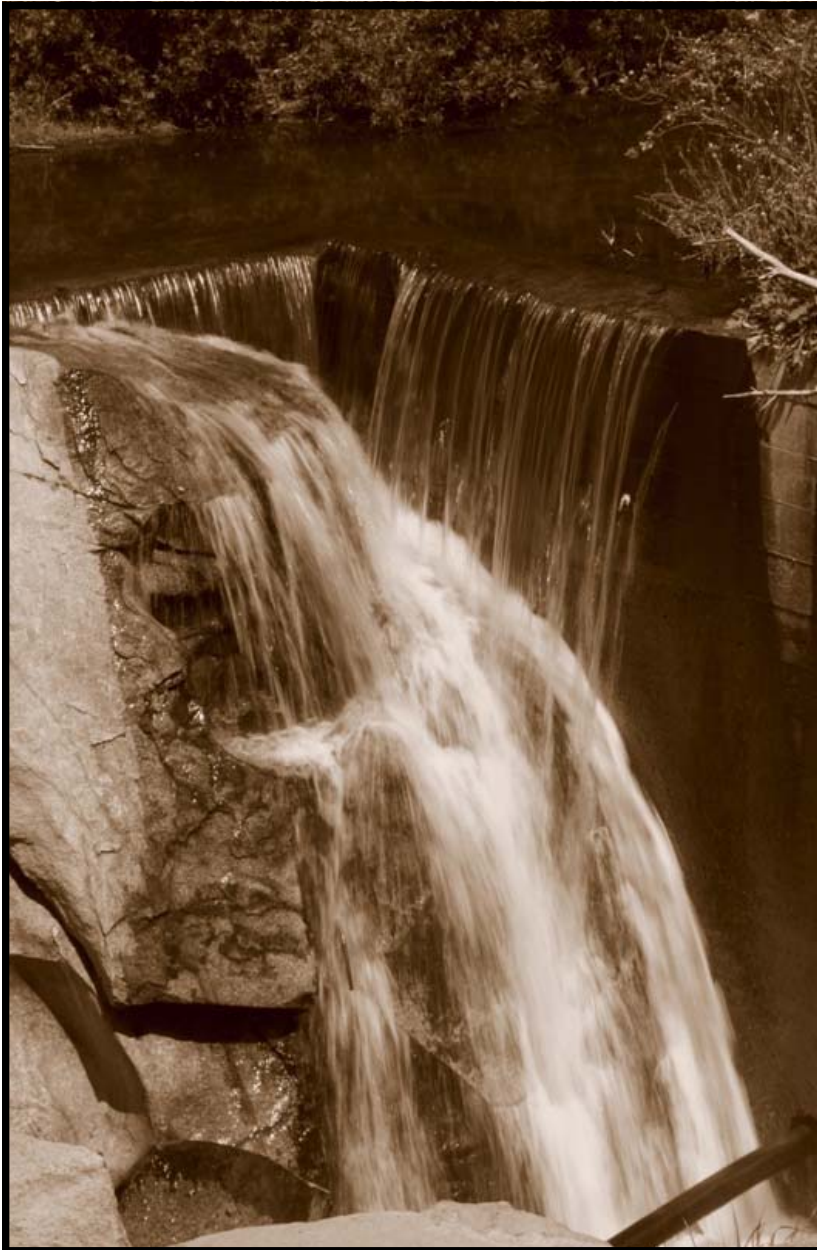


Trails and Tales

News for VIP Volunteers in the Montane Sector

June 2010

Dam Mystery Solved! Great Year for Waterfalls on the Sweetwater River! By Daniel Williford



Waterfalling over an old reservoir dam off Merigan Fire Road. Take note of water main in lower right corner of the photo.
Photo by Michele Hernandez

Since moving into the Merigan House, I frequently hike the southern end of our park. Chaparral-covered hills in a year of plentiful rain has not only livened up the hillsides with an incredible palette of wildflowers and gorgeous blooming shrubs, but has certainly made the Sweetwater River a constant source of beauty and awe. And now through a conversation with Ernie Smith of MAU, a mystery has been solved for me: the story of an old dam just up the hill from the Merigan Fire Road trailhead. Thanks, Ernie!

Built around the time of World War II by Lawrence Oliver, a big wall has created an impressive waterfall along the Sweetwater River. Just upstream from the Descanso Falls, a solid flow of water still falls over the edge of the dam. The dam is a solid, steel reinforced concrete structure. Water from this reservoir was taken by way of a 6 inch water main to a hand dug well further down the valley. You can see the gorge where the water main was used to facilitate better suction, south of the dam along the Merigan Fire Road near the Dead Horse Trailhead. The dam silted up the river and never really functioned as intended. When the Merigan family purchased the property they excavated the reservoir to create a swimming hole and installed a port at the bottom of the dam to cleanse the area of silt during the rainy season. With beavers being introduced into the Sweetwater, they would dam up the hole, so again, things did not work out as planned. Now is a great time to experience this part of the park and check out the rush of water before the heat of summer sets in.

Trails and Tales

June 2010

A Park to Die for: Death Cases in Cuyamaca Rancho State Park by Supervising Ranger Bob Hillis

The recent fatality on Stonewall Peak prompted a few volunteers to ask me about people dying in the Park. While a report is filed on every death in the Park, there is no easily accessible list of death cases. The incidents discussed in this article are based on the recollections of current and former Rangers who worked at Cuyamaca within the past 25 years.

By far, the majority of fatalities that occur in the Park are events that could happen anywhere, but just happened to be in the Park. Motor vehicle collisions on Highway 79 are the leading cause of death. These collisions are usually a motorcycle versus another vehicle or a vehicle versus an oak tree or rock outcrop. Speed is frequently a factor and many have been alcohol related.

Suicides are a very close second in terms of frequency. Gunshot, hanging, overdose and jumping off a cliff are all methods that have been employed to commit suicide in the Park. Some suicidal subjects take great efforts to accomplish their goal. One woman took a cab from San Diego so she could shoot herself near Meadow Parking. In a fairly recent case, a man couldn't find an unburned tree from which to hang himself, so he threw a rope over a branch of a down tree and then kneeled down to kill himself. Suicides are usually discovered when rangers notice a vehicle parked for a prolonged period.

Surprisingly, there have been no murders confirmed as occurring in the Park. There was one body dumped in the Park and one suicide that was very questionable.

Natural deaths, usually in the form of heart attacks, are the third leading cause of death. Some of these happen in the campgrounds and some on the trails. While friends and loved ones are always, understandably, shocked by the incident, they all express gratitude that the decedent died doing what they loved, in a beautiful setting.

Two people died in a plane crash on Mother's Day in 1988 on Oakzanita Peak. Another died in a hang glider crash at near-by Kwaaymii Point.



Relatively few of the fatalities are caused by the Park environment. Three died by falling from the top of Stonewall (two of these were suspected suicides). Three more died by hypothermia, usually as a result of being lost. Tragically, one of these hypothermia victims was a small child left behind by an orphanage that had taken a field trip to the snow. When they noticed him missing, an extensive search was conducted, that lasted a few weeks. The child wasn't found until the following spring. One visitor died by lightning, one by mountain lion attack, and one by being thrown from her horse.

Trails and Tales

continued from page 2

June 2010

The ranger's role in all death cases is to render first aid as appropriate, preserve the death scene for possible criminal investigation, and to liaison with other rescuers, local patrol deputies, the Sheriff's homicide team and the county Medical Examiners Office. Sometimes, just recovering the body from steep, heavily vegetated terrain is a significant undertaking; one that requires rangers, fire fighters, search and rescue teams, and the ASTREA helicopter to all work together.

By far, the ranger's most difficult task in a death case, due to our relatively isolated location, is to stay with the surviving loved ones until their family and friends can arrive to take over the role of comforter. You never feel that you have done enough. Sometimes tough, you will receive a letter several weeks later, thanking you for all you did and telling you how much your support meant to them at the time. Then you know that you've done your job.

On an unrelated note, if you have not turned in your Pre-designated Physician form yet, do it now. If we don't have one in your file, you will not be able to work. Thanks for all that you do in the Park.



Daniel Williford

Cuyamaca Rancho seems like a beautiful place to say goodbye for some

Trails and Tales

June 2010

Uncertainties for State Parks Continue as Governor's Proposed Budget Moves to the Legislature

From California State Parks Foundation



In today's May Revisé announcement, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger sent the Legislature a budget with considerable uncertainty for State Parks. The Governor's budget revisions comes on the heels of the Governor removing his support for the Tranquillon Ridge offshore oil drilling project, which he linked to state parks funding in his January budget. The Governor reiterated an earlier commitment to replace Tranquillon Ridge revenues with General Fund dollars.

"We hope that the Fiscal Year 2009-2010 state budget was the funding nadir of California's state park system," said Elizabeth Goldstein, CSPF President. "The first question is what the Legislature will do with the recommendations from the Governor. We must remember this is only another step in a long and arduous budgetary process." Even the prospect of restoration to FY 2008-2009 levels of funding are a far cry from the resources necessary to adequately protect our precious state parks. "California's state parks now rank among the most endangered sites in the country," said Goldstein. "Budget cuts forced nearly 150 of the state's 278 state parks to partially close or reduce services this last year."

California's world-renowned state parks have been underfunded for decades. While the state's population, park acreage and park visitation have soared since the 1970s, state park funding and staffing levels have barely increased. And, since 2008, the state park system has been thrown into ever increasing budgetary turmoil.

For that reason, CSPF has worked hard to find a long-term sustainable funding tool for state parks. CSPF is a lead supporter of the California State Parks and Wildlife Conservation Trust Fund Act of 2010, which is slated to appear on the November 2010 ballot. This initiative will provide adequate funding for state parks in perpetuity, removing the threat of park closures once and for all. By establishing a new, dedicated funding source, the measure directs new revenues from an \$18 vehicle surcharge to replace current General Fund support for the state park system, freeing up \$140 million annually for other state budget purposes. In return for Californians' investment in their world-renowned state park system, the Act provides free day-use access to state parks for Californians. For more information visit www.yesforstateparks.com.

The California Travel and Tourism Commission has recently predicted the number of tourists visiting the state will rise by an average of three percent through 2011, and all told these tourists will spend about \$92 billion on food, lodging, recreation and other expenses. Many of these tourists visit state parks. Studies have shown that visitors to California's state parks spend more than \$4 billion annually. In Tuolumne County alone, recent analysis illustrates that visitors drawn to that county's state parks and other attractions spend approximately \$164 million and tax revenues generated from visitors reaches \$8.5 million per year. As the Governor's budget proposal moves forward, CSPF will keep the public informed about its status, and continue to lead the fight to keep all state parks open and adequately funded.





Dave McClure at Fern Flat Fire Road

Summer vacation is almost here and the TMU is working hard to get our trails ready for the summer influx of visitors. This year it will be especially important to have the Cuyamaca Rancho and Palomar State Parks ready and welcoming to our guests because we want to give our guests a reason to vote Yes on the California State Parks Initiative which will be on the November ballot. A word of caution: while in uniform and on duty, you cannot advocate for or against any political issue. So please do not discuss any ballot measures while on duty. Let's just show our summer guests the very best that their State Parks have to offer.

We are catching up after an especially wet and windy winter. Many of the trees that have not rotted and broken off are now coming down because of root failure and saturated ground. Our old friend, *Ceanothus*, is in bumper crop stage. The overgrown brush is especially difficult because it is time and labor intensive to remove.

We are slowly making progress on Sugar Pine trail, which has pretty much been closed ever since the fire. In recent years, this trail has gotten completely overgrown with *Ceanothus* and we literally have to fight our way through thick, 12' high trees of the stuff. With a large crew, we can clear maybe about 100 yards in a four hour shift. We have made progress, though. The trail is now clear and usable by both hikers and equestrians for about two-thirds of its length from the bottom connector with the Marty Minshall trail. This makes a nice morning ride or hike because there are several nice clearings where you can sit down and enjoy your lunch or a snack and take in an unobstructed view of the lake and points north. Unfortunately, though, unless you bring your machetes, you will not be able to make it to the top at this time. We have, however, hacked a narrow trail up to within a couple of hundred yards of the connector to Middle Peak Fire Road. Our goal at this point is to get the trail clear to the connector.

Another major milestone was reached last month when we were finally able to get the Azalea Glen trail cleared all the way from Paso up to the Springs Fire Road. This was a priority project because the park will be involved in a major event on June 12; the San Diego 100 Mile Endurance Run. This is an annual event where the participants run, as the name suggests, 100 miles starting in the Lagunas. The runners route comes into our park from Anza Borrego from the north, up and over Stonewall Peak, across the highway and up Azalea Glen. Then south on West Side to Sweetwater, back across the highway, north up Green Valley fire road and back into the Lagunas. (Now, I know that a number of you will be begging me to participate, but I don't want to make any of the other runners look bad. So I will stay out of it this year). So, the second week of June we will be making sure that the entire event route is clear and ready to leave a very positive impression with the runners and promoters.

And with the arrival of warm weather, the Fire Roads are finally beginning to dry out. This has been a major obstacle to getting to some of the more remote trails because we cannot drive on the Fire Roads.

(continued on page 6)

Trails and Tales

June 2010
(continued from page 5)

This issue was driven home to us last month when your Wednesday trail crew managed to get our truck stuck in a muddy quagmire on Middle Peak Fire Road and after several hours of fruitless shovel work had to call for a tow. (Thanks, Andrew!)

And, with the drying of the fire roads, we were finally able to get Fern Flat Fire Road cleared after it had been closed all winter. This is a major north-south hiking, riding and biking route so we are very happy to get this open again. I am hoping that by the time you read this we will have been able to get Japacha Fire Road cleared as well.

We are continuing with our successful cross-unit cooperation with our new members Ron and Erin Robillard, who are using their MAU skills to help out with trail clearance. Ron and Erin are able to use their preferred mode of transportation to carry them and their equipment back into areas that we have trouble getting to because of the distance involved. Our MAU/TMU workers recently cleared the B-13



We had a lot of great help at the Mack House clean-up on May 15th

Trail, the Back of Stonewall Trail and are presently working on West Mesa Trail. And more good news for the Sector; we now have TMU volunteers working at Palomar. New TMU members Eric and Rick Barclay are checking the trails for us at Palomar. This is a great step forward as it has always been difficult to get our volunteers to make the long drive up to Palomar. Welcome, Rick and Eric. Thanks for stepping up and we're looking forward to working with you.

In May, the TMU also worked on a Mack Ranch cleanup with the Lakeside Frontier Riders. We filled an entire Jumbo size

dumpster with debris, replaced some of the tumbledown fencing (check it out next time you drive by) and enjoyed a delicious barbecue lunch courtesy of Molly Jean Featheringill who purchased and most generously donated the large quantity of food. Thanks, Molly Jean - the Hot Links were terrific!

Please consider joining us for a Saturday work party sometime soon. I promise that we won't work you too hard and we always unlock your leg chains promptly at noon (shotgun duties courtesy of Boss Hernandez). The June schedule is at the end of this newsletter. Until next month, Happy Trails!

Trails and Tales

June 2010

IAU News from Peggy Buffo

It was *great* seeing all the IAU members at the May training. Those few who missed the meeting will need to complete new forms, which we will have to mail to you. New Green cards were NOT issued, we were told to simply update the old cards with a new date!

We had a short but informative meeting at lunch; all interested volunteers are invited to come to the next IAU Advisory Committee meeting June 12 at 8:30 a.m. We're looking for YOUR input and perhaps a few new volunteers to help us with the committee. One of the things we are considering is: do we need to have meetings, and if so should we switch to quarterly instead of every other month? So please plan on attending, we will be in the museum.

Do we want a summer potluck? In the past there has been a potluck where all units have been invited, last year we decided not to have one—let me know if you are interested and we will figure out a date and location.

Daniel will be leading a Nature Hike Saturday, May 29 at 9 a.m. at Paso Picacho for Memorial weekend. Then a Junior Ranger program following it at 11 a.m. Nature hikes will be each Saturday at 9 a.m. to Labor Day. EVERYONE is encouraged to join Daniel, help out or lead a nature hike. Give Daniel a call if you want to help, or just show up!

KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN for RATTLESNAKES! As we were told in a trail report, they are out and about.

I am sorry to tell everyone about the passing of an IAU member, Sue Fear. Sue and her husband Ralph volunteered in the museum for several years. Sue was recently diagnosed with breast cancer in February, developed complications and passed away May 5. Sue's service was May 14 and several IAU members attended to offer their support to Ralph. Ralph, you are in our thoughts.

Finally: when you go out roving on the trails, always take a handful of handouts: especially the footprints flyer to hand out to kids. If we can get kids interested in the outdoors, then perhaps we can get them (and their parents!) interested in supporting keeping parks open.

Get out there and enjoy the trails!



Michèle Hernandez

IAU Members Mary Loh, Shannon Svensen, and Park Interpreter Daniel seek out the wild dudleya along the Sweetwater River



Daniel Williford

Wild Dudleya or Live-forever

Trails and Tales

June 2010



Darla Winland

Nancy Ujzdowski of MAU moving branches off of trails on Mother's Day. A very dedicated volunteer who had Mother's Day plans with her children but put them off until after she rode her patrol and did trailwork.

MAU News from Suzie Kirkwood

MAU had excellent attendance at the annual park training and unit meeting. Thanks to the half-day training format, we had more time for our unit meeting and got all three patrol camps cleaned up on Saturday. Thank you to everyone who stayed after the unit meeting to help with the camp clean up. The camps look beautiful! At the unit meeting, we elected Erin Robillard to the Advisory Committee and re-elected John Saxer. Maggie Benfante is our new alternate. Congratulations, and welcome to Erin and Maggie. With May training behind us, that means it's time to start gearing up for the Benefit Ride. We really need everyone to help on the day of the ride. If you haven't signed up

to help, please contact Bonnie Slager, bonnie@norcotrails.com. I'm looking forward to relaxing and riding with everyone at our Los Vaqueros campout this month. It will be a wonderful time!



JOIN US FOR THE ANNUAL BENEFIT RIDE & CAMPOUT

AT

CUYAMACA RANCHO STATE PARK

Camp in Los Vaqueros Horse Camp

or come for the day Sunday.

Ride through Cuyamaca Rancho State Park

Delicious BBQ Dinner • Awesome Prizes

Presented by the CRSP Mounted Assistance Unit

Proceeds go to Cuyamaca Rancho State Park Interpretive Association (CRSPIA) to support our mountain State Parks

Trails and Tales

June 2010

MBAU News by Susie Murphy

May Training was well attended by our MBAU members and we were happy have some new volunteers in attendance that we gathered at Earth Fair. We were all very inspired by Daniel's talk on interpretation of the park. CRSPiA money well spent! After lunch, a few of us went out and rode down to see Green Valley Falls. An amazing amount of water! This is great to see!

We would like to welcome our new volunteers: Donald Sexton, John Hanley, and Tom Cook.

We have some changes to our leadership as well. Susie Murphy and Jim Loh will be sharing the duties of Unit Coordinator. Jonathan La Rosa will be the new scheduler and oversee our new Google calendar. Sean Murphy is continuing as secretary as is Steve Boland as Training Coordinator.

Earth Fair was great fun. MBAU members Sean and Susie Murphy, Chris Vine, Kathi Medina and Steve Boland all took a shift meeting and greeting others in our community who love the park. As always, Earth Fair is a great venue for people and dog watching! The Murphys even came home with a new dog from San Diego Animal Rescue...suckers!

One of our valued members, Chris Vine, has decided to step down as an active member, but will still be helping us out with his graphic design talents for the Benefit Ride T-Shirt and forms. Member Phil Ohme will be learning the ropes from Chris to help with these duties.

All MBAU members need to log on to the new Google Calendar that Chris has set up and put in their dates they would like to ride. Remember that there have to be at least two people on a patrol and trainees always have to be with a full member. Please contact Susie Murphy (susiemurphy1@cox.net) if you have trouble logging on.



Michele Hernandez



Michele Hernandez

Palomar Monkeyflower blooming in the Park captured the interest of many volunteers while on the Chaparral Adventure. Here Shannon Svensen, Joseph Gerans, and Ariana Russo take photos of this not often seen wildflower

Trails and Tales

June 2010

CUYAMACA RANCHO STATE PARK TRAILS MAINTENANCE UNIT

Schedule for June, 2010

Saturday, June 5, 2010 ---Supervisor: Serena Hill

Saturday, June 12, 2010 --Supervisor: Milo Prodanovich

Saturday, June 19, 2010 --Supervisor: Dave McClure

Saturday, June 26, 2010 --Supervisors: Dave & Michele Hernandez



Unless otherwise notified, all trail crews meet at the Paso Picacho campground maintenance area.

PLEASE NOTE OUR SUMMER HOURS: 8:00am until noon.

Preregistration is not a requirement - you are invited to just show up at 8:00. However, we strongly urge you to contact the scheduled supervisor if you plan to attend so that in case of a change in plans (such as inclement weather), you can be notified.

Contacts:

Serena Hill - serenahill81@aol.com

Milo Prodanovich - mprodanovi@aol.com

Dave McClure - dmmclure@cox.net

Dave Hernandez - jerrydave1@sbcglobal.net

Park Headquarters - 760-765-3020

Paso Picacho Kiosk (for weekends) - 760-765-3023

Friends who come to help on scheduled work parties will get two free day use passes



Big John Sproule and the TMU get results on the Fern Flat Fire Road. Top photo is when TMU arrived, bottom photo shows that they get things done!!!

Trails and Tales

Summer Interpretive Programs Begin! Nature Den Opens for Summer!

June 2010

Summer Interpretive Programs got off to a great start this Memorial Day Weekend! The programs were well attended and the opening of the Nature Den as a summer interpretive center occurred. The Nature Den serves as a great starting point for the Nature Walk and Junior Ranger Programs. If you would like to be involved with the Nature Den (opening it up and answering questions for campers) let Daniel know. This is another great way to get involved this summer with the park and connect our visitors with this incredible place!



Daniel Williford

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IAU Unit Coordinator	Peg Buffo	pbuffo@cox.net
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MBAU Unit Coordinator	Susie Murphy Jim Loh	susiemurphy1@cox.net maryeloh@aol.com
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General editor	State Park Interpreter Daniel Williford	dwilliford@parks.ca.gov



Daniel Williford

Mountain Dogwood is blooming now up towards the top of Cuyamaca Peak!

A Note from Mary Jo Redman, Trails and Tails Copy Editor

Next month, I will be leaving for Indonesia the evening of June 16. Please send submissions for the July newsletter by the evening of **June 15** to allow extra time in case my internet goes out inconveniently for a few hours (as it tends to do). Please double-check everything for complete information and correct spelling of names before you send it. I won't return in time for the August newsletter, so please send articles and photos for publication in August directly to Daniel at dwilliford@parks.ca.gov by **July 16**.



Summer Interpretive Programs at Cuyamaca Rancho State Park

Please feel free to join us at any of the summer interpretive programs! It is also encouraged for volunteers to develop, lead and co-lead nature walks, Jr. Rangers, and Campfire Programs. Please contact Daniel if you have even a slight interest in presenting programs. He'll do his best to talk you into it and train you for success! And the training is free!

Nature Hikes Saturdays 9 a.m. Daniel and ?

Junior Rangers Saturdays 11 a.m. Daniel and ?

Saturday Campfire Programs at Paso Picacho

- June 5 8:00 p.m. Ranger Erik "Snakes of Cuyamaca Rancho State Park"
- June 12 4:00 p.m. Southwest Search Dogs
- June 19 8:00 p.m. Ranger Andrew Topic TBA
- June 26 4:00 p.m. Sky Hunters Raptor Presentation
- July 3 4:00 p.m. Sky Hunters Raptor Presentation
- July 10 4:00 p.m. Southwest Search Dogs
- July 17 8:00 p.m. San Diego Astronomy Association Star Party
- July 24 8:00 p.m. Ranger Andrew Topic TBA
- July 31 8:00 p.m. Ranger Erik "Snakes of Cuyamaca Rancho State Park"
- August 7 8:00 p.m. Ranger Erik "Snakes of Cuyamaca Rancho State Park"
- August 14 will announce time later Ranger Heidi "The ABC's of Plants in CRSP"
- August 21 will announce time later Ranger Heidi "The ABC's of Plants in CRSP"
- August 28 8:00 p.m. Ranger Andrew Topic TBA
- September 4 TBA (It could be you!)

Discover the many states of California.™