



Rancho Simi Trailblazers

A Division of the Rancho Simi Foundation



Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District events can be viewed at www.rsrpd.org

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!!! Hiker Alert: All hikes, work parties and meetings have been cancelled until further notice due to the COVID-19 "Stay Well at Home" orders !!!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Due to unforeseen circumstances, all activities are subject to change without notice. Please see <https://www.simitrailblazers.com/calendar/> for event details and the most up-to-date schedule.

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



The RANCHO SIMI TRAIL BLAZERS are looking for leaders for public hikes! If interested, please contact Michael Kuhn at mike.kuhn@simitrailblazers.com. Applicants must be evaluated by the board and would be subject to the park district's standard background check.



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HIKE REPORTS - Special Report from Les Wilson in 2019

July 21st to 26th, 2019 – Little Lakes Valley Mule Pack Trip

During this morning's MidWeek Mountaineers hike in Wildwood Park (Thousand Oaks), I was asked several times how last week's Sierra Club Angeles Chapter Mule Pack Section's camping-and-hiking trip to Little Lakes Valley (which I co-led) went. I was also asked if I had any photos I could share, so here goes ---

Our hike to our base camp (10,800') near Chickenfoot Lake began at Mosquito Flat (10,200') at the south end of Rock Creek Road [shown near the upper end of the map]. Chickenfoot Lake is in Little Lakes Valley in the John Muir Wilderness in the eastern Sierra Nevada (mountain range) about 20 miles southeast of Mammoth Lakes, CA (Hwy 395). We dropped our camping gear and food off at the Rock Creek Pack Station (9,875') across from Rock Creek Lake (9,695') and then carpooled to Mosquito Flat. Then we hiked with day packs (rather than much heavier backpacks thanks to the mules) to the base camp location. There was a spectacular palette of various blooming wildflowers, there was lots of water in the streams and lakes, and beautiful snow-capped scenery -- there were also lots of mosquitoes.



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 hikers 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 years 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 the night was alive with their howling. What a wondrous sound!

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

BATS HAVE A FEEL FOR FLIGHT

[Condensed from Greg Miller, Science 310,1260(2005)]

In the 1780's, a noted French biologist proposed that bats used their sense of touch to fly and maneuver in the dark. This theory was strengthened when anatomists in the 19th Century discovered that bats had a latticework of tiny bumps on their wings that contained tactile receptor cells. Somewhat later, a naturalist suggested that bats depend instead on echolocation, where the bats give off high-pitched sounds and interpret the return echoes. However, it wasn't until the 1930's, when researchers first recorded the high-pitched sounds bats make to echolocate, that proof of echolocation was realized.

Up until recently, it has been accepted that bats depend entirely on this echolocation to execute the complex aerial maneuvers required in capturing prey or avoiding obstacles.

John Zook, a biologist at Ohio State University in Athens, was curious about the tactile receptor cells. Studying them under a microscope, he noted that they all had a tiny hair poking out of the center. Nerve recordings revealed that the receptor cells were very sensitive to the air flowing across the wing. Because air turbulence can signal that a wing is losing lift, Zook thought that the tactile cells might help bats to adjust the angle and curvature of their wings during tight turning maneuvers to avoid stalling out in midair.

To test this theory the researcher used Nair, a depilating cream, to remove the tiny hairs from the bats' wings. The bats were then videotaped in flight as they caught mealworms shot out of an air cannon in an enclosed space. They flew perfectly well – in a straight line, but when the bats had to make a 90-degree turn, their elevation control was erratic. Sometimes they would hit the ceiling. When the hairs grew back, the bats regained their flying skills.

The study provides convincing evidence that the bats' tactile sense is important for their flight and prey capturing ability.

John Sabol

COLD DRINKS IN EARLY CALIFORNIA

[Some of the information contained in this piece is drawn from "The Ice Harvest," in Alton Pryor, *Little Known Tales in California History* (1997), pp. 161-165.]

The sleepy town of San Francisco quickly emptied in 1849 with the onset of the California goldrush. Gold was there for the pickings. There were alluvium-choked streams. All one had to do was find alluvial deposits with gold and then use the water to separate the gold from the sand and gravel. Some of the gold miners got rich, and many merchants got rich too. Before long, San Francisco became a boom-town and a major port. Incoming miners from the east coast, Californios, Mexicans, Chileans, Australians and even Chinese nationals flooded in. Miners from the goldfields, flush with new wealth also flooded to what quickly became the premier city on the west coast. Demand for many products and services outstripped supply.

Eggs of the common murre were harvested from the Farallon Islands, which lay off the coast of San Francisco. To get them, one or more harvesters would be put ashore on the rock coast. Their first act would be to crush all of the murre eggs they could find. From that point on any egg that they found would be considered "fresh" and would be collected. About a week later their harvest would be picked up and they would be re-supplied. The chicken eventually saved the murre from extinction.

Yankees demanded ice for their drinks (by and large other nationalities were not so particular) in both San Francisco and Sacramento. The first ice came in by ship from Portland, Maine, via the Cape Horn route by sailing ships, with Boston-based carriers. The ice was harvested in Maine rivers during the winter and stored in below-ground ice houses. The ice was expensive – stored without refrigeration, the long journey and double crossing of the Equator took its toll in reduced volume. As much as 60 percent of the load was lost during shipment. By 1853 the American-Russian Commercial Company, whose ice source was Sitka and Kodiak, Alaska, had forced the Bostonian merchants out of the California market. Ice became a competitive commodity. Ice was harvested at Lake Angela on Donner Summit. Then warehouses and ice ponds were established at Serene Lake. Eventually all ice suppliers operated ponds in the Truckee River Basin. Some ice companies used their ponds for lumber production during the summer and for ice during the winter. In 1875 the Boca Brewing Company got into the very competitive ice market. By the late 1890s it became clear that ice could be used to ship fruit from California to eastern markets via iced railroad cars.

Horses were used to scrape the snow off of the ice to expose clear ice. Blocks of 22 inches square and 22x32 inches were standard. Once the surface was cleared, the ice was scored into a checkerboard pattern. The ice was harvested to a depth of two thirds of the thickness of the ice. The ice was floated in long open channels through the ice to elevator conveyor systems to lift the ice into warehouses. In some years the Truckee ice harvests stored 300,000 tons of ice. Bad weather was the detriment to the ice harvest, and rainfall sometimes soften the ice and ruined the harvest. Snow was also bad. The weight of the snow could submerge the ice and allow the pond water to flood on top of the ice.

In 1882, the Union Ice Company was formed out of six companies – five of which were located in the Truckee area. "The Union" was essentially a marketing firm, but soon acquired its own production facilities. Eventually only the National Ice and the Union Ice companies remained. The Truckee Basin dominated ice production in the west between 1868 and 1927. It was the ready supply of ice, harvested from winter ponds, that made the Pacific Fruit Express possible and permitted the mass plantings of fruit trees, including citrus.

While refrigeration killed the Truckee Basin ice pond production, at least Union Ice still is in business. Block ice continued to preserve a market for home delivery to "ice boxes" until well after the end of World War II. I can still remember the iceman delivering block ice to my grandmother's home in Spokane, Washington during the war. When my family moved to the Santa Clara Valley in 1943, we spent the first week in a motel with an ice box. I can remember the early morning deliveries, with the iceman having to step over me and my sister while we tried to sleep on the floor of the motel room. Even the first refrigerators included tiny freezers to make cub ice. Now ice simply drops into your glass from the fronts of some refrigerators. Block ice and bags of ice cubs are still big commodities sold at the supermarket, the mini-market and at gas stations. Those of us who car camp or picnic know this well.

Ice from rivers and pond was loaded with bacteria. It doesn't take much to imagine what those horses and workers were doing out on the ice while it was being harvested. However, the fact of the matter is that most water supplies throughout the United States were also loaded with bacteria until the late 1950s and early 1960s. A major health problem emerged in this country when baby formula was introduced in a big way during World War II when many mothers went to work in factories. The practice of using tap water to mix with baby formula resulted in a dramatic increase in the infant death rate. The problem was solved when it became standard practice to put the formula in bottles into boiling water for a while before giving it to babies. Having grown up in that period, in later years I was alarmed to see that new mothers from the late 1960s on were not heating the baby formula but mixing it with water straight from the tap. I had not realized that our nation had made a major advance in public health during the late-1950s through the 1960s by cleaning up our public water supplies. This is not the case in many parts of the world today, where it is unwise to consume ice in non-alcoholic drinks.

Mike Kuhn

THE CURRIER BARN

I grew up like most rural kids whose parents had lived through the depression. When you took something apart, you reclaimed the wood for later use and you saved and straightened the nails. Those nails went into an old coffee can or peanut butter jar. My dad was still going through that routine for decades after our economic situation rendered that practice quaint. I suppose it taught me thrift. Until 2010, my wife, Hannah, and I were still using a hot water kettle on our stove that I repaired with a small snipping from the lid of a tin can in 1966. It was supposed to last until we had time to buy a new one. Its replacement was occasioned by the purchase of a new stove with convection heating.

Farmers in Simi Valley did the same thing. In the early days, there simply wasn't much money around. You often borrowed until the crops were in, then you paid off your debts, or as much of it as you could, and did with little until the next year. You produced what you needed to eat and otherwise made a good life with very little. Neighbor helped neighbor and everyone was part of the community.

The last piece of the old Currier Ranch, complete with the ranch house and two barns and various other structures, was proposed for development during 1998. The remnant parcel was less than three acres in size - just enough room for ten houses on pretty good sized lots. The ranch had produced apricots, with a "cot" cutting and drying operation and walnuts. That much is apparent from examining the shed on the property.

The barn was unique. The two storied addition to the original pre-Currier one storied barn was covered primarily with the bottom and side slats from apricot lugs. These thin slats were nailed vertically to the side of the barn with horizontal batons covering the top and bottom joining points. It looked rather neat and tidy. The ends of the older part of the barn, over the sliding door and windows, was covered with opened up and flattened smudge pots. The metal was galvanized with approximately one inch air holes along the bottoms. One wooden slat was stenciled on the inside of the barn "Harrington Santa Susana." The Robert E. Harrington place was nearby south of the Currier place. It was a practice throughout America in the pre-World War II days for delivery pallets and lumber to be stenciled with the name of the customer.

The Simi Valley Historical Society has acquired the apricot and walnut processing shed, and it has been installed in the Strathearn Historical Park. Thanks to profits from *Simi Valley: A Journey Through Time* (1997), there was monies to save that little bit of history.

Mike Kuhn

**ALL REGULARLY SCHEDULED HIKE HAVE BEEN CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.
CHECK THE WEBSITE at <https://www.simitrailblazers.com/calendar/> FOR UPDATES.**

Sunday Evening - Rocky Peak Fire Road

During Daylight Savings Time meet at **5PM** and during Standard Time meet at **4PM** at the Rocky Peak Fire Road trailhead on the northern side of the Rocky Peak exit from the 118 Freeway. Take the Rocky Peak exit on the 118 Freeway and head north over the freeway. Park at the trailhead or across the bridge on the Santa Susana Pass Road. (Strenuous - 4.95 MRT - 1,325' elevation gain).

Tuesday Evening - Mt. McCoy Trail

During Daylight Savings Time meet at **6PM** in the parking lot, located to the south of Donut Delite, near the NE corner of Madera and Royal. There is no hike during Standard Time.

(Moderate - 3.07 MRT - 600' elevation gain)

Thursday Evening - Chumash Trail

During Daylight Savings Time meet at **6PM** at Chumash trailhead. Directions: Take the 118 Freeway to Yosemite exit. Go north on Yosemite and turn right on Flanagan Dr. The trailhead is at the north end of Flanagan Drive.

(Moderate to Strenuous - 5.4 MRT - 1300' total elevation gain.)

Due to unforeseen circumstances, all activities are subject to change without notice.
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RSTB Calendar May 2020



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CHECK THE WEBSITE at <https://www.simitrailblazers.com/calendar/> FOR UPDATES.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5 Happy Birthday Hannah Kuhn Robert Lisenby	6	7	8	9
10 Mothers' Day	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23 Ramadan Ends
24	25 Memorial Day	26	27	28	29	30 Happy Birthday Bonnie Bouley
31						

SANTA ANA WILDFIRE THREAT INDEX - Provides a 6 day forecast of Santa Ana Winds Wildfire Threats on a color coded map
<https://fsapps.nwcg.gov/psp/sawti/>

CALIFORNIA FIRE WEATHER MAP - Provides actual Red Flag Warnings and Fire Weather Watches
<https://www.fire.ca.gov/programs/communications/red-flag-warnings-fire-weather-watches/> (Scroll down to map)

* Not within the jurisdiction of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District.
 No dogs 🚫 allowed on trail(s). For additional 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.
Full descriptions of these hikes and activities are available at <https://www.simitrailblazers.com/calendar/>



-----cut out and return with your payment-----

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 _____ Birth Month _____ Day _____

Address _____

Family memberships: Please list names and birthdays of additional family members (Month & Day Only)

Phone (provide up to two numbers): work/home/cell _____

Newsletters are distributed by email only. Contact the Membership Chair if you require a copy by US mail.

Email address _____

How did you find out about the RSTB? _____

**Please make out tax deductible member donation check for the year to:
Rancho Simi Foundation and mail it to RSTB, P.O. Box 1231, Simi Valley, CA 93062**

Rancho Simi Trailblazers <i>A Division of the Rancho Simi Foundation</i>			
Executive Chair:	Mike Kuhn	HM (805) 583-2345	mike.kuhn@simitrailblazers.com
Treasurer:	To Be Announced		
Park District Liaison:	Nikki Collier	WK (805) 584-4453	volunteers@rsrpd.us
Work Parties Chair:	VOLUNTEER NEEDED		Contact Mike Kuhn at: 805-583-2345
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