

Friends of Tecolote Canyon



Our New Senior Park Ranger

~ **Steven Smith** by Marla Gilmore



Do you remember a few years ago when we welcomed a new Park Ranger to the Tri-Canyon Parks team? Now, just a few years later, we would like to congratulate that ranger on becoming our new Senior Park Ranger! Steven Smith was promoted to the Senior Ranger position after our previous Senior Ranger, Matt Sanford, left the City to accept a promotion with the County of San Diego. We appreciate Matt's hard work and all that he did to improve Tecolote and Tri-Canyon Parks for the community. Matt got us moving in a positive direction and Steven would like to continue with that positivity.

Steven grew up in Northern California between Crescent City and Eureka. He came to San Diego after a stint in the Peace Corps and traveling to many countries around the world. A different job landed him in San Diego, but becoming a Park Ranger, and now a Senior Park Ranger

has kept him here. He always wanted to be a Park Ranger and moving up to Senior Park Ranger was a natural progression for him. Steven envisions an improved trail system, thriving native flora and fauna and a happy place for the community to be involved in and be proud of. Because of stewardship and community involvement, Tri-Canyon Parks has become a peaceful refuge amongst the Urban Sprawl.

Due to Ranger Janice's recent retirement and Steven's promotion, we have two vacant ranger positions. Please be patient while we transition into a brand new team of Park Rangers. There is much work to be done and we hope to fill those spots soon. We'll keep you updated on new staff and upcoming projects in our canyons. Change is in the air here in Tri-Canyon Parks and we wish Senior Park Ranger Steven Smith well as he leads us into the future.

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Friends of Tecolote Canyon is a non-profit community organization committed to sponsoring nature education and restoration activities in Tecolote Canyon Natural Park. Our education program, supported by SDGE's "Environmental Champions Initiative", is dedicated to bringing children into Tecolote Canyon and fostering connection through enjoyable, memorable, and meaningful experiences in our unique and precious local

Of All the paths you take in life, make sure a few of them are dirt ~ John Muir



Ranger Janice ~ Farewell by Marla Gilmore

Park Ranger Janice was born in northwest England. As a young adult, she moved to Southampton for a job opportunity as a black jack dealer on a cruise ship. The cruise ship went from San Pedro, Los Angeles to Mexico. This job not only brought Janice to the United States but also helped her meet her husband Peter, who was a dock worker in the area. Eventually, Janice moved to San Diego and began working for the City in a customer service position. When the Park Ranger position became available she was encouraged by her supervisor to apply for the job. Janice was hired at Tri -Canyon Parks in the Open Space Parks Division and has remained there for her entire career.

Now that Janice's career as a Ranger is coming to an end, she has reflected on her years of service and what they have meant to her. She is most proud of her work with volunteers, being able to recruit and retain them, and making lifelong friendships with people. Her words of wisdom for future Park Rangers would be to work well with volunteers. We could not do what we do if it weren't for our wonderful, generous volunteers!

Her biggest accomplishments are partnering with the Hmong Church group in Linda Vista, and Mesa College. Due to these partnerships, Park Ranger Janice was able to clean up areas of Linda Vista and get the community involved in their neighborhood canyons. Ranger Janice led the Mesa College Canyon Cleanup for 8 years, putting hundreds of people to work and removing tons of trash and invasive plants from the canyon.

Speaking of invasive plants, Ranger Janice has a few on

her least favorites list. Number one being the palm tree which comes up by the dozens in the creek beds. Castor bean has been a nemesis of Ranger Janice's as each plant can have thousands of toxic seeds and lay dormant for years. Last, but not least is the tumble weed, some get as big as a Volkswagen bug! These plants are hard to remove because of their size and they're prickliness, not to mention they provide a great place for rattlesnakes to hide. A favorite plant of Janice's would have to be the white sage, it has a lovely aroma and is revered by the Kumeyaay People as a spiritual plant.

During retirement Janice will take up lawn bowling, play more badminton and golf, and remodel her bathroom. When asked what she will miss most about the job Janice says she won't miss picking up trash and cleaning up homeless camps but she will definitely miss all of the volunteers.

We will all miss Ranger Janice. Thank you for your service



We have a website!

Friendsoftecolotecanyon.org is a new resource that you can visit for newsletter archives, Tecolote Canyon background, images, and contacts. Please send questions, comments, user issues, and feedback to nikiahrens@gmail.com.

Birds of Tecolote ~ by Niki Ahrens

Cedar waxwing

The Cedar waxwing is a distinct winter visitor that particularly enjoys the Toyon (aka California Christmasberry) in Tecolote Canyon and swallows its berries whole. It's a medium-sized, sleek bird with a crest that falls toward the back of its head. It can be distinguished by its crested shape, shiny color patterns, and shrill whistle. Its head and upper back are light brown, wings and tail fade to gray, belly is pale yellow and its tail has a bright yellow stripe at the tip. Its wings and black-masked face are outlined in white, and it has somewhat hard to see red waxy tips on its wing feathers.



Bombycilla cedrorum

These social birds travel in flocks and can gather fall and winter berries without landing, rather by hovering near. They mostly maintain a fruit-only diet, particularly in winter, which is a trait that only a few North American birds share. In the times I've been treated to seeing these winter migrants in the canyon, they are savvy gatherers, here one moment and gone the next.

Scaly-breasted munia



This introduced bird is also known as a Spotted munia, and in the pet trade as a Nutmeg mannikin or Spice finch. Native to tropical Asia, these highly social birds are now widespread in California, resulting from pet trade escapes. Flocks of them frequent Tecolote Canyon and have frequently been seen

roosting in Scrub oaks. The adult has a striking feather pattern on its belly and chest that resembles scales. Its head and back are nutmeg brown and its underside and tail is yellow. Their conical beaks are suited for crushing grains.

Munias are small, non-aggressive, communal birds that stay with their flock and perch in close quarters. Their clutch tends to have 4-6 eggs at once, and they live for about 6-8 years. They eat grass and other seeds like millet, berries, and small insects, and prefer riparian areas near water. Their call is a high pitch or wispy "chee". Scaly-breasted munias are not migratory, though they are more seldomly seen in the winter and early spring than other months. When you do see them, they will likely be in a flock and preening themselves. Their nests can be distinguished by their dome-shapes.

The Scaly-breasted munia has a conservation status of Least Concern due to its wide range and population. As a result of its southern California population in the thousands, it's been included in the American Birding Association list of established birds since 2013.



Lonchura punctulata

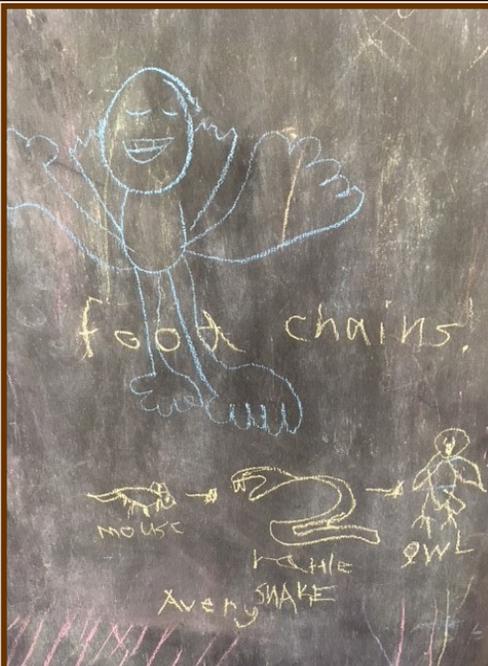


Have you visited our library? It's located just off the hallway behind the welcome desk. We have a large selection of books about all-things-nature, nature activities, puppets and manipulatives. Feel free to come in, relax, and spend time on your own or with your family.

May books and nature
be their early joy!

William Wordsworth

*Check out the cool artwork that someone did on the children's library chalkboard!
It's great to see parents getting creative with their children.
We love it when we discover a new masterpiece in the children's library!*





EVENTS IN THE PARK

Tecolote Nature Center

5180 Tecolote Road San Diego, CA 92110

858-581-9959

Monday – Closed, Tuesday –Saturday 9:00-4:00, Sunday 9:00-2:00

Saturday, December 2

9:30 am Family Nature Walk – Decem-birds and Decem-berries!

The journey will begin on the main trail, then follow the less beaten path of Battle Trail, looping to the main trail back. During this walk, we'll listen and look for birds that are here year-round and ones that visit for the season. We'll also look for Decem-berries while focusing on child-led wonder.

Meet at the Tecolote Nature Center * for more details check out [www.meetup.com/Friends of Tecolote Canyon Natural Park and Nature Center](http://www.meetup.com/Friends-of-Tecolote-Canyon-Natural-Park-and-Nature-Center)

Saturday, Dec 16th & Jan 20th

Work with a Park Ranger to clean up your canyon. Come and get some exercise taking your frustrations out on invasive and non native plants, plant natives, trash, debris, and other unsightly canyon enemies! Make new friends and satisfy community service credits for school. When the day is done you will feel good knowing you are a canyon soldier. The few, the proud, the Weed Warriors!

Wednesday, December 20 & Jan 17th

1:30 – 3:00 Art & Activities for Kids- Free

Make and take a variety of winter inspired nature crafts. Meet a critter, learn a little and create a lot!

Saturday, December 23 & Jan 27th

8:00 Audubon Society Birding Walk

All skill levels welcome – Meet at the Tecolote Nature Center

The nature center will be closing at 2:00 on Saturday, December 2.

Updated activities are posted at:

<http://www.meetup.com/Friends-of-Tecolote-Canyon-Natural-Park-and-Nature-Center/>

Like us on

www.facebook.com/friendsoftecolotecanyon

Tecolote Nature Center ~ 5180 Tecolote Road San Diego, CA 92110

Hours of operation: Tues.-Saturday; 9-4:00, Sunday: 9-2:00, Closed Monday

For information call 858-581-9959



Like us on Facebook – Friends of Tecolote Canyon

Activities are free of charge.

**Donations to the “Friends of Tecolote Canyon
are always appreciated!**



*Friends of Tecolote Canyon and the ESCAPE team gratefully
acknowledge a generous grant from **SDGE** supporting
another year of our Escape program.*



*We want to thank **Scott Chambers and Filmetrics** for
their donation, providing 5 years of wifi to the nature center*

Volunteer Opportunities ~ Something for Everyone!

Docents * Interpretive Guides * Art and Crafts

Tecolote Canyon Advisory Committee * Native Plant Garden

Weed Warriors * Park Patrol * Jr Volunteers (community service)

Environmental Stewards Canyon Program (ESCAPE)

If you are interested, come in and speak with any staff member.

SD City Council Community Project and Services

