



This wreath made of native vegetation by Daisy Mah is an entry to the California Native Plant Society's annual Wreath Masters competition on December 16.

A Few Words from Our President

Holiday Greetings! We're approaching the end of another year in which the coronavirus has challenged us in so many ways. Yet, COSF has good news to share and I hope you will find some solace in the stories in this Winter newsletter.

First, some uplifting wildlife information during this holiday season! Below you'll find the details about how to register for COSF's final 2021 virtual **Speaker Series presentation, "Wildlife in Our Neighborhood,"** where you can learn about the California Wildlife Center's efforts to rescue, rehabilitate, and release injured wildlife and how we can live in better harmony with our open-space neighbors. This topic is particularly relevant in light of the recent discovery of four motherless mountain lion kittens in a Thousand Oaks office park.

Then, read on to learn how COSF has put your donations to work to help make the **wildlife bridge over the 101 freeway at Liberty Canyon** happen. It looks like groundbreaking will start in 2022. See also the good news about the state's purchase of Triangle Ranch and how it will preserve a wildlife corridor that leads to the bridge.

We are also very pleased to welcome **Kory Prindle, the new Supervising Park Ranger**, to the Conejo Valley. He will be managing an expanding group of rangers who are so incredibly valuable to our enjoyment of the open space. Removing graffiti, building trails, rescuing lost and injured hikers, and always being willing to help people on the trails are just part of what the COSCA rangers do. Welcome, Kory!

Still looking for a holiday gift for an outdoor enthusiast? Steve Johnson of our Board of Directors recommends some worthwhile books to address that need. Speaking of our Board, you'll see below that we are delighted that Tania Garcia has joined us; she's already made significant contributions to our outreach efforts.

Earlier this month, COSF contacted high schools in Ventura County to announce our **second scholarship opportunity for graduating high-school seniors who plan on an environmental-studies-related major**. Naomi Lin and Daniel Conway, our first two scholarship recipients, are pursuing environmental-related majors at UCLA and UC Berkeley, respectively.

And, finally, we hope the holiday spirit of giving will move you to **donate to our annual fundraising campaign**. To those who have already done so (we had a gratifying response on Giving Tuesday!), we are very appreciative for your generosity.

Happy Holidays, everyone! Here's to a happier, healthier 2022!

All the best,



President, Conejo Open Space Foundation

Annual Giving Campaign Underway Now!

[COSF](#) depends on open-space supporters like you for donations that help us fund volunteer programs, children's education, scholarships, and so much more. COSF is an entirely volunteer nonprofit dedicated to protecting and promoting the Conejo Valley's beautiful open spaces and multi-use trails for the benefit of all trail users.

Please consider a year-end gift to keep our efforts going. And ask your employer if they will match your contribution!

Thank you for your generosity. It makes a difference

[Donate](#)

[Volunteer](#)



Jenn Guess (above right), seen here with an injured pelican, will talk about her work at the California Wildlife Center at COSF's December 16 Speaker Series.

Next Speaker Series: Saving Injured Wildlife

On December 16 at 7:00 p.m., Jenn Guess, development manager for the California Wildlife Center (CWC), will discuss the animal hospital's rehab activities for attendees of the COSF Speaker Series. Still being held virtually via Zoom, the winter event, "Wildlife in Our Neighborhood," will focus on human-wildlife interaction and how we can be good neighbors to the open space's creatures.

Guess will explain common reasons why wild animals end up being brought to the Calabasas-based CWC and how they are rehabilitated. She will also talk about what you can do to reduce your impact on wildlife and how to handle conflicts between humans and animals. The mission of the 23-year-old CWC, which has treated over 60,000 animals representing 170 species, is to protect native wildlife through conservation, education, and animal rescue and rehabilitation.

Guess, who started at the nonprofit Center in 2012 as a volunteer, was hired the following year as an animal care coordinator and then as the senior wildlife technician supervisor. After almost 10 years of hands-on work in the ICU and Orphan Care Unit, Guess was promoted to her current role.

Attendees can register at COSF's website: <https://cosf.org/events/register/>. Although this is a free event, COSF encourages a \$10 donation to support future Speaker Series presentations.



An artist's rendering of the Liberty Canyon Wildlife Crossing. Now known as the Wallis Annenberg Wildlife Crossing, it is set to be completed in October 2023.

COSF Completes \$10K Pledge; Adds Bonus Gift

Thanks to generous donations from members and supporters, COSF was able to add \$6,840 to the \$10,000 donation already pledged to fund the construction of the \$87 million Liberty Canyon Wildlife Crossing over the 101 Freeway. The additional money came from the Julia Osborn Gourley Memorial Fund, which COSF created in honor of longtime Conejo Valley resident and former COSF president and volunteer.

The donation of the \$2,500 remaining in the \$10,000 pledge and the \$6,840 bonus gift were matched by contributions from the Annenberg Foundation, doubling their dollar value. The crossing will open up what is effectively an island bounded by freeways and the ocean within the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, encouraging greater genetic diversity in wildlife. Although most of the attention has been focused on the dangerously inbred mountain lion population, similar effects are being seen in reptiles and birds as well.

Construction for the crossing, which is a joint project of Caltrans and the National Wildlife Federation, is expected to begin in early 2022.

COSCA Gets New Chief Ranger, More Staff

On November 8, the Conejo Recreation and Parks District welcomed a new Supervising Park Ranger to the COSCA troop. Born and raised in San Diego, **Kory Prindle** holds a degree in Recreation, Parks and Tourism Management and has over 13 years of professional experience. His previous years as a ranger were spent in San Diego County, including two years as a supervising park ranger at two large, high-use desert campgrounds, Agua Caliente and Vallecito. He was inspired to start a career in recreational management after a canoe trip to the Hoover Dam in college.

“I was looking for a change from San Diego and the Conejo Valley had a lot of things I was looking for,” says Prindle, “I was even more pleasantly surprised when I saw both the quality and quantity of open spaces. It felt like a great fit.” Prindle’s exploration of the area confirmed the great parks and wonderful natural features. As a San Diego native, the oak woodland, chaparral, and watersheds found in the Conejo Valley felt like home.



In response to increased public use and newly acquired properties, the COSCA Board authorized the hiring of **three additional rangers** to join Prindle and the current ranger staff. These new positions will be filled in the next few months as workspace and vehicles are added.

Prindle, who is a passionate backpacker, photographer, and skateboarder, also hopes is to

connect to local communities, organizations, and individuals to help find new opportunities for volunteerism, stewardship, and just plain old enjoyment of the parks. “I would love for us to all be on the same team and be able to stay involved and stay flexible as the park system grows,” he says. “Teamwork from all sides.”

Conejo Reads: Holiday Gift Ideas

[*The Mountains of California*](#) John Muir

This volume is one of the foundational works of the ecology movement of the 20th century. John Muir, who spent much time in the Sierras, influenced many notables’ attitudes toward conservation, including Teddy Roosevelt’s. One section covers the San Gabriel Mountains, which form the northern edge of the Los Angeles Basin. Lavishly illustrated with late 19th century engravings and photos.

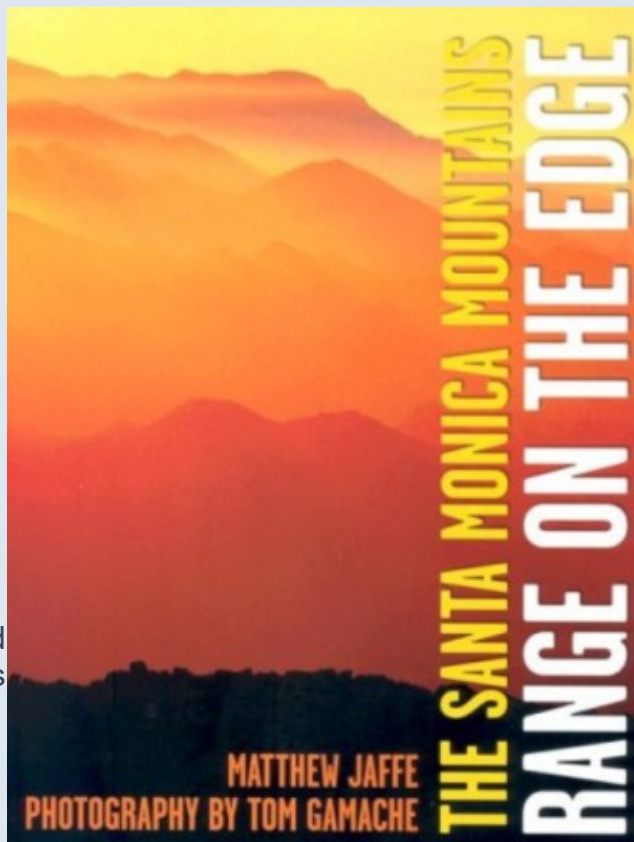
[*Hiking & Backpacking Santa Barbara & Ventura*](#)

Craig Carey

Author Craig Carey is a local, does thorough research, and updates this book regularly. It’s illustrated, mostly in color, with topographic maps and photos of the hiking areas in the southern Los Padres National Forest.

[*The Santa Monica Mountains: Range on the Edge*](#)

Matthew Jaffe & Tom Gamache



Focusing on the area traversed by the Backbone Trail, this large coffee-table book is full of beautiful photos of our local haunts. The authors cover history, culture, and contemporary issues thoroughly.



Spotlight on...

COSF board member **Tania R. Garcia** has nearly 20 years experience in higher education administration, including major gift fundraising, annual giving, alumni relations, community relations, and government relations work. Most of her professional life has been at California State University Channel Islands, followed by three years at the University of Denver, her alma mater.

In her spare time, she joins her fiancé in their small Cessna Cardinal 177 to fly over California or play ice hockey with the co-ed Swashpucklers team in Simi Valley.

When did you join the COSF board and why?

I joined the board in October because I was looking to build a better understanding of our open spaces, and how to care of our environment and wildlife locally. I feel that it's not only our responsibility to care for nature and wildlife, but also that our open spaces give us the well being we so badly need.

Why is open space important to you?

I've always been a child of the outdoors. Growing up in remote Northern New Mexico, at the tip of the Rocky Mountains and at almost 8,000 foot elevation, I lived and breathed our open spaces. Like many of us during the pandemic, I realized that I had neglected my outdoor spaces for too long. Now that I am older, I'm reminded how much I missed being out in nature daily.

What advice do you have for open space visitors to get the most out of their time there?

Don't rush through. Stop and literally smell the flowers along the way. Learn about what you are looking at. Get a plant identification app and see what you find. When you see insects, Google to find out what they are and why they do what they do. Keep an eye out for tracks and signs of wildlife.

And go out often. The more you visit your open spaces, the more you will learn about our different seasons and what grows or lives in each season. And the more you know, the more you appreciate.

What do you like to do in the open space?

Mostly hike: It's an easy enough activity to be peaceful, but challenging enough at times to clear your head. This year, I pledged to hike every trail in the Simi Hills and am just about done. My hope is to take my photos from my Simi Hills experience and compile a woman's hiking guidebook for the area.

What's your favorite Conejo open space?

I really enjoy the Oakbrook Vista Trail in the Lang Ranch and Woodridge area. At the end of the trail you reach a large group of rock outcroppings with rock arches and some amazing elevated scenery. Not to mention, you will be guaranteed to see a hawk or two.

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

My hope is that we can help educate every resident of the Conejo Valley about the best ways to protect and maintain our trails and open spaces. I'd like to see less graffiti and more students who can tell me what a tarantula hawk is. Education is the key. The more we understand, the better we take care of our outdoors.



Board members Elayne Haggan (left), Tania Garcia, and Jerry Westby (not pictured) represented COSF at the Conejo Senior Volunteer Fair on October 7.

News In Brief

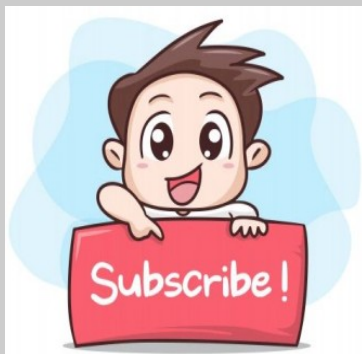
- **COSF recent outreach efforts** included board member appearances at the Conejo Senior Volunteer Program expo held at Conejo Creek North Park (photo above) on October 7; the Growing Works Fall Festival in Camarillo on October 23; and the Lead with Purpose Foundation student event on November 7. In addition, COSF President

Jerry Westby worked several food-giveaway events run by Adelante Comunidas Conejo. On November 18, Westby introduced Amgen employees resettling in the Conejo Valley to the resources of the open space.

- **Claim your free plant!** If you were one of the generous donors for our Speaker Series presentation "Native Plants Demystified," don't forget to pick up your complimentary native plant at Growing Works Nursery in Camarillo. The nursery generally has retail days on Saturdays, but please call ahead to be sure:

[Growing Works Nursery](#)
South Lewis Road 1736
Camarillo, CA 93012
(805) 586-9900

- **Triangle Ranch has been saved!** A significant parcel of land in Agoura Hills along Kanan Rd. that is an important area for wildlife habitat and watershed protection will be preserved as open space. The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) joined with the City of Agoura Hills and other partners—including State Senator Henry Stern and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, who secured millions of dollars in grants and budget funding—to acquire the 360 acres and prevent its development. The land's preservation will help maintain connectivity between the Ladyface Mountain open space and the Liberty Canyon wildlife corridor.
- RIP: Mountain biker **Ward Vaughan**, 54, died October 3 in the open space in Newbury Park from a medical condition. Our condolences to his family.
- Congratulations to the winners of our most recent "Where in the Conejo" contests! Our knowledgeable entrants correctly identified one local trail, a native insect, and an invasive non-native plant in the October, November, and December competitions. This season's winners of a \$25 gift card are: **Jef Kurfess**, **Eric Perl** and **Jeff Ross**. If you would like to be added to the "Where" contest email list, go [visit our website](#) and sign up.
- Have a comment, correction, story idea or other **input for the newsletter?** Let us know! Email us at: newsletter@cosf.org.



If you would like to have this newsletter emailed to you quarterly, along with other occasional messages about our activities, subscribe here.

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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](#)
- [Bike Bell Box Replenishment](#)
- [Trail Watch Program](#)
- [Trail Ambassador Program](#)
- [Trail Building and Restoration](#)
- [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.

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