



NATURE NEWS

Welcome to Nature News

Through this quarterly newsletter we hope to encourage you to **CONNECT** with us through our many programs, **EXPLORE** the wonders of Nature, and help us **PRESERVE** Orange County wildlands. Enjoy!



Proceeds to benefit our education
and wildlife conservation programs!



7th Annual Turkey Trot on the Ranch

Thanksgiving Day - Thursday, November 23, 2023

10K - 8:00am

5K - 8:30am

Little Gobbler's 1K - 10:00am

Rancho Mission Viejo's 7th annual Turkey Trot on The Ranch features a 10K, 5K, and a Little Gobbler's 1K that takes participants through the beautiful pathways and walkways of the Community of Rancho Mission Viejo.

All proceeds from Turkey Trot on The Ranch will benefit our environmental education and wildlife conservation programs. This run will happen, rain or shine!



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Rambles About Nature

The Nature of Awe

In my early 20s, I took a job as an outdoor science school instructor, working in the San Bernardino mountains. On the first night of each week, we took students out for an astronomy night. My first week with students was with a group of boys from an urban area of Orange County. It was winter

in the mountains and that night was very cold and breathtakingly clear. The boys were inside putting on hats and jackets, and I was waiting outside for them. As the door opened, two boys bounded out the door, but the third boy stopped suddenly in the doorway and stared open-mouthed at the night sky. He was simply awestruck by the night sky – of stars, planets, and the milky way.



A Banana slug stares in awe at a little girl...or the other way 'round.

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Laura's Line



Fall 2023

Hi everyone! The last days of summer have passed and fall is here. For most of the Nature Reserve's monitoring program it means that field surveys are complete and report writing is underway. The exception is our grazing monitoring. Cattle grazing on Rancho Mission Viejo (RMV) is conducted according to a Grazing Management Plan or GMP which discusses such topics as grazing pattern (where cattle are grazed and at what time of year), stocking rates (how many cattle) and annual forage productivity (how much grass has grown). RMV practices rotational grazing whereby cattle are moved across the ranch to different pastures depending on the time of year. This is why cattle are sometimes visible on the landscape and other times not.

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Volunteer Corner

Become a Nature Reserve Certified Volunteer!

Take your volunteering to the next level. Train to become a Certified Volunteer. Certified Volunteers are specially trained volunteers who help in the following areas, depending on their interest:

- Lead and co-lead programs
- Monitor and assess trails
- Represent The Nature Reserve at Community Events

To learn more, sign up for the Virtual Informational Meeting on November 1.

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Volunteer Orientation and Training

Take the first step to becoming a certified Nature Reserve volunteer. Current volunteers may join us for updates on our volunteer program and connect with other volunteers!

Next session: November 11

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Species Spotlight



Coast Live Oak

Coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) is the most common oak in coastal California and a Covered Species in our Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). These large drought-resistant evergreen trees typically occur throughout the lower elevations (<5,000 feet above sea level) and occupy deep sandy or loamy soils on slopes, alluvial terraces, flats, and canyon bottoms. Coast live oaks can reach 30 to 80 feet in height and commonly form a densely branched trunk with branches extending to almost ground level and a broad dense crown that can extend up to 130 feet across.

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Community Connections



Meet Tom Millington

Introducing Tom Millington, Director, Environmental Compliance at Rancho Mission Viejo.

Tom interned with RMV back in 2011 following graduation from UC Santa Barbara before going on to spend twelve years working for Michael Baker International as Biological Resources Manager/Senior Biologist. Tom is an experienced field biologist with survey certifications for several rare and listed species, some of which occur on RMV. Tom will be supporting Reserve Manager, Laura Coley Eisenberg, in the Habitat Reserve Management and Monitoring Program, and in overall environmental compliance. Tom will also help with Nature Reserve outreach events and education programs, so look for him out on the trails. In addition to enjoying the outdoors, Tom is a big fan of golf and baseball and has also been coaching teams in North Mission Viejo, South Mission Viejo, and San Juan Capistrano little leagues for the past several years.



Environmental Science Internship 2023-24

This is the fifth year The Nature Reserve has hosted its internship for local high school students. The High School Environmental Science Internship is intended to provide local high school juniors and seniors considering a career in environmental conservation and management with a variety of field experiences as well as meet professionals involved in restoring and maintaining Orange County's cultural and natural resources. High School Juniors and Seniors compete for a limited number of places via an application process that includes an interview and written essay. Afterwards, interns will take their experiences to produce a social media post, highlighting their experience.

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Outdoor Explorers

Let's hear it for cooler temperatures, leaves tumbling to the ground, and fall exploration. Enjoy some time outside this autumn with this downloadable Fall Fun Scavenger Hunt.

[FALL FUN!](#)



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