

Sycamore Sage

The President's Message

The Preserve may be closed during and after heavy rains. For your safety, please observe all closure notices.

Hours:

November-March: 8am-5p.m

March-November 8am-7pm

For more information, call the Visitor Center at 858-513-4737

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Newsletter & Webpage
Rita Lee

Good News! The Friends of Goodan Ranch and Sycamore Canyon Open Space are officially a member of the Wildlife Habitat Conservation Coalition (WHCC). The WHCC meets with the County as well as State and Federal wildlife agencies on a regular basis.

We have actually been working with a core group from the WHCC since 2018. The group continues to monitor and address potential environmental impacts that surround the Preserve. This core group consists of some heavy hitters that have helped with our efforts on Recreation Ecology, the Public Access Plan, Wildlife Tunnel, Highway 67 Improvement Plan and, now, the potential Open Pit mine that threatens our Preserve.

Bad News. An Open Pit Mine in Our Backyard!

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) prepared an environmental assessment to analyze impacts resulting from issuing a Slaughterhouse Canyon competitive mineral materials contract on a 119-acre parcel owned by Hanson Aggregates. Unfortunately, the parcel is within the MSCP and is surrounded by Sycamore Canyon Preserve on two sides. A pit mine there would be devastating to wildlife and habitat.

Background - BLM is obligated to respond to owners request to make mineral materials available for sale through a bid contract.

Selected bidder is then required to submit mining and reclamation plans subject to Federal, State and Local review (NEPA, SMARA, CSMRA, CEQA and County).

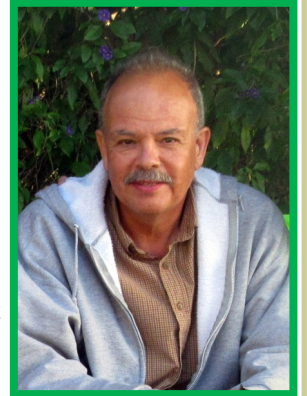
This open pit mine would excavate 8 Million tons of aggregate over the first 10 years. Mineral extraction would continue until an estimated 70 million tons are exhausted over successive contract renewals. After mining ends any remaining reclamation would be completed.

Minerals would be extracted using blasting and onsite crushing equipment. All mining activity operations would occur 24 hours a day. Night lighting would be employed.

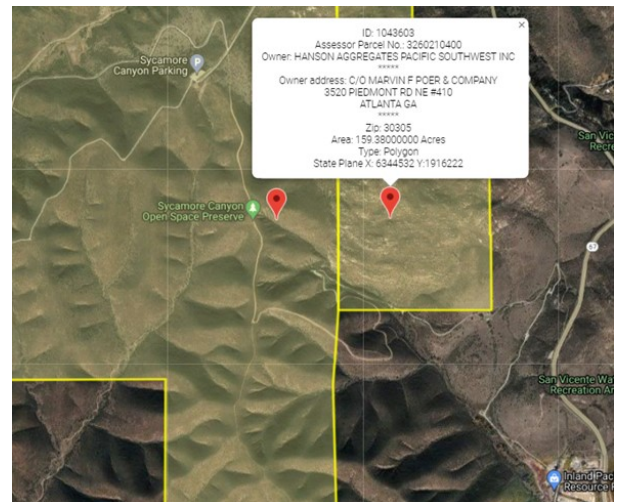
Code of Federal Regulations states "It is BLM's policy to make mineral material available, unless it is detrimental to the public interest to do so and to protect public land resources and the environment and minimize damage to public health/safety during the exploration for and the removal of minerals."

The BLM language speaks for itself - removing 70 Million tons of material in the middle of the MSCP preserve would be "detrimental" and can't be justified or mitigated.

If you love the Preserve, take action now. Contact BLM. Tell them an open pit mine does not belong there. Lead BLM Contact: Daniel Ryan dryan@blm.gov



Robert Laudy



The Cruelty of Glue Traps



This is the worst idea for a pest trap I have ever seen. “Glue boards” or “glue traps” are trays or cardboard coated with an extremely sticky adhesive. You are supposed to put food in the middle of the trap as bait. This lures the rat or mouse to the center of the trap ensnaring it in the glue. The aim is for the whole body of the animal to stick on the trap.

The traps are easy to use, but the method is horrible.



The injury to the animal trapped in the glue trap is terrible. Some creatures get their faces stuck in the glue and suffocate after hours or days. In their frantic attempt to escape the sticky trap, some animals will rip out their fur and feathers, break bones, dislocate joints, and even chew off their own limbs. The screaming of these animals is chilling. Some manufacturers tell consumers to “just” throw the trap and animal in

the trash. This can leave still-living victims to suffer for days until they finally die of starvation, dehydration, or stress—a cruel fate.



You can read hundreds of disturbing stories on wildlife rescue websites about animals trapped in glue trays. One wildlife rescuer rescued a pet cat that was stuck. The tail was severely damaged where it was glued down in the trap. His hind legs had become stuck together and his fur had been ripped off. There was serious damage to his abdomen and his right hock. In order to remove the trap and glue from the poor cat, it had to be anesthetized.

In another story, a Western scrub jay probably thought it had struck gold when it discovered chocolate chips and bread hidden beneath some bushes. The sticky glue quickly ensnared one foot, then the other. With its frantic flapping, the bird's tail feathers and wings became hopelessly stuck. All this bird could do was squawk and struggle as it became increasingly entrapped in the glue. Fortunately, the bird was found and rescued. When the jay was



brought into the wildlife rehabilitation center, medical personnel sedated him. They then removed the bird from the glue with care and precision to avoid further injury and to protect the feathers and delicate bones. This bird's story ended happily: its feathers recovered, it spent about a week in an aviary, and it was then released back into its natural habitat.

The moral of this the story is to never, ever use a glue or sticky trap under any circumstances. Rescuers answer calls on a regular basis from panic-stricken individuals who have discovered birds, lizards, snakes, bats, chipmunks, rabbits, squirrels, and even their own pets hopelessly stuck to these sticky boards. Responsible for more suffering than virtually any other wildlife control product on the market, glue traps are not as nice as advertised.

Tree Squirrels vs. Ground Squirrels

By Rita Lee

In San Diego, when we hear about ground squirrels and tree squirrels, we think that ground squirrels are native and tree squirrels are not. After all, San Diego doesn't have many native trees. However, that notion would be wrong.

Eastern Fox Squirrels (*Sciurus niger*) are not native and were introduced from the eastern part of the United States to Balboa Park sometime around 1929. Since 1933, it's been illegal to bring tree squirrels of any kind into California. However, both **California Ground Squirrels** (*Otospermophilus beecheyi*) and **Western Gray Squirrels** (*Sciurus griseus*) ARE native to San Diego County.

If you look carefully at the three species of squirrels, you can see there are two distinct types of squirrels...the ground squirrel and the tree squirrel. These 2 types have very different life styles, personalities and appearances.



Eastern Fox Squirrel



Western Gray Squirrel

Tree squirrels are larger than ground squirrels. They have longer, bushier "S" shaped tails to help them balance while running up and down trees. The **Western Gray Squirrel** has a silvery-gray back, a pure-white belly, and a beautiful long, bushy, blackish-gray tail edged with white. The **Eastern Fox Squirrel** has a foxlike coloring of grey and orange with a bushy tail that often perks up and lines its back. One of the most unusual facts about the **Eastern Fox Squirrel** is that it has pink bones, due to accumulating a chemical in its teeth, bones and tissues.

Western Gray Squirrels and **Eastern Fox Squirrels** are generally solitary but not territorial. Because they can hide in the leaves and branches they often wander far from their nests (dreys) looking for food. Tree squirrels can safely make their nests in trees.

Many times, you can see the scampering males chasing the females thru the leaves and branches during mating season. It's normal for female tree squirrels to mate with more than one male; often having two litters of babies in a year.

California Ground Squirrels are the opposite of the tree squirrels in looks and habits. They are smaller with stockier bodies and shorter front legs. They have a mottled color of gray, light brown and dusky hairs on the shoulders, neck and sides. A distinct white ring lines the fur around its eyes. Its underside is lighter, buff or grayish yellow. It holds its tail directly behind the body, usually on the ground or sometimes hanging straight down if the animal is perched.



California Ground Squirrel

California Ground Squirrels are social creatures often creating underground colonies by connecting the burrows of several families. Their burrows can be as deep as 4 feet below the sur-

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face and 5 to 30 feet in length. Each squirrel has its own entrance to the tunnels and they rarely venture more than 50 feet from their lair using their tunnels for sleeping, storing food, raising their young, and hiding from predators. They mate underground in early spring and usually have only one litter per year. Unlike tree squirrels, ground squirrels also hibernate according to weather conditions, moving underground when the weather turns too cold or too hot for them. They sleep lightly, however, and awaken to leave their burrows foraging for food on moderate days

The ground squirrels and tree squirrels also differ immensely in their defenses to predators. Tree squirrels' biggest enemy is mainly large hawks and owls. The tree squirrels emit alarm calls to other squirrels when threatened. They will try to confuse the predator by continuously running in various directions taking advantage of their agility and maneuverability in the trees.

Not only do ground squirrels have to escape the same predators as tree squirrels, they are more prone to attack by snakes. If a snake approaches any nearby squirrel burrow containing pups, the squirrel will quickly swish its tail from side to side to distract it. If that doesn't work, the **California Ground Squirrel** will flood its moving tail with extra blood, causing the tail to heat up. The infrared-sensing pits on the sides of the rattlesnake's head detect the heat. Apparently, the snake perceives a large, quick-moving animal, which is probably too quick and large to consume, and the snake moves on.

If the snake continues past a mother squirrel after all of that, the squirrel stands stock-still to avoid revealing the location of her young. Then when the snake gets close to the entrance of her nest burrow, she bursts into action. She uses her front feet to bombard the rattler with sand and pebbles. (You can see this behavior on video at: <https://i.imgur.com/YB16YUw.gifv>). The sandstorm might provoke the snake to rattle. The rattle enables the squirrel to gauge the snake's size and activity level. Other squirrels may come to her aid at this point, biting and harassing the snake. If the rattlesnake manages to slide into a tunnel, the mother squirrel may race into the burrow through a different opening and block the snake's progress with dirt.



Researchers found that California Ground Squirrels chew up rattlesnake skin and smear it on their fur to mask their scent from predators.

PLEASE HELP

In San Diego, there has been a well-established population of **Eastern Fox Squirrels** in Balboa Park since about 1920. The species started to expand into the neighborhoods around Balboa Park and then into the San Diego River. In the last few years, there has been more and more Fox Squirrels reported in other parts of the county. The impact on the ground squirrel is probably minimal as these two species have different habitat and nesting preferences. However, unfortunately Eastern Fox squirrel species competes directly with our native Gray Squirrel and often dominates it.

To help scientists better understand the current distribution of squirrels in San Diego County, please take photos of them, post on iNaturalist.org and join the Southern California Squirrel Survey at bit.ly/3bmU4ez.



Eagle Scout Projects



It is not easy to become an Eagle Scout. Only 4% of the candidates ever achieve the highest rank in Boy Scouts. To even qualify, Scouts must already have 21 merit badges, and are required to earn 10 more before they can be promoted. They also have to provide references confirming they follow the principles of the Boy Scout Oath and Scout Law in their daily lives. Then the candidates must complete the infamous service project.

The Eagle Scout Requirement 5 states: “While a Life Scout, plan, develop, and give leadership to others in a service project helpful to any religious institution, any school, or your community.” Note that the key words—“plan, develop, and give leadership to others”—come before “service”. Through this requirement, Scouts practice what they have learned and gain valuable organization, management, and leadership experience.

The Goodan Ranch and Sycamore Canyon Open Space is proud to have worked with the Scouting community in this endeavor. Below are a few of the recent Eagle Scout projects completed.



Amphitheater renovation



5 bat boxes installed adjacent to the oak grove near Martha's Grove Trail



New kiosk installed near the south gate entrance



David Fisher Eagle Scout Shade structure at SCGR

Ranger's Report

SYCAMORE CANYON GOODAN RANCH COUNTY PRESERVE

Supervising Park Ranger Louis Chertkow

Attendance has increased in the preserve, especially with trail usage on weekends and holidays. Park staff continues to monitor toads. Signs are still up at the Martha's Grove Trail and Cardiac Hill trailheads to help educate trail users about toads in the preserve. Informational signs about toads found in the preserve were also added to park kiosks. Park Rangers continue to monitor areas where toad activity was previously observed.

Park staff continues to support the department's Comprehensive Tree Program by planting 15 Coast Live Oak trees in the preserve. The Agricultural Scientist for our department consults with staff prior to any plantings about good locations and proper planting techniques. Staff are also caring for newly planted trees and shrubs by removing weeds and through temporary drip irrigation lines that were installed to help generate tree and plant growth.

D&D Wildlife Habitat Restoration, in coordination with the department's Resource Management Division, continues to target and remove invasive plants in the preserve. They are concentrating on removing eucalyptus trees and other invasives in the riparian area of Sycamore Creek. This work is part of a 2-year grant funded through the San Diego River Conservancy.

Park staff continue to patrol and monitor the new preserve properties along SR67, and around the Clark Canyon area to deter unauthorized uses in these areas. Staff continue to maintain fencing, signage, and natural barriers in areas where unauthorized trail use is observed.

Park staff continues to regularly refill the water troughs around the preserve. They have been getting a lot of use recently by wildlife due to the hot temperatures in our region.

Park Hosts Richard and Gail Andujo continue to assist with daily maintenance duties such as cleaning Visitor Center restrooms, and vault toilets. Other duties include trail maintenance, sanding and staining park benches and picnic tables, and watering trees.

Roy Derego and Kevin Leavitt recently joined the SCGR team as Day Volunteers and have been a great additions to the team. They both have great knowledge and enjoy volunteering, protecting plants and wildlife, and providing great customer service. Their assignments consist of planting and watering trees, general vegetation management, and trail maintenance.

Boy Scout David Fisher recently completed fabricating and installing a new shade structure along the service road below the Goodan Staging Area. A picture of this new shade structure is on the previous page.

PMW Mike Ambrose completed a new composting station located behind the Goodan Ranch house. This new composting station has created a great opportunity to educate park visitors on composting.

Recent Public Programs at SCGR include: Composting 101, a Night Hike in the preserve with a Discovery Table, a Star Party in coordination with the San Diego Astronomy Association, and the ongoing DPR Trail Challenge.

Kelsey Tyler recently joined the SCGR team as a Seasonal Park Attendant. Kelsey is a hard worker and is enjoying her new assignment.

Thank you for all of your support!



Friends of Goodan Ranch &

Sycamore Canyon Open Space
Webpage—GoodanRanch.org

Facebook—Goodan Ranch

Email—FriendsofGoodanRanch@gmail.com



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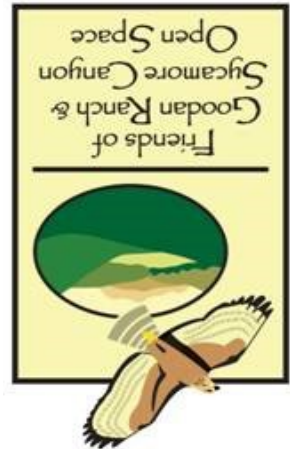
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The Sycamore Sage

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