



President's Message

Hard to believe that spring and summer have come and gone and that fall is upon us! I hope everyone had an enjoyable summer and a chance to hike, ride, bike, or run in our beautiful backyard that we call the Santa Monica Mountains. It's an amazing place and sometimes we don't realize what a privilege it is to have such a vast open space within walking or driving distance. I enjoyed a recent article about a guy who moved his family from California to Texas for the wide-open spaces only to find that meant fenced private ranch land! They moved back to California. I'm grateful every time I go out and see the blue sky and mountains, canyons, and beaches that are open to everyone.

It's been a busy 6 months for the Trails Council and our crews. The mountains welcomed the drenching rains of winter and that has produced lots of growth on the trails. Our normal July/August hiatus from trail work was filled with special projects and routine maintenance. As you enjoy our trail system, consider giving back and joining one or more workdays with our experienced crew leaders. I will guarantee that you won't look at a trail the same again and there's such satisfaction to see an overgrown trail made passable again. You'll look back at the work and say, "Wow, I did that!". Along with the work, we have lots of fun out there with jokes, banter, and yes, the occasional song and "air rake". Check out our [Trail Maintenance Schedule](#) on the website. Is one of your favorite trails on the schedule? Join us!

We had an amazing Trail Days event this spring, with over 200 people working on the trails over the weekend. It's hard to believe this was our 40th year and the largest turnout ever. Please save the date of April 19 – 21 for Trail Days 2024. Our Backbone Trek was a success! We had a full roster of hikers and everyone enjoyed being able to hike the entire trail.

We're beginning to go electric! A big shout out and thank-you to Debi Dold for her generous donation that helped us obtain new battery-operated power tools. We've started the acquisition already with new hedgers and trimmers. Also a thank you to The Ranch Malibu for their continued support both financially and the volunteer time of the landscaping staff.

We welcomed Roger Young to the board in August. Roger is also an SMMTC Crew Leader. He focuses on trail running events in the Santa Monica Mountains as a participant, pacer and aid station volunteer. Roger coordinates SMMTC trail maintenance events with race directors and trail running groups. He has been a member of the local running community since his move to the Conejo Valley in 2011. When he's not hiking or running, he works as a financial and HR consultant. Welcome Roger! We have openings on the Trails Council Board of Directors. Check our website for details.



I'd like to welcome Richard Fink II as our new State Parks District Superintendent. Richard joined the district in August. Nakita Lopez, our roads and trails supervisor from the National Park Service has taken a new position at Cape Hatteras National Seashore. Aaron Tulenko will be the interim supervisor.

Save the date! Please join us on October 26th for our annual dinner meeting. If you sign up for dinner and find you're unable to attend, please send regrets as soon as possible. This helps us keep the cost down.

See you on the trails!

Barb Thomas
Barb Thomas, President

YOU'RE INVITED

Dinner & meeting are free and open to the trails community. RSVP at smmtc.org or 818.222.4531

Calamigos Ranch, 327 Latigo Cyn Rd, located at the intersection of Kanan Rd and Mulholland Hwy.

- 6:00PM | Social Hour-Visit with NPS, State Parks, MRCA, local officials and representatives from other government & trail organizations
- 6:45PM | Dinner
- 7:30PM | Meeting

OCTOBER 26TH 2023 ANNUAL DINNER

Could They “Bee” Any Cuter?

It’s not often that one can be surrounded by thousands of bees and not get a single sting. Well, that’s what happened to me in the Santa Monica mountains. We stopped for a moment while out on a mountain bike ride and immediately noticed all these bees moving around on the ground.

These amazing bees are commonly called “ground bees”. Thank goodness they’re not known for stinging and simply ignored my presence, as I would have been one lumpy rider!

Ground bees, (at least the females) are amazing workers – building turret-like structures in the ground to provide their larvae a home, safe from predators and parasites. With mom’s hard work and a bit of luck, they become the next generation of bees. Ground bees tend to form groups during nesting season choosing locations that have hard-packed sandy soils. Notably each female tends to her own brood.

Ground bees are solitary and not aggressive - they do not live in hives.

Ground bees are important pollinators. We have two kinds of ground bees and they tend to be specific about the plants they pollinate:

1. Bindweed Turret Bee - *Diadasia bituberculata* has distinctive banding on the abdomen, grayish eyes and an overall darker appearance. Flower preference: morning glory/bindweed
2. Turret Bee - *Diadasia ochracea* has blue eyes, pale banding on abdomen and is overall lighter in color. Flower preference: mallow

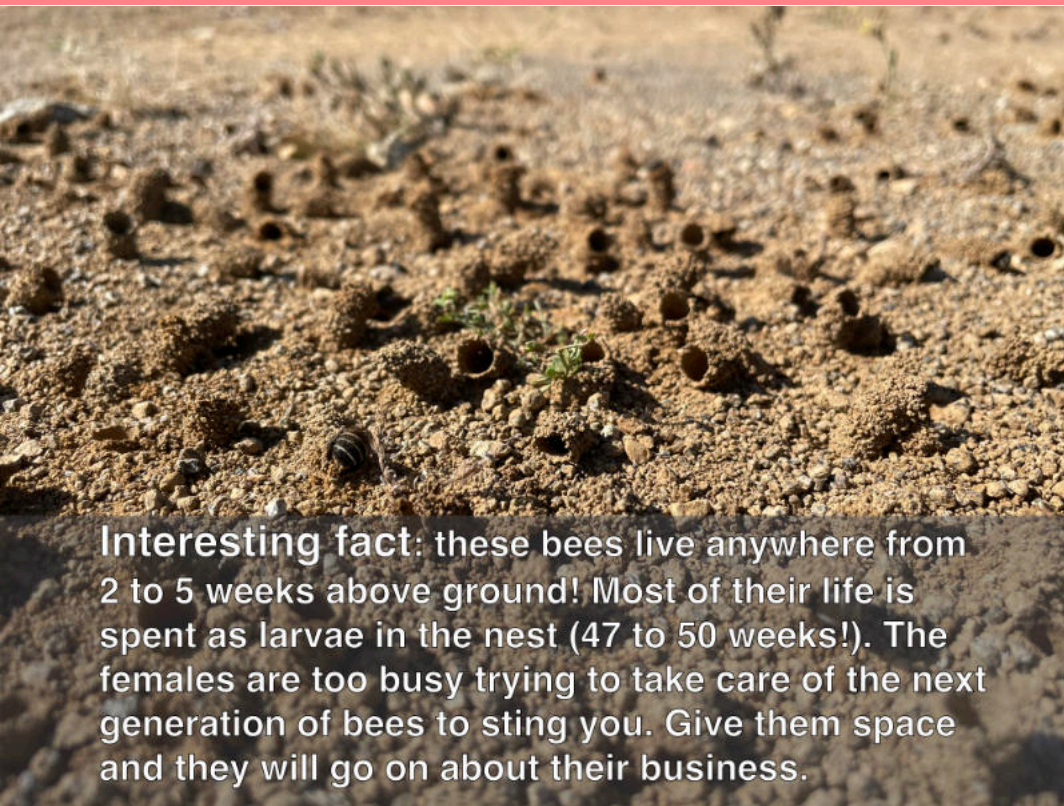
Male ground bees do not live with the females. They tend to form small groups and sleep nearby in the flowers pollinated by their species. When awake, they relentlessly patrol for potential mates. Males do not have stingers. [Need to know more?](#)

The thousands of bees humming around me was a natural delight to my eyes and ears. With all the rain we received this year, it has created a ground bee phenomenon.

So, bee thankful these little ground bees are around – another of nature’s un-bee-lievable treasures!



-Denise Pomonik



Interesting fact: these bees live anywhere from 2 to 5 weeks above ground! Most of their life is spent as larvae in the nest (47 to 50 weeks!). The females are too busy trying to take care of the next generation of bees to sting you. Give them space and they will go on about their business.

Nesting season is only a few short weeks in late spring, please respect their homes while the bees do their part in making the Santa Monica Mountains a wonderful place to “bee”.

Trail Work Report - April to October



Our public land managers do not have anywhere near the staff capacity needed to maintain trails on their own. Volunteer stewardship is essential to keeping trails open. - TrailRunner Magazine

Juan Carlo Mendoza, standing in the middle of the trail surrounded by green bark ceanothus looking to reclaim the trail.

The first few months of 2023, our trail crew worked on trails damaged by the substantial amount of rain we received in the winter.

Rain water flowing down trails, in some cases had removed the tread along with rocks and large chunks of soil. Shovels, buckets, picks and large rocks were utilized to fill trenches, repair slides and re-create the tread. The peak of our rebuild efforts was at Trail Days where we had more than a hundred volunteers working together on this.

All this rain showed us that the drains we had been building in previous years were not sufficient for the amount of rains we received. State Parks conducted a "Drain Building Workshop", led by

Steve Messer, Jason Finlay & Juan Carlo Mendoza. The techniques we learned will result in drains designed to withstand larger volumes of rain and make a better trail user experience.

After Trail Days, we put away the shovels and buckets and spent the next several months using brush cutters, loppers, saws and electric shears to remove brush encroaching on the trail. We removed dense, 7 foot tall stands of mustard where it obscured the path. In one over-achieving day we cleared some 2 miles of the Ray Miller Trail by working from morning until night. Nicholas Flats was the location for several brush clearing events during the summer - we beat the heat by starting early. Check out our work and then come join us!



George, [cutting the mustard](#) to temporarily reclaim this trail while pondering which is better: gas or electric power hedge cutters.

Photo: Denise Pomonik

Dave Edwards- An Extraordinary Volunteer
5,000+ Volunteer Hours, 17+ Years of Service
Crew Boss & provider of chocolate at lunch
First to arrive on site and last to go home

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Photo: Juan Carlo Mendoza

Dave is a big part of what makes our crew successful. His truck has carried crew and tools on several hundred events. If he sees a tool that might be useful- he goes out and buys it. If there is poison oak to be removed, he steps up and deals with it. Building stairs, steps, drains, trail relocation, removing overgrown brush and fallen trees - these are among the many tasks that Dave will share his knowledge and help you master. While we are lucky to have Dave, he also leads trail work events with Channel Islands Restoration.



Photo: Ruth Feldon

Jon Sheldon

Signs Project Update

September 9th was the first outing to install newly purchased signs in Point Mugu State Park.

Jon Sheldon's Report:

This was a pilot event so we chose easy-to-access signs to better gauge efforts needed on subsequent, harder to reach areas of the park. Up to five more outings will be needed to complete the Phase 1 effort. We met at the Sycamore Canyon Day Use parking lot at 8:30am. We drove into the park and dealt with signage issues at the Serrano Canyon Trail, Fireline Trail, Overlook Fire Road, and Scenic Trail junctions of Sycamore Canyon Fire Road and at the yellow gate at the campground. We then drove to the La Jolla Canyon Day Use area for one installation (Ray Miller trail head) and one removal (La Jolla Canyon Trail) and finished the day installing a sign at the Chumash trail head finishing at 12:30pm.

Signs Installed: 9; Posts pounded: 6

Crew: Jon Sheldon, Jerry Mitcham, Ruth Feldon, Barry Dydik, John Reynolds

The Trails Council is entering the third year of a formal agreement with the California State University Channel Islands (CSUCI), Center for Community Engagement, Service Learning Program.

Within this program, the CSUCI Trails Corps has been established. The Trail Corps is a small group of university interns committed to working with the Trails Council during the school year. The Trail Corps members will work alongside SMMTC members to learn about community service and the value of volunteerism while working in the field to help restore and maintain trails in the Santa Monica Mountains and adjacent areas.

This year's Trail Corps is made up of three members: Krista, a senior; Christopher, a junior; and Solomon, a sophomore and continuing member from last year. All three are majoring in Environmental Science. The members have completed orientation and initial training and will now be joining our regular trail crew on regular trail maintenance events. In the past two years, the Trail Corps has contributed several hundred volunteer hours to our trail maintenance program. Jerry Mitcham is the SMMTC Trail Corps manager.



L-R Christopher, Solomon & Krista

Looking for a Volunteer Opportunity?

The Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency (COSCA) preserves, protects, and manages open space resources in the Conejo Valley.

Wildwood serves as the location for Trails Education Days (TED). This year close to 950 Conejo Valley Unified School District fourth-graders learned about local natural resources and wildlife. In small groups they take a guided hike into the canyon then rotate through interactive exhibits and educational presentations by experts in various fields related to conservation and ecology. If you are interested in volunteering at next year's event, to be held April 22-26, please fill out a volunteer application and list [Trails Education Days](#) under areas of interest.

In Memoriam

The Trails Council is sad to announce the passing of Betsy Elliott in July. Betsy was the wife of iconic crew leader and Trails Council member Burt Elliott who passed away in July of 2014. Betsy and Burt were married for 59 years. Our condolences to their family.

Trail Days 2023 What a successful 40th Trail Days! In April we had a record number of attendees for the weekend-long trail work event in Point Mugu State Park. Many camped at Danielson group campground for the weekend. We enjoyed perfect weather and a wonderful BBQ provided by **Dearmore BBQ**. Over the 2 workdays, we logged a total of 1,128 volunteer hours and we cleared and repaired 18,430 feet (3.5 miles) of trail very overgrown and significantly damaged trail. Scout troop 111 prepared and staged materials for an Eagle scout project of the installation of steps in La Jolla Valley. Kids as young as 5 worked on the Blue Canyon trail and our good friend Dave "Doc" Perlmutter came out of retirement to help the kids. Adults worked very hard on upper Blue Canyon, Old Boney, Sin Nombre, Coyote, Upper Sycamore Canyon, Hidden Pond Connector, and Sin Nombre Connector. Everyone had a great time, worked hard, and the contribution to the improvement of the trails was enormous. The event was held jointly with the **Santa Monica Mountains Task Force of the Sierra Club** and **Concerned Off Road Bicyclists Association**. Teams from State Parks and the National Park Service supported the event and were instrumental in helping it all run smoothly.

Thank you all!!

Board of Directors

Barb Thomas, **President**

George Sherman, **Vice President**

Sheryl Phelps, **Treasurer**

Melody Reilly, **Secretary**

Don Brusselars

Jerry Mitcham

John Kross

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Ruth Gerson, **President Emerita**

Individual Membership

Annual - \$35 Family - \$60

Lifetime - \$360 Can also be paid over 3 consecutive years @ \$120 per year

Business Membership

Supporter - \$100

Patron - \$250

Benefactor - \$500

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Dues are on a rolling 12-month basis. Membership dues are effective the first of the month following receipt of funds; membership will be effective for 12 months. Please make your check payable to SMMTC and mail it to P.O. Box 345, Agoura Hills, CA 91376. Memberships can also be purchased on our website using Paypal.

Make a Donation?

*SMMTC is a tax exempt,
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your continued
support!**

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OUR STORY

Since 1969, the Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council has been the only organization devoted to representing all trail user groups in the Santa Monica Mountains. We are a volunteer nonprofit organization, dedicated to establishing, preserving and maintaining the public trail system throughout the Santa Monica Mountains and adjacent areas through education, advocacy and partnership with public and private sectors.

We coordinate with various government agencies to enhance and preserve the trail system. We assist in negotiations with property owners regarding trail alignments. We promote public awareness and build, monitor and maintain trails.

Upcoming Events

Annual Dinner Meeting — October 26th

41st Annual Trail Days — April 19th to April 21st

Backbone Trek — TBD

Board Meetings (Currently held via Zoom)

Board Meetings are open to the public and are on the 4th Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm. There are 4 exceptions: No meeting in August; April meet on the 2nd Thursday; Nov & Dec, meet on 1st Thursday.

CONTACT US

Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council

Address:	P.O. Box 345, Agoura Hills CA 91376
Phone:	818-222-4531
Email:	mail@smmtc.org
Web Site:	www.smmtc.org
	George Sherman, Newsletter Editor
	E-mail: mail@smmtc.org

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