City of Irvine | Community Services

Nature Center Chronicles

Quarterly Newsletter of the Turtle Rock Nature Center

Summer–2009

"Quack Quack Quack"

(Translation: Please obey our simple trail rules so we can *all* enjoy your visit.)

Page 2

Youthful Volunteers Make a Difference

Turtle Rock Nature Center

1 Sunnyhill Drive
949-724-6738

Hours: Mon-Fri 9am-5pm
Sat 9am-4pm

Website
www.irvineopenspace.org

Rules of the Trail Protect both You and Wildlife

If the wildlife utilizing the Turtle Rock Nature Center set the rules for trail use, they'd probably restrict or eliminate the hours the trail would be open to the public. Many a lizard or rabbit has had to scurry for cover when visitors use our trails. These creatures are just minding their own business, trying to warm up on the sidewalk, or cruising around looking for food! Fortunately, our trail rules are established by staff, and are intended to help the area function as a family-friendly site for the public and as wildlife habitat. Yet even though our rules are simple, it seems people don't always know them, and they often don't understand why the rules are in place. Since our short list of rules also applies to most wilderness areas, we thought we'd take the opportunity to expand on them.

Please stay on the trail.
Most of our trails are paved, though there are a few short unpaved sections. But all are level and afford visitors a safe path with a clear view of the habitat and the creatures that dwell here. Off the path, staff and volunteers sometimes weed or collect airborne trash, yet they are always careful, as this is wildlife habitat. Staying on the trail respects their space and ensures visitor safety.

Do Not Disturb the Wildlife.
That's not only a matter of respect; this policy allows our wildlife to stay on task. Their task each day is to survive to the next. Forcing wildlife to move unnecessarily means they're wasting energy. This may make them more susceptible to predation. We also encourage visitors not to feed the wildlife such as ducks. Instead of helping the animals, this practice puts them at a disadvantage by filling them up with "junk food." The ducks feel full and may not eat normally. The ducks naturally possess the skills necessary to secure their own food.

Collection of Natural Items is Prohibited.
Many a child visits and asks if they can take a pine cone or two or five. Staff simply takes them a few steps from the trail door and shows these children dozens of pine cones eaten down to the core. A pine cone might be somebody's dinner! That rock could provide shelter. A dusty feather might line a nest very nicely, thank you. And eventually, these materials all break down into elements that help sustain the plants and animals that grow here or frequent the area.

No Smoking.
The threat of fire is one important reason that this rule must be taken seriously.

Domestic Animals are not permitted on the trail.
Occasionally people ask about bringing their dog on the trail. With the exception of service animals, dogs are not permitted on the trail. Dogs in general like to leave their scent behind as a message. Dogs want to root out the animal it smells in the hole, or

Continued on Page 2

Join Us

Second Saturdays is a monthly land steward program offered on the 2nd Saturday of each month, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Parental authorization is required for minors.

September 12
October 10
November 14

For other volunteer opportunities, please call 949-724-6738

Ryan, Harrison and Thomas satisfied after a morning of hard work

Harrison and Miguel with a wagonload of tule & cattails removed from a creek channel

In summer, the song sings itself.

William Carlos Williams

Continued from Page 1

chase the lizard, or bark at the bird. Allowing pets would alter the experience for other visitors, and would decidedly impact the only habitat available to the wildlife that calls the Turtle Rock Nature Center home.

We hope this article will bring some education and knowledge to our visitors so we can all continue to enjoy the wonderful experiences nature has to offer. In the words of Senegalese environmentalist Bab Dioum, “In the end we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught."

Summer is Hot—Volunteering is Cool

“What did you do on your summer vacation?” Is a question children ask each other in the fall when going back to school. If you’re one of four young Irvine teens, the answer this year would be, “I volunteered to do trail work at the Turtle Rock Nature Center.”

The first week, 13-year old Boy Scout Harrison Bachman mentored with Wednesday volunteer regulars Lonnie Horn and Rosemary Jones. The two veterans raved about Bachman’s work ethic and background, and were delighted when he returned the following week – with fellow scouts Thomas Bryant and Ryan Bahl in tow. The following week scout Miguel Navarro joined the burgeoning volunteer work force. A suitable task for the group was found, clearing cattails that had clogged a creek feeding in from the Turtle Rock community. Three hours later, the situation was much improved, and all six volunteers seemed satisfied with their mornings work.

A lot has been said over the last few years lamenting how kids don’t get outside enough, how they’re losing their connection with nature. But these four youths, seeking community service hours and a chance to do something different one day a week, chose to spend a morning working in the summer heat. They showed up ready to work and demonstrated an initiative that is uncommon among their peers. While volunteering they learned a lot from their experienced mentors such as how to follow directions, how to size up a task, and how to see it through to completion.

We hope they’ll spread the word:
Volunteering has many quiet rewards
Volunteering is fun
There is work to be done

Miguel and Thomas empty the garden cart