

# THE CONEJO OPEN SPACE FOUNDATION NEWS

## Winter of 2019

[www.cosf.org](http://www.cosf.org)

**Happy Holidays!** We are so grateful for all of our open space donors and volunteers! We wish you all a healthy and happy 2020! We appreciate your continued support this coming year.

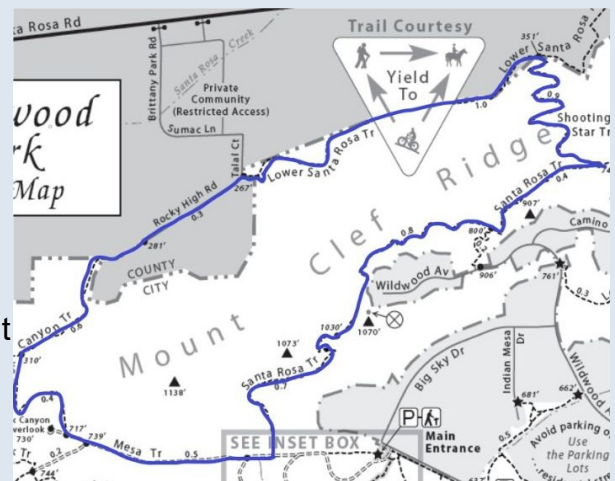
**Donate**

**Volunteer**



### Trail Trivia: Shooting Star Trail By: John Kross

The Shooting Star Trail is a relatively new trail that connects Wildwood to the Santa Rosa Valley. Mark Burley, long time Conejo Open Space supporter, was instrumental in getting this trail established. Mark recalls some historical information about the area before the trail was put in... "In the 1990s some riders used a very steep route where the gas pipelines are, to the east of the current Shooting Star Trail, to connect from the upper Santa Rosa Trail to the Lower Santa Rosa Trail. This trail washed out in heavy rains and went from dangerous to impassible. For years I had visions of a trail connecting the upper and lower Santa Rosa trails that would be safely usable by all users. The previous owner of the land where the easement for the Lower Santa Rosa trail runs, Homer Caston, had suggested that a safer place for the trail would be further west than the gas pipelines. So one day I set off through the brush starting from the Santa Rosa Valley floor and after a steep beginning the land became less steep grassland. It seemed like a good place for the trail. In 2007, I contacted the CRPD rangers for confirmation



this was practical and Bruce Pace and I went and marked out a route for the trail with a consistent 10% grade from bottom to top."

Mark goes on to say, "That same year, Santa Rosa Valley Trails Inc. went to the Conejo Open Space Trails Action Committee, COSTAC, with the proposal. They liked the idea but COSCA was considering the trails and new bridge in the Hill Canyon Area, so did not want to go ahead with getting approvals for the Shooting Star Trail as a separate project. So SRVTI members went to the various meetings and public workshops for the Hill Canyon project, which is also of interest to Santa Rosa Valley residents. And at the same time they advocated strongly for the new trail, which was temporarily called the Santa Rosa Connector Trail. When the Hill Canyon design was finished in 2008, one of the proposals was that connector trail. It was later named Shooting Star Trail."

In 2008, the completed draft Trail Plan map for Santa Rosa Valley was made public. The Board of Supervisors voted to authorize Planning to review the Trail Plan and analyze the scope of work necessary for adoption of the plan by Ventura County. Santa Rosa Valley Trails Inc. (SRVTI-<http://www.srvtrails.com/>), a non-profit neighborhood association, made a proposal to the Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency (COSCA) to add a new trail that would connect Santa Rosa Valley to Wildwood Park. In 2009, SRVTI actively negotiated two easements, and SRVTI adopted the Lower Santa Rosa Trail through COSCA's Adopt-A-Trail program. In 2010, The Shooting Star Trail -yet unnamed- proposed in 2008 as part of the Trail Plan by SRVTI, was built by 100 COSCA and 30 SRVTI volunteers. The trail runs from the Santa Rosa Trail on the top of the Mountclef Ridge down to the Lower Santa Rosa Trail (also known as the Baseline trail). The trail connects Santa Rosa Valley to Wildwood Park and creates a loop that you can start on either side of the Mountclef Ridge. In the spring, there is a breathtaking growth of shooting stars along the sides of this trail. This feature gave the trail its name.

### **COSF Donates \$30000 for the Second Hill Canyon Bridge**

During the annual Holiday Party where [COSCA](#), [COSTAC](#) and [COSF](#) contributors celebrate the year with like-minded open space enthusiasts, COSF President Jerry Westby handed over a check for \$30,000 to COSCA Administrator, Brian Stark. The funds came from COSF donor/members and is to go towards the construction of the second Hill Canyon bridge.



The bridge will be located near the bottom of Hill Canyon ("Baxter") Fire Road and provide a route for loop hikes and rides through Conejo Canyons, the Western Plateau and Wildwood Park without the need to travel on Hill Canyon Road. Further, it will provide a second vehicle

exit for water treatment plant workers in case of an emergency that blocks Hill Canyon Road, such as a wildfire.

### **Spotlight on...**

**Christina Robertson** is an energetic, positive, and passionate board member. She posts on our social media (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) and has a knack for sharing her enthusiasm about all things nature with others. She does amazing work with children and getting them excited about all of the wonders that the great outdoors has to provide. You might have run into her at the trailhead during a Trailhead Outreach event, as a coordinator for Trails Education Days, or just out there with her adorable, nature-loving girls. We are so grateful for her many contributions to the Conejo Open Space.



### **Tell us about yourself (your day job, hobbies, how you spend your spare time). When did you join the COSF board and why?**

I am a full-time mom. I also teach science classes at a private elementary school. My absolute favorite thing to do is go on outdoor adventures with my family. My passion for Conejo Open Space started with leading a hike for Trail Education Days. I loved it so much and I wanted to do more. I joined COSTAC a little while after that and then a year ago, I joined COSF.

### **Why is open space important to you?**

Open Space has been a priceless gift to me and my family. It gives me memorable connections with my family. Hiking in the open space has helped with my kiddos' agility and confidence. It has been a sanctuary for me during tough times and been a venue for me to find solitude and rest. It has given me precious moments with friends. Our open space really represents so much more to me than just a bunch of space without buildings.

### **What skills do you bring to COSF and/or the Conejo Open Space?**

I always say enthusiasm is the number one thing I bring to the table. I am absolutely in love with our open space and would love for everyone to feel comfortable to enjoy it. I am very passionate about sharing the benefits of open space with our community and the telling people about uniqueness of the plants and animals that inhabit that space. That is why I have enjoyed helping with the Trails Education Days (T.E.D.) for the past three years. T.E.D. takes place during a week in the spring, when we host over 1,000 fourth grade students and teach them about our open space. We take them on a hike through Wildwood and provide seminars where they learn trail etiquette, the wildlife in the area, and job opportunities that serve our



open space. There is nothing like seeing a student or friend have a little more awe about our open space after experiencing it first hand.

### **What do you like to do in the open space?**

I love hiking and taking pictures. Sometimes, I even like to just find a bench and soak in the sounds, sights, and smells all around. I have never walked back to my car from hiking a trail feeling disappointed that I didn't see or experience something amazing.

### **What are your hopes for the future of COSF and/or the Conejo Open Space?**

Oh my, I have so many! If I were to narrow my hopes and dreams for our open space down to one, it would be that I hope our community's appreciation and participation in protecting our unique open space continues to grow for generations to come.

### **Any other thoughts or words of wisdom?**

I am so grateful for the forethought, wisdom, and fortitude of the incredible individuals that fought for our open space protection over 50 years ago. Let's join together and continue to care for the resources that provide so much for those living in and around our open spaces.



PHOTO CREDIT: CRAIG PERCY

### **Free Hikes!**

Come get to know some new trails - or come revisit your favorite trails - in a guided group hike setting. The *2020 CRPD Open Space Appreciation Hike series* is underway. Come join us for these monthly mid-range hikes! Upcoming hikes are listed below. Participants must be at least 14 years old, and a responsible adult must accompany hikers under 18. No pets please.

\* Saturday, January 11, 2020 from 8am to 11am  
Los Robles West to Angel Vista - 6 miles

\* Sunday, February 8, 2020 from 8am to 11am Satwiwa Center, Waterfall, Old Boney, Fossil - 6.5 miles

\* Saturday, March 14, 2020 from 8am to 11am Rancho Simi- "Beeline" to Arch Rock - 6.5 miles

### **Tarantula Hill** **By: Kira Krukowski**

This popular landmark in Thousand Oaks has been in the news lately because one of its beautiful oak trees was lost in the beginning of September 2019.

Read more about it here:



PHOTO CREDIT: CHRISTINA ROBERTSON



<https://www.facebook.com/118602994875872/posts/2324322550970561?sfns=mo>). Have you ever wondered how Tarantula Hill got its name? According to COSCA, "It is named for the spiders, which can occasionally be seen on its slopes." The hill is also sometimes called "Dawn's Peak", and after some investigating, this is most likely because that name occurs in social media and on some trail apps. According to the Thousand Oaks Library Special Collections, "The alternate name, Dawn's Peak, was probably coined by someone who didn't know the actual name or doesn't like tarantulas."

### **The Hill Canyon Bridge**



On September 19, 2019, The Hill Canyon Bridge was re-opened after repairs were made to it after the Hill Fire. The fire started in November 2018 and caused structural damage to the



bridge, which forced it to be closed for about 10 months. We are so glad to have access back at one of our favorite trailheads!

## Invasive Non-Native Plants

If you have an interest in helping COSCA to identify the location and type of non-native plants you see out on the trail, please stay tuned for plenty of training opportunities in the future. You can make a difference and help with open space stewardship by reporting the non-natives when you are hiking, running, or biking in our open space.



## Accidental Poisoning of Wildlife and Pets by Rodenticides

### Lethal Dose: Rat Poison & Local Wildlife

Local residents may inadvertently be poisoning wildlife. National Park Service researchers have found a direct link between exposure to anticoagulant rodenticides, commonly known as rat poison, and the deaths of wildlife in and around the Santa Monica Mountains. How rodenticide works its way through the food chain:

**1 Targeted rodents**  
Rats and other rodents who eat rodenticide do not die right away and may even become lethargic as they approach death, making them easy prey for larger predators.

**2 Predators**  
Raptors, snakes and larger predators consume poisoned rodents.

**3 Top of the food chain**  
Mountain lions feed on smaller predators laced with lethal poison.

**Unintended victims**

**In the Santa Monica Mountains...**

- 21 of 22 mountain lions tested positive for exposure and four died from poisoning.
- 93 of 105 bobcats tested positive for exposure and 70+ died from related secondary disease.
- 23 of 27 coyotes tested positive for exposure and 12 died from poisoning.

Updated as of April 2019

**How anticoagulant rodenticide kills**  
These compounds interrupt blood-clotting, which leads to uncontrolled bleeding and death. They may also suppress the animal's immune system, making it susceptible to other diseases. **Symptoms include:**

- Nosebleeds
- Bleeding gums
- Ruptured blood vessels, causing bruising
- Internal hemorrhaging
- Secondary disease, such as mange.
- Blood in urine and feces

**What is mange?**  
A microscopic mite that burrows into the skin and causes...

1. Extreme itchiness and skin lesions.
2. Fluid and nutrient loss through the skin.
3. Infection, starvation, hypothermia or other complications, eventually leading to death.

**Check the label**  
Here are the most common anticoagulant compounds:

- Bromadiolone
- Brodifacoum
- Diphacinone
- Difethialone

SOURCES: Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area research, L.E.K. Seriesy, UrbanCarnivores.com

CREDIT: National Park Service  
<http://1.usa.gov/1SuhsXv>

Please do not use rodenticide in your homes or businesses. It harms not only pets and neighborhood wildlife, it travels up the food-chain and harms or even kills coyotes, bobcats,

and mountain lions. Thank you to NPS for the above image. Please visit their website [here](#) to learn more about rodenticide and potential alternatives.

### **Want to Volunteer? Here's How!**

The COSCA Volunteer Corps has many ways for residents to help maintain and preserve the open space that surrounds our beautiful Conejo Valley. By joining with others, we can make sure that the trails, canyons, and ridgelines will be enjoyed by visitors for generations to come. You can read about the specific volunteer opportunities below, and you can submit a request to volunteer, noting your specific interests, [here](#).

- [Adopt-a-Trail Program](#)
- [Trail Watch Program](#)
- [Trail Ambassador Program](#)
- [Trail Work Days](#)
- [Trails Education Days](#)



The Conejo Open Space Foundation was formed in 1995 to promote and maintain the open space and trail system of the Conejo Valley and to educate residents as to their roles as custodians and protectors of the open space and the environment. Our [web site](#) illustrates ongoing Conejo Open Space programs supported by the Foundation that help preserve and protect our precious open space.

### **Follow us on social media**



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PHOTO CREDIT: ROBB BOYLE

