

**The Clear Print**  
The San Diego Tracking Team Newsletter



**DON'T FORGET!**

**SDTT Speaker Series presents Adriaan Louw on Trailing:  
Tales & Techniques from South Africa**

Wednesday, October 3, 6:30 to 9:00 PM at the Mission Trails Regional Park Visitor Center.  
Tickets are \$10. Seating is limited, so call now (760-715-4102) to reserve your space!

**Tracking the Trackers**

By Geralde Carpentier

Hello, my name is Geralde, and I'm in the trainee [Apprentice] program for the Anza-Borrego Tracking Team. We all have our stories about how we came to tracking and I'll share mine with you, as the story itself is a reflection of my personal understanding and appreciation of tracking.

As a young adult I read Tom Brown's «The Tracker» when it first came out ... some 30 years ago (already!)... and was passionately interested by the book. It exemplified for me all the ways one can tune in to nature, through knowledge, observation, awareness, and intuition. I could very much relate to the underlying messages, since as a child I had also spent much time alone in nature, sitting in trees, venturing in the wilderness, observing the birds, plants and beasts. That was home for me.

Decades of life flew by during which I was engaged in the conventional program of living: marriage, children, career, and the focus required to meet all the challenges offered to me along the way. In the background I was fine-tuning for myself the subtleties of tracking in "ordinary" life: observing how people walked, their body language, what it revealed about their personality. Observing domestic and wild animals, their body language, what it revealed about *their* personalities, species, situation and intrinsic nature. And experiencing time and time again the reality that there are dotted lines, invisible to some, but often evident to me, that make connections between seemingly unrelated people, animals, situations, places and events. Learning to rely on intuition even in the context of an executive career made it clear for me how valuable an asset it could be in assessing a situation and decision making. I learned by trial and error that intuition is a way of applying discernment as a navigation tool in one's own life.

Some 10 or 11 years ago, while living in Europe, I chanced upon a television program about the indigenous San trackers in Africa and a certain Louis Liebenberg who had developed a method of cyber-tracking that enabled illiterate but extremely competent native trackers to record their observations in the field. The principal character in the documentary was Vet Piet, a San tracker who was acknowledged as a master tracker. Again I was fascinated by the documentary and watched it several times. Several years later, my husband and I decided to return to the US, after more than 30 years abroad, and settled in southern California, not far away from the Anza-Borrego State Park that attracted us insistently by its wild and welcoming beauty. To make a long story short(er), I heard about the ABF setting up a program in view of developing a tracking team, signed

up of course, and was totally awed and overjoyed to realize that I had landed in the *only* place in the US that had a direct connection to Louis Liebenberg's cyber-tracking evaluation program in the person of Mark Elbroch, the SDTT and Barry! What an incredible "coincidence"!

So, although I have everything to learn about tracking and trailing the animals, I feel pretty good about my ability to track and trail the best trackers. The first months of the Naturalist program again confirmed to me that lessons learned in the field from tracking go beyond the technical scope of animal tracking; how to see the greater story in a set of tracks, how to listen to the inner voice or intuition and not doubt and second guess oneself (every time I did that, I got the answer wrong!), how important it is to have knowledge to help interpret and understand what one sees. I find that all of these lessons apply in life in general, and I'm looking forward to increasing my tracking and living skills in the next 18 months of the Apprentice program.

All my thanks to Barry, to all the trackers, mentors, administrators and volunteers of SDTT and ABF that enable this incredibly pertinent and rich learning experience for us all. It's an honor for me to be a part of this great (ad)venture with you.

## **BEWiSE About Tracking**

**By Rick Botta and Ann Hunt**

BEWiSE (Better Education for Women in Science and Engineering) is a program sponsored by the San Diego Science Alliance. The San Diego Science Alliance is a non-profit consortium of leaders from business, K-12 education higher education and scientific institutions in San Diego County and is committed to enhancing science literacy in K-12 education. The BEWiSE program is targeted at girls in grades 7 and 8, encouraging them to become interested in, and pursue, the science and engineering professions. One element of the program is a series of "Science Overnights" at various locations around San Diego which expose the girls to various subjects in the areas of science and engineering.

In April, Ann Hunt and I participated in one of these overnight events at Quail Botanical Gardens in Encinitas. This was the first of BEWiSE's 3 planned overnights in 2007 focusing on biodiversity. Before we go any further, I should point out that us "adults" did not actually sleep overnight at Quail nor did we participate in any pillow fights that may have occurred that evening.

The evening started with a dinner that would bring a smile to any young persons' face – macaroni and cheese (the real kind, not made with that pale yellow powdered cheese stuff), chicken, bread and lots of desserts. Even the grown-ups seemed to enjoy the dinner. After dinner, Pat Nolan of the San Diego County Department of Agriculture presented the keynote presentation on plant pathology.

For the remainder of the evening, groups of 10 girls rotated between 3 of the 4 different hands-on workshops, each workshop session lasting 40 minutes. One workshop was titled "CO2 is No Match for Phenolred," another "Do Plants Have Genders" and a third "Are There Bats in Your Backyard?"

Ann and I presented the 4<sup>th</sup> workshop focusing on how tracking and data collection is being used to help support biodiversity preservation. Our original plan to have the girls go on a short mock transect around the gardens and demonstrate the use of Cybertracker was thwarted by a wet evening, but we improvised. Thinking quickly, Ann suggested we commandeer a vacant office, and switch from a focus on the handheld devices and mock transect to using Cybertracker installed on a laptop with adding more of tracking introduction. While Ann spent time with half of our group during each session, I took the other half outside under an almost-but-not-quite waterproof patio cover to teach them about data collection using radio telemetry collars. Hidden around the outside of the building were two ferocious stuffed animals each fitted with a radio collar – a wolf and a big horn sheep. Each of the girls learned how the telemetric unit worked and then was given a chance to locate the collared animals.

After two and half hours of presentations, the girls were off to put on their pajamas, have a snack and watch the movie “Fly Away Home.” Then, hopefully to get a few hours of sleep before their tour around Quail Botanical Gardens the next morning. For Ann and me, it was all we could do to stay awake enough to make the drive home.

### **Member Profile: Carolyn Dorroh**

My name is: Carolyn A. Dorroh

On September 11, 1955, I was born in Golden Meadow, Louisiana and grew up on Bayou Lafourche. During my childhood, French speaking adults usually couldn't speak the English language deep in this Cajun country.

When I was a child, I wanted a college degree one day, but didn't know what I wanted to be when I grew up. At that time, the adults in my world typically dropped out of school well before reaching Jr. High School. I wanted a job that utilized brain power rather than muscle.

My current occupation is an Electrical Engineer for a defense contractor. We build a variety of products including Air Combat and Ground Combat Training Systems for the U.S. and our allies. One of the older versions of our Air Combat Training System is shown in the movie Top Gun. In October, I will have worked for that employer for 25 years. They hired me right out of the U.S. Air Force.

I got into tracking and nature awareness as a landowner in the Ramona Grasslands Wildlife Preserve. I worked with the County of San Diego Parks and Recreation Department during their Santa Maria Creek Restoration Program funded by Proposition 13 Water Bond grant funds and had granted permission for them to conduct whatever studies they wanted to do on my 10-acre-parcel which included the creek. At the time, Ann Hunt was conducting transects on my neighbor's parcel, the Fund for Animals. A mutual friend, Renée Martin introduced Ann and I. Ann then extended transects to continue through my parcel as well.

My current tracking and nature awareness activities are: member of Executive Committee and SDTT Board of Directors. I'll sometimes participate on the Ramona Grasslands and Mount Woodson transects when held on weekends.

Other than tracking and nature awareness, my favorite hobbies and activities are something that I had to learn to let go after being left with a permanent disability resulting from an auto accident

caused by a drunk driver in a Mack truck while on a business trip in Washington, D.C. I loved gardening and playing the piano and 5 string banjo. I also enjoyed playing softball so much that in 1978, we were National Champions. Pitching a ‘no hitter’ in slow pitch softball was quite a rush. I was also a first degree black belt in Hapkido, the Korean martial art of self defense. Today, as a member of the Ramona Community Planning Group, I find myself actively participating in the political arena. Although it’s well within my physical abilities, it’s a world that I never dreamed of stepping into before. Instead of growing a vegetable garden, I care for the oaks and cedars that I planted on the parcel.

My favorite book(s) and/or movie(s) is/are: I like watching science fiction movies and poker tournaments. It would be fascinating to actually play the game one day.

My favorite food(s) is/are: seafood gumbo, jambalaya, fried shrimp, raw oysters and Italian food. I’ll take a cappuccino any day.

My circle of close family/friends are folks who knew me before I had to learn how to breathe, roll over, walk, reach, sit up, lean, torso twist, look down, etc. at 38 years old. They supported my efforts to step back into life and they accept whatever I have to offer at any given time. The recovery transition took well over two years as I figured out how to work a full work day; 6 hours more than the best limitations predicted.

If I could take a vacation anywhere in the world, I would go to the Himalayas.

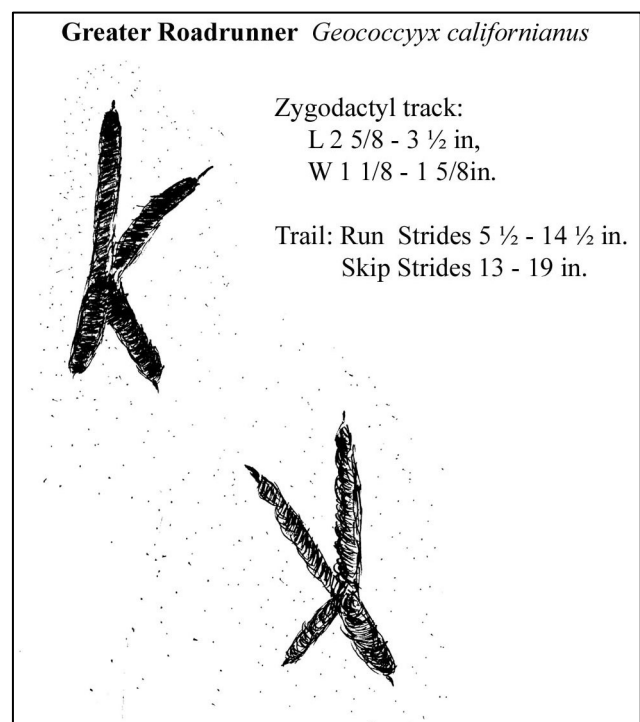
If I could share one more thing about myself it would be that I utilize the benefits of a ‘can do’ attitude to go beyond the norm.

## The Roadrunner

By MTRP Ranger Heidi Gutknecht

(Reprinted with permission from the Mission Trails Regional Park News – Volume 16, Number 3)

The Roadrunner, made famous by the Warner Brothers cartoon, is truly an amazing bird, and not just because he is fast and able to escape those “wily” coyotes. With two toes in front and two toes in back, Roadrunners are members of the Cuckoo Family (Cuculidae) and belong to the subfamily, Neomorphinae (the ground cuckoos). Since they can only keep their large bodies airborne for a few seconds at a time, they prefer to walk or run (with a funny wobble) and can reach speeds up to 17 mph. This great speed enables roadrunners to prey upon rattlesnakes! With its wings spread out to distract the rattlesnake, the roadrunner will quickly snatch it up by its tail and repeatedly bash its head on the ground until it is dead. The roadrunner then swallows as much of the snake as it can at once and goes about its business, while the rest of the snake’s body, which



remains dangling out of its mouth, is slowly swallowed as it is digested.

Roadrunners are, for the most part, strictly carnivorous, feeding on lizards, snakes, rodents, insects, scorpions and birds. During the winter, when prey is scarce, they will resort to subsidizing their diet with plant material. To ensure there is enough food to raise young, Roadrunners nest after the rains increase their food supply. Since there is only one rainy season in the Mojave and Sonoran deserts of California, they nest only once, in spring. In the Sonoran desert of Arizona, they will breed again in August or September, after the summer rains. When mating season arrives, the male Roadrunner will dance around the female and offer food to entice her. Both the male and female gather sticks to make the nest, but only the female actually builds it (in a bush, small tree, or cactus). Both parents also incubate the eggs, but especially the male. Up to 12 eggs are laid over a few days, which hatch after about 18 to 20 days, but only 3 or 4 of the young are usually fledged from the nest.

Roadrunners inhabit areas with scattered cover of desert scrub, dry brush, or chaparral. They are extremely well adapted for living in these environments in a variety of ways. For example, water in their feces is reabsorbed before it is excreted, and during the hottest part of the day, the Roadrunner is half as active as usual. Also, instead of eliminating excess salt in its urine, like most other birds do, the Roadrunner loses its surplus salt through a nasal gland. And, being carnivorous, much moisture is obtained from its food.

The Roadrunner is New Mexico's state bird and is also called the "Chaparral Cock." A good place to catch a glimpse of this amazing bird is along the trail out to the Grasslands, from the East Fortuna Staging Area. You may also hear their descending dove-like coos, or the sound of their mandibles clattering together. Next time you're out here hiking, keep your eyes and ears open, and you just might be treated to a Roadrunner sighting!

## Upcoming Events

The **Fall Wildlife Survey** period starts October 20. If you are interested in helping with wildlife survey transects or any other activities, email Lani at [info@sdtt.org](mailto:info@sdtt.org).

**Wednesday September 19 and Saturday September 22:** Intermediate Tracker Naturalist Class, 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm Wednesday and 8:00 am to 6:00 pm Saturday at the Ranch House. \$50 fee, \$10 discount for SDTT donor members. Contact Rick Botta at (858)472-2220 or [lpitt@cox.net](mailto:lpitt@cox.net) to sign up as a student or to help out.

**Wednesday, October 3:** Speaker Series, Adriaan Louw on Trailing: Tales and Techniques from South Africa, 6:30 to 9:00 PM at the Mission Trails Regional Park Visitor Center. \$10 admission. Call 760/715-4102 to reserve your spot.

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

**Saturday, October 20:** Wildlife Survey Volunteer Training, 9:45 am to 4:00 pm at the Ranch House in Peñasquitos Canyon.

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

**Wednesday November 14 and Saturday November 17:** Advanced Tracker Naturalist Class, 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm Friday and 8:00 am to 6:00 pm Saturday at the Ranch House. \$50 fee, \$10 discount for SDTT donor members. Contact Rick Botta at (858)472-2220 or [lpitt@cox.net](mailto:lpitt@cox.net) to sign up as a student or to help out.

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

The 2007 Donor Membership drive is still underway. Are you a donor member of the SDTT? It's not too late! 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](http://www.sdtt.org) for a membership form if you don't already have one.

Please send submissions to the Clear Print to Lani Noreke at [info@sdtt.org](mailto:info@sdtt.org).