

Friends of Tecolote Canyon



A Park ~ Not a Four Lane Highway

I have lived on the rim of Tecolote Canyon since 1958. My sons played in the canyon. We walked the canyon, caught lizards, snakes and polliwogs. Caterpillars were plucked gently from the “Licorice Bushes,” to be tended carefully and later we marveled at the small miracle of the histogenesis and emergence of the Anise Swallowtail butterflies from their chrysalid confinement. The

Excerpts from Eloise—Tecolote History

recipients of our attentions were released back into the canyon unharmed. Later my grandsons joined me in the explorations.



Years ago I took a class about native plants at the San Diego Museum of Natural History from Helen Witham and learned a great deal more about what the space my house overlooked held and what dwelled in it. We were often serenaded by the pack of coyotes who denned in a finger canyon across from our house as their descendants do today. Raccoons sometimes had beach parties poolside and left great muddy footprints as they washed the grubs they found in my unkempt garden. Hummingbirds still have energetic dogfights at the feeder and other birds ate insects in my untamed and never sprayed garden. One day Helen Witham called and told me there was a campaign underway to preserve Tecolote Canyon as a natural park.

Our conversation ended with her asking

“Wouldn’t you like to get involved?” That was January 1971.

So an arduous journey began. There was a four lane highway and some tentative maps for houses and condos on the books for Tecolote Canyon. With my husband and children cheering me on, with an army of fellow activists and broad community support, we marched on the San Diego City Hall. (Continued on page 2)

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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

“Here is your country. Cherish these natural wonders, cherish the natural resources, cherish the history and romance as a sacred heritage, for your children and your children's children.” ~ Theodore Roosevelt

“We didn’t realize at the time just how important our goal was or that Tecolote Canyon lies within an ecological hotspot that is recognized world wide.”

We made the news with some spritely demonstrations, gave canyon side luncheons for elected officials, collected lengthy petitions, became thoroughly familiar with the land use laws and evolved into rather effective lobbyists, who didn’t throw money but wouldn’t go away.

We didn’t realize at the time just how important our goal was or that Tecolote Canyon lies within an ecological hotspot that is recognized world wide. There are more endangered and threatened species in San Diego County than any other county in the continental United States. Our tireless efforts were rewarded April 1, 1978 with the ceremony for dedication of Tecolote Canyon Natural Park. But we weren’t done yet. Mayor Pete Wilson appointed me chair of the Tecolote Canyon Citizens Advisory Committee (TCCAC). Our task was to develop a Master Plan for the park and monitor it’s implementation.



Tecolote Nature Center under construction



Opening Day Tecolote Nature Center 1994

We had a budget; we had staff; we were set. Then the infamous Proposition 13 passed and our funds and staff vanished. The options were; to give up and fade away, or take charge, write the Master Plan ourselves, and put it through the departmental approval process. We decided on the latter option. We were real greenhorns and had no idea what we were getting into. We floundered for a while but eventually focused, plunged into research, found an illustrator, made maps, and later presented the City of San Diego with a completed Master Plan for Tecolote Canyon Natural Park, ready to print and for departmental review.

few changes to our original text. While I was chair of TCCAC, the committee oversaw the initiation of the implementation of the plan. Sturdy gates were constructed to prevent unwanted access for vehicles and motorcycles; dump sites were cleaned up, and signs installed at public entrances. Finally the Tecolote Nature Center was constructed and opened with a staff of one City Park Senior Ranger in 1994.

The picture to the right is of Eloise Battle and Sherlie Miller on opening day of the nature center. Sherlie came along side Eloise in the fight to preserve the canyon. It was a battle that would last more than 10 years. They became known as the “Tecolote Twins.” Today, more than 40 years later, they are still actively overseeing “Friends of Tecolote Canyon,” as well as encouraging and mentoring younger generations to follow in their footsteps.



Castor Bean

Invasive Plant

By Trent Robertson

We've had a very atypical rain pattern in San Diego this summer. We had an inch and a half of rain in July which is usually one of our driest months. That was followed by an inch and a quarter of rain in September. This has resulted in some very green vegetation for this time of year. Unfortunately, it has been a boon for some very noxious weeds, particularly Castor Bean or *Ricinus communis*. This plant is native to the southeastern Mediterranean, Near East and India. It is a commercially significant source of castor oil. The seeds are the source of the poison ricin.



It was introduced to California and has spread voraciously in many of our riparian plant communities. It is an especially troublesome weed because the seeds remain viable for an extended period of time. This summer's weather pattern appears to have been the perfect storm for castor bean—good solid rains at wide intervals

when the days are at their longest. As a result, the dormant seed banks, underlying disturbed areas, have sprouted castor bean plants by the thousands. Castor bean plants can grow to the size of a small tree but they can bear fruit and seed themselves when they are only a foot or two high. We are in danger of having a massive recharging of the castor bean seed bank in our canyons. It is important to harvest as many seed heads as possible and uproot these seedlings or we are going to have a horrendous job



If you are willing to help us eradicate this noxious and poisonous plant from our environment please contact Ranger Janice LaVallee at 858-581-9961 or sign up for one of the Weed Warrior events, held on the 3rd Saturday of each month, through the Friends of Tecolote Canyon Meetup.



Ranger Steven and Volunteer Matt, working on the shade structure for the garden nursery and work area. This structure will be used by students as well as volunteers who will be working on the native garden.

This project is made possible thanks to funding from the **Community Service Association** and the **Master Gardeners Association!**



Winter Visitor ~ The White-Crowned Sparrow

By Linda Stafford

The white-crowned sparrows are easily identifiable birds due to the brilliant white and black stripes covering their heads. In contrast to the bold crown, they have a pale grey face and breast, brown and grey streaks on their back, a long tail, and 2 distinct white wing bars. Averaging 6 inches in length, with a 9 inch wingspan, they are considered one of the larger sparrows.



Visiting during their non-breeding season, they arrive in late September. After enjoying our relatively warm winter, they begin their migration north in March with a few stragglers staying as late as early May.

White-crowned sparrows can be seen foraging in fields and along trails, always close to the protection of shrub borders. Like our native brown towhee, they forage for food by scratching at leaf litter using a two-footed backward hop. Their stocky beak is well designed for their primary diet of seeds, however, they also enjoy fruit and insects. On the trail, look for them in the coastal sage scrub, woodland edges, and disturbed weedy areas. If you want to attract them to your yard, provide offerings of hulled or black-oiled sunflower seeds, cracked corn, and millet on a platform feeder. They will also forage any fallen seeds off the ground. Of course, you can expect many of our year-round residents to enjoy the buffet as well!



If you are interested in how to attract birds to your backyard and which birds to expect during each season, visit Cornell University's feeder watch website at: <http://feederwatch.org>



The Future of Tecolote Natural Park

Adding New Trails and Entrances

Tecolote Canyon Natural Resource Management and Trails Plan Update ~

You may have heard about the ongoing update to the Tecolote Canyon Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP) and wondered what it's all about. The City of San Diego Open Space Division has been working on an update to the NRMP, and park trails plan since 2013. The purpose of the NRMP is to provide guidance for the management, maintenance, utilization and development of the Park while preserving the Park's natural and cultural resources. The NRMP fulfills the City's Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) requirement to develop area-specific management directives for the protection of natural resources at the Park. It's intended not only to make provisions for the protection and preservation of natural and cultural resources, especially sensitive resources, but also to allow safe and accessible use of the Park to meet the needs of the surrounding communities.

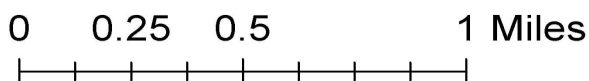
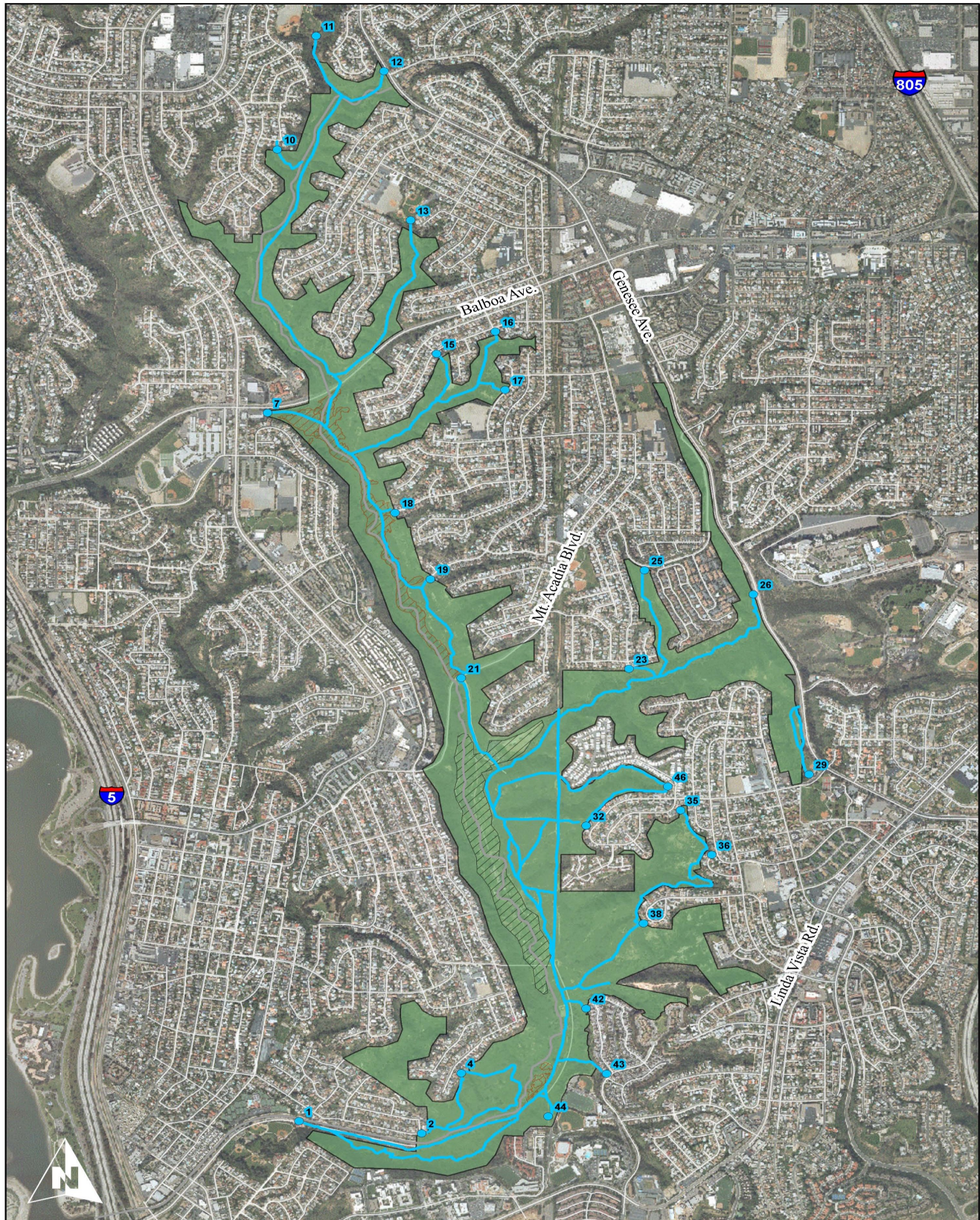
The specific objectives of this NRMP are:

- To update sensitive species and habitat mapping;
- To identify communities of species threatened by common threats and stressors;
- To identify and prioritize threats to sensitive species and habitats;
- To develop management priorities for species, habitats, and/or communities based on MSCP conditions of coverage;
- To establish management directives within an adaptive management framework for MSCP-covered species within the Park.
- To integrate management actions with climate-smart planning principles to prioritize actions based on both existing and potential future threats.

A revised trail plan for Tecolote Canyon has also been prepared as part of the NRMP, and will be implemented following approval by the San Diego City Council. The proposed trail plan updates the regional plans in the Tecolote Canyon Natural Park Master Plan of 1982, and contains 28 park entrances connecting to 15 miles of trail, and also one overlook which will have amenities such as but not limited to interpretive signs and benches. The trails in the park are multi-use to accommodate recreation such as jogging, walking, mountain biking, wildlife viewing, and scenic enjoyment. In addition to the proposed trails within Tecolote Canyon park boundaries, several trails that connect to the park from outside park property will be incorporated into this NRMP update. (See map on following page)

Both documents are nearing completion with a final vote by the San Diego City Council anticipated in 2016. Stay tuned for more updates about the NRMP and revised trail plan, and as always please let me know if you have any questions . ~ **Senior Ranger Matt Sanford**

Tecolote Canyon NRMP Proposal



	Proposed Entrances		Park Boundary		Creek
	Proposed Trails		Public Utility Mitigation		Roads
Total Proposed Park Entrances = 26			Golf Course		
Total Proposed Trail Mileage = 15.19 mi.			Map Created By: Mike Milano City of San Diego, P&R (OS), 2014		

Events in the Park

Feb. 5th: 8:00am Beginning Birders Walk

Mission Bay Hilton to SD River (See meet-up link below)

Feb 6th: 9:00am Nature Walk – Mt. Carol canyon entrance

Join the Tecolote Canyon Interpretive Group (TCIG) on a fun walk in a beautiful part of the canyon

Feb 17th: 1:30-3:00 Art and Activities

Water conservation themed indoor and outdoor activities for kids

Feb 20th & Mar 19th: 9:00 -11:00 Weed Warriors (3rd Saturdays)

Clean up the canyon with Park Ranger Janice. Wear sturdy shoes and long pants.

gloves and tools provided

Feb 20th: *Intermediate Birding Class*

Call 619-297-7380 or deverna@sandiegoriver.org for details

Feb 21st & Mar 20th: 9:00– 12:00 Sunday in the Garden (3rd Sundays)

Volunteer with Park Ranger Steven in our native plant garden.

Get dirty, have fun, help out your community! *gloves and tools provided*

Feb 27th & Mar 26th: 8:00am Audubon Society Birding Walk (4th Saturdays)

People come from all over the world to see and hear the birds in our canyon. No experience?

No problem! Plenty of helpful birders on this walk. Meet by the Tecolote Nature Center.

Mar 16th: 1:30–3:00 Art and Activities

Have fun learning about the Owls of Tecolote, ~ for kids

Updated activities are posted at:

<http://www.meetup.com/Friends-of-Tecolote-Canyon-Natural-Park-and-Nature-Center/>
&
<http://www.meetup.com/The-San-Diego-Beginning-Birders/>
&
www.facebook.com/friendsoftecolotecanyon

For more information call 858-581-9959 ~

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

For information call 858-581-9959

Front Desk (585) 581-9944

Park Rangers (858)581-9961

Senior Park Ranger (858)581-9952

Friends of Tecolote (858)292-5548

Tecolote Advisory Committee (858)581-9959

Center Director (858)581-9959

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



Like us on Facebook – Friends of Tecolote Canyon
Activities are free of charge.

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

There are a variety of volunteer opportunities at Tecolote:

Nature Center Docent

Tecolote Canyon Interpretive Guides (TCIG),

Native Plant Garden

Weed Warriors

Elementary Outreach Assistants

Park Patrol

Art and Craft Events

Tecolote Canyon Advisory Committee (TCCAC).

Environmental Stewards Canyon Program (ESCAPE)



Friends of Tecolote Canyon and the ESCAPE team

gratefully acknowledge a generous grant from SDGE

supporting another year of our Escape program

We are presently seeking additional corporate and

private donations for the 2015/16 school year, to continue our mission to

“Inspire students to connect with nature and respond by becoming stewards of Tecolote Canyon.”

*Thank you to our Partners for their contributions to
the continued improvement of the nature center.*

