

The Clear Print
The San Diego Tracking Team Newsletter



Times They Are a' Changing for the San Diego Tracking Team

By Karen Larsen Gordon
Executive Director

Our organization was privileged to receive funding from The San Diego Foundation for an executive director in 2005-2006, but is currently regrouping due to the scarcity of ongoing funding. What this means is that my position soon will be left open and you, as volunteers, are needed on committees to do many of the duties I have undertaken over the last year. The transition from being a small, all-volunteer organization to a sustainable, professional one may not be easy or even a steady progression. But, as I have discovered, the experience can be highly rewarding. All of you who have made a commitment to the San Diego Tracking Team are united in purpose and values so pivotal in the health of our special native species and habitats. To that, I say, "Thank you!"

Now, what you can do:

1. Continue to volunteer. We still need you—in fact, we need you more than ever.
2. Volunteer for something new. Manning booths, applying for grants, printing flyers, organizing events or sharing your hidden talents would really help SDTT.
3. Facilitate funding. Do you work for a company that sponsors non-profit organizations, has a grant-making program, or matches donations? Do you know people active in philanthropy? If so, you could help us get our foot in the door.
4. Become a donor member. Renew your membership for 2006, or if you've already done this (thank you, thank you), consider increasing your membership level.

Highlights of the past year – in no particular order:

1. Communication within the SDTT is better than ever before;
2. We have more people involved as volunteers, more people being touched through outreaches, and more data being collected;
3. Certification of trackers began, using the Wildlife Tracking of North America process with Mark Elbroch;
4. Data analysis funded by a Blasker grant has been completed, with protocol revisions recommended.
5. New tracking teams were launched at Box Canyon (Center for Natural Lands Management) and Blue Sky Ecological Preserve;
6. SDTT's Speaker Series continues with engaging and informative programs;
7. Wildlife Survey & Research, Technology, and Education committees formed and began addressing areas for improvement within SDTT;
8. QuickBooks for Nonprofits have been implemented as the primary accounting system in order to facilitate developing budgets and a long-term business plan;
9. Payroll systems for staff and consultants, plus related tax reports are in place;
10. The Apprentice Program has graduated 4 trackers and has 19 in training;
11. Fee schedules for SDTT services are now available;

12. Junior Naturalist successfully completed programming at Mission Trails Regional Park, and has incorporated programming for home school groups and others;
13. The first "Wildlife on Track" newsletter for SDTT donor members was published;
14. Outreach programs shared the essence of SDTT, thus exploring or building upon partnerships (Kiwanis, Boy Scouts, Friends of Daley Ranch, etc.);
15. Special wildlife and habitat assessment projects were conducted for areas throughout San Diego County;
16. Contracted tracking training was completed for field biologists;
17. A presence within the San Diego Conservation Resources Network was established;
18. Continual grant applications and the pursuit of additional funding.

Congratulations to all of you who have made this impressive list possible!

Recommendations to ensure the future of the SDTT:

1. Volunteers will be needed to take a more active roll in the Public Relations and Communications Committee (outreach, flyers, press releases, media contact, etc.), the Fundraising Committee (special events, membership development, etc.), Education (Speakers Series, trainings, etc.) and more.
2. A Council of Tracking Teams, in which each team is represented and where decisions are made that affect the functioning of the tracking teams, will be initiated immediately.
3. Lani will continue as Program Manager and Volunteer Coordinator in order to support the wildlife monitoring, survey training, apprentice program and to continue to seek grants.
4. And finally, the Board of Directors will be structured to focus on the sustainability of the organization.

If you could consider making the commitment to share more of your skills or your time to help keep the organization going, please let us know by calling (760) 715-4102.

Ticks and Chiggers

by Karen Larsen Gordon

Trackers beware – hitchhikers exist on our wonderful trails! Imagine strolling between coastal sage scrub and chaparral early in the morning when the temperature is all of 39 degrees and discovering that a deer tick has warmed up enough to catch a ride home with you. That happened to me not too long ago, and the little critter managed to sink its torso into mine. It was clear that I was unable to extract it on my own, so I made an appointment at Kaiser that very same day. Lyme disease has been reported from many areas of the country, including most counties in California, so I sought professional help. Lyme disease is a bacterial disease spread by the bite of a Western Black-legged Tick, and the effects of the disease may persist in the human body for several years.

Just in case this happens to you, the Western Black-legged Tick is most common in the coastal regions and along the western slope of the Sierra Nevada range. The adult female is reddish-brown with black legs, about 1/8 inch long. Males are smaller and all brownish-black. The Western Black-legged Tick is a three host tick that primarily feeds on lizards and small rodents during its sub-adult

life stages, and as an adult feeds on large mammals, commonly deer, canids, horses and humans. Humans bitten by these ticks may notice intense inflammation at the site of the bite which may be slow to heal. These sores do not necessarily indicate pathogen transmission by the tick (i.e.: a Lyme disease "bull's eye" rash), but are frequently due to irritation from tick salivary products injected into the bite site.

Once extracted (tweezers don't work due to the barbs on the tick), the common treatment for a tick bite is a 3 to 6 week dosage of tetracycline or similar antibiotic. A blood titer for Lyme disease is recommended approximately a month after the series of antibiotics has concluded. More information about Lyme disease can be found on many web sites, including <http://sdnhm.org/fieldguide/zoonoses/lyme.html>.

Chiggers? Yes, chiggers. Here in San Diego County, they are particularly troublesome in coastal chaparral after a wet season, which explains how I came in contact with them last spring and again last week! Adult harvest mites will lay a nest of up to 400 eggs. The hatched larvae then find a host – and people emitting the most carbon dioxide seem to be popular. Adult chiggers are barely visible and the larvae are 1/50 inch in size. You won't know the larvae have arrived until the annoying itching on the skin begins, usually 4-8 hours after exposure. The itch is created by a toxin the larvae inject to dissolve cells in order to create a food source to grow into a nymph. Red bumps or papules are also a clue for diagnosis. Apparently, we don't provide the right nutrients, so the critter eventually dies off.

In the meantime, the resulting symptoms can be quite a problem. Treatment recommendations vary from topically arresting the itch with corticosteroid creams or Campho-Pheneque to orally taking antihistamines or steroids. Another suggestion was to apply Rid Lice Shampoo to the bite sites in order to speed up the chigger demise. I have tried them all and realize I'll just have to wait out the 2-6 weeks for true relief. Find additional information on: <http://science.howstuffworks.com/question488.htm> and <http://www.nlm.nih.gov>.

Bottom line here – use bug repellent when heading out to brushy areas! A high concentration, 98% DEET, is the most effective. Then, shower as soon as possible to remove those tick or chigger hitchhikers!

Volunteers Needed for Deer Scat DNA Study

Last year the SDTT entered a partnership with Dr. Andy Bohonak's lab at SDSU to collect deer scat from which DNA is extracted for analysis. This study will continue through 2006, and more volunteers are needed. Tracking experience is not necessary, and training will be provided, however you will find that your tracking and trailing skills will improve rapidly when you get involved with this. The challenge is that the DNA degrades quickly when exposed to the elements, so we need to find deer scat that is no more than 48 hours old. Once trained, this is something you could do on your own, though we do encourage people to go out in groups or at least pairs.

Using several different statistical techniques, graduate student Anna Mitelberg is estimating long-term historic gene flow and comparing it to current movement patterns. Anna's study looks at 13

locations focusing on the Peñasquitos/Del Mar Mesa/Miramar area (but also including MTRP and Hollenbeck Canyon). This is a follow up to Shea Valero's thesis in which she used the DNA from mule deer scat to identify individual animals and trace the gene flow between six locations in San Diego County: Torrey Pines, Peñasquitos Canyon, Fortuna Mountain, Oak Canyon (MTRP), Hollenbeck Canyon, and Rancho Jamul.

Please contact Anna Mitelberg for more information or to volunteer: (305) 799-2584 or mitelber@rohan.sdsu.edu.

Upcoming Events

The **Summer Wildlife Survey** period begins July 15 (transect schedule will be sent to SDTTLIST at that time), and the **Spring/Summer Deer Scat Collection** period is already underway. Plenty of volunteer opportunities remain for both. If you are interested in helping with any of these activities, or if you have any questions, please e-mail Lani at noreke@sbcglobal.net.

Saturday, July 1: Continuing Education Program, 8:00 am to noon at the Peñasquitos Preserve Ranch House. This event is open only to Apprentices and Trackers.

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

Sunday, July 9: Introductory tracking walk, 8:30 to 9:30 am at the MTRP visitor center.

Saturday, July 15: Summer Wildlife Survey Volunteer Training, 9:45 am to 4:00 pm at the Ranch House in Peñasquitos Canyon.

Sunday, July 30: Dirt Time at MTRP, 8:30 am, for those who wish to improve their tracking skills. Call 760-715-4102 for details.

Saturday, August 12: Monthly tracking walks, 8:00 am to 10:00 at the Peñasquitos Preserve Ranch House. Beginning and Intermediate/Advanced levels offered.

Sunday, August 13: Introductory tracking walk, 8:30 to 9:30 am at the MTRP visitor center.

Sunday, August 27: Dirt Time at MTRP, 8:30 am, for those who wish to improve their tracking skills. Call 760-715-4102 for details.

Are you a donor member of the SDTT? It's not too late to send in your 2006 membership contribution. Don't forget, you can help support SDTT in two important ways—volunteer your time and/or contribute financially by becoming a donor member. Call 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.