



Rancho Simi Trailblazers

A Division of the Rancho Simi Foundation



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

~~~ Welcome New Members: Jonene Barbosa, Heather Candelaria, Phil Pratt and Brooke Schick ~~~

## 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](mailto:mike.kuhn@simitrailblazers.com). Applicants must be evaluated by the board and would be subject to the park district's standard background check.



### August 7, 2021 — Sage Ranch Loop 7AM

3.5 Mile Loop – Easy (400' of elevation gain/loss)

This 625-acre park is located in the Simi Hills just north of the Santa Susana Field Laboratory (SSFL) (aka Rocketdyne/Boeing) at an elevation of 2,000'. It is full of world-class sandstone rock formations and the trail provides great views of Simi Valley and the mountains to the north. NOTE: A relatively short section of the original loop trail was closed in mid-2017 for the cleanup of the former trap and skeet range in that area. To compensate, a new "detour" section of trail has been established; it bisects the ranch and provides views of the heretofore unseen center of Sage Ranch. Our hike will be counterclockwise.

**DIRECTIONS TO TRAILHEAD:** From Simi Valley, take Highway 118 to the Kuehner Drive exit. Take Kuehner Drive 0.9 mile south to Katherine Road. Turn right (west) on Katherine Road and drive 0.5 mile to an intersection at which Katherine Road makes a 90-degree turn to the left (south). Drive 0.2 mile south on Katherine Road (crossing the railroad tracks along the way) to a junction with Oak Knolls Road. Turn right (west) on Oak Knolls Road and drive 0.1 mile to a junction with Black Canyon Road. Turn left on narrow Black Canyon Road and follow it 1.9 miles as it winds steeply uphill to Sage Ranch Park. Turn right at the signed entrance to the park (and then immediately left) into the parking lot. Bring your camera, water and lunch. Wear boots.

### August 14, 2021 — Porter Ranch Loop\* 7AM

4.5 Mile Loop – Easy to Moderate (700' of elevation gain/loss)

The hike begins near Porter Ridge Park. It descends into shady Aliso Canyon and follows a seasonal creek to the south. Then it heads west along the Palisades Trail to the Limekiln Canyon Trail. It then heads north to the Sesnon Trail and follows it east to Porter Ridge Park (there's sometimes a great view from there). Our hike will be clockwise.

**DIRECTIONS TO TRAILHEAD:** In Simi Valley, take Highway 118 east to the Reseda Blvd exit (about 6 miles east of Santa Susana Pass). Turn left (north) onto Reseda Blvd and drive 1.7 miles north to its T-junction with Sesnon Blvd. Turn right (east) on Sesnon Blvd and drive 0.1 mile to the "end" of Sesnon Blvd [it's interrupted by Aliso Canyon where our hike will start; there's no bridge across the canyon]. Bring your camera, water and lunch. Wear boots.

### August 18, 2021

Club Meeting 7:30PM Please contact Mike Kuhn

### August 21, 2021 — Devil Canyon\* 7AM

6 MRT – Easy to Moderate (600' of elevation gain/loss)

The hike will begin as we drop into lower Devil Canyon just north of Hwy 118 near Topanga Canyon Blvd in Chatsworth. We will follow the heavily shaded course of the long-abandoned Devil Canyon Motorway as the trail heads upstream reaching a large dam in less than two miles. Continuing upstream the canyon soon widens and we'll pass through meadows and the lower portion of an oak woodland until we reach a large stack of oak firewood where we'll take a snack/rest break. We'll then return the way we came.

**DIRECTIONS TO TRAILHEAD:** In Simi Valley, take Highway 118 east to the Topanga Canyon Blvd exit. NOTE: When exiting Hwy 118 get in the left lane on the exit ramp. Turn left (north) and get in the right lane as you drive under Hwy 118. Turn left (west) on Poema Place and drive 0.25 mile uphill as the road curves northward to the second driveway on the right into Summerset Village (11500 to 11524 North Poema Place). Park on Poema Place [NOT in Summerset Village]. Bring your camera, water and lunch. Wear boots.

### **August 28, 2021 – Chivo Canyon Loop 7AM**

4.6 MRT – Moderate (900' elevation gain)

We will start our hike by descending into the mouth of Chivo Canyon from Cottonwood Drive. We will then hike up Chivo Canyon to the “Narrows” where private property prevents further exploration. We’ll backtrack to the Buckhorn Trail and follow it up to the Marr Ranch Road (MRR) with its vast views; then we’ll head south on MRR to the Cappocchi Trail, drop back into Chivo Canyon, and return to the trailhead.

**DIRECTIONS TO TRAILHEAD:** In Simi Valley, take Highway 118 to Yosemite Avenue and exit. Drive 1.9 miles north to Westwood Street. Turn right (north) on Westwood Street. Park in the first block, if possible, or along the north side of Copper Ridge Court (the first street on the right). Bring your camera, water and lunch. Wear boots.

## **HIKE REPORTS**

### **July 3, 2021 – Mt. McCoy and the Reagan Library**



18 hikers met at the carpool point near the intersection of Royal Avenue and Madera Road on a pleasant summer morning and then (since trailhead parking is quite limited) walked from there to the Mt. McCoy trailhead on Washburn Street a few blocks to the west. The hike began along the trail heading south but it quickly began climbing gradually westward along the well-maintained (but frequently “cut” by bicycle riders) trail leading to the summit via a series of switchbacks. As the trail rose up the mountainside, we were rewarded by intermittent cool breezes and views of the western end of Simi Valley, including Sinaloa Lake, Wood Ranch, and the Bard Reservoir.

There is a white concrete cross (erected in 1941) as well as two concrete benches at the summit, from which the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library can be seen.

After a short break to enjoy the panoramic view of the desiccated landscape (there was a single California poppy blooming along the way), we hiked southwest to Presidential Drive and then hiked along it to the west side of the library where President Reagan was buried in 2004 (and Nancy Reagan in 2016). The setting of the library is quite beautiful and there are planes and an army tank outside the library to look at as well as a spectacular view to the west. After a short rest break, we returned the way we came, completing a 5.8-mile hike with a little over 875' of elevation gain/loss. NOTE: This hike was the first one for some of the participants since March, 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic “lockdown” went into effect; moreover it was, for most of us, the first time we had hiked with a sizeable group of friends/acquaintances since March, 2020 so the outing was particularly pleasurable.

### **July 17, 2021 – Big Sky Trail Loop**



18 hikers (and three dogs) met along Big Sky Place in Simi Valley on a pleasant summer morning for a local hike. After a short walk northward on a sidewalk along Erringer Road where we admired the rose beds, we turned east onto the well-signed Big Sky Trail. After crossing a dry streambed, we began hiking the loop portion of the hike in a counterclockwise direction as we climbed fairly steeply up to the north-south ridge to the east of the Big Sky housing development.

## July 17, 2021 – Big Sky Trail Loop (continued)

Upon reaching the ridgetop we enjoyed views of the surrounding area including the west end of Simi Valley and the Santa Susana Mountains, particularly Whiteface Mountain (which some of us had climbed in the past). We continued our hike by heading north along the ridge toward Lost Canyons Drive, taking in the views of mostly tan mountainsides and canyon bottoms. After we reached the highest point (1,463') in our hike, we took a short break and then continued to the northernmost point (1,357') in our hike where the trail turned sharply to the south as it wound its way southward, mostly along the oak-lined streambed that runs through the Big Sky neighborhood. The remainder of our hike was an easy nearly-level stroll and we finished our invigorating outing having completed a 4.7-mile hike with about 875' of elevation gain/loss. We spotted a few blooming plants including **datura** (aka Jimson weed) and sunflowers.

**NOTE:** All species of **Datura** are **poisonous** and potentially psychoactive, especially their seeds and flowers, which can cause respiratory depression, arrhythmias, fever, delirium, hallucinations, anticholinergic syndrome, psychosis, and even death if taken internally.

## July 24, 2021 – Tapo Canyon Open Space



16 hikers met at the trailhead (1,145') of the Tapo [Canyon] Open Space Trail (T23) in Simi Valley on a surprisingly cool summer morning. We headed northward along the nearly flat dirt road which was bordered by numerous oak trees with bright green leaves that have so far survived ongoing drought conditions. After a mile or so the road rose steadily to a narrow pass and a dirt-road junction (1,535') where we took a break and enjoyed the views of the "valley" before us and the rows of mountainous ridges to the northeast.

Resuming our hike, we took the right fork (leaving the main route of T23) and began the loop portion of our hike as we followed a section of dirt road downhill through a pretty oak woodland until we reached its eastern junction (1,276') with the main T23 route. We then followed the eastern-most section of T23 down into Chivo Canyon (near a bee apiary).

After a short break, we returned to the T23 loop and took the right fork and followed the main T23 route as it rose gently to the west through a large "valley" before rising fairly steeply to the southwest to another dirt road junction (1,620', the highest point on our hike). We enjoyed the scenery from this viewpoint and then took the left fork and followed T23 back to the narrow pass (completing the loop) and then hiked on down (along T23) to the original trailhead. We completed our leisurely still-pleasant hike (with a nice cool breeze and a temperature in the 70's) having hiked just over 5 miles with a total elevation gain/loss of about 800'. We spotted several rabbits and one blooming datura (Jimson weed) plant in Chivo Canyon.

## A SUMMER SOLSTICE SITTING SITE

In a remote cave in the City of Thousand Oaks is what appears to be a well used sitting place where a sequence of more than one Chumash Indian shaman stayed to observe the summer solstice - an important event in the Chumash religious beliefs. The site consists of a roughly east-west oriented north-facing cave. Towards the west northwestern end of the cave, a seat-like rock platform extends out from the back wall of the cave. The surface conditions suggest considerable wear and use. The rock exhibits a polish and a darkening that suggests penetration of a lot of body oil. From that spot the far horizon can be observed through a round hole in the western end of the cave.

The summer solstice occurs each year in the Northern Hemisphere on June 21 or 22 and marks the point on the earth's orbit around the sun when the North Pole points most directly at the sun. In the Northern Hemisphere, it is the longest daylight period of the year. In other words, the daylight lasts the greatest number of hours during the 24-hour day, and the period of darkness is shortest. On the summer solstice, the sun rises and sets farther north of due east and west than at any other date of the year. For the Chumash, the summer solstice had to be predicted by observations so that ceremonies could be performed.

From the sitting place in the cave, when visibility is its usual hazy self in late-June, the sun is observed sinking in the sky. Nothing else is observed until the sun begins to set behind the top of a pointed hill far to the west northwest. The existence of the pointed hill becomes apparent as if by magic. The pointed hill simply pops out of the haze. This phenomenon takes place on each of several evenings around the solstice date. Before and after these several dates the sun sets south of the pointed hill as observed from this remote cave. If this site was indeed an observation place to determine the approach and day of the summer solstice, a shaman would have started making observations many days before the actual solstice event. Each evening, a shaman would sit on that seat. As the solstice grew near, it was possible to predict that the event would occur in so many days. The call would go out for members of the Antap cult to gather to perform the summer solstice ceremony at the appropriate time as determined by careful observation.

## A SUMMER SOLSTICE SITTING SITE (continued)

We do not follow these practices, as celebration of the summer solstice is not part of our own belief structure. The summer solstice is shown on most calendars as it marks the first day of summer. It's just not the same. The seat remains empty and our collective memories are silent.

To access the cave today requires scrambling through 50 or more yards of solid poison oak – so the site is well protected and infrequently visited.

Mike Kuhn

## STATUS OF CALIFORNIA CONDORS

(adapted from Anna Lena Phillips, "Junk Food," *American Scientist*, Vol. 95 (September-October 2007), pp. 402-403)

The California condor is a valuable scavenger species – cleaning up after us by eating flesh and even bones from carrion. Since their near extinction 35 years ago, largely from eating lead bullet fragments in the meat they consumed, they have recovered from a low of 22 individuals in the 1980s to a current population of about 285 (year 2007 statistic). In order to prevent lead ingestion, the 22 birds were convinced to enter captive breeding programs in California zoos. Now there are 69 birds in the wild in California and many in Arizona. Those in the wild have started producing nestlings, however, their survival is threaten by a new, unanticipated problem – consumption of junk!

In order to reduce the ingestion of lead bullet fragments from carcasses, wildlife managers put out food for the adults every third day. In Southern California the feeding station is as close as two miles to the nearest condor nest. The condors, it seems, now have a lot of free time, and are getting into mischief – that is they are attracted to the abundant brightly colored trash that is left in the wild and around oil fields. They have been bringing back to their nestlings a prodigious amount of that trash. Adult condors regurgitate their meals to feed to nestlings, so adult condors are able to relieve themselves of the trash, which they collect. However, their nestlings do not have that ability. The results are that the junk they eat lodges in their crops and gizzards severely limiting the absorption of nutrients and, in some cases, they experience life-threatening metal toxicity. One x-ray of a dead nestling included in the above-noted article exhibits nine metal bottle caps, one flip-top opener, a spring and other unidentifiable items. The body of another nestling contained 30 metal items, 54 of glass, 28 pieces of plastic and two miscellaneous items – a total of 200.5 grams of junk. Another contained 193.5 grams. Two of the nine Los Padres chicks that hatched between 2001 and 2005 died as a direct result of junk ingestion, while several others died of junk-related complications. The reintroduced population in Arizona has had much less trouble with trash ingestion. Most of the birthing locations in the Grand Canyon are far from feeding stations – up to 50 miles. The birds have far less time on their wings and their territory contains far less trash because of its isolation. Condors in Arizona also have a far more diverse natural food supply than their California brethren.

It is clear that hunting with bullets that contain lead must be abandon within condor territory. Copper bullets are available that can meet the needs of hunters. Aversion therapy for trash-eating California condors or retraining junk-tossing humans may be the best bets for the survival of the California condor.

Mike Kuhn

11-14-07 (revised 12-2-12)

## REGULARLY SCHEDULED HIKES

*(Red Flag Warnings and Rain cancels the hike – No hikes on holidays)*

### On Hiatus - Need Hike Leader - 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)

### On Hiatus - Need Hike Leader - 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.

Please see <https://www.simitrailblazers.com/calendar/> for event details and the most up-to-date schedule.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <div>RSTB Calendar</div> <div>August 2021</div> |                                              |                                                      |     |     |                                                                                        |  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sun                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Mon                                             | Tue                                          | Wed                                                  | Thu | Fri | Sat                                                                                    |                                                                                     |
| 1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 2                                               | 3<br>Mt. McCoy<br>Trail 6PM<br>See Schedule  | 4<br><br>Happy Birthday<br>Betty Cameron             | 5   | 6   | 7<br>Sage Ranch Loop<br>7AM<br>See Upcoming Events                                     |                                                                                     |
| 8                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 9                                               | 10<br>Mt. McCoy<br>Trail 6PM<br>See Schedule | 11                                                   | 12  | 13  | 14<br>Porter Ranch Loop*<br>7AM<br>See Upcoming Events                                 |                                                                                     |
| 15                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 16                                              | 17<br>Mt. McCoy<br>Trail 6PM<br>See Schedule | 18<br>Club Meeting<br>7:30PM<br>Contact Mike<br>Kuhn | 19  | 20  | 21<br>Devil Canyon*<br>7AM<br>See Upcoming Events<br><br>Happy Birthday<br>Al Richards |                                                                                     |
| 22                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 23                                              | 24<br>Mt. McCoy<br>Trail 6PM<br>See Schedule | 25                                                   | 26  | 27  | 28<br>Chivo Canyon Loop<br>7AM<br>See Upcoming Events                                  |                                                                                     |
| 29                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 30                                              | 31<br>Mt. McCoy<br>Trail 6PM<br>See Schedule |                                                      |     |     |                                                                                        |                                                                                     |
| <div>SANTA ANA WILDFIRE THREAT INDEX - Provides a 6 day forecast of Santa Ana Winds Wildfire Threats on a color coded map<br/><a href="https://fsapps.nwcg.gov/psp/sawti/">https://fsapps.nwcg.gov/psp/sawti/</a></div> <div>CALIFORNIA FIRE WEATHER MAP - Provides actual Red Flag Warnings and Fire Weather Watches<br/><a href="https://www.fire.ca.gov/programs/communications/red-flag-warnings-fire-weather-watches/">https://www.fire.ca.gov/programs/communications/red-flag-warnings-fire-weather-watches/</a> (Scroll down to map)</div> |                                                 |                                              |                                                      |     |     |                                                                                        |                                                                                     |

\* 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/>





## **Rancho Simi Trailblazers**

*A Division of the Rancho Simi Foundation*

|                        |                         |                   |                                                                                              |
|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Executive Chair:       | Mike Kuhn               | HM (805) 583-2345 | <a href="mailto:mike.kuhn@simitrailblazers.com">mike.kuhn@simitrailblazers.com</a>           |
| Treasurer:             | To Be Announced         |                   |                                                                                              |
| Park District Liaison: | Nikki Collier           | WK (805) 584-4453 | <a href="mailto:volunteers@rsrpd.us">volunteers@rsrpd.us</a>                                 |
| Work Parties Chair:    | <b>VOLUNTEER NEEDED</b> |                   | <b>Contact Mike Kuhn at: 805-583-2345</b>                                                    |
| Hiking Chair:          | Mark Gilmore            | HM (805) 990-1460 | <a href="mailto:markinthepark@simitrailblazers.com">markinthepark@simitrailblazers.com</a>   |
| Vice Hiking Chair:     | Les Wilson              | HM (805) 522-2642 | <a href="mailto:les.wilson@simitrailblazers.com">les.wilson@simitrailblazers.com</a>         |
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| Ways & Means Chair:    | Marty Richards          | HM (805) 526-4414 | <a href="mailto:marty.richards@simitrailblazers.com">marty.richards@simitrailblazers.com</a> |
| Membership Chair:      | Louise Pomes            |                   | <a href="mailto:louise.pomes@simitrailblazers.com">louise.pomes@simitrailblazers.com</a>     |
| Publicity Chair:       | <b>VOLUNTEER NEEDED</b> |                   | <b>Contact Mike Kuhn at: 805-583-2345</b>                                                    |
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