



WHITTIER NARROWS NATURE CENTER ASSOCIATES

Newsletter of the Whittier Narrows Nature Center Associates

April 2011



Photo by Jim Odling

Traditional plant uses highlighted

Biologist and Gabrieleno Indian Matt Teutimez (above) delivered an engaging and informative presentation on traditional Native American uses of local plants in the nature center library Feb. 26. Matt's energetic style wowed the standing-room-only crowd. It was a "smashing day" and an "excellent presentation," said Nature Center Associates member Michael Barba.

Eagle projects spruce up natural area for visitors, wild inhabitants

Two area Eagle Scout candidates recently demonstrated that the spirit of service is alive and well in our youth, using their Eagle projects to improve the Natural Area both for human visitors and for an avian resident.

Life Scout Kent Chen, of Cerritos' Troop 693, led a team of scouts, friends and family in replacing the information kiosk between the parking lot and

the nature center on March 19. The original kiosk had been knocked over in heavy winds March of last year.

Chen said the project, which he began planning in April 2010, involved a number of elements, including meeting with county staff, creating scale models of the finished kiosk, learning roofing and other skills from a local contractor,

See EAGLE PROJECT, page 2

This month at the natural area . . .

4/2 - Bird walk, 9 a.m.
Led by docent-naturalist Ed Barajas.

4/9 - Bird walk, 9 a.m.
Led by docent-naturalist Ray Jillson.

4/16 - Bird walk, 9 a.m.
Led by docent-naturalist Ed Barajas.

4/23 - Bird walk, 9 a.m.
Led by docent-naturalist Ray Jillson.

4/23 - Cleanup, 9 a.m.
Sponsored by WNNCA

4/30 - Annual volunteer recognition brunch
hosted by Nature Center Associates at Eaton Canyon Nature Center, 9:30 – 11:30 a.m.

4/30 - Cleanup. Call for details. Led by Dept. of Parks and Recreation.

Save the date:

5/14 - Potluck picnic at natural area. Hosted by WNNCA.

All events are free and open to the public, unless otherwise noted. Please contact the nature center to confirm schedule: (626) 575-5523.

Army Corps of Engineers looking at Santa Fe Dam safety; scientists study California super-storm scenario

News reports in January revealed that the Santa Fe Dam, on the San Gabriel River in Irwindale, received the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' second-worst safety rating in 2009, the same rating that the Whittier Narrows Dam received in 2006.

Both dams have the corps' Dam Safety Action Class II rating, meaning that "the combination of life or economic consequences with probability of failure is very high," according to corps guidelines.

The Whittier Daily News reported on Jan. 24 that engineers "said they found no major flaws in the Santa Fe Dam, but a major earthquake or massive flood could damage" Santa Fe Dam. But the Whittier Narrows Dam "had verified issues with seepage and with piping, a process where water tunnels under or through a

dam," wrote the newspaper's Ben Baeder.

The dams protect hundreds of thousands of people in southeast Los Angeles County.

Also in January, scientists working with the U.S. Geological Survey's Multi-Hazards Demonstration Project unveiled a hypothetical California scenario — called ARkStorm — that describes a storm that could produce up to 10 feet of rain, cause extensive flooding and result in more than \$300 billion in damage.

The ARkStorm storm is patterned after the 1861 – 62 historical events but uses modern modeling methods and data from large storms in 1969 and 1986.

"We think this event happens once every 100 or 200 years or so, which puts it in the same category as our big San Andreas earthquakes," said Lucy Jones, chief scientist of the USGS MHDP. "The ARk-

Storm is essentially two historic storms (January 1969 and February 1986) put back to back in a scientifically plausible way."

Jones noted that the largest damages would come from flooding — the models estimate that almost one-fourth of the houses in California would experience some flood damage from this storm.

"The time to begin taking action is now, before a devastating natural hazard event occurs," said USGS Director Marcia McNutt.

"This scenario demonstrates firsthand how science can be the foundation to help build safer communities," she said.

"The ARkStorm scenario is a scientifically vetted tool that emergency responders, elected officials and the general public can use to plan for a major catastrophic event to help prevent a hazard from becoming a disaster."

Whittier Narrows Nature Center Associates

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EAGLE PROJECT, from page 1 and fundraising.

The Eagle project, said Chen, is "an opportunity to give back to my community."

Chen, a high school junior who also bikes along the San Gabriel River, said he appreciates the opportunities at the Natural Area to be near nature. "I enjoy being here."

A few feet away from where Chen was leading his team in helping to improve the visitor experience, Life Scout Chris Leblanc and his team were working to improve the experience for the nature center's resident Red-tailed hawk.

Leblanc, of Whittier's Troop 546, was leading fellow scouts

and family in building a "bird weathering enclosure," essentially a really large birdcage built around 12-foot poles with a perch over a gravel floor. The enclosure is mandated by state and federal regulation, Leblanc said, and when complete will allow the hawk more time outside.

The project moved quickly from initial discussions with county staff in February to construction in March, said Leblanc, a high school sophomore.

"It'll improve the quality of life for the hawk," Leblanc said, and it could enhance the educational opportunities at the nature center.

Interim natural areas boss has Parks and Rec in the blood

The recent retirement of respected and long-serving natural areas administrator Mickey Long left some big shoes to fill, with the county launching its search for his permanent replacement earlier this year. But in the meantime, that role has been filled by a veteran park superintendent who, you could say, has Parks and Recreation in the blood.

Since December of last year, Kim Bosell, superintendent of Deane Dana Friendship Community Regional Park, has been the county's acting natural areas administrator, providing supervision for 12 wildlife sanctuaries and seven nature centers stretching from San Pedro to the Antelope Valley.

It's a lot more territory to cover, Bosell said, but while each park and nature center has its own special attributes,

overall it's the same type of work.

Bosell said she has been with the county Department of Parks and Recreation for 13 years. She has also worked at Arcadia's Wilderness Park and Monrovia Canyon Park.

The highlights of her career, she said, include working with the California Department of Fish and Game on a bear research project for three years while employed in the foothill

cities. At the county, she said, a highlight has been restoration work at Friendship Park, helping to bring back coastal sage scrub habitat and the endangered Palos Verdes blue butterfly.

Bosell, who hails from Indiana and whose grandfather was a park superintendent, said the county natural areas system is "a huge asset because so many people don't get out and make that connection to nature anymore."

Habitat restoration, endangered wildlife, outdoor recreation in urban areas, and a family tradition of park management — Bosell clearly brings an important perspective and a wealth of experience to her responsibilities helping to lead an agency that serves a community of so many people in so many important ways.

Whittier Narrows Natural Area and Nature Center

1000 N. Durfee Ave.
South El Monte 91733
Phone: (626) 575-5523

Natural area open seven days a week. (Nature center closed on Mondays.)

Admission is free.

Join the fun! Join the Whittier Narrows Nature Center Associates!

Membership includes our monthly newsletter and a 10-percent discount in our gift shop

The Whittier Narrows Nature Center Associates is a volunteer 501(c)3 nonprofit organization actively looking for new members. WNNCA is a chapter of the Nature Center Associates, a nonprofit support organization of the natural area park system of Los Angeles County.

We were founded to help enrich educational and scientific knowledge in the community. Our primary mission is to help foster an appreciation of the natural world in children and adults and to help preserve the Whittier Narrows Natural Area and the county's other natural areas for future generations.

Our activities include leading school group tours, answering visitors' questions, arranging and leading classes, planting and maintaining plants around the nature center, helping in the nature center museum and in the gift shop, performing light office work and answering phones, and much more!

Membership application form

Name _____

Street _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Annual membership levels (circle one)

\$30 - Individual \$15 - Senior (over 62)

\$45 - Family \$15 - Student

\$75 - Friend Associate

\$100 - Patron Associate

\$250 - Supporting Associate

\$1,000 - Golden Oak Associate

Send with check, payable to WNNCA, to:

WNNCA
1000 N. Durfee Ave.
South El Monte, CA 91733



Photo by Terry Young

Dr. Jack Bath discusses 19th-century irrigation works in the natural area following his presentation on area history in the nature center library Jan. 8.

Inside this issue . . .

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The Whittier Narrows Natural Area and Nature Center are located within the unincorporated area of Los Angeles County in the Supervisorial District of Gloria Molina. The natural area and nature center are operated by the County of Los Angeles, Department of Parks and Recreation, in partnership with the Whittier Narrows Nature Center Associates.



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1000 N. Durfee Ave.
South El Monte, CA 91733
Phone (626) 575-5523 • Fax (626) 443-5359