



Least Bell's Vireo's Voice

Whittier Narrows Nature Center Association Newsletter

October 2015

Volunteers Recognized



Members of the WNNCA attending the Annual Volunteer Recognition at Eaton Canyon Saturday September 12. Very enjoyable event.



Gregorio Gonzalez, receiving his Volunteer of the Year award, in the company of Lou Orr, our President, Jack Levenberg, NCA president, and Hayden Sohm, assistant Director at the LA County Park and Rec. Dept.



In this photo, Lou appears with our newer docents, Gregorio Gonzalez, Maria Cervantes, Ashley Barajas, and Peter Dille. Docents are the backbone of our Association!

This month:

October 3. 8:00 AM. Docent Training: Birding with Mickey Long. (Please note time.)

October 10. 8:00 AM. Bird walk with Ed Barajas.
ALSO: Docent training: Native Plants ID with Ann Croissant.

October 17. 8:00 Nature walk. Docent led.
ALSO: Docent training: History of the area with Paul Spitzeri.
ALSO: 5:30 PM. Night hike.

October 21. 10:00 AM. WNNCA Exec. board meeting.

October 24. 8:00 AM. Bird Walk with Ed Barajas.
ALSO: 10:00 AM. Docent training. Native history and plants use with Matt Teutimez.
ALSO: 5:30 PM. Night Hike.

October 31. 8:00 AM. Introduction to Nature Photography with Lou Orr.

Our email:

www:wnnca@att.net

To all members of the Whittier Narrows Nature Center Association:

You all would have heard about the project to build a brand new facility in the site of our beloved Nature Center, occupying a lot more land with buildings and a big parking lot. This is a multimillion dollars project and The Discovery Center Authority has decided to begin executing the project in stages in order to make it economically viable for them. Phase 1 will consist of the construction of the new parking lot and the wetland component of the project in the site of our present parking lot, starting in January 2016, bringing major changes in this natural area in the coming year. Most of the land around the Nature Center belongs to the Army Corp of Engineers, and we have never found out whether this party has given consent to the changes or not.

The Whittier Narrows Nature Center Association has never supported this plan, and it has even gone as far as presenting the Discovery Center Authority with an alternative plan, designed by an environmental motivated architect, for the improvement and refurbishing the existing facility, without diminishing the present amount of open space.

The Association firmly believes that the best education for children and adults alike is the experience of being in open spaces, not inside a building with learning exhibits and pictures. We will already anticipate a diminishing of that contact with Nature, since it will not be feasible to schedule school tours after December 15 because of construction. It might be argued that this situation might be temporary but it is undeniable that the execution of this project will provoke profound changes not only in the manner this natural area is utilized but also in the role of the Association as well.

Just as a reminder of our main purpose, this is a quote from our mission statement; **“We were founded to enrich the educational and scientific knowledge of our community. Our primary mission is to develop in children and adults an appreciation of the natural world and to preserve Whittier Narrows Nature Center as a natural area for future generations.”**

The Association is endeavoring to have a web site available shortly, in which there will access to all matter pertaining this developments, and all matters related to the Association and the Natural Area.

We continue to receive letters from people that have been influenced by our natural area in ways that have taken them closer to Nature. We are very proud of this and consider it one of our highest achievements.

I was raised within the working class community of South El Monte. Earliest memories of my childhood are between El Monte to South Central LA, shuttled by my abuelita while my parents worked overtime to provide for our family. It was on the miles of paved landscape, a landscape once fertile and inhabited by the wild and native, where my earliest memories of miles of graffiti, pavement, homework and quarrels in the back seat of an old jalopy were formed. My early memories of the Whittier Narrows are dreamy. I remember birds with long legs, squirrels and the lush green trees. It was a vast place that had lakes, geese, trails and incredible playgrounds of sea creatures and rocket ships. Within that, I also remember the Whittier Narrows Nature Center, as a special place where the trees stood like cathedrals, and each tree was a home to a chorus of songbirds— it was cool, secluded and meditative – wild and teeming with life- a sanctuary for those living in the hot and dry urban landscape. I remembered the Narrows again as a student at Rio Hondo. Inspired by an Environmental Science class, I wanted to reconnect with the Nature Center to find an opportunity to learn more about our native landscape. Revisiting it again after so many years, I had a new awareness. Unlike so many intercity children, I had been to the Sierras and Cascades and I knew what deep wilderness was like. And still I could sense that the narrows were just as special as the wild of Yosemite. After a few visits, I became aware of the plans to develop the Nature Center into a water conservation museum. It was obvious from the planning documents left by the planning agency that theirs was a vision that would destroy the natural area. So, I became an avid supporter in giving landscape a voice with the Friends of the Whittier Narrows Natural Area. I spoke for the wildlife but also for my community. Going door to door, I learned that people in our community had no idea of the plans for a giant multimillion-dollar building that would replace over 30 mature trees in our wildlife sanctuary. Since then, I left the area to pursue my education and career. Inspired by my work with the FWNNA I pursued an education in restoration and biodiversity. I received my B.S. in Horticulture and worked as a botanist in field research in the Sierras and Mojave Desert on projects concerning climate change and rare plant habitat loss. Most recently, I have just started a new career working for the UC Davis Arboretum & Public Garden as their Plant Records Specialists. It is an exciting time as our goal as an institution is to begin developing a program that will support students in research concerning rare and endangered plant conservation for the state. California is a biological hotspot and every inch of landscape we preserve will support efforts to preserve biodiversity. We are at a crossroads, and we need to anticipate and prepare for the global climate changes ahead. In my heart, I know that my work with the FWNNA was a catalyst in developing the person I am today and thank every volunteer for the work they do to preserve the unique and rare

Ruben Castaneda, B A in Biology from U C Davis

My youth and adolescence took place in Montebello, CA. where trickery, fun and games were taking hold. Not so far away, Montebello High School, was from Whittier Narrows Natural Area yet a veil shimmered between us. Out of high school I attended Rio Hondo College then transferred to the University of California, Davis with Animal Biology as my field of study. Ever since I was a child, and as far back as my memory permits me, my devotion to learn about life had vastly increased to my thoughts of today. With enormous vacillation, deciding between General Biology as my major or Animal Biology, my love for the Animal Kingdom took its reign.

My love for life has been inside of me since my first memories. And my actions and perseverance have guided me to the Whittier Narrows Natural Area. And they keep bringing me back! My first time in Whittier Narrows was during my Fall semester of 2008. Whittier Narrows is located only a few miles from home. Before that, I would just imagine skyscrapers, homes, stores, cars. Trees were only on the sidewalks. Not until I arrived at the WNNNA did I start viewing LA as a diverse community where you have these beautiful pieces of land right at the step of our Los Angeles big city backyard.

My first time at Whittier Narrows I would ask myself, "Why is this place so dry, where is all the green you'd normally see in natural areas?" As I have learned that many factors have played into what WNNNA is today. One thing is for sure, the WNNNA is located in Southern California, a Mediterranean type of climate, nowhere near the equator with its rain forests. The best thing about it here is my imagination that one day I will encounter a coyote! The Whittier Narrows Natural Area has not only taught me about biology, but it has also guided me in life. As I have gathered my thoughts here about planning my future and getting past my personal struggles. Whittier Narrows has influenced me to strive for the greater good for myself, my family and my community. Being part of Rio Hondo College, two of my Biology courses had ties with Whittier Narrows. The WNNNA has empowered my journey as a Biologist, providing a hands-on experience for my field of study: animal behavior.

And another letter:

During my first couple of years at South El Monte High School, I was completely oblivious to what was across the street from my school. I would see trees covering the whole side of that block, but never thought much of it. I never had a conscious relationship with nature, seeing as I grew up in a suburban/urban setting and with parents who were not the outdoors-y type. That changed quite dramatically when I found what the other side of the street really contained.

I made my first trip there as a volunteer for a club I joined called the Future Business Leaders of America. It was part of a project to incorporate more green initiatives in business education. We participated in the San Gabriel River Clean-up organized by Terry Young. Being able to take care of nature through something simple, such as picking up trash, was a unique feeling. This may have been the experience that transformed me from being indifferent about nature to a nature lover, and ultimately, an environmentalist.

Ever since that day, I spent many afternoons in high school volunteering at the nature center, either maintaining the plants and roads, taking care of the animals, or helping with demonstrations to visitors and school children. I fell in love with the place; it was my favorite place to be. That was why I was torn when I heard about the plans for the Discovery Center and what it entailed. I didn't want this pocket of nature to be urbanized.

I started participating in the meetings and activities of the Friends of the Whittier Narrow Natural Area and delved into what protecting natural areas involved. From then on, I nurtured my goal of contributing to the protection of natural areas through increasing our knowledge of the plant life. I aim to be a researcher that seeks to increase our understanding of the natural areas many people disregard and ultimately destroy. Through greater understanding comes greater appreciation for nature. With this belief, I hope that the conservation of important threatened ecosystem takes a turn for the better. It's crazy to know this all started with my high school volunteer experience. The Whittier Narrows Nature Center is still one of my favorite places to be.

Vera Chang



From left to right, Joseph Ruvalcaba, Rebeca Saldana, Jack Levenberg and Hayden Sohm at the Eaton Canyon Volunteer Recognition Awards. Rebecca received recognition as Youth Volunteer of the Year from Whittier Narrows Nature Center. Rebecca is an extraordinary worker and always willing to do what is necessary and always with a lovely smile.

Whittier Narrows Nature Center Association

Official Ballot 2015 Board of Directors

Please check ONE name for each position, or write in your own choice for each board position.

President: Write in _____

Vice President: Grace Allen ____

Write in: _____

Treasurer: Kathy Lee ____

Write in: (must meet qualifications) _____

Recording/Corresponding Secretary: Mireya Parravicini ____

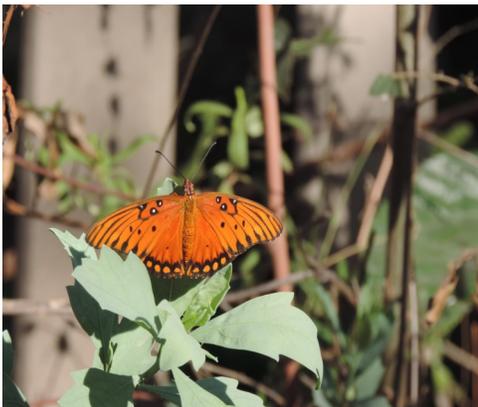
Write in: _____

Ballots must be received no later than Saturday, October 24, 2015 at 12:00 PM at which time they will be counted.

Ballots may be mailed to: WNNCA 1000 N Durfee Ave South El Monte, CA 91733. Or emailed to:

WNNCA@ATT.NET. Or personally deposited into the ballot box located at the above address.

**INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS
AND
POTLUCK LUNCHEON**



**High Noon
At the
Picnic Shelter**

October 24, 2015

**Join the fun. Join the Whittier Narrows Nature Center Associates.
Membership includes out monthly newsletter and a 10% discount in our gift shop.**

The Whittier Narrows Nature Center Associates is a volunteer 501(c)3 nonprofit organization actively looking for new members. WNNCA is a chapter of the Nature Center Associates, a nonprofit support organization of the natural area park system of Los Angeles County.

We were founded to help enrich educational and scientific knowledge in the community. Our primary mission is to help foster an appreciation of the natural world in children and adults and to help preserve the Whittier Narrows Natural Area and the county's other natural areas for future generations.

Our activities include leading school group tours, answering visitors' questions, arranging and leading classes, planting and maintaining plants around the nature center, helping in the nature center museum and in the gift shop, performing light office work and answering phones, and more.

Membership application

Date: _____

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Annual membership levels (circle one)

\$30 - Individual \$15 - Senior (Over 62)

\$45 - Family \$15 - Student

\$75 - Friend Associate

\$100 - Patron Associate

\$250 - Supporting Associate

\$1,000 - Golden Oak Associate

Send with check, payable to the address below.

The Whittier Narrows Natural Area and Nature Center are located within the unincorporated area of Los Angeles County in the Supervisory District of Gloria Molina. The natural area and nature center are operated by the County of Los Angeles, Department of Parks and Recreation, in partnership with the Whittier Narrows Nature Center Associates.



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