



Friends of Tecolote Canyon

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Do You See the Warning?



Rattlesnakes have excellent camouflage. This photo, taken by Tecolote Nature Center Director, Marla, is a great reminder to stay on the trail and keep our pets on a leash.



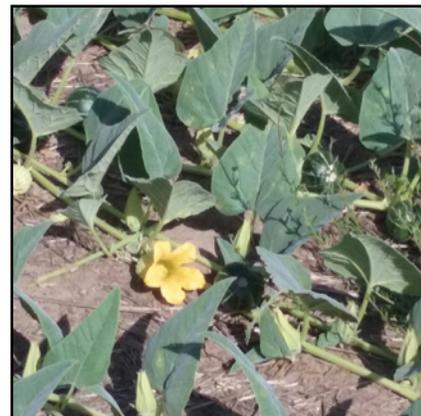
Curious Vine in Tecolote Canyon by Joan Brosnan



What is that vine growing in the restoration area?

It's a native plant, Calabazilla or Stinking Gourd. *Cucurbita foetidissima* produces leaves, blooms and fruits profusely in our late summer heat. In Latin, *Cucurbita* means "gourd" and *foetidissima* means "very evil smelling". The impressive vines may grow up to 15 feet and currently fill a huge area along the service road in Tecolote Canyon basin not far from the nature center.

The grey-green, hairy, triangular leaves have a fetid odor but some have described the fragrance of those golden yellow bell flowers as similar to violets. Walkers can see the 4-inch green striped globes scattered among the calabazilla patch right now, but by October, when the fruit is mature, it ripens to a beautiful golden yellow.



To call the stinking gourd a fruit is a stretch as it only resembles cultivated pumpkins or melons. There isn't any "meat" within the gourd, just seeds and pulp. And the seeds and pulp are extremely bitter.



Reported ethnobotanical uses of the Stinking Gourd vary. Some sources say that the long carrot-like root from the vine was pounded and used as soap; others state that the pulp and seeds from the gourd were mashed and boiled to whiten clothes. Whatever its uses, the Stinking Gourd is a curious and striking native plant.

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Ode to Nature

There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature—the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter.

—Rachel Carson

Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished.

—Lao Tzu

We don't inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children.

—Native American proverb



About Friends of Tecolote Canyon

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 habitat.

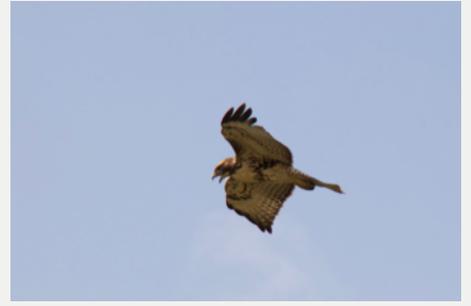
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www.friendsoftecolotecanyon.org

Your donations are always appreciated and make our programs possible.

You can donate to Friends of Tecolote Canyon at Tecolote Nature Center, or at our website:

www.friendsoftecolotecanyon.org/donate

Looking Up and Down Birds, Words, and Crawling Wasps



"Birds have always had the ability to bring me out of a dark space and provide relief in bad times."

"One of the reasons #BlackBirdersWeek is so important, is representation. Seeing yourself in the adults who are blazing trails for future generations. My son loves nature. I look forward to watching that love blossom through the years."

—Jason Ward, "Birds of North America" YouTube Series

Black Birders Week was May 31-June 5.

Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Covered Toes



The Red-haired Velvet Ant, *Dasymutilla auerola*, is a non-aggressive, bright scarlet wasp. A member of Nocturnal Velvet Ants, the wingless female is often active during the day. This fuzzy velvet traveler was spotted crossing concrete on the Tecolote Canyon rim, and is a reminder to also look down at times.

Don't let her unassuming roaming delude you; this isn't an insect to pet. Its vibrant red color is a signal that it should be left alone, as it does sting in defense. Its sting registers on Justin O. Schmidt's *Pain Scale for Stinging Insects* as a level 1.5 on a 0-4 scale. For specifics, Schmidt described this wasp family's sting as "Itch, burn, and more itch. A toothpick dipped in both itch powder and hot sauce is stuck in your thigh," (*Sting of the Wild*, 2016). The males have wings and can fly, but cannot sting.

If you are fortunate to cross paths with this striking wasp, enjoy its fiery crimson and its leisurely pace from a distance.