



CACHUMA FLYER

CACHUMA LAKE NATURE CENTER NEWSLETTER

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EXHIBIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

From: Linda Taylor, Exhibit Chairperson

Exhibit development for the '96-'97 fiscal year was vastly impacted by donations to the Foundation of both exhibit specimens and funds

Receipt of \$5,000.00 from the Santa Barbara-based Wood-Claeyssen Foundation has enabled the CLF to arrange for mounting of a Mountain Lion, a Mule Deer, and an additional small animal. Additionally, these funds have provided for the purchase of materials to build showcases for mounted specimens.

California Department of Fish and Game through their local officer, Frank Milozzi, has loaned to the Center a Grizzly bear skin with head and claws. (Occasionally, the Department will remove for short time period this specimen to use for their own purposes.

Mr. and Mrs. Michael Lum of Norco, California, donated mounts of a black bear, a gray squirrel, a wild turkey, and a raccoon. Cases have been constructed to protect and display these specimens to their best advantage.

Peg Coleman, a Santa Barbara artist, has donated generously of her time to complete one showcase mural and is working on a second. Docent **Jim Smith** designed and supervised construction of cases for the upright bear and for the Grizzly skin. Docents **Don Wimpres** and **Charlie Jack** were primarily responsible for design and construction of the larger, "mural case."

Charlie Jack, George Hughes, and Fred Blaser cooperated to build a more effective display area in the entry hall. Removing built-in wooden bookshelves, they installed adjustable glass shelves, a plexiglas front, and lighting. A delicate exhibit demonstrating how a spider builds his web was created by **Neal Taylor**.

In the plant room an exhibit on Plant Communities of the Watershed explaining plants that grow in chaparral, riparian, marsh, oak savanna, and oak woodland and plant adaptations to the various habitats was installed.

An on-going project has been development of an book of photographs and text on Watershed plants. Two copies of the book are available: one for the public and one for Docent education.

Other exhibits created this year are

- a matching game using wooden label blocks and Cachuma-relevant objects.
- a comprehensive display regarding construction of Bradbury Dam, its history, cost, and the communities it serves.
- an explanation of summer solstice.
- mushrooms in the rainy season.
- explanatory material on the new Junior Ranger Program.
- text and pictures for two "Birds of the Week" displays.

Existing exhibits which have been revised, repaired or expanded are

- changing color of leaves in the fall.
- Marina and Vista Point showcases (three times each).
- Chumash toys.
- Acorn Woodpecker.
- bird window pictures.
- plant labels and plant of the week text.
- feather exhibit (relocated and re-formatted)
- Chumash uses of plants.
- "Buzzer Board"--complete replacement of pictures, text, and other improvements.
- maps of the Park and Lake in front hall.
- mercury mining.

Other projects indirectly related to exhibits addressed this year are

- development and maintenance of a native plant garden and associated drip watering system.
- alteration of aquaria installations to improve access for cleaning.
- design and erection of a large Nature Center sign.
- research and planning of a bridge for the Oak Canyon Nature Trail.
- re-writing Oak Canyon Trail Guide.
- clean-up of Oak Canyon Trail.
- maintenance of a file of resource articles and pictures.

Over the years questionnaires have been distributed to visitors to indicate the exhibits they enjoy. Mounted animals repeatedly are the favored displays.

In order to have mounted animals in our possession, permits are required from the Department of Fish and Game. Currently, an application to add a fawn, a badger, and a California Quail to our permit is in process.

A young, roadkill Mountain Lion (for which a permit has been issued) is at Don Andersen Taxidermy in Atascadero. (A \$500. deposit has been paid toward the finish price of \$1500.) Since mounting is a long process, including tanning of the hide, Mr. Andersen does not expect to complete it until spring, 1998. He has access to a roadkill fawn--as mentioned above--which he will mount when the permit is complete.

Included in Wood-Claeyssen monies was \$325.00 for a raccoon. Since an already mounted raccoon has been given us, those funds will be put toward mounting a badger, which has been offered to the Center pending a permit.

Re-design of the geology exhibit, additions to the children's room, and exhibits on equinox and insects are currently in the planning stage. Under construction is an exhibit explaining flint knapping with sample arrowheads.

Docents, in addition to the Exhibits Chairperson, who have assisted with exhibit design and construction are

**Fred Blaser
Don Wimpress
Jim Smith
George Hughes
Tommie Miller
Charlie Jack**

**Becky Deutsch
Dale Findley
Barbara Gutman
George Smith
Connie Howerton
Jim Rogers**

Oak Canyon Nature Trail

Hopefully our Oak Canyon Nature Trail is going to get a facelift before the next summer season. The mile-long trail, starting and ending at the Nature Center, and for half its length running through native oak and chaparral forests, was built in 1991 and gradually became overrun with brush and poison oak to the point where it was not recommended for public use. Last spring several docents cut away a lot of brush, herbicided much of the poison oak, and reworked the trail bed to the point where it has been open all this year.

Linda Taylor and Don Wimpress are now organizing a plan to upgrade the trail during the coming winter for wheelchair use. There are two major things that must be done to accomplish this: 1) Provide a bridge across an intermittent stream gully, and 2) do a bit of grading and minor realignments to provide width and grades that meet wheelchair requirements. Each of these requires a bit of money so we are presently applying for grant funding to accomplish these goals. These improvements will also make the trail better suited to the larger groups that currently use it during naturalist/docent-led nature walks.

This trail would then be unique in that there is no other wheel-chair accessible trail in the Santa Barbara area upon which there are regularly guided nature tours.

Don Wimpress

Gift Shop

If you haven't visited our Gift Shop recently you have missed a special treat. Manager, Betty Wimpress has really done an impressive job of buying a wide variety of new and interesting things and displaying them very attractively!

The past year gross sales were \$9058.78. With a Net Profit of \$4327.00. Of this amount \$3500 was donated to the Cahuma Lake Foundation and the balance was used for new inventory.

Don Wimpress now has the gift shop operations on computer. This allows Betty to better control the inventory by showing which products sell the best and which make the largest profit.

Poison Oak: Not Always the Bad Guy!

To many, it is a minor, inconvenience, while to others, it can mean two weeks of misery. Then why not destroy every last leaf? Because poison oak isn't a bad guy. We can't judge it from only our perspective.

Poison oak is a good guy to many creatures. Not only do woodrats often use its twigs to build their houses, they love to eat those tasty greens! And they are not susceptible to it as we are. Another favorite animal, our coastal mule deer, also makes a meal of the fresh leaves of poison oak.

The local Chumash people in past times are said to have used poison oak on wounds. There are age-old legends that California Indians were immune to it. Some stories describe how Native Americans ate it to encourage immunity, while the Pomo name for poison oak, Ma-tu-ya-ho, meant 'the southern fire doctor.' We do know that eating poison oak can make people very ill.

The scientific name of Poison Oak is *Toxicodendron diversilobum*, 'toxic tree, diverse leaves,' and though never a tree, it can grow up the side of a tree and look magnificently arboresque. It is not related to oaks, but like the valley oak (*Quercus lobata*), it can have lobed leaves, or like the coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), not!

'A plant in the sun can have shiny leaves, in the shade, matte. This plant likes moist canyons as well as oak woodlands, and it has showy scarlet leaves in the fall. "Leaves of three, let them be!" goes the warning. Beware of poison oak all year--the oils that cause the blistering rash are even found in the dry, leafless twigs of winter. And don't ever burn those twigs--you don't EVER want to breath poison oak smoke!

Liz Mason



Poison Oak