



Foundation Flyer

Our Mission: To fund education, research, and preservation of the Santa Rosa Plateau Ecological Reserve for the purpose of raising awareness of the unique qualities of the Plateau.

www.srpf.org

SANTA ROSA PLATEAU FOUNDATION

FALL 2008

LOOK INSIDE TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THIS YEAR'S FAMILY WILDLIFE DAY AT THE PLATEAU.

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Here come the kids!

Third Grade Outreach Program Resumes by Rob Hicks

Eight and nine year olds bring their own set of experiences and interests to the Plateau on field trips. No matter what the previous experience, or lack thereof, regarding the outdoors, children benefit from an introduction to the Plateau before they visit. Besides relieving anxieties about wild animals such as snakes and cougars, lessons about the Plateau prior to the visit build excitement and reduce precious time spent on rules and reassurances during their visit. The 'Animal Letters' sent

to classrooms before the school's visit are also intended to introduce students to the natural history concepts that are required in California's third grade curriculum. It is hoped that the exposure to such concepts as habitat, food webs, and photosynthesis



beforehand will better allow the field experiences of these subjects to

resonate with the students.

The outreach program was designed with the same goals in mind. By introducing students to the Plateau and these mandated concepts in a classroom setting, the following trip to the Plateau would reinforce these biological concepts with hands-on experiences on the trail. On Monday, October 2, the first outreach program of the school year was presented to Murrieta Elementary School. Local newspaper columnist John Hunneman was

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Third Grade E-Newsletter Inauguration by Derick Hansen

The inaugural issue of the Santa Rosa Plateau Foundation's educator-focused e-newsletter is making its debut in October. Timed to coincide with the start of the 2008/09 Third Grade Educational Program season, the e-newsletter is being distributed to every 3rd grade teacher in all seven participating school districts. Included in this first issue are several lesson plans designed by 3rd grade teachers from the Murrieta Valley Unified School District. Also included are a few "teacher-tips" and an article by Guy Romero, MVUSD's Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services. Guy has been a long time supporter of the

Educational Program at the Plateau and we are pleased to have him participating in this endeavor. The e-newsletter also includes a "Kid's Page" that teachers can print and use as a teaching tool with their students. To receive a copy of the newsletter yourself via email, send your request to Derick Hansen at dhansen_srpf@msn.com.



Family Wildlife Day by Nancy Backstrand



Some Visitors Enjoying the Wild Wonders Show!

Although thousands of kids tour the Santa Rosa Plateau Ecological Reserve every year, few see more than an occasional bird or lizard, and there is little chance to see these up close. On Saturday October 25th, the Santa Rosa Plateau Foundation and Riverside County Parks District provided an opportunity to see a few of the animals that make their home on the Plateau.

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Possoms, tarantulas and toads, Oh My! By Nancy Backstrand



Continued from Front Page

Since our reserve animals cannot be disturbed, we worked hard to find rescue animals that could make personal appearances.

Our featured group was Wild Wonders from Carlsbad. They occupied center stage for about an hour. The stars of their show were a gray fox and a pair of possums, with a supporting cast of snakes, a tortoise and a turtle. Some children were allowed a few minutes on stage with the animals. Our own Rob Hicks showed off a few area rescues, including tarantulas, toads, chorus frogs, our own rosy boa and California King Snake.

Some animals just could not show up for the day, so we had the next best thing. A few mounted specimens were on loan from the Idyllwild visitor center and the San Diego Natural History Museum. Diane Hoffman from Wind Canyon Rescue was there

to explain the wildlife rescue program and showed her wonderful pictures.

Part of the admission fee for this event is going to support the third grade program at the Plateau.

Funding for this event was made possible by a generous grant from Joanne and Ron New.

We would like to thank Jay Fennell and his guitar for entertaining us with animal songs, Phyllis Duarte and Jackie Brown for their storytelling skills, Claire Johnson and friends for their games and face painting skills, as well as all the wonderful volunteers who made this such a great day. Thank you to Juice It Up for coming in and having smoothies available for our visitors as well.

So although the first Family Wildlife Day has come and gone, we are already planning for the next one. We learned a lot from our first outing and are looking forward to bringing this special day to you and your family and friends in the years to come.

Keep checking with us and plan on bringing your kids to the 2nd Annual Family Wildlife Day in November 2009.



Park Interpreter Rob Hicks Entertains some visitors at the 1st Annual Family Wildlife Day at the Plateau.

**Live critters,
children's activities,
games, music and
stories.**

COWBOY JUBILATION! By Ginger Greaves

On July 25 and 26, the 2nd Annual Santa Rosa Plateau Cowboy Jubilee was held to benefit the third grade children's education program at the Santa Rosa Plateau Ecological Reserve in Murrieta. With the tremendous support of over 100 volunteers, sponsors, vendors and supporters, the event raised approximately \$30,000 for the children's program.

The business community sponsors are unmatched in their continuous emphasis of helping non-profits augment critical and important community services and programs. Verizon, Pechanga Indian Reservation and West Dallas Hats, Boots & Jeans of Temecula stepped forward as presenting sponsors. The Jubilee could not have been produced without their generous support and we thank them sincerely.

Supervisors Bob Buster and Jeff Stone and the City of Murrieta and its fantastic staff played a crucial role in the success of the Jubilee. We invite you to patronize Plateau Vineyards, Comfort Inn Murrieta, Excel Sales & Rentals, Sansevieri Insurance Services, Stone Brewing Co., Merrill Lynch, Rosendin Electric, Commerce Bank of Temecula Valley, Temecula Valley Bank, Peck Creative, A Better Tomorrow, A Cut Above, Soboba Casino and Norco Ranch. These local businesses have community support in their hearts and their contributions set the Jubilee up for success.

Special thank you also to Dr. Frank Ellis, Norma Seymour, Ph.D. Lee Young, Mike and Betty Bouris, the Eisen Family Foundation, Cois Byrd, Lynn Mattocks and the Riverside County Trails Commission, Cliff, Gidget & Kyle Thompson, Anheuser-Bush, Jim and Tina Peratt (owners of Liberty Oaks Ranch) and Bryan Houser and Lisa Hill (former owners of Cottonwood Ranch) and the Bear Creek Fire Station Captain and staff.

It is also important to note and to thank the local media, newspapers, magazines, radio and TV Station KZSW who all stepped forward to make sure we had good coverage in an economy where advertising dollars for non-profits are virtually non-existent.

And a heartfelt THANK YOU to all the volunteers, Reserve staff, committee members, and last but not least.... to all the spouses who supported their partners' participation with this fun, unique event...we send you a hearty YOU'RE THE BEST!

**SAVE THE DATE FOR
JUBILEE # 3 – July 24 & 25,
2009.**

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Third Grade Outreach Program Resumes

present to enjoy, and document for the community, the first of this year's presentations.

With last year's pilot program a grand success, volunteer docents will increase the number of participating schools visited to twenty-five. Since the majority of schools participating in the outreach program are underprivileged, many students will be experiencing hiking for the very first time.

These outdoor experiences go much further than helping children understand the importance and fun of the natural world. Since recent research suggests that experiences in nature offer therapy for depression, obesity and attention-deficit disorder, these programs not only help to create an appreciation for the Plateau, they are improving individuals and society.

Third Grade Program - Participating Schools Districts

**Murrieta Valley Unified
Hemet Unified
San Jacinto Unified
Temecula Valley Unified
Lake Elsinore
Romoland Elementary
Menifee Union**

**Santa Rosa Plateau
Foundation
COWBOY
JUBILEE**

Plateau Historical Scanning Project In Full Swing
by Steve Lusky

The Docents have initiated a project to scan the 21 binders about the natural and human history of the Santa Rosa Plateau and the surrounding community, compiled by Myra Gonsalves and Nancy Backstrand. We will save the information on DVDs as an archive.

There are nearly 3000 pages of information in these binders. They are unique copies that we intend to:

- Preserve onto DVD's
- Work with Myra and Nancy to update this information
- Make selected information available for display on the Visitor Center's new wide-screen TV and on the SRPF web site.

Initially a flat bed scanner was used, but progress was very tedious and error prone to capture even a single page. Diana Nilsen urged us to obtain a scanner with more automation.

With the generous assistance of Jackie Clay, we purchased a new Canon MX850 "all-in-one" scanner/fax/copier/ printer. Test runs show a reliable means of scanning information. We are now ready to commence with scanning each binder. Procedures are still being refined, so those who assist in the next few weeks can help us improve our methods. Volunteers are needed.

Please contact Steve Lusky at slusky@gmail.com or 951-719-6271. No computer experience is necessary. This is an opportunity to not only assist the Santa Rosa Plateau, but to gain experience with scanning and organizing information on a computer. If you know of others who might be interested in volunteering, please let them know.

This is a fabulous opportunity for people of any age to do a valuable community service, and have an enjoyable learning experience as well.

Docent Training Program Begins

On October 4th, the Reserve began hosting its annual docent-training program. The training sessions provided in the program are designed to prepare people in becoming volunteers on the Reserve that specialize in visitor contact. Whether presenting school programs, staffing the Visitor Center, or conducting trail patrol, volunteer docents share the uniqueness of the Plateau while promoting the protection of the resources that make it special.

This year's program will host guest speakers specializing in subjects as diverse as geology and ethnobotany. They are designed for new and returning docents alike. Increasing our knowledge allows us to grow in our ability to share the Plateau with visitors.

Becoming more acquainted with the history and inhabitants of the Plateau also reminds us of the privilege we all share in being a part of the important mission of promoting and protecting this special place.

All sessions will take place on the first two Saturdays of each month through the month of February at both the Visitor Center and the City of Murrieta's Senior Center. Hosting some of the training sessions in Murrieta will provide us with a larger venue to share more of these amazing subjects and presentations for the neighboring communities.

To request a schedule, please e-mail programs@santarosaplateau.org.

If you cannot attend the remaining programs for this year's training program, mark your calendars for the 2009 training season.

Membership is now open to all caring people. Please visit our website for details and benefits.

I eagerly support the Santa Rosa Plateau Foundation and its Vision. Enclosed is my/our check or money order (made payable to Santa Rosa Plateau Foundation) for my annual membership. You can also become a member through our website: www.srpf.org.

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|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------------|
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Newsletter available via email or at SRPF.org. I would like to receive my Newsletter via Email.

Send Donations to:

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PO Box 941
Murrieta, CA 92564-0941

Phone: (951) 461-7667

Save a tree. Educate a child. Respect Nature.

DATES TO REMEMBER:

- Garden Tour – April 25, 2009
- Cowboy Jubilee 2009 – July 24-25
- National Day of the Cowboy – July 25
- Art Show – July 2009
- Special Event Coming September 2009
- The third Thursday of each month – Board of Directors meeting at the Visitor Center – 6:30 p.m. – except December

Board of Directors

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To contact your Board of Directors, please go to www.srpf.org and click on the "contact us" link or call (951) 461-7667.

THE BLUEBIRD OF HAPPINESS

The last one-half mile of road is always the longest when you begin litter pick-up at the entrance to La Cresta and finish at the Hidden Valley Trailhead. I usually count the utility poles to mark my progress, which diverts me from focusing on my tired feet and back. On a warm, sunny day this last April, something special provided an unexpected reward for my efforts. A pair of Western bluebirds was busily working around a nesting box near the old cattle chute. They shuttled back and forth from box to chute flashing bright blue in the sun. I stood and watched them, silently thanking Dean Newell for the lovely moment.

Dean is the Santa Rosa Plateau's birdhouse builder, locator, and tender. He has constructed approximately 40 bird houses using left over fence boards from the Reserve. With the help of Ranger Kevin Smith, he has mounted them on steel poles and hung them from tree branches along many trails that are visible to observant hikers. On the Granite Loop the nesting boxes located in the oaks with bench seating beneath them allows third grade docents to share a teaching moment with the students as part of the outdoor educational program. Dean understands the importance of visual aids having taught school for thirty-five years.

He was raised in the rural Des Moines area and enjoyed lots of time in the outdoors. His life-long interest in birds was sparked by a high school biology teacher who gave his class the assignment of identifying fifty

birds. Using a pair of opera glasses that had been given to the family by a World War I soldier, Dean prowled a ten-acre parcel owned by the family and successfully identified twenty-five different species, an impressive achievement for any novice birder with very basic equipment.

After serving in the Navy and seeing action during WW II in the Battle of Okinawa aboard the USS Indianapolis, Dean married and, with his wife Helen, relocated to Riverside County in 1947. A career in teaching began a year later and they raised four children, three boys and a girl, in and around the Riverside area. A favorite memory was taking the family on a cross-country trip in their 1955 Chevy station wagon staying with friends/ relatives part of the time and tent camping for the remainder.

Upon retirement Dean and Helen moved to The Colony in Murrieta where he organized and led a monthly birding group. In the enclave's early days there was more natural growth to provide cover for birds, which provided ample opportunity for the birders. Naturally, the Newell's found the Reserve and began exploring it. Rob Hicks, Reserve Interpreter, persuaded Dean to become a docent and he has been contributing to others enjoyment of the Reserve since 1995.

An added enjoyment for all Reserve hikers is the observation of Dean's bird boxes, especially in bird breeding and fledging season (approx. February through May). Different sized birds are attracted

by Virginia Hyde

to the boxes by smaller or larger diameter entry holes. Most prevalent are boxes that attract the Western bluebirds and other small birds such as the white-breasted nuthatches, house wrens, swallows and flycatchers. Also, kestrels, screech owls and barn owls use the larger boxes. Dean can tell what type of bird is using the box by the nesting materials left after breeding season.

Dean offers an example of how a docent can use their unique talents and knowledge to enhance everyone's enjoyment of the Santa Rosa Plateau Ecological Reserve. His enthusiasm for the Reserve and birds has weathered some heavy storms: Helen's passing, his own health problems and the fact that he will be 87 in November. Thank you, Dean! Your work and dedication has given us all a chance to experience "the bluebird of happiness."



**SANTA ROSA PLATEAU FOUNDATION
PO BOX 941
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