
The Clear Print



The San Diego Tracking Team Newsletter ♦ October 2010

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SAVE THE DATE!

The next Volunteer/Donor Appreciation Event will be Saturday, April 30, 2011, at the Ranch House at Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve. More details to follow.

From the President, Fred Kramer

The San Diego Tracking Team has an active outreach program. We staff information tables at various environmental events. We also provide tailored educational programs for diverse groups.

Our outreach table is anchored with a three panel display board (right) with pictures and printed information about SDTT's mission, activities, and programs. We also hand out brochures and other information at these events. We talk to people about SDTT and tracking in general and answer questions. Some people are interested enough to sign up to receive informational e-mails via our e-group. The prime attraction of our exhibit is a tray of dirt. We set out a variety of animal paw plaster casts and invite kids of all ages to "make some tracks" in the dirt. It is



amazing how effectively this activity attracts people to our table.

We also present programs to groups. These include PowerPoint presentations and outdoor introductions to tracking. Some of the interesting outdoor programs have been to Boy Scout troops seeking to earn their tracking merit badge. As many of you may know, 2010 is the centennial of Boy Scouting. In honor of this milestone, the Scouts brought back, for one year only, a few badges from the beginning days that were subsequently retired. Tracking is one of those badges that was established in 1911 and retired in 1952. Several troops have contacted us for help meeting the requirements for the badge. It has been rewarding working with them.

Each of these outreach events requires dedicated volunteers. My thanks to the many folks who have given their time to help us get SDTT's name and message to more people. Contact me if you'd like to be involved too.

Congratulations to Gary Seiser on his selection as an SDTT Senior Tracker!!!

Tracking Team Spotlight: Blue Sky by Anna Gateley-Stanton

As early as 1995, Robert Patton (County employee and, at the time, Blue Sky Ranger) had an idea to start monitoring the flora and fauna at Blue Sky Ecological Reserve. At a docent retreat at Heise Park in Julian, a sample “sector monitoring” exercise was performed to spark interest. The exercise worked. Blue Sky docents and Friends of Blue Sky loved the idea. Excitement was high, but soon after, plans fell through. Robert left his position with the County to pursue other opportunities monitoring least terns and snowy plovers. With Robert’s departure, Friends of Blue Sky and the docents were unable to make the monitoring dream a reality.

Fast forward to January 2005 when I attended the San Diego Tracking Team’s free wildlife survey training and signed up for the Tracker/Naturalist classes. My plan was to learn tracking to add another dimension to my interpretive hikes as a Blue Sky docent. I soon realized that the training could accomplish so much more. Flashing back to Robert’s idea about monitoring Blue Sky, I decided to complete the three classes and the apprentice program to become a tracker. Once tracker status was reached, we could form a Blue Sky tracking team, set up a transect, and begin monitoring the mammals in Blue Sky. Everything fell into place. The Blue Sky Tracking Team (BSTT) was formed under the umbrella of SDTT in the spring of 2006. We started with 14 members, seven of whom are still active today.

Temperatures soared to over 100 degrees as we completed our first transect on July 23, 2006. (Whose idea was this again?) We’ve now learned to start our summer transect at 7 a.m., instead of 8:30, just in case the heat is upon us.

Our second survey brought an exciting discovery—a large deposit of mountain lion scat and what we were

fairly certain were lion tracks. Since the tracks consisted of only large disturbances in decomposed granite and no actual prints, we could not be 100 percent sure. But they were spaced consistently with the size of a cougar and continued on the trail for quite a stretch.



BSTT members (l to r) Anna Gateley-Stanton, Kathy Reading, and Paula Shults on transect in July 2010.

Being a small canyon, we only have one transect in Blue Sky. Because of heavy use on the main trail, the transect is designated along a small section of dirt road leading south to Lake Poway. It then turns and heads west along the Ramona Water District’s pipeline road, which is closed to the public. Of course, there are a few bicyclists and hikers that pretend not to notice the signs.

Since the majority of our team members are also Blue Sky docents, we love looking at not just tracks, scat, and browse, but also the plants, birds, insects, and reptiles. Over the few years we’ve been doing the Blue Sky transect, we’ve collected photos of interesting insects, a huge alligator lizard, and a hummingbird’s nest, not to mention lots of tracks and scat.



The lowest point in BSTT history was when Blue Sky was ravaged by the Witch Creek Fire in 2007. Along with many parts of Poway, Blue Sky was totally consumed by the flames. An entry from the BSTT page on the web site tells the tale of our first transect after the fire.

12-15-07 (approximately eight weeks after the fire): *The devastation left by the October fires was so sad. If I hadn't already been to the reserve prior to this trip, it would have been a very emotional experience. But having seen the fire's damage previously, I knew what to expect. We had five people show up this time, most of whom had already been here and also seen the damage left when the fire swept through the entire canyon. All the ground cover and understory were gone, leaving very little cover for what animals were still there.*

The rangers had counted only eight deer in the canyon, but because of the lack of ground cover, the heavy ash layer, and recent rain, we found deer tracks literally everywhere—well over 60, which was very unusual. Before, the deer had been consistently using existing game trails, but now there are no trails and no barriers to stop them from leaving the pipeline road. The thick, ashy substrate (compared to our previous decomposed granite) made it easier to find tracks. It was also interesting that the only section in which we found evidence of cottontails was the very last section—the one closest to Espola Road, which may mean the rabbits had moved from the actual canyon into the surrounding housing neighborhood to find

food. No evidence of fox was found, but we found tracks and/or scat belonging to coyote, bobcat, and raccoon.



Of course, we neither heard nor saw any gnatcatchers or coast horned lizards, but we did find presence of small rodents in sections 1 and 3. Sadly, all of the woodrat nests, being made of piled sticks, now exist only as a concentration of white ash on the ground, documenting where the woodrat nests used to stand.

Like most of San Diego County, Blue Sky is recovering from the fire. During our July 25, 2010 transect, we even found evidence that woodrats are returning. There among the granite boulders beside the trail, we found several deposits of woodrat scat (see photo above).



BSTT members (l to r) Anna Gateley-Stanton, Mike Greene, Gini Kitchen, Carol Simpson, Celeste Larson, Martha Fisher, and Kathy Reading.

Interesting group, we tracker/naturalists. Who else would get excited about mountain lion poop and woodrat droppings!

Please submit items for future issues of *The Clear Print* to Fred Kramer at fred.kramer@cox.net. We're looking for items, such as interesting tracking stories, pictures, book reviews, news about tracking teams, trivia, and, of course, pictures for the Tracking Corner.

Blue Sky Tracking Team Featured Member: Paula Shults by Anna Gateley-Stanton

If asked to name the members of the Blue Sky Tracking Team, some people may forget to mention Paula Shults.

She's the quiet type, not one to raise a ruckus. But if asked who you can count on to help out with the Blue Sky transect, her name is at the top of the list. She's helped with more Blue Sky surveys than any other team member.

Joining the ranks of the Blue Sky docents five years ago, she quickly attended a wildlife survey training class and became a member of the newly formed Blue Sky Tracking Team. She signed up and assisted with her first



transect, and she's been a reliable volunteer ever since. Paula's completed the beginning and intermediate tracker/naturalist classes, and would like to take more classes and go on more transects, but in her words, "life just seems to get in the way." What does she enjoy about tracking? The chance to be outside in nature, learning more about it.

When Paula's not volunteering or being a wife and mother (two daughters and a one-month-old granddaughter), you might find her reading, quilting, or sewing.

Thanks Paula, for all you do for the Blue Sky Tracking Team!

We need your help ...

... to support SDTT's mission to promote the preservation of critical wildlife habitat in San Diego County and adjacent areas through wildlife monitoring, research, and environmental education programs.

You Can Help In Two Ways

1. Become a San Diego Tracking Team **Volunteer**. E-mail info@sdt.org or call (760) 715-4102 for information how to become involved.
2. Become a San Diego Tracking Team **Donor Member**. You can conveniently join online at www.sdt.org/General/donateNow.aspx

You can also help SDTT by joining e-Scrip. Go to www.escrip.com, click on signup, and follow the directions. Our group name is San Diego Tracking Team and Group ID is 500018107.

For more information, visit our web site www.sdt.org, e-mail info@sdt.org, or call (760) 715-4102.

Tracking Corner—Analysis from June Issue

Wendy Esterly took the mystery track photo on the Oak Grove Loop Trail in Mission Trails Regional Park on May 25th at 10 a.m.

The responses submitted all correctly identified the snake trail in the photo. Many also recognized that there was more than a single trail. Wendy's photo shows the result of an interesting, but rarely seen event in nature.

A woman passed Wendy on the Oak Grove Loop Trail that morning and described what Wendy recognized as male-to-male rattlesnake combat just farther along the trail. Wendy arrived at the scene too late to see the snakes, but the pattern on the ground was undisturbed. You can go to YouTube and enter "male-to-male rattlesnake combat" and watch some videos showing this behavior.



CONGRATULATIONS!

To Uli Burgin on receiving a 2009 Star Award from the San Diego Performing Arts League. Uli was nominated by the San Diego Natural History Museum where she is an active volunteer.

Way to go, Uli!

Upcoming SDTT Events

When	What	Where
Wednesday, Nov. 3 7:00–9:00 PM Saturday, Nov. 6 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM	Advanced Tracker Naturalist Class The Advanced Class continues to develop your proficiency as a tracker. Subtle details of track identification are presented. Techniques and exercises for trailing animals through various surfaces will enable you to stay on the right track. Drills and exercises will help expand your knowledge base, point out areas to work on, and give you a preview of the tracker evaluation process. Cost: \$50 (\$10 discount for SDTT members). Pre-registration required. Go to LPTT Class Info for more information or e-mail lptt@cox.net to register.	Los Peñasquitos Ranch House
Saturday, Nov. 6 8:30 AM	Tracking Walk – Free Join MTRP Tracking Team member Mike Gibbs for an adventure in wildlife tracking suitable for the whole family! Learn the art of discovering signs left behind by resident creatures during two fun-filled hours of “dirt time.” Information at MTRP Web Site .	MTRP Visitor Center
Saturday, Nov. 13 8:00 AM	Tracking Walk – Free Everyone is invited to join Los Peñasquitos Tracking Team members for a free, easy tracking walk to learn about the art of tracking. Beginner and Intermediate levels. Information at LPTT Schedule .	Los Peñasquitos Ranch House
Saturday, Dec. 4 8:30 AM	Tracking Walk – Free Join MTRP Tracking Team member Mike Gibbs for an adventure in wildlife tracking suitable for the whole family! Learn the art of discovering signs left behind by resident creatures during two fun-filled hours of “dirt time.” Information at MTRP Web Site .	MTRP Visitor Center
Saturday, Dec. 11 8:00 AM	Tracking Walk – Free Everyone is invited to join Los Peñasquitos Tracking Team members for a free, easy tracking walk to learn about the art of tracking. Beginner and Intermediate levels. Information at LPTT Schedule .	Los Peñasquitos Ranch House
SUNDAY, January 2 8:30 AM	Tracking Walk – Free Join MTRP Tracking Team member Mike Gibbs for an adventure in wildlife tracking suitable for the whole family! Learn the art of discovering signs left behind by resident creatures during two fun-filled hours of “dirt time.” Information at MTRP Web Site .	MTRP Visitor Center
Saturday, January 8 8:00 AM	Tracking Walk – Free Everyone is invited to join Los Peñasquitos Tracking Team members for a free, easy tracking walk to learn about the art of tracking. Beginner and Intermediate levels. Information at LPTT Schedule .	Los Peñasquitos Ranch House

When	What	Where
Saturday, January 15 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM	Beginning Tracking for Wildlife Surveys Class – \$25 This new class for SDTT volunteers prepares you to participate in surveys that monitor the wildlife in major open space preserves and other critical areas. Topics include basic recognition and identification of animal tracks and other signs, introduction to track patterns and gaits, wildlife journaling, an overview of the survey protocol, and more! Classroom time is supplemented with plenty of time in the field. Reference materials are included in the fee. Pre-registration is not required for individuals, but requested for groups. Bring a sack lunch.	Los Peñasquitos Ranch House
Saturday, January 29 4:00 PM	SDTT Annual Board Meeting SDTT Board meetings are open to the public.	Los Peñasquitos Ranch House
Saturday, February 5 8:30 AM	Tracking Walk – Free Join MTRP Tracking Team member Mike Gibbs for an adventure in wildlife tracking suitable for the whole family! Learn the art of discovering signs left behind by resident creatures during two fun-filled hours of “dirt time.” Information at MTRP Web Site .	MTRP Visitor Center
Saturday, February 12 8:00 AM	Tracking Walk – Free Everyone is invited to join Los Peñasquitos Tracking Team members for a free, easy tracking walk to learn about the art of tracking. Beginner and Intermediate levels. Information at LPTT Schedule .	Los Peñasquitos Ranch House
Saturday, March 5 8:30 AM	Tracking Walk – Free Join MTRP Tracking Team member Mike Gibbs for an adventure in wildlife tracking suitable for the whole family! Learn the art of discovering signs left behind by resident creatures during two fun-filled hours of “dirt time.” Information at MTRP Web Site .	MTRP Visitor Center
Saturday, March 12 8:00 AM	Tracking Walk – Free Everyone is invited to join Los Peñasquitos Tracking Team members for a free, easy tracking walk to learn about the art of tracking. Beginner and Intermediate levels. Information at LPTT Schedule .	Los Peñasquitos Ranch House
Wednesday, March 16 7:00–9:00 PM Saturday, March 19 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM	Intermediate Tracker Naturalist Class This class expands on the beginning class and includes recognition and interpretation of tracks and sign on a variety of surfaces. There are exercises in speculative tracking, aging, soil dynamics, debris interaction, trailing, mammal skull and dental identification, and tracking on various substrates. Additional gait interpretation is covered. Cost: \$50 (\$10 discount for SDTT members). Pre-registration required. Go to LPTT Class Info for more information or e-mail lptt@cox.net to register.	Los Peñasquitos Ranch House

Wildlife on Track



For San Diego Tracking Team's Donor Members

Donor members are critical to the San Diego Tracking Team's success. The vast majority of our budget comes from our donor members. While much is accomplished with our team of dedicated volunteers, there are numerous operational expenses that need to be paid to keep SDTT running.

But thanks to all our generous donor members, we have been able to continue our conservation efforts in 2010. We conducted 104 wildlife surveys along our established transects. We taught 4 training sessions for wildlife survey volunteers turning out 38 more trained volunteers. We staffed 5 outreach tables reaching 962 people and provided 8 educational programs for 183 people. We also sponsored two outstanding Speaker Series events. In February Barry Martin related his tracking adventures in South Africa and in September Anna Mittelberg presented the results of her mule deer population research. We also hosted an enjoyable Donor/Volunteer Appreciation lunch in April with Dr. Jeff Tracey giving a talk on the movement behavior of animals in response to their environment. If you missed that one, plan to attend the next one on April 30, 2011.

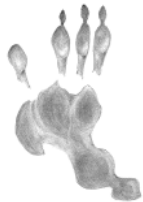


Anna Mittelberg

All these activities and more help ensure we keep our *wildlife on track* for survival in our natural areas.

Journaling ... the Opossum By Barry Martin

If you haven't created a journal yet, now is a good time to start with the opossum. I will pose some questions, make some suggestions, and all you have to do is spend a little time doing some reading about this interesting animal and entering a few details and drawings in your journal. The goal is to improve your tracking capabilities, and this is an excellent way to train your eyes for the details a good tracker sees.



Drawing © 2008
by Mike Kresky

So here we go! Let's start with the first animal in the book. If you look in your Peterson *Field Guide to Animal Tracks* or Mark Elbroch's *Mammal Tracks & Sign* book, the first animal is in the family Didelphidae. The Opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*) is the only marsupial found in North America. It has a distinctive track due to its prehensile number 1 toe on the hind foot (see drawing on left). Here are some questions for you to answer in your journal. Where in the United States is it found besides in San Diego County? What does it eat? What are its habits, such as where would you most likely see its tracks? How many teeth does it have? How big are its feet and what kind of track pattern does it leave? What is the average stride length? Is it nocturnal or diurnal? Quickly sketch the animal and its tracks.

Remember good journaling techniques. Read about the animal then close your eyes and see the animal in your mind's eye. This is the technique Jon Young teaches in the Kamana program, and it is quite effective. After creating a picture of the animal in your mind, you have given it a unique life that will stay with you. So, you can build on that and start to draw. See the animal in your mind's eye then sketch it; do the same with the tracks. When you are out tracking and come across tracks of the opossum, draw them, or take a photo and draw the image in your journal later. You see, it is the drawing/sketching that is valuable in training your "tracker's eye." Don't worry if you aren't an artist, just sketch; the less you think about it and just do it, the better you'll get.

Start asking your own questions. The questions above should get you started and lead you to more of your own. When you find answers, write them down in your tracker journal. Above all have **fun** with this. Be patient and before you know it, you will have covered a tremendous amount of ground, becoming a very good tracker in the process.

San Diego Tracking Team Donor Members for 2010

Our sincere thanks to the following individuals and families
for their generous financial support in 2010.

Student/Senior

Uli Burgin
Jean Douglas
Ray Eubanks
Margaret Fillius
Vernie McGowan
Mary Jane Moore
Paul Richter
Susan Schwartz
Beth Shugan
Jim Toothaker

Individual

Maureen Abare-Laudy
Luanne Barrett
Scott Berry
Yuriria Blanco-Castillo
Matthew Gregory
Heidi Gutknecht
Matt Lochtefeld
Susan Meyer
Stacey Miller
Jacques Pieterse
Jim Powers
Annie Ransom
Frank Sprinkle
William Sulzbach
Nancy Varga
Fred Wollman

Family

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Terry & Wendy Esterly
Anna Gateley-Stanton
Cindy Hawkinson and Erica Harris
Susan Klug
Karin Vickars & Mac McNair
Carl & Myra Shiroma
Marv & Milly Utech
Bryan & Diane Wold

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Lifetime

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