



# Rancho Simi Trail Blazers



## REEXAMINING FIRE SUPPRESSION IMPACTS ON BRUSHLAND FIRE REGIMES

A recent article, by the above title, in Science Magazine (June 11, 1999, pp. 1829-1832) reexamined the fire history in chaparral and coastal sage scrublands in Los Angeles and Ventura counties. It is widely held that the reason that southland brush fires are increasingly destructive is that modern fire suppression has resulted in an increase in frequency, intensity and area coverage of wildfires. Therefore, it has been held, that-controlled burns to rotate through older stands of brush, i.e., brushland management, should be pursued to decrease the destructive nature of brushland fires. The results of the examination of the California Statewide Fire History Database, shows that since 1910 fire frequency and areas burned, have not declined and fire intensity has not increased.

The number of small to medium sized fires has increased. However, those fires dominate when fires are easily suppressed, and they result in little property damage. Large fires, such as the 1961 Bel Aire and the 1993 Green Meadow fires, which burn more than 10,000 acres at a time, are not dependent upon old stand

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## HIKING PHOBIAS

We all have encountered people who are afraid to hike in the hills, because they are afraid of snakes, ticks, insects, bears, mountain lions, poison oak, drowning (Around here that's a laugh!). getting lost, being attacked by other people, falling off a cliff, being hit by falling rocks, being struck by lightning, being caught in a storm or having to spend the night out alone. Come to think of it, I'm having second thoughts about having anymore outdoor experiences. The reality, of course, is that getting out in the hills is one of the safest forms of recreation you can have. I've been lugging around several pounds of first aid and other types of emergency equipment for years. I have yet to treat anything more serious than blisters and heat exhaustion and an occasional case of mountain sickness. I haven't even come across any really serious biking accidents, at least the off-road type, yet.

The most dangerous part of going hiking in the hills is still getting there. Once you're out of the city and parked, you're pretty safe. Yet few of us think twice before going to work, to the market, or getting into our cars to go anywhere. Am I preaching to the pulpit?

Mike Kuhn

**SEPTEMBER  
RSTB CLUB MEETING**

**The scheduled Membership Meeting will be held at 7:00 P.M. Wednesday, SEPT. 15th. In the B-1 Room, 1692 Sycamore Drive in the Community Center**



## Graveyard Meadows Backpacking Trip

Ten of us (Mike Kuhn, Gary Cremeans, Eve Durham, Margarita Marsh, Arlene Altshuler, Bob Atltieri, Joe Mangia, Bill Cespedes, John Downey, and John Sabol) made our way towards the Sierra National Forest early Friday morning. Around 4pm we reached our destination... the Goodale Pass trailhead (elevation...7600'), which would also take us to Graveyard Lakes, just above Edison Lake.

We started out, and soon hit our first obstacle. Earlier, there had been a trail leading to a bridge crossing, but no one wanted to go that way because it wasn't marked on the map. The trail continued to the creek, which was deep in spots, and there were problems crossing. After a few people got their boots soaked trying to cross some of us decided to backtrack and use the bridge instead. After a few trying moments, we all made it safely across the creek.

Since it was getting late, and we were tired (from both the long drive and the altitude), our

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vegetation. Driven by Santa Ana Winds, they burn unimpeded through all classes of vegetation and are usually stopped only when they reach dense urban environments or the ocean. September has remained the peak fire month throughout the Twentieth Century.

Before the Twentieth Century, fires generally were started intentionally by Indians at a time not favorable for large-scale destructive fires or by lightning during the late summer. Those lightning-started fires usually continued into the Santa Ana Wind season, when they occasionally became very destructive. Humans directly affect fire regimes by starting fires and by suppressing them. In southern and south-central California there is no evidence that fire suppression has altered the natural stand-replacing fire regime in the manner suggested by others. This is in sharp contrast to our experience in coniferous forests throughout most of the western United States, where the stand-thinning fire regime, i.e., controlled burns, has proven to be favorable when compared to fire exclusion, which results in catastrophic and very destructive fires. The increased frequency of small fires in brushlands would normally result in conversion to non-native grasslands. Our success in fire suppression since 1950 has largely offset that impact.

All of this comes as welcome

news to resource managers, who have had to weigh the legal implications associated with controlled burning. The study suggests that controlled burns in brushland probably are not needed if we are trying to limit economic losses. (Improved range conditions, where more grass is the goal, may be a different matter.) Some have suggested that a return to fire breaks may be in order, although they have not proven to be particularly effective in wind-driven fires.

Mike Kuhn



## JERUSALEM CRICKETS

A good Trail Blazer often encounters this rather large insect while constructing trails. If you find them, please, gently rebury them in loose soil where they won't get crushed. They are not venomous or otherwise harmful to human beings, so leave them alone. To one Indian tribe, they were known as woh-tzi-neh (old bald headed man). To the Spanish/Mexicans, they were known as nino de la tierra (child of the earth). We often call them "potato bugs." While not poisonous, they can bite. Because their mouthparts are so large, that bite can hurt. So, be careful. They are usually found in moist loose soil where they can tunnel underground

Mike Kuhn.

spent about 1½ miles from the trailhead (elevation 8000'). We found water about ¼ mile from camp, prepared and ate dinner, and settled in for the night.

We broke camp around 9am the next morning, hiked past Graveyard Meadows, and stopped just below Upper Graveyard Meadows (elevation 9200'). We found a lovely spot, perfect for ten very tired backpackers. Then set up camp and relaxed. Gary decided to explore Graveyard Lakes, and returned just in time for dinner. He described the Lakes, including a trail that wasn't on our map, which would allow us to explore four of the Lakes in the area.

The following morning, we set out for the Lakes. Bob and Gary left the earliest; they decided to climb Graveyard Peak. The rest of us meandered up the trail, taking in the beauty of the area. We stayed a while at both the first and fourth lakes (elevation 10,300'), and then decided to start back down when we noticed thunder building in the sky.

By the time we returned to camp, it had started to rain and hail. It soon became heavier, and some of the group decided to wait it out in their tents. The rest of us put on ponchos, built a fire, and hung out until the weather cleared.

There were two short storms, the first lasting about 1 hour, the second about ½ hour, both a mix of hail and rain. Gary and Bob made it back to camp in time for dinner, with a few interesting stories about lightning and rain as they

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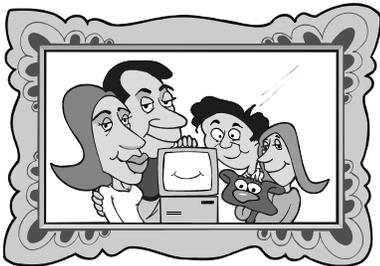
After dinner we were hit with a third short storm. Some went to their tents for the evening; the rest of us waited for it to pass. After about a ½ hour the sky cleared, and we dried off by the fire. By 9pm, the moon and the stars had come out, and there were just a few clouds in the sky. We called it a night, and doused the fire.

The next morning we took our time packing up, and headed down the mountain. John Downey left early to recover a stashed bag in a tree at the first night camp site. The rest of us met him at that camp, and we proceeded back to the cars. This time everyone crossed the creek at the bridge.

On the way home, we stopped in Bakersfield for dinner at El Pueblo, a restaurant owned by Bob's daughter (Jackie) and son-in-law. Wonderful Mexican food!!

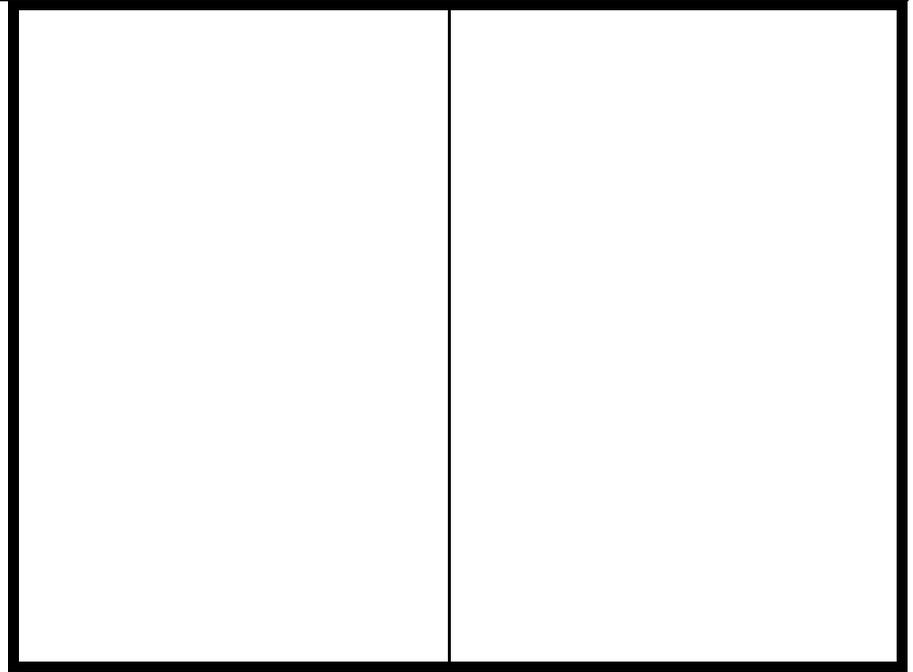
We made it home by 10pm, very tired but also very satisfied with the trip. Many thanks to Mike and Bob for Driving!!

Arlene Altshuler  
Hiking Chair



**WELCOME NEW MEMBER**

**Elizabeth Lake**



**JOHN SABOL AND ARLENE ALTSHULER**

### **August Work Party on the Mt. McCoy Trail**

Scout Jason Franklin brought his mom, Lisa, (she actually brought him) and six scouts to work on the trail. 'Blazers Phil Ankrom and John Downey started at the bottom of the trail and used weed whips to clear the grasses growing alongside the trail. John Sabol led the scouts up to remove heavier brush and to widen and straighten sections of the trail. Arlene Altshuler, Tom Frye, and Louise Pomes cut back a very large Sumac for which Arlene was rewarded with a rash on her forearms.

We then moved up to the saddle overlooking Wood Ranch and cut a new section to bypass several switchbacks that were being over run by short cutters. The scouts gathered boulders and rocks to help construct the new switchback. John Sabol and Arlene transplanted a dozen young Yuccas to discourage people from wandering off the trail at the new construction.

See you in September at the Hummingbird Trail. Happy hiking.

Bob Altieri  
Work Parties Chair

### **THE GOOD OLD DAYS**

Memories of what his valley was like just 20 or 30 years ago sometimes come to me at the oddest times. In those earlier years, the land west of Kuehner Drive and south of Los Angeles Avenue were covered with coast goldfields (*Lasthenia californica*). Not every year of course. But many years. I can remember

looking forward to seeing them. A landscape architect friend once suggested to me that perhaps the land should not be allowed to develop into tract homes so that we could always enjoy the splash of color. This of course was not practical. But

I do miss that corner in the  
spring

Mike  
Kuhn.





# SEPTEMBER



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2 Chumash Trail Hike 6:00 PM See Schedule Happy Birthday Lindsay McCarthy	3 Happy Birthday Bobby Rasmussen	4 Zuma Canyon Hike Meet at 7 am See schedule
5 Rocky Peak Trail Hike 5:00 PM See Schedule	6	7	8	9 Chumash Trail Hike 6:00 PM See Schedule	10 Happy Birthday Jody Junor	11 Ferndale Hike Meet at 7 am See schedule
12 Rocky Peak Trail Hike 5:00 PM See Schedule	13	14	15 RSTB CLUB MEETING 7 pm See Page 1	16 Chumash Trail Hike 6:00 PM See Schedule Happy Birthday Gene Clark	17	18 Hummingbird Trail Work Party 7 am to 11 am See Schedule
19 Rocky Peak Trail Hike 5:00 PM See Schedule Happy Birthday Rick Marsh	20	21	22	23 Chumash Trail Hike 6:00 PM See Schedule Happy Birthday Durell Fowlks	24 Happy Birthday Jeanette Curia & Mercy McDougall	25 Pt. Mugu State Park Hike Meet at 7 am See schedule Happy Birthday Ben Seifert
26 Rocky Peak Trail Hike 5:00 PM See Schedule	27 Happy Birthday Cesar Fabros & Todd Clark	28	29	30 Chumash Trail Hike 6:00 PM See Schedule Happy Birthday Erika Wolfe		



