



CACHUMA FLYER

CACHUMA LAKE NATURE CENTER NEWSLETTER

OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS

When a class of docents graduates often there is a lack of understanding regarding their role in the Docent Organization. Many opportunities exist for participation and new Docents may have their own plans for original projects--not developed previously by other members.

Participants may employ a variety of talents from office work to construction; they may supervise the Nature Center, operate the gift shop, design and build Nature Center exhibits, conduct hikes, operate the boat tours, plan, develop and show their own slide show for Saturday night Fireside Theatre, assist with Thursday night Astronomy Programs, conduct children's programs, operate the projector and play "host" at Friday night Film showings, plan and build trails and write accompanying guides.

Docents are encouraged to use their own ingenuity to plan exhibits and programs, such as children's programs or Saturday evening programs. The Nature Center has much bare space which needs displays. Using their own expertise and following their own particular interest, docents may call on one another for assistance in construction, design and financing. No programs exist at this time that are specifically aimed at children. Story hours with material reflecting the local area, art or crafts projects incorporating native materials, walks to illustrate simple nature principles, are examples of programs that any docent may plan.

Docents with a library of slides may wish to organize a program of approximately 45 minutes to one hour in length. Topics may be wide-ranging from simple travelogue format, illustrating points of interest in the U.S. (particularly

parks or wilderness areas), to other topics such as nature or history. Any docent wishing to do such a program should contact Neal Taylor for scheduling and discussion of the topic.

Essentially, the opportunities for docents to be creative and active are endless. Experienced docents will assist new docents in whatever way possible, for the asking

SPOTLIGHT ON THE DOCENTS: DON WIMPRESS.

Don Wimpress is a native Californian born in Riverside but brought up in a rural area north of Glendale. From childhood, he has been interested in the natural sciences and in fact, had his own native plant garden and a "museum" in his backyard, displaying his collection of rocks and minerals which he collected at various mining sites around the state with his father. The plants, lifted from the nearby open country, fossils, and other exhibits were carefully labeled and shown in the building (read that as "shed") which Don and his brother shared in the backyard of their family's home.

With plans of becoming a National Park Naturalist, he did volunteer work in the Giant Forest Museum in Sequoia in 1939. At Glendale Junior College he took many courses in the natural sciences--biology, zoology, paleontology, mineralogy, geology, and botany.

When World War II began, he went to work at Cal Tech in a rocket propellant extrusion pilot plant, after which he served in the army, graduating from Fort Benning, Georgia, as a Second Lieutenant, Infantry.

By the time his service obligation was completed, he was married to Betty and had two children. Believing that his fortune at that time lay with the aerospace industry and not with the life of a naturalist, he got a degree in mechanical engineering at UC Berkley and then worked thirty years at AiResearch in Los Angeles.

After retiring in 1979, he and Betty moved to Los Olivos, and says Don, "I am now enjoying what I wanted to do in the first place."

Don is responsible for developing the pamphlet which accompanies the self-guided nature trail. He wrote the material that appears on the posts along the trail and designed and built the stand for fresh plant displays. The astronomy night programs have benefitted from his knowledge and participation; Neal Taylor believes they make a good team: "I entertain the folks and Don teaches them." Don recently constructed a portable podium for use at astronomy programs, which enables the speaker to see star charts or other written material while in the astronomy viewing field.

Don is the editor and instigator of a pamphlet which will provide a source of information on a wide variety of topics concerning the Lake area.

As a member of the Los Padres Interpretive Association, and the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden Don continues to increase and to share with many others his knowledge of the local natural world.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We are very pleased to have completed training and graduated our third class of docents. Many of you have exhibits you are working on but the field is wide open to on any projects of special interest to you.

You have also signed up to cover the Nature Center on weekends this summer, which is vital to the success of the Center.

We have set on going monthly meetings and work parties for the fourth Saturday each month. We look forward to everyone participating in the continuing growth and development of our Nature Center.

Connie Howerton

YOUNGSTERS BECOME THE LEADERS

The United Nations in New York City recently played host to three children and a teacher from the Los Olivos-based Family School; however, the important factor in this to our readers is that these students received an international award for work which they did here at Lake Cachuma. The award from Kids Saving Earth, a world-wide children's conservation organization, included paid trips to New York for three children and teacher, Sandy Hanes. These third, fourth, and fifth grade students under her direction write the Junior Pathfinder, a children's newspaper which is distributed free of charge at the Lake and which contains articles on the environment, natural science, and native Americans of the area. Additionally, the group has done much to increase awareness of littering and recycling and have donated many hours of work at the Nature Center.

A coloring book drawn by the students for children is on sale at the Nature Center.

Founded in 1974, the school is now located on the Midland School Grounds. Believing that education is an extension of the family, this school endeavors to simulate the learning atmosphere of a stimulating and loving family. Active parent participation is encouraged.

AN ENCOUNTER WITH AN UNFRIENDLY PLANT

Growing up in a semi-rural area between Ventura and Ojai, your editor spent a great deal of her childhood play time in vacant lots, hillsides and barrancas. "Stinger weeds" were well known plants among kids of that neighborhood, just like "sour grass", which we consumed each spring, and poison oak which sometimes put us to bed.

Recently while walking on the "flats" east of the docks at the Lake I noticed a large plant, four feet tall, or so, which was new since the rains. Grasping the stem for a closer look, immediately, I knew it was the old stinging nettle from my childhood, although bigger and leathery (like me) than on our previous meeting. For several days my fingers itched and finally a few blisters formed on the back of them. My skin's response was considerably more dramatic in middle-age than in childhood.

Nettles (*Urtica*) have hairs on the stems which are hollow tubes ending in a bulb, containing formic acid. When a curious adult or an unwitting child grasps the stem, hairs penetrate the skin, the tips break off and acid is released into the skin. The mechanism is similar to a hypodermic needle. Acid causes the skin irritation and inflammation

CHILI DOGS AND A FILM FOR DOCENTS

Docents are encouraged to attend a showing of the thirty minute film, Cave Paintings of the Chumash, at Family Movie Night, July 26, in the outdoor amphitheater at the Park.

The film illustrates some history of Chumash paintings, including the Painted Cave at the top of San Marcos Pass, which is considered to be an outstanding specimen from the period of peak development of the native people of this area.

Docents are invited to come to the Nature Center at 6:00 p.m. that evening, bringing a salad to share and your own beverage. Chili dogs will be served by the docent Executive Board to members, who may camp out if they wish, since there will be a regular meeting the following morning.

The film, The Loon's Necklace, will also be shown that evening.

FILM SCHEDULE FOR JULY AND AUGUST

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| July 12 | Camouflage in Nature
Beaver Valley |
| July 19 | Ishi in Two Worlds
Call It Courage |
| July 26 | Cave Paintings of the Chumash
The Loon's Necklace |
| August 2 | Vanishing Prairie (three reels) |
| August 9 | The Night Sky
The Milky Way |
| August 16 | Wild and Fragile Islands of the S.B. Channel
Unsinkable Sea Otter |
| August 23 | The Golden Fish
Migrating Monarchs |
| August 30 | Paddle to the Sea
Legend of the Boy and the Eagle |

Films are shown each Friday evening at the Fireside Theater at 8:30 p.m. All docents, campers, or day visitors are welcome; there is no charge. Dress warmly, because evenings may be cool, even when the daytime temperatures are high..

NATURE CENTER MASTER PLANNING

The Cachuma Lake Foundation Board has employed Brian Cearnal Associates, Inc., Architects to develop a master plan for the Nature Center building and surrounding area. In order to incorporate docent ideas for the building's usage in the Plan, a workshop has been organized at which members of the Master Plan Committee (includes specific docents and board members) will discuss thoughts with representatives of the firm.

The plan and renderings produced as a result of this half-day meeting will be used as fund-raising tools, as well as guidelines for the future.

COMMON MUSTARD IS UNCOMMONLY INTERESTING

This has been an exceptional year for wildflowers in the area surrounding Lake Cachuma; the miraculous rains of March apparently occurred at just the right time to produce optimum displays of wildflowers. Approximately fifty different blossoming plants have been exhibited in the wildflower racks at the Nature Center since March 30, with additional species coming into bloom each week.

Although not an unusual plant to southern Californians, mustard (*Brassica nigra*) has bloomed in an intense display of yellow widespread over fields and hillsides. Introduced into California probably by the the Catholic missionaries, this species is a native of Europe and Asia and is probably the same plant of the Biblical parable of the mustard seed. A legend exists that early explorers or mission founders scattered the seed as they moved northward from Mexico through California to mark their route through the countryside.

Botanically mustard is closely related to broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, kale, rutabaga, and turnips. The condiment mustard used on hamburgers and hotdogs is made from a flour from the ground seeds of this plant. Mustard plaster, common in earlier times, were also a product of this flour. The young leaves may be eaten as a green.

According to Berglund and Bosby in "The Edible Wild," the name mustard is a Briton corruption of "must seeds." Must is new wine in which Romans ground the seeds to make a condiment.



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