is *topo*, at least as recorded by Harrington and others. Harrington also records roasting pits being used to cook *topo*. The remains of roasting pits are common artifacts near villages and temporary camp sites.

This characteristic of being able to get food from the yucca plant year round rendered important to the Chumash and may be the reason that they named the premier village in the *Simi'* after the plant. That village was called *ta'apu* and is our source for the name "Tapo"

Mike Kuhn

WOOD RANCH/MADERA ROAD

The Wood Ranch was originally purchased from the Simi Land and Development Company by Charles B. McCoy. Later, it became the Taylor Ranch and subsequently was purchased by A.G. Wood. At that time, the road running south from Los Angeles Avenue to the ranch was called Kujawsky Road.

Nate Kujawsky, for which the road was named, had long since changed his last name to "Kern". Following the death of A.G. Wood, Mrs. Wood petitioned the County of Ventura to change the name to "Madera Road". "Madera" means "wood" in Spanish and the Woods had named their place "Madera Ranch". I remember an arched iron entryway to the ranch which contained the name "Madera Ranch". At some point it began to be referred to as the Wood Ranch.

Madera Road was extended to the Conejo Valley as a shorter way than the old route through the Tierra Rejada Valley to Santa Rosa Road and over the Norwegian Grade. The extension of Madera Road to connect with Olsen Road divided the ranch into a northern part and a southern part. When the ranch was sold for development in the late-1970s, the north ranch, including Mt. McCoy and the site of the Presidential Library, was sold off separately. Anyway – that's how we came to have a "Madera Road" and a Wood Ranch development.

Mike Kuhn



*Wildwood on a foggy morning.
Left to right: Rafael Zepeda, Carol Tucker, John Sabol,
Alan Cueba, and Bill Cespedes.
Photo by Mike Kuhn.*



*Sacred Datura (Datura wrightii)
Photo by Arlene Altshuler*

THE ALTERED STATE OF THE SHAMAN

The Chumash shaman used drugs to induce an altered state. Both native tobacco, which was eaten, and Jimson weed (i.e., Datura) were used for this purpose (but not at the same time). By inducing a trance, the shaman believed that they gained access to the spirit world - usually in the form of an animal. Caves, springs and pools of water and high places were very important in this belief.

Caves were inhabited by natural animal spirits. The shaman gained access to the spiritual world through caves. It was believed that the rock wall or a crack in a wall in a cave would open up, and the shaman would enter another world. For this reason, the lizard is a common rock art motif. Lizards take refuge by entering cracks or crevices in rocks. It was believed that they could enter and exit the spirit world with ease.

The shaman could enter the spirit world through a spring or pool of water - without getting wet. Creatures that inhabited pools of water, such as water striders, salamanders, pond turtles and frogs, could also enter and exit the spirit world with ease. They too are common rock art motifs.

The shaman could enter the spirit world through the North Star, as could birds, which could fly to the spirit world. Shamans are often depicted in rock art with wings, with bird heads and/or bird feet. The shaman was transformed into a bird in order to visit the spirit world.

Spirit animals were seen during altered states in the same way that a person of intense faith today may receive messages and see visions of their own faith.

Once a shaman had returned from an altered state, rock paintings were made to record or "write on the wall" the images seen. These rock paintings or pictographs were powerful images to be feared and respected, and the places where they were painted were sacred places.

Mike Kuhn



RSTB Calendar

April 2006



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 Work Party Corriganville See Schedule
2	3 <i>Happy Birthday</i> <i>Mike McCrary</i>	4 Long Canyon 6:30pm hike See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday</i> <i>Anne Guibor</i>	5	6 Chumash Trail 6pm hike See Schedule	7	8 Wildflower Walk Antelope Valley See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday</i> <i>Louise Pomes</i>
9 Rocky Peak 5pm hike See Schedule	10	11 Long Canyon 6:30pm hike See Schedule	12	13 Chumash Trail 6pm hike See Schedule	14	15 Grotto Trail (Circle X) See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday</i> <i>John Sabol</i>
16 Rocky Peak 5pm hike See Schedule	17	18 Long Canyon 6:30pm hike See Schedule	19 RSTB Meeting See Page 1	20 Chumash Trail 6pm hike See Schedule	21	22 Work Party Mt. McCoy Trail See Schedule
23 Wildflower Walk Mt. McCoy Trail Rocky Peak 5pm hike See Schedule	24	25 Long Canyon 6:30pm hike See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday</i> <i>Cody Frank</i>	26 <i>Happy Birthday</i> <i>Gary Cremeans</i>	27 Chumash Trail 6pm hike See Schedule	28	29 Cold Creek Canyon See Schedule
30 Rocky Peak 5pm hike See Schedule						



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Hiking Schedule



REGULARLY SCHEDULED HIKES

(Rain cancels – No hikes on holidays)

Sunday Evening - Rocky Peak

Meet 5pm at Rocky Peak trailhead at the end of Rocky Peak Rd off Santa Susana Pass. (Strenuous, 4.8 MRT)

Tuesday Evening - Long Canyon

Meet at 6:30pm in Long Canyon parking lot. Directions: Take First Street South. Continue when the road's name changes to Long Canyon Road. The parking lot is at the intersection of Long Canyon Road and Wood Ranch Pkwy. (Moderate, 3.0 MRT)

Thursday Evening - The Chumash Trail

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. (Strenuous, 5.2 MRT)

APRIL HIKES

April 1st - Work Party - Corriganville Park - Lower Stagecoach Trail

Trail Blazer **volunteers are needed to supervise** work in Corriganville Park and on the Lower Stagecoach Trail for Saturday, April 1, 8:00 a.m. to Noon. Directions – take 118 Fwy to Keuhner. Go south on Keuhner, to Smith Rd. Turn left onto Smith Road. The parking lot is at the end of the road. Bring 2 - 3 quarts of water, hat, sunscreen, and gloves. For more details, please see page 1 of this newsletter.

April 8th - Wildflower Walk - Antelope Valley**

It's flower season again, and we'll be driving out to Antelope Valley to check out the local plant life and beautiful scenery. This will be an ALL DAY event. Meet at 8 AM near Donut Delite at the corner of Madera and Royal. Bring your camera, water and lunch. Wear boots.

April 15th - Grotto Trail (Circle X) ** - 5 MRT - Moderate (700' elevation gain)

Traverse the Canyon View trail to the west fork of the Arroyo Sequit, down to "The Grotto". Meet at 8 AM near Donut Delite at the corner of Madera and Royal. Bring 2 - 3 quarts water and snack, and a pair of shoes/sandals that you don't mind getting wet. Wear boots.

April 22nd - California Trails Day Work Party - Mt. McCoy Trail

Directions: Take Royal Avenue west of Madera Road, take a right at the "T" intersection with Acapulco Avenue and an immediate left onto Washburn. The trail begins where Washburn curves and becomes Los Amigos Avenue. Meet at 8 AM. We'll work until noon. Tools will be provided. Bring 2 - 3 quarts of water, hat, sunscreen, and gloves to work on the trail.

April 23rd - California Trails Day Wildflower Walk - Mt. McCoy Trail

Directions: Take Royal Avenue west of Madera Road, take a right at the "T" intersection with Acapulco Avenue and an immediate left onto Washburn. The trail begins where Washburn curves and becomes Los Amigos Avenue. **Meet at 9:30 AM.**

April 29th - Cold Creek Canyon - 5.5 MRT - Moderate (800' elevation gain and loss)**

This is an incredibly rich loop hike on Mountains Restoration Trust land. Meet at 8 AM near Donut Delite at the corner of Madera and Royal. Bring 2 quarts of water and a snack. Wear boots.

** Not within the jurisdiction of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District.

 No dogs allowed on trail(s).

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.

<http://www.simitrailblazers.com>

RANCHO SIMI TRAIL BLAZERS

A Division of the Rancho Simi Foundation

Executive Chair:	Mike Kuhn	HM (805) 583-2345	hannahmike@adelphia.net
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Work Parties Chair:		*** OPEN ***	
Hiking Chair:	Mark Gilmore	HM (805) 529-5581	markinthepark@sbcglobal.net
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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 to:

“Rancho Simi Foundation” mail it to “RSTB, P.O. Box 630445, Simi Valley, Ca 93063

Please list any extra names and birthdays of more than one member (Month & Day Only)



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