



# Rancho Simi Trail Blazers



## BYERS (JOHN) DOWNEY 1927-2001

Byers "John" Downey, a consummate hiker, community volunteer, Trail Blazer, and dear friend died catastrophically as a result of a fall in the Santa Monica Mountains on August 11 while on a Trail Blazer hike. John fell about 70 feet onto bedrock at the lower falls in Escondido Canyon while looking for "a better trail." He was apparently unaware of the danger as he pushed his way through thick vegetation. Death was instantaneous.

John was a Navy veteran of World War II, when he served during the invasion of Iwo Jima and in other battles. After the war, he served as a hard hat Navy diver, which included the salvaging of sunken ships in the Yangtze River. He worked for more than 30 years for Rockwell, much of the time at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory.

John was a core member of the Trail Blazers. He hiked with the club two days a week, served on our executive board from the beginning, and was at nearly every work party with his weed whip and other tools. He helped lay out trails, led outdoor education hikes

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## BEEP BEEP

The greater roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*) inhabits the hills surrounding our valley and are frequently observed by hikers and residents on the edge of the City. They feed on any animal that they can swallow whole. Their food includes lizards, snakes, small rodents, birds and insects, which they stab with their nearly two inch long beak. During the spring and summer months,

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## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

**Rae & Robert Knapp**

## RSTB CLUB MEETING

The monthly club meeting will be held at the Community Center  
In the B-1 Room  
1692 Sycamore Drive  
At 7:00 PM  
On  
Wednesday, Sept. 19th.

## ARROYO SIMI CLEANUP

As part of a special day for the cleanup of our beaches and water courses, the Rancho Simi Trail Blazers will participate in a cleanup of the Arroyo Simi on Saturday, September 15, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. The event sign-in will be held at the northeastern corner of Rancho Simi Community Park (southwestern corner of the intersection of the Arroyo Simi and Erringer Road). Los Angeles Avenue from Sequoia Avenue westerly to Madera Road will be closed off for the Simi Valley Days Parade, so some of those wishing to participate will have to go around to get to the park. Bring gloves, wear a hat and sunscreen, and wear waterproof boots if you have them. This is an opportunity to dress up our community and to reduce the solid waste pollution of our

## SIERRA BACKPACKING TRIP

This year's Sierra backpacking trip will be to Kennedy Meadows in Inyo National Forest, from Friday, September 7<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup>. Those who would like to go should call 805-581-9735 for more information.

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where, and worked particularly well with youth. He could always be counted on. John frequently said, "I couldn't have done better myself" when praising someone. As the Editor of our newsletter, we have to say, no one could have done it better. John also served as the outdoor project leader in Tapo (Simi) 4-H and as a docent at Strathearn Historical Park. He was an active member of the Sierra Club.

John was an ardent backpacker and remained so to the end. As a hiker, he was always out front - a humbling experience for those of us who were not 74 years old. He loved being out in the hills, he never stopped learning and seemed to love people. He was our hero, our inspiration and our dear friend. He never spoke ill of anyone and we were always happy to see him - he will be sorely missed. People like Byers "John" Downey don't come along very often, but when they do, we are all better for it.

John had a wonderful sense of humor. He often retold the same stories and jokes, usually to a newcomer, and we all enjoyed them just as much as the first time. We will miss the "Now that everyone has had a 20-minute break -", "Trust me, I'm a Trail Blazer", "It looks like a big leaf maple to me", "I once sailed on a sea-going tug that took less food with it than that (someone's lunch)" and "We're burning light" (i.e., Let's get go-

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John lived life to the fullest. It was always about someone else, not about himself. When he died, he was in a beautiful place and he was doing what he wanted to do in a place where he wanted to be with close friends who loved him.

John leaves behind: his wife, Martha, of 52 years; daughter, Kathleen Downey; son, John; daughter-in-law Jodene; two grandchildren, Patrick Byers and Kenneth Dean; brother, Frank; and Martha's sister-in-law, Hazel



BYERS "JOHN" DOWNEY

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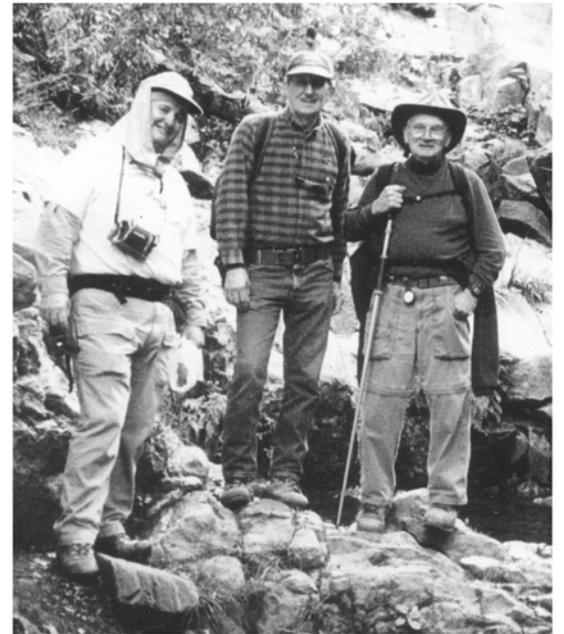
They depend upon speed and keen eyesight to catch their prey. They can run up to speeds of 15 miles per hour and when presses will fly for relatively short distances. They do not interact with coyotes, but do compete directly with them for food. They drink when water is available. Otherwise they can survive on the moisture they get from their prey.

The roadrunner is a member of the cuckoo family, the only other member of which in our area is the yellow-billed cuckoo. Cuckoos have slender bodies, long tails and two toes forward and two toes back - therefore, you can always tell a roadrunner's track.

Roadrunners maintain the same territory throughout the year and do not migrate. They can withstand great temperature extremes. When hot, they rest in the shade. At night, their normal body temperature of 101 degrees F can drop as much as seven degrees. In the morning or on cold days, they warm themselves in the sun, turning their backs to the sun and raising their back feathers to expose a large dark patch of skin.

They mate for life and build nests in low trees and brush. Both male and female birds sit on the nests. When the nest is threatened by a predator, the adults feign broken legs and lead the predator away from the nest.

# Fond memories of *John Downey*





# SEPTEMBER

2001



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						<b>1</b> <b>Mugu Peak hike</b> <b>Meet at 7am</b> <b>See Schedule</b>  <i>Happy Birthday</i> <i>Millie Reina</i>
<b>2</b> <b>Rocky Peak</b> <b>5pm hike</b> <b>See Schedule</b>  <i>Happy Birthday</i> <i>Doug Temple</i>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> <b>Chumash Trail</b> <b>hike</b> <b>Start at 6pm</b> <b>See Schedule</b>	<b>7</b> <b>1st Day</b> <b>Sierra Back-</b> <b>packing Trip</b> <b>See schedule</b>  <i>Happy Birthday</i>	<b>8</b> <b>2nd Day</b> <b>Sierra Back-</b> <b>packing Trip</b> <b>See schedule</b>
<b>9</b> <b>3rd Day</b> <b>Sierra Back-</b> <b>packing Trip</b> <b>See schedule</b>	<b>10</b> <b>4th Day</b> <b>Sierra Back-</b> <b>packing Trip</b> <b>See schedule</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> <b>Chumash Trail</b> <b>hike</b> <b>Start at 6pm</b> <b>See Schedule</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> <b>Arroyo Simi</b> <b>Cleanup Work</b> <b>Party</b> <b>See schedule</b>
<b>16</b> <b>Rocky Peak</b> <b>5pm hike</b> <b>See Schedule</b>  <i>Happy Birthday</i> <i>Tamara Combs</i>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b> <b>RSTB Club</b> <b>Meeting</b> <b>7pm at the 1692</b> <b>Sycamore Com-</b> <b>munity Center,</b> <b>Room B-1</b>	<b>20</b> <b>Chumash Trail</b> <b>hike</b> <b>Start at 6pm</b> <b>See Schedule</b>  <i>Happy Birthday</i>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> <b>Sulfur Moun-</b> <b>tain hike</b> <b>Meet at 7am</b> <b>See schedule</b>
<b>23</b> <b>Rocky Peak</b> <b>5pm hike</b> <b>See Schedule</b>	<b>24</b>  <i>Happy Birthday</i> <i>Jeanette Curia</i>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>  <i>Happy Birthday</i> <i>Frank Reina</i>	<b>27</b> <b>Chumash Trail</b> <b>hike</b> <b>Start at 6pm</b> <b>See Schedule</b>  <i>Happy Birthday</i>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b> <b>Calabasas Peak</b> <b>Meet at 7am</b> <b>See schedule</b>
<b>30</b> <b>Rocky Peak</b> <b>5pm hike</b> <b>See Schedule</b>  <i>Happy Birthday</i> <i>David Hirsch</i>						



# *Rancho Simi Trail Blazers*

## *Hiking Schedule*



- Sep 1 Mugu Peak Hike**  
Approx. 7 1/2 MRT, strenuous hike with 1300' elevation gain. This hike is not within the jurisdiction of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District. Meet 7am near Donut Delite at the corner of Madera and Royal. Wear boots, bug juice, lunch, and 2 - 3 quarts of water.
- Sep 2 Sunday Evening Hike**  
Meet 5pm at Rocky Peak trailhead at the end of Rocky Peak Rd off Santa Susana Pass. (Strenuous, 5 MRT)
- Sep 6 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)
- Sep 7 - 10 Sierra Backpacking Trip**  
This year's Sierra trip will be to Kennedy Meadows in Inyo National Forest. This backpacking trip is not within the jurisdiction of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District. Please call 805-581-9735 for more information.
- Sep 13 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)
- Sep 15 Arroyo Simi Cleanup Work Party**  
As part of a special day for the cleanup of our beaches and water courses, we will participate in a cleanup of the Arroyo Simi, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. The event sign-in will be held at the northeastern corner of Rancho Simi Community Park (southwestern corner of the intersection of the Arroyo Simi and Erringer Road). Tools will be provided. Bring 2 - 3 quarts of water, hat, sunscreen, and gloves to work on the trail.
- Sep 16 Sunday Evening Hike**  
Meet 5pm at Rocky Peak trailhead at the end of Rocky Peak Rd off Santa Susana Pass. (Strenuous, 5 MRT)
- Sep 20 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)
- Sep 22 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 7am near Donut Delite at the corner of Madera and Royal. Wear boots, bring bug juice, snack, and 2 - 3 quarts of water.
- Sep 23 Sunday Evening Hike**  
Meet 5pm at Rocky Peak trailhead at the end of Rocky Peak Rd off Santa Susana Pass. (Strenuous, 5 MRT)
- Sep 27 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)
- Sep 29 Calabasas Peak**  
Short but steep 4MRT hike with 950' elevation gain/loss, with a possible (3 - 4 mile, 550' elevation gain/loss) detour into Red Rock Canyon. This hike is not within the jurisdiction of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District. Meet 7am near Donut Delite at the corner of Madera and Royal. Bring 2 -3 qts. of water and snack, bug juice.
- Sep 30 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.**

