



Rancho Simi Trail Blazers



THE SHAMAN'S VISION QUEST

A Siberian term, shaman, is used for an individual who served as an American Indians group's spiritual leader and medicine man. That role seems to have been widespread and generally universal among north American Indians and probably came to the Americas from Asia. Indeed, the role of the shaman may have originally been common to all peoples of the world, only to have survived into historic times in sub-Saharan Africa, Siberia, Australia and the Americas. The rock art from Ice Age European caves is thought by some to be evidence of European shamanism. In the western United States, the shaman served to guide the group in all matters relating to the welfare of the group, such as how to live, when to move and in all spiritual concerns. According to Debra Sherman, in an article in the January/February (2000) issue of California Geology, the role of the shaman could be equated to that of priest, doctor, and statesman.

The shaman sought spiritual guidance through a "vision quest." Ms. Sherman describes a vision quest as an "... inner search for answers to difficult questions. It is a personal ceremony to find strength and renew a sense of direction and well being. A shaman (always a man) goes alone on his vision quest to a sacred site, often on a hill, or high rock. The shaman fasts and smokes tobacco to induce a hallucinatory state that

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SPECIAL NOTE
**Sheep Camp Overnight-
 Backpack**
**Saturday & Sunday-
 August 12th. & 13th.**
**Read about it in the
 page 5 Hiking Schedule**

RSTB CLUB MEETING
**The monthly club meeting will
 be held at the Community
 Center**
In the B-1 Room
1692 Sycamore
At 7:00 PM
On
Wednesday
Aug.16th.



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Stacia Peter
Dan Marnien
Michelle Marnien
Nicole Marnien
Jessica Marnien

JULY TRAIL WORK PARTY

Too late to be acknowledged in last month's newsletter, on Tuesday June 27, eight scouts, a scout's brother and 3 adult leaders from Girl Scout Junior Troop 502 worked on the upper Stagecoach Trail. This was the last activity for the girls' "Sign of the Sun" badge. We started off with a safety talk, answered some questions about rattlesnakes and Poison Oak and everyone picked up a tool and went to work. The morning was very hot as some girls lopped brush growing into the trail paths. Others removed weeds growing in the trail bed. As we went along we talked about the plants and animals of the area. Everyone tired quickly. We worked from 8:00-11:00 AM after which the girls headed off to a swimming pool for a much deserved cooling off. I received a box of Girl Scout cookies as my reward. Many thanks to the following workers:

Scout leaders/helpers: Linda Duzy, Sherri Ferber, Debra Womack and Ryan Womack

Scouts: Shantal Ben-Aderet, Jessica Brown, Jessica Duzy, Cecily Feist, Katie Ferber, Amanda Hubbell, Ashley Spalding and Helen Womack

We had a small work party on the Hummingbird trail July 15. Three of our regular workers were on a Sierra backpacking trip, Arlene Altshuler was on a business trip and Mike Kuhn, after dropping four of us off at the Hummingbird upper trailhead, had to leave to supervise boy scouts on a Mt. McCoy trail work party. John

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brings him a vision.” She goes on to quote Dr. David Whitley, a leading expert on ethnography relating to shamanistic practices and their relationship to rock art - “Native Americans have a certain expectation of their vision quests. They expect to be guided by some supernatural being, a link to their tribe, to their family, or to themselves. Their visions may appear as a past relative or animal deity. The shaman then interprets the meaning of the visitation in terms of what is happening in the lives of his people...”

Many sites that have been interpreted as “vision quest” places have been identified throughout the historic range of the Chumash Indians. Several have been suggested within the Simi Valley area. These sites are usually isolated small caves in which the only archaeological evidence consists of shamanistic paraphernalia and, sometimes, rock art. Dr. Whitley believes that most rock art, i.e., pictographs (paintings) and petroglyphs (inscribed or pecked pictures), is the result of shamans’ vision quests.

A shaman’s hallucinations, like our own dreams, are affected by enzymes when awoken that obliterate short term memories. That is why one cannot remember dreams, as hard as one tries, for very long. Indeed, if you want to remember your dreams, you must write them down. The shaman recorded his dreams in the form of rock art. That art was usually symbolic - hence nearly impossible to interpret. The shaman knew and the symbols helped him remember. The “writings” of shamans and the places where they remained were sacred to his people. These places still exist and are a part of our collective heritage of a people and their struggle to exist. They and their times are now largely gone from this earth. We are the less for it.

Mike Kuhn

MOUNTAIN LION ATTACKS ON HUMANS

It is estimated that there are between 4,000 and 6,000 mountain lions in California. Mountain lion attacks on humans are very rare. Between 1890 and 1990, a 100-year period, in Canada and the United States combined, there were only 53 mountain lion attacks recorded. Nine (9) attacks resulted in ten (10) deaths and 44 attacks were non-fatal. In California, there have been only 12 such attacks between 1890 and the year 2000. The first attack occurred in Siskiyou County in 1890, when a seven (7) year old boy was killed by two mountain lions. Then in 1909 a rabid lion injured a woman and a child. Both died of rabies. Between 1909 and 1986 there were no verified attacks on humans. Then in 1986 a five-year old girl was seriously injured by a mountain lion in a regional park in Orange County. In the same year a six-year old boy was injured in the same park by a mountain lion. In 1992 a nine-year old boy received minor injuries when attacked in Gaviota State Park in Santa Barbara County. In 1993 a ten-year old girl received minor injuries when attacked by a big cat in San Diego County. In 1994 a 40-year old jogger was killed in El Dorado County. Again in 1994, this time in Mendocino County, a couple was injured by a rabid mountain lion. While the man lost a thumb to the cat, the couple killed the animal with a kitchen knife. In December of 1994 a 56-year old woman was killed by a mountain lion while walking in a park

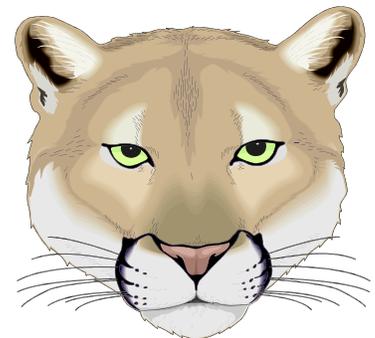
Downey used his brush cutter and the rest of us hand cut the larger plants as we worked our way down the trail. Louise Pomes started from the bottom and lopped brush as she worked her way up the trail. It was hot and dusty and everyone was happy to knock off work and head for Chuy's. Many thanks to the following workers:

Tom Frye, John Downey, Robert Foster, Louise Pomes and John Sabol.

The Trailblazers now have their own shed to store all of our trail maintenance tools, thanks to Jim Kepler, Sr. Maintenance Supervisor-Grounds, for the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District. The shed and tools will remain in the Sycamore Drive Maintenance Yard.

The next work party will be held August 19 on the Mt. McCoy Trail and we will work from 7:00 AM to 11:00 PM. Hope to see you there.

Work Parties Chair
John Sabol



DARKLING BEETLES

In the summer months, mostly in the evenings, hikers will encounter various beetles on the trail. Some of the most numerous are commonly called "Stink Bugs" or "Pinacate Bugs". They are not true stinkbugs but Darkling Beetles, the insect family Tenebrionidae. They are clumsy wingless beetles of the genus *Eleodes* and are found in arid regions of the Pacific states. Their food is the roots and seeds of native plants. In our area two species are very common.

The first is about one inch in length, black with a smooth shiny surface and abdomen pointed at the rear. A distinctive habit of this species is the comical position they assume when in possible danger; the tip of the abdomen is elevated about 45 degrees from the ground so the beetle seems to be standing on its head. When disturbed or picked up, they emit a black fluid with a very disagreeable odor. I was fortunate enough to see one actually spray. Several hikers had alarmed it and as the hiker in front of me passed by and the beetle was back lit, I saw the atomized spray emitted from the pointed tip of its abdomen. I suspect this spray is a survival mechanism used to discourage hungry birds and lizards. The Chumash Indians are said to have thought these beetles were wise because "They always had their ear to the ground".

The second species is smaller, a dull black with a rough surface consisting of large and small irregular bumps on their backs.

Their survival technique is to "play possum" whereby they strongly resemble bits of dry rotten wood or a small stone. Pick one up, and it will immediately pull in its legs against its body and not move for a minute or so, even after being put down.

When hiking in sandy areas, you will occasionally encounter a strange small fuzzy crawling insect, which looks like two small balls of fur connected together. These insects are known by the common name, "Velvet Ants". The females are wingless and are the ones most often noticed. The males are larger, have wings and are rarely seen. Both sexes have a dense covering of hair. In our area, they have been seen with black, white and red colored fur. Although ant-like in appearance, these are not true ants but wasps of the family Mutillidae. This is a group of about 475 North American species, most of which occur in the South and West, the majority in arid areas. Mutillids are generally found in open areas. They are external parasites of the larvae and pupae of ground dwelling wasps and bees and sometimes beetles and flies. Some species will produce a squeaking sound when disturbed.

Although they seem cute and fuzzy, DO NOT TOUCH! The females are reported to sting viciously, which caused Texan species to be nicknamed "Cow-Killer Ants" and Mule Killer Ants". I have never heard of anyone being stung in our area and the males do not sting.

John Sabol

in San Diego County. Finally, in 1995 a 27-year old man received minor injuries when attacked by a mountain lion while riding his bicycle in the mountains above Altadena in the Angeles National Forest. His worst injuries, as it turned out, came from the poison oak he tumbled through while fighting off the cat. Perhaps his psychic injuries were worse.

What can we learn from these attacks. Well, they are infrequent. Only two occurred in California prior to 1986. However, as the human population of the state has increased and has pushed out into prime mountain lion habitat, the number of injuries has dramatically increased. Children are an attractive target for the big cats, as are runners and people alone. Rabid animals account for a significant share of injuries and deaths. (Death from rabies need no longer occur if medical treatment is sought following the injury.) If attacked, fight back. You have a pretty good chance of surviving. Stay out of Orange and San Diego counties.

(Data for this piece came from the May/June 2000 issue of *Outdoor California* - that's the issue with the mountain lion on the cover.)

Mike Kuhn



AUGUST

2000



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2 Happy Birthday Elfriede Cespedes	3 Chumash Hike Meet at 6 PM See schedule	4	5 Arroyo Sequit To Leo Carrillo Beach Meet at 7 AM Read Schedule
6 Rocky Peak Hike. Meet at 5 PM See Schedule	7	8	9	10 Happy Birthday Bob Altieri Chumash Hike Meet at 6 PM See schedule	11	12 Sheep Camp Overnight Backpack Read schedule
13	14 Happy Birthday Kathy Mountain	15	16 Happy Birthday Diana Elsey RSTB Club Meeting at 7 PM at the Community Center, B-1 1692 Sycamore	17 Chumash Hike Meet at 6 PM See schedule	18 Happy Birthday James Langford	19 Mt. McCoy Trail Work Party Read Schedule
20 Happy Birthday Tom Frye & Lisa Judd Rocky Peak Hike. Meet at 5 PM See Schedule	21 Happy Birthday Al Richards	22	23	24 Chumash Hike Meet at 6 PM See schedule	25	26 Happy Birthday Laura Altieri Wildwood Hike Meet at 7 AM Read Schedule
27 Rocky Peak Hike. Meet at 5 PM See Schedule	28	29	30	31 Happy Birthday Catherine Verga Jack Archibald Chumash Hike Meet at 6 PM See schedule		

