THE NATURE RESERVE
at Rancho Mission Viejo

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!

Let's Grow Together!



DONATE TODAY TO END OF YEAR GIVING

Rambles About Nature

The Flutter Mill

For as long as I can remember, my stepmom has given me a book for Christmas. It is a gift I look forward to every year. Most years it is just one book, but sometimes a series of books – a holiday bonus. Like the year she gave me

Volunteer Corner

The Little House on The Prairie series. I remember running my finger along the wrapping paper to feel how many books were in the box – eight. Another year she gave me a series of seven books. On the outside of the wrapping paper was a bumper sticker with a drawing of an old lamppost and words that read, “There’s no place like Narnia”. I had no idea what that meant but I couldn’t wait to find out.



Illustration by N.C. Wyeth

When I was eight years old, she gave me *The Yearling* by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. It is still one of my favorite books and every couple of years I sit down and read it again. Like I did as a kid, I love the descriptions of the backwoods of Florida in the late 1800’s. Early in the book the main character Jody finds himself deserting his chores to play down by the creek. While at the creek he builds himself a flutter mill, a small water wheel made of sticks and Palmetto fronds that spins when he puts it in the flowing water of the creek. Jody lays down to watch the waterwheel turn.

READ MORE

Laura’s Line



Winter 2024

The purpose of biological monitoring on the Nature Reserve is to detect change over time. In order to detect change over time in either a species or a vegetation community, one must make scientific observations. These observations must be done according to a methodology that produces statistically valid results. For species that are listed as threatened or endangered, and therefore by definition not common on the landscape, this can be a challenge. This is where the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the SSHCP Science Panel and contracted experts help us decide what is the best methodology to use for any given species or vegetation community.

For the California gnatcatcher, a federally listed bird species, we use what is called a spatially balanced sampling protocol. We begin with a distribution map of coastal sage scrub (the preferred habitat of the gnatcatcher) and use a geographic information



Trail Volunteers Maintain Habitat Reserve

One of our most critical responsibilities is to ensure that the trails are open, and free of obstacles such as fallen branches, for visitors attending Nature Reserve programs. For a growing habitat reserve, it is a big job and we are always looking for volunteers to help.
The Nature Reserve schedules regular trail maintenance,"Trail Clearing & Weeding" events throughout the year. We welcome groups such as Scouts, corporate groups, philanthropy groups, families and individuals. These events are typically on a Saturday morning and we can accomplish the same work in a few hours that would otherwise take days for our staff alone.

READ MORE

FEB 8 TRAIL CLEARING & WEEDING

Staff Picks

systems (GIS) tool with a set of specified criteria to generate a non-biased sample point. The figure linked HERE illustrates what a single selected point looks like in GIS.

READ MORE

Species Spotlight



White-tailed Kite (Elanus leucurus)

The white-tailed kite (Elanus leucurus) is a fully protected species in California. This small hawk is slightly larger than a crow, about 14–17 inches in length with a wingspan of 35–40 inches. They typically weigh 250–380 g (8.8–13.4 oz). They have a pale gray body, black shoulders, a white head, and long tail. The wings are narrow and pointed. It has deep red eyes and a black beak. White-tailed kites get their name from a distinct hovering behavior known as “kiting.” They beat their wings while facing into the wind, giving the appearance of hanging in the air like a toy kite as they watch for prey moving on the ground.

READ MORE

Community Connections



Community Science through Birdwatching

Bud Carter, a regular Nature Reserve volunteer, participated in Project Phoenix, a study of the effects of smoke on birds in neighborhoods across California, Oregon, and Washington. For several months, Bud observed birds each week for at least 10 minutes in the same spot, noting how many and what kinds of birds he saw. He then submitted his observations to eBird (linked HERE), a website and app developed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology where birdwatchers can upload checklists of birds to contribute data to science, conservation and education.

Bud shared how he became involved with Project Phoenix, “Obviously, after over 31 years in the fire service, I was keenly



Our Favorite Places to Observe

As we focus on mindful observations this season, we asked our staff to share their favorite place to simply sit and observe nature. A place where their mind is at ease and where the beauty and curiosities of the natural world take over their thoughts. Here are our favorite spots to be still and to take in nature's ever-changing processes.

STAFF ANSWERS

Outdoor Explorers



Observing Nature with Kids

Children are natural experts in observing. For babies and toddlers, the world is new and therefore a place to be explored at all times. As kids grow, they may need more directed activities to develop keen observation skills in

drawn to getting involved in this project. My first year...

READ MORE

nature. Go outdoors and see what piques your child's interest. Observing involves using our senses of sight, smell, taste, hearing, and touch. Have fun with these simple activities, focused on using different senses to practice observing.

OBSERVATION ACTIVITIES





THE NATURE RESERVE at Rancho Mission Viejo

CONTACT US: staff@rmvreserve.org 949-489-9778

Share this email:

Manage your preferences | **Opt out** using **TrueRemove**™
Got this as a forward? **Sign up** to receive our future emails.
View this email **online**.

P.O. Box 9
San Juan Capistrano, CA | 92693 US

This email was sent to .
To continue receiving our emails, add us to your address book.

emma

Subscribe to our email list.