

Sycamore Sage

The President's Message

Wow! 2020 has been a challenge, to say the least.

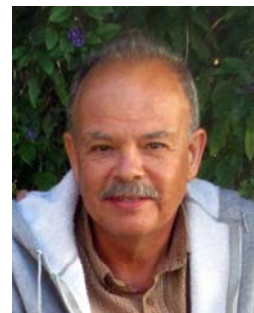
On a positive note, it looks like we will be authorized to spend time in our regional parks for recreation and physically distanced personal health and wellness through outdoor exercise. Although the Goodan Ranch Nature Center is once again closed, the preserve staging and parking areas, outdoor amphitheater, trails, benches, and picnic tables remain open for public use.

Hopefully, you can make the most of it. Winter can be a wonderful time to visit. Cooler weather is great for exploring Sycamore Canyon and Goodan Ranch without getting so hot and thirsty. More than 10 miles of trails await and lead to grand vistas, abundant wildlife and interesting reminders of human use, centuries ago. Martha's Grove trail is always a favorite choice.

A big thanks to all of our supporting friends! I'd like to remind you that membership dues need to be renewed in January. Thank you for your continued support of the Friends of Goodan Ranch and Sycamore Canyon Open Space. We hope you will invite some of your friends to join also.

All the Best,

Robert



Due to Covid-19 there are changes to the opening of the Parks. Also, the Preserve may be closed during and after heavy rains. For your safety, please observe all closure notices.

Hours: 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. .

Open: Staging areas, Outdoor amphitheater, trails, benches, picnic tables, and visitor center (when staff is present).

Closed: Nature Center

Board members of Friends of Goodan Ranch & Sycamore Canyon Open Space

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Newsletter

Rita Lee

What's a Spadefoot?

Our Sycamore Canyon Goodan Ranch Preserve is fortunate to be home to the Western Spadefoot Toad. These 2-inch-long, stout-looking little toads are known for their purr-like trill, their spade-like adaptation for digging on each hind foot, and for their unusual ability to accelerate metamorphosis when shallow breeding pools start to dry up. But even with those remarkable adaptations, the western spadefoot has been no match for the march of development and habitat reduction. The animals have lost more than 80 percent of their preferred grassland and alluvial fan habitats. The toads, which are terrestrial except when breeding, depend on the existence of vernal rain pools and slow-moving streams, both of which have declined across their range due to urban development and agricultural. Historically known to occur in the lowlands of Southern California, from south of the San Francisco Bay area to northern Baja California, they are now listed as a "species of special concern" in California. They are thought to be extirpated throughout much of Southern California.

During the breeding season, which occurs after rainfall forms shallow pools, typically from January to May, Spadefoots emerge onto some of the trails and roads of Sycamore Canyon Goodan Ranch Preserve. This causes many of them to die by being squished by the tires of mountain bikes and vehicles. As you will read further in the Ranger's Report, the County is aware of this problem and has made efforts to educate the public with signs. If these efforts prove to be ineffective, other measures, such as temporary trail closures may have to be explored in order to protect this vulnerable species.

More information on the Spadefoot Toad was reported in our newsletter from 2017. It can be found at.... Goodan Ranch newsletters

<http://goodanranch.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/2017-May-Sage-b.pdf>



While watching some hummingbirds at my feeder, I realized I really didn't know a lot about them. This is some of what I have learned about these colorful birds.

A fun fact.... a flock of hummingbirds are referred to as a *bouquet*, a *glittering*, a *hover*, a *shimmer*, or a *tune*. Such diverse names!!! However it is doubtful you will ever see a flock of hummingbirds as they are very territorial.

Sometimes these little creatures seem so colorful. Then the next second, they appear rather drab. Why is this? Well, unlike other colorful birds, the color you see has nothing to do with the pigmentation of their feathers, but more to do with iridescence and its effect on how the feathers are arranged. So, wear and tear, the angle from which you are looking at it, the level of moisture, and the amount of light shining at the time affect how vibrant and colorful their throat appears.



Hummingbirds can hover in midair and they're the only birds that can fly backward. Like a helicopter, a hummingbird can go up, down, sideways, backward, and even upside down! Most of its wings are made of hand bones instead of arm bones like other birds' wings. When hovering, the wings turn in opposite directions and then reverse themselves in a figure-eight movement. Hummingbirds also have muscles that power both the up and down stroke instead of just the down stroke, as in other birds. They can beat their wings from 20 to 200 times per second. Hummingbirds can fly at a speed of almost 30mph during a normal direct flight. Even more impressive is that during stunning courtship dives, they can reach speeds of over 45mph.



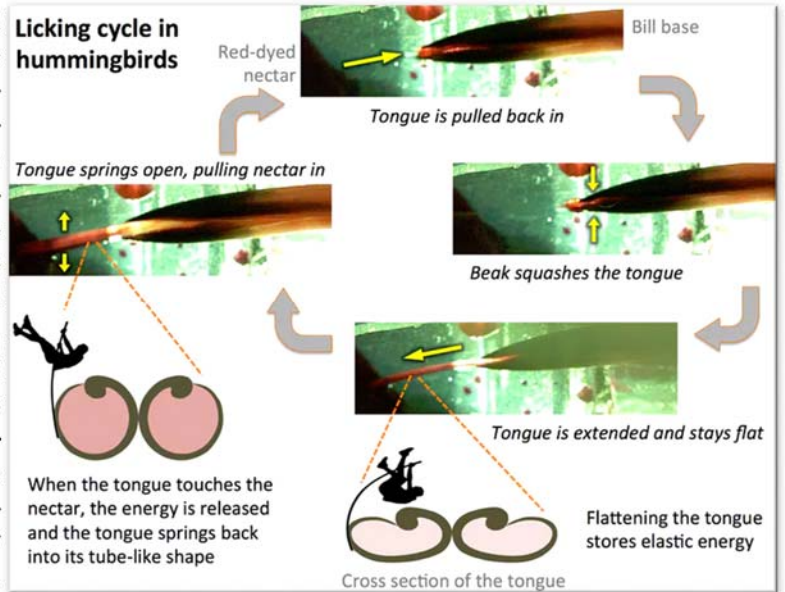
I wondered how and where hummingbirds sleep. Hummingbirds often find a twig that's sheltered from the wind to rest on for the night. When hummingbirds sleep, they go into a hibernation-like state called Torpor (pronounces TOR-per). This is a very deep sleep. During the state of torpor their neck is retracted and their feathers are fluffed out. Their metabolism lowers to just about 50 beats per minute rather than the normal 1200 beats per minute. Their body temperature will drop to the point of becoming hypothermic. It will almost look like they have stopped breathing altogether. This helps them to save up to 60% of their energy. If you find a hummingbird that is hanging upside-down and they appear to be dead, it is

actually more likely that they are just asleep. They will probably not even respond if you touched them. If at all possible, leave them alone and they will wake up when they get warmer. It takes anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour for a hummingbird to fully recover from torpor.

Once they are up and about, the first order of business is food. The hummingbirds will eat 25% of their daily intake as soon as they recover from torpor.

Each flower doesn't offer a lot, so to make a living off tiny amounts of nectar spread throughout the forest, hummingbirds are tiny, fast and feisty. When a hummingbird inserts its bill into a flower, it still needs to stick its long tongue deeper inside to get at the nectar within. After the tongue fills with nectar, the bird retracts the tongue back inside the bill. When hummingbirds eat, there is actually a micro-pump, which is transforming the whole tongue shape, and that transformation of the tongue shape is what actually pulls the fluid inside. The bird squashes the tongue flat, and when it springs open, this expansion rapidly pulls the nectar into the grooves in its tongue. It turns out it's elastic energy—potential mechanical energy stored by the flattening of the tongue—that lets hummingbirds collect nectar so fast. It is a fairly new discovery and one I don't quite understand. If you want more information, you can go to

<https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/full/10.1098/rspb.2015.1014> .



Hummingbirds can lick between 10 and 15 times every second during feeds, consuming up to double their body weight in a day. They visit between 1,000 and 2,000 flowers a day and dine every 10 to 15 minutes. When they feed on nectar, hummingbirds can digest the natural sucrose it contains in around 20 minutes, efficiently converting around 97% of it into energy. As well as flower nectar and from feeders, hummingbirds will also chomp down wasps, mosquitoes, gnats, aphids, ants, beetles, and other annoying small insects.



I was fortunate enough to see a hummingbird nest on my neighbor's tree. It was so tiny! The average number of eggs laid by female hummingbirds is only two. These eggs have been found in nests smaller than a half dollar and compare in size to a jellybean or a coffee bean. Hummingbirds make their nests with plant down, spider silk, and other natural resources that can expand as their babies grow after hatching. This ability to "grow" allows the nest to accommodate the baby birds, as they grow larger. Juvenile hummingbirds fledge (leave the nest) 18 to 28 days after hatching. Some females re-

turn to the very same nest year after year. Instead of house cleaning last year's nest, she will build a completely new one right on top of the old one. This can result in a pile of three or four nests!

Hummingbirds are extremely smart. A hummingbird's brain is larger in comparison to the body size than any other bird. The brain of a hummingbird accounts for 4.2% of its total weight compared to human brains that account for 2% of our total body weight.

HUMMINGBIRD Q&A

Q. HOW SMART ARE HUMMINGBIRDS?



A. HUMMINGBIRDS ARE VERY INTELLIGENT, AND ARE ABLE TO REMEMBER PLACES AND INDIVIDUAL PEOPLE FROM ONE YEAR TO THE NEXT.

Hummingbirds have a terrific memory. They can remember every single flower they have ever visited. They can also determine how long they need to wait before visiting flowers again for more nectar. They remember year to year, where each and every hummingbird feeder is, both at home and along a migration path. The females sometimes watch older female hummingbirds building a nest to learn some tricks and tips (and possibly steal some material). They also learn which people are the ones responsible for filling hummingbird feeders, and which ones don't. They are so smart!

Predators are a big problem for hummingbirds. Cats are their biggest danger. Because hummingbirds will dart and move quickly, cats love to chase

them. Since hummingbirds are not much of a meal, a cat will usually just maul them to death. How sad!

Hummingbirds have been caught by dragonflies, trapped in spider webs, snatched by frogs, fish, snakes, and lizards and stuck on thistles. Perhaps the most surprising predator is the preying mantis. The insect sits motionless and camouflaged on a leaf or twig and strikes with furious speed and power to nab a small hummer. Large Spiders can catch a small hummingbird in its web for a meal. Ants also invading a hummingbird's nest and eating hummingbird eggs and even baby hummingbirds. Other birds, such as hawks, orioles and roadrunners, occasionally eat hummingbirds.



Have you ever seen a hummingbird walk along the ground like other birds? Hummingbirds may have feet but they are not used for walking. They solely use their feet for scratching and perching. At best, they can slowly shuffle. If you see a hummingbird on the ground, it is likely because they are in trouble.

Hummingbirds have four toes. Their feet consist of three toes in the front and one toe (called the hallux) on the back of the foot. The hallux works in the same way a human's thumb does and allows the hummingbird to hang on to a branch or wire. Because hummingbirds fly, they have evolved to have smaller, lighter feet that are more efficient at flying. They will also use their feet for itching and preening.

Hummingbirds are both beautiful and so precious. Luckily, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 protects this bird. Basically, it is illegal in the United States to hold a hummingbird, it's nest, a baby, or any part of a hummingbird, nest, or egg, in any type of captivity in any way, shape, or form. This means that unless you have a valid permit, it is illegal to trap, band, hold, harass, or control any hummingbird or any part of the hummingbird, nest, or egg.

If someone is caught violating this law, the hummingbird will be taken away immediately and there is a fine of anywhere between \$15,000 (fifteen thousand) and \$200,000 (two hundred thousand) US dollars.

Ranger Report

Staff Report – November 2020

Supervising Park Ranger- Louis Chertkow

1. Park attendance and trail usage has increased recently. Staff have also observed a lot of wildlife: mule deer, raptors, snakes, and coyotes mostly.
2. Park staff continue to be very busy with the COVID-19 related duties: Cleaning the Visitor Center, restrooms, vault toilets, drinking fountains, bike station, picnic tables, park benches daily. The Visitor Center is closed to the public again, but all preserve trails, staging areas, and public restrooms remain open.
3. Park staff are currently working with DPR Resource Management Division on new signage about toads in the preserve. This signage will be displayed only during periods of toad activity, and added to park kiosks, at trailheads, and areas where toad activity is observed. Park Rangers will monitor areas where the toad activity occurs the most.
4. We observed all of these toads listed below during that time we were out there with RMD: Western spadefoot (*Spea hammondi*), California toad (*Anaxyrus boreas halophilus*), Baja California treefrog (*Pseudacris hypochondriaca hypochondriaca*)
5. Park staff continue to patrol and monitor the new preserve properties along SR67, and deter unauthorized trail use around the Clark Canyon area. Staff maintain fencing, signage, and natural barriers in areas where unauthorized trail use occurs.
6. Park staff recently planted 12 Coast Live Oak trees and native shrubs. Temporary drip irrigation lines were also installed to help care for these planted trees and shrubs. Staff also added a new composting station. The DPR Agricultural Scientist has assisted staff with planting location recommendations, proper planting techniques, and effective watering systems.
7. D&D Wildlife Habitat Restoration, in coordination with the DPR Resource Management division, is currently targeting and removing invasive plants in the preserve. This work is part of a 2-year grant funded through the San Diego River Conservancy. They will be concentrating on removing eucalyptus trees and other invasive in the riparian area of Sycamore Creek.
8. SDG&E will be using drones to assess their transmission lines and towers in the preserve on Nov 24 & 25.
9. New Park Attendant Brandon Botticelli recently graduated from SDSU and has really enjoyed working at Sycamore Canyon/Goodan Ranch so far.



Park Attendant Brandon Botticelli
planting a Coast Live Oak tree

Thank you for all of your support!

Louis

Join or Renew Your Membership



Just a reminder -

The membership year starts in January

for the Friends of Goodan Ranch & Sycamore Canyon .

You will find a membership form on the backside of this news-
letter.

Please renew as soon as possible.

Board Meeting Minutes

Due to the Corona Virus there was no Board meeting.



**CANCELED BY
CORONAVIRUS**

NEWS AND EVENTS

COVID-19 UPDATE

Safety is Our Priority

The County is working to protect the public's health in the face of COVID-19 by taking actions to help slow the spread of the virus. **Parks and preserves remain open, though some on-site amenities have been closed for your protection. View a [Comprehensive List of Parks](#) showing what's open and closed.**

We work every day to support a healthy, safe and thriving San Diego community and safety remains a top priority. For more information regarding the novel coronavirus and current status, visit the County's coronavirus webpage at coronavirus-sd.com.

DATE	UPDATE
	<p>State and local public health officials instituted new guidelines to combat the spread of COVID-19. In accordance with these guidelines, and in an effort to protect our staff and customers, the County of San Diego Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) will be temporarily closing all of its campgrounds and canceling all camping and day-use reservations this Sunday, Dec. 6 (at 12:59 p.m.), through at least Dec. 27, 2020.</p> <p>Additional changes to park operations:</p> <p>Campgrounds open for day-use only; no overnight stays</p>

Sycamore Canyon/Goodan Ranch County Preserve

16281 Sycamore Canyon Road, Poway, CA 92064•

Hours: Pedestrian access is available from sunrise to sunset.

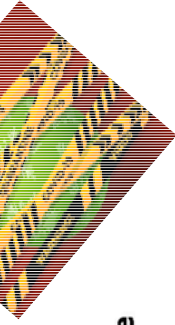
Open: Staging areas, outdoor amphitheater, trails, benches, picnic tables

Closed: Nature Center





**Friends of Goodan Ranch
&
Sycamore Canyon Open Space**
Webpage—GoodanRanch.org
Facebook—Goodan Ranch
Email—FriendsofGoodanRanch@gmail.com



**Please enroll me as a member of Friends of Goodan
Ranch & Sycamore Canyon Open Space.**

Date _____
Name or Business _____
Contact Name _____
Address _____
City, State, Zip _____
Phone _____
Email _____

Please select your membership level

- ☐ •\$ 25 Individual
☐ •\$ 20 Student /or/ Senior -62 and above
☐ •\$ 40 Family
☐ •\$ 50 Small Business
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Fill out the requested information & mail it with your check to:

**Friends of Goodan Ranch & Sycamore Canyon
Memberships**

14753 Carlson St.
Poway, CA 92064



The Sycamore Sage
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