

The Clear Print

The San Diego Tracking Team Newsletter



SDTT Committees: Getting Started

As mentioned in the previous Clear Print, the SDTT is establishing committees in order to improve efficiency within the organization and make the best use of the expertise and enthusiasm available to us. We would like to thank everyone who has joined a committee and point out that there's still opportunity for others to get involved too. Please call Karen at 760 715 4102 if you'd like more information or if you'd like to join a committee.

Committee	Topics of Interest	Members
Executive	The business side of the SDTT. Comprised of officers of the corporation.	Barry Martin—Chair Rick Botta Ann Hunt
Education	Tracker/Naturalist series, Jr. Naturalist, Apprentice, Continuing Education & Certification Programs, Contract services, etc.	Lani Noreke—Interim Chair Rick Botta Lee Kirchhevel Gary Seiser
Finance	Financial Planning, Budget, Insurance, Assets, Control, etc.	Rick Botta—Chair Ann Hunt Karen Larsen Gordon
Fundraising	Proposals, Fund Appeals, Corporate Donors & Sponsors, Fee for Service, Special Events, Membership, etc.	Karen Larsen Gordon—Chair Donna Cheverton Anna Gateley-Stanton Mike Kelly Doug Schanzenbach
Public Relations & Communications	Newsletters, Promotional Publications, Media Contact, Volunteer Appreciation Events, Outreach Events, Alliances with other groups, etc.	Karen Larsen Gordon—Interim Chair Betsy Brack Howard Burgeson Betty Kirchhevel (advisory) Doug Schanzenbach
Technology	Cybertracker, GIS/Mapping, Database, Website, etc.	Matt Deig—Chair Rick Botta Doug Hansen Ann Hunt Judy Lemon Lucy Sapien Bryan Webber
Wildlife Surveys & Research	Wildlife Track & Sign Survey, Remote Camera Projects, Deer Scan DNA Project, Protocols & Revisions, etc.	Lani Noreke—Chair Rick Botta Doug Schanzenbach Gary Seiser Frank Sprinkle Seiko Sudo

SDTT Receives Two Grants from the San Diego Foundation

We are pleased to announce that the SDTT has recently received two grants from the San Diego Foundation. Congratulations to everyone involved in the grant writing and site-visit process! One grant is a "Community Environment" grant from the SDF to fund SDTT sustainability and capacity building. Specifically, this will allow us to hire a part time Executive Director.

The other grant we received is "Blasker" grant to continue analysis of SDTT Data. Phase I of this project was begun a year ago with a similar SDF grant which funded a preliminary analysis by Shea Valero under the guidance of Mike Wells. SDSU graduate student Lisa Markovchick-Nicholls will begin Phase II of the analysis in the fall with the leadership of assistant professor Helen Reagan. This most recent grant funds Phase III which Lisa and Helen will be doing in the spring and which focuses specifically on the applicability of SDTT wildlife survey data in MSCP monitoring. Please contact Lani (noreke@sbcglobal.net) if you would like to see a copy of the Phase I report.

A Pacific Tracking Weekend

By Gary Seiser

"Watch out for the rattlesnakes."

Mike Kresky's warning wasn't taken lightly. Barry Martin had bumped a Diamond Pacific into rattle mode the day before as we had gathered beneath an overpass looking at and "journaling" bobcat tracks. Now our group was "trailing" a deer; the other group had trailed a bear. Soon we would all be "mapping" a mountain lion kill. What do you call a weekend for beginners and advanced trackers alike in which you can learn to "trail" like the Kalahari bushmen, gather around a campfire to hear stories from a master storyteller, gain dirt time with Mark Elbroch, and share tracking experiences and laughter with some of the nicest people you could ever hope to meet? Pacific Tracking's "Track and Sign Intensive" three-day course in the Cuyama Valley north of Los Angeles.

The San Diego Tracking Team was well represented during that May 28-30, 2005 course. Of the fourteen students, half were from the SDTT: Barry, Chris Bader, Rick and Liz Botta, Matt Deig, Juliet Hendershott, and myself. They ranged from the super experienced to some still relatively new to the tracking scene. Sometimes we were broken into two groups, the more experienced and the less experienced. Sometimes we were all together. Whichever group we fit in, there was something for everyone.

A word about the instructors, and then more on what we did. Mark Elbroch is the author of Mammal Tracks & Sign, and the co-author of Bird Tracks & Sign, two top-notch books. But he's more than an author. Mark has been involved in many wildlife research projects, including capturing and collaring cougars and Glacier National Park's Bear Sign Survey. He is also taking a leading role in bringing international tracking certification to North America through Louis Liebenberg and CyberTracker Conservation in South Africa. A master wildlife tracker and an

outstanding instructor, Mark brings a quiet humility to his teaching that garners instant respect and appreciation from his students at all levels.

By contrast, Mark's roommate and fellow instructor Mike Kresky looks like a wild man who belongs riding a wave or a skateboard. It's no illusion. Although he has a degree in philosophy and is an artist with works in galleries from San Francisco to Paris, he was also a champion skateboarder and continues to be affiliated with Powell Classic Skateboards in Santa Barbara. As an artist, his tracking journal is beyond compare, and few are in his league as a storyteller as he becomes the animal through both movement and facial expression. He is also an expert on the plants and animals of southern California and an experienced tracker.

So what did we learn with Pacific Tracking? A lot. There was a huge focus on small rodents and on plants. One of the main things we learned, though, was the art of "trailing." If you need to actually find the animal (or person) you're tracking, trailing is what you need to do. Unlike many tracking efforts in which we try to find every track, trailing is about prediction and confirmation. In trailing your eyes are up far more than they're down. Having found a track, the trailer lifts her head to see the landscape and predict the probable direction the animal traveled. Then she moves to confirm that prediction.

Knowing animal behavior is critical. Bear and lions are more likely to travel in a straight line. If you don't find a lion track for 100 yards or more, that's okay, so long as you're able to trail the animal and eventually find the tracks that will confirm where the lion went. Deer don't travel in straight lines, though. Knowing that influences how often you lift your eyes and how far ahead you look. With deer it's not that far. Trailing was very different and very interesting.

One of the other big things we did was spend a day with a mountain lion. Having located the remains of a doe and two fawns killed by a cougar, we broke down into 7 two-person teams to "map" the kill site. We learned a kill site is not limited to a single location where a carcass is found. It encompasses a far larger area and involves the many animals living in that area. The doe we found had been killed about four days before but coyotes and ravens had already visited the remains, ants were already carrying away maggots, and there was evidence of a bear and bobcats within 30 yards. Interestingly, a mountain lion may drag his kill as far as 1,000 yards. So there was a lot for the individual teams to "map," then to bring it all together and put on a master map.

After that, half the students trailed the lion, and the other half backtracked him. My group was trailing, and we trailed him for about a mile in some terrible tracking conditions. We didn't actually locate the lion, which was good, but we learned a lot about him and the area he lived in, so it was an excellent day or, in the words of Mike Kresky, "epic."

Do I recommend trying to get Mark, Mike or both down to the SDTT for classes? Absolutely! That's already in the works, and when it happens you should be sure to attend. Do I recommend taking courses from Pacific Tracking? That also gets an emphatic YES! I know I will. Not only are they excellent, they're in southern California. But don't just take my word for all this. Check out their website at www.PacificTracking.com or give drop Meghan Walla-

Murphy, their program director, an e-mail at phoksumdo@yahoo.com. Then take a course and decide yourself. You'll be glad you did.

Fawning Time

By Rick Botta

If you've been out and about in Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve, or other coastal areas inhabited by our Southern Mule Deer, you may have been fortunate enough to notice that it's fawning time again!

The fawning season in San Diego County typically begins in June and can extend into August, with the fawning season starting earlier nearer to the coast. Based upon my previous sightings over the years, along with information gathered using our remote sensing cameras, the fawning season in Peñasquitos Canyon usually begins in May. My first fawn sighting in Peñasquitos Canyon this year was on May 13th near the waterfalls where I sighted a doe and her new fawn drinking from the creek. I ran into this same doe in the same area about a week earlier. She was bedded down, but based upon the way she bolted and the direction she headed, I suspected she had a fawn hidden nearby and was trying to lead any potential threat well away from her newborn.

The spots on this fawn were just beginning to fade, from which I estimated it being born in late April – a bit earlier than normal. In past years, we have evidence of fawns in Peñasquitos Canyon being born as late as August and as early as the end of April. Twin fawns are common, but this depends on the age of the doe and nutritional factors. You can roughly estimate the age of a fawn from its spots. Spots begin to fade at about 3 weeks and will be completely gone in as early as 6 weeks, 8 at the outset.

So, as you're out and about, look for evidence of these new arrivals to our wildlife community. Remember that fawns will spend a great deal of time bedded down and under cover in their early weeks while the mother is feeding. So if you happen to run into a fawn that is bedded down, please leave it alone. You would be surprised at the number of people who find what they believe are “abandoned” fawns and turn them into wildlife rescue agencies.

While sightings are always enjoyable, remember the tracker inside of you and look for tracks while you're out getting that dirt time! We will be performing our next deer survey in Peñasquitos Preserve in July, so we'll be able to get a better idea of what this years fawn population looks like.

Upcoming Events

Summer Wildlife Survey period starts July 16th with the volunteer training (at the Ranch House 9:45 AM to 4 PM). The transect schedule will be available by July 16th (though probably not

much sooner) through our e-group, SDTTLIST. If you have any questions, would like to be an assistant for the volunteer training, or sign up for a transect, call Karen at 760 715 4102.

Saturday, August 13: Monthly tracking walks, 8:00 am to 10:00 at the Peñasquitos Preserve Ranch House. Beginning and Intermediate/Advanced levels offered.

JUST ADDED! Friday, August 19: SDTT Speaker Series Presents Mark Elbroch: Tracker, Naturalist & Author, 6:30 to 9:00 PM at the Mission Trails Regional Park Visitor Center. Lecture starts at 7:00, refreshments will be available from 6:30. Call Karen (760 715 4102) or e-mail Lani (noreke@sbcglobal.net) or for more info.

Saturday, September 10: Monthly tracking walks, 8:00 am to 10:00 at the Peñasquitos Preserve Ranch House. Beginning and Intermediate/Advanced levels offered.

Thursday, September 22 and Saturday, September 24: Beginning Tracker Naturalist Class, 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm Friday and 8:00 am to 6:00 pm Saturday at the Peñasquitos Ranch House. Contact Rick Botta (858-672-0584, rmbotta@earthlink.net) to sign up as a student or to help out.

Don't forget, you can help support SDTT in two important ways—volunteer your time and/or contribute financially by becoming a dues paying member. Call our new number 760-715-4102 to volunteer and go to www.sdtt.org for a membership form.

Please send submissions to the Clear Print to Lani Noreke at noreke@sbcglobal.net.