

# 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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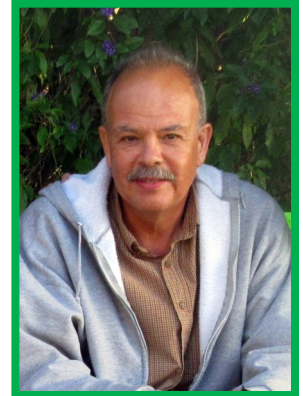
#### **Newsletter & Webpage**

Rita Lee

### **Why Wildlife?**

Wildlife is what it's all about. When we go for a hike or run, ride a horse, or get on our bike in an open space, we are really enjoying how life is supposed to be, natural. It has become ever more important for people to get away from the "developed areas" and get back to nature.

In San Diego County, we are fortunate to have so many special habitats to enjoy. Agencies such as City Regional Parks, County Parks, State Parks, Nature Preserves, and National Forests are all set aside to protect native habitat. Residents and visitors are lucky to be able to share this protected open space. This is great.



**Robert Laudy**

With this greatness comes responsibility. We, as stewards of this wildlife habitat, must insist that it is protected from over-use, over-development, fragmentation and illegal activity.

In Goodan Ranch/Sycamore Canyon Preserve we are seeing many threats to wildlife -- proposals from too many new trails that cause fragmentation of habitat corridors, a potential open pit mine on our eastern border that threatens the viability of the Multiple Species Conservation Program, a potential Fanita Ranch housing development on our southern border, Highway 67 widening/improvement concepts, and a proposed new upper reservoir for San Vicente. All of these activities would detrimentally impact wildlife in the region.

The Friends of Goodan Ranch and Sycamore Canyon Open Space will continue to fight for wildlife and promote a balanced way forward on these and other issues. Let me know if you want to help. Email me at [rlaudy@yahoo.com](mailto:rlaudy@yahoo.com)

### **In this issue**

- We sadly note the passing of long-time Friends president, Carol Crafts. *Page 2.*
- What about earthworms? *Page 4.*
- Why is it called "Martha's Grove"? *Page 6.*
- Hermes Copper Butterfly is now listed as "Threatened" and why the habitats around Sycamore Canyon are more important than ever. *Page 8.*

Happy Open-spacing

*Robert*



With children, grandchildren, and friends at her side and a raven feather clutched in her hand, Carol B. Crafts released her earthly form on June 12, 2022 after suffering complications from a massive stroke. She was 81. Carol was born January 14, 1941 to Fred and Thelma (Pohle) Billhardt in Cleveland, Ohio. Graduating from Ridgewood High School (1958) in New Jersey and then the University of Vermont (1962) as a Registered Nurse, Carol was an author, an avid naturalist, historian, librarian, and perpetual volunteer. After marrying Dr. Robert Crafts, Jr. (1935-2020) in 1963, she left nursing to raise their four children and curate their family life in whichever community they found themselves, including Hartford, CT, La Jolla, CA, Yokosuka, Japan, Camp Pendleton, CA, Oconomowoc, WI, Indio, CA, and finally Poway, CA.

Her legacy of service to others will live on with all who were privileged to know her. As a strong advocate for wildlife, a dedicated member of Project Wildlife's education and care teams, and as a docent and custodian of Sycamore Canyon Open Space Preserve and the Blue Sky Ecological Reserve, she led countless school programs and instructed people of all ages on how to interact with nature safely. Over the past 30 years, she personally hosted and nurtured a raven, several red-tailed hawks, multiple great-horned owls, and many other feathered friends at her home as well. She was, in many ways, a force of nature herself.

A docent and board leader of both the Poway and Santee Historical Societies; author of a book called Goodan Ranch and Sycamore Canyon: A History of the Land Then and Now; a volunteer librarian aide in multiple schools; the family genealogist; and a frequent costumed participant representing old-time Poway in local parades, she was the keeper and teller of stories. As an ancient African proverb says, "when we lose an elderly person, a library burns to the ground." Her knowledge will be profoundly missed.

She was known as "Grandma" to almost everyone who met her more than once. But nothing made her shine more than sharing life's experiences with her own family. She was woven intrinsically into the everyday fabric of so many lives; even in her absence, we feel her presence *everywhere*.

She is survived by her brother, three children, seven grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.



It is with a heavy heart that we said goodbye to our friend and past president, Carol Crafts. Her love of nature and history was legendary and we will forever miss her.







There are many types of worms, but those that we commonly encounter in our gardens are earthworms.

I was amazed to find out earthworms are actually considered animals. They are cold-blooded invertebrates, meaning that they lack a backbone and are unable to generate their own heat. They are more active in warm weather and during cold months they hibernate deep in the ground.

Many of us have heard that if you cut a worm in two, both parts will turn into a worm. Two for the price of one. However, that is not true. Although earthworms do not have a heart like mammals and reptiles do, they have series of 5 single-chambered aortic arches (similar to a heart) which pump blood through their body. The 5 “hearts” are close to the head. Depending on where you cut the worm, it is possible the front portion where the “heart” is may survive, but the tail portion will not. Most likely the worm will simply die. Worms also have a nervous system that enables them to feel pain whenever they are injured or hurt. Cutting them in half is simply cruel.



So how do worms reproduce? Earthworms are simultaneous hermaphrodites, meaning worms have both male and female reproductive organs. However, they need a partner to reproduce. In general, worms reproduce by rubbing up against another worm to exchange sperm. The individual worms store the sperm in sacs. Once this happens, mating is complete. At this point, the worms separate. The formation of the cocoon begins immediately after the two adult worms separate from each other after they have mated. They then go their separate ways and lay egg cocoons in the soil. From each cocoon, several little worms emerge, and they look

essentially like miniature versions of the adults. There is no larval stage.

Earthworms spend their lives underground, so they do not need eyes. However, they can detect light through their skin with special photosensitive cells. They move away from light to ensure their skin stays moist, which is extremely important to them. Earthworms breathe by pulling dissolved oxygen from the soil through their skin. The mucus on its skin helps it to dissolve the oxygen. Therefore, if a worm dries out, it suffocates.

Worms can also absorb enough oxygen from water to keep them alive underwater. The amount of time a worm can survive submerged depends on the oxygenation levels of the water. The more oxygen in the water, the longer it can survive. This begs the question if worms can breathe in water, why do they come to the surface when it rains?

There are two main theories:

1. Earthworms find it easier to travel across the surface when it is wet (to find food or a mate).
2. Raindrops sound like predators, such as moles, that make vibrations in the soil as they hunt. Moles eat earthworms, so when the worms hear one coming, they will rush to the surface to avoid

danger. Interestingly, birds have recognized and exploited this behavior by mimicking rain, hitting the ground with their feet to encourage earthworms to rise to the surface so they can eat them!

Each earthworm species has its own preferred food source, but in general, they eat decaying plant matter, spoiled food refuse, and dung. As earthworms have no teeth, they swallow their food whole, digesting about half of their body weight each day. Their digestive system is a tube running from the front at the mouth to the rear. A little flap pushes their food into the mouth hole where the throat muscle lubricates the food with saliva, and slowly moves it down the earthworm's esophagus to a small place called a crop. The nutrients are stored in the crop until it reaches the gizzard where the food is ground up in a specialized stomach with the aid of grit or stone. It then passes to the intestines where fluids are released and the nitrogen-rich food is broken down. The worm only absorbs about 27% of that nitrogen, leaving the other 73% as castings. These castings are excreted by the earthworms, becoming a key element needed to sustain plant growth. Charles Darwin calculated that 10 years' worth of worm castings from an acre of soil, collected and spread evenly over that acre, would form a layer 2 inches thick.

Besides enriching the soil with nitrogen, earthworms help our soil due to their burrowing nature. They move soil both upward and downward, distributing nutrients more efficiently, breaking up compact soil, and aerating it.



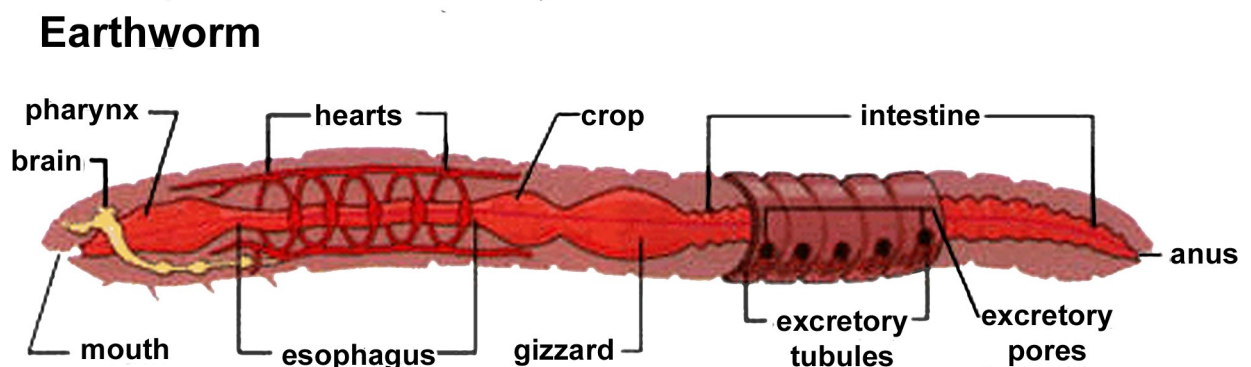
**EARTHWORMS ARE FOOD FOR GARDEN WILDLIFE AND THE START OF A FOOD CHAIN.**

While keeping worm populations alive is great for our soil and plants, worms are also an important food source for many predators, such as birds, raccoons, skunks, moles, and many other animals.

Recently, however, scientists have revealed that the very same traits that make earthworms beneficial can also make them harmful. The same food that earthworms eat so efficiently is also the habitat for spiders, lizards, beetles, frogs, snails, and innumerable other species. It also serves as protection for seeds that grow to form the plant community. Studies have found earthworm activity can reduce both the total coverage and the

diversity of plant species by between 25 and 75 percent. This effect ripples up the food chain to affect deer and other vertebrates that depend on that vegetation for food. Put simply, earthworms eat these other animals and plants out of house and home.

Earthworms, like many other species, are important in our ecosystem. They bring both positive and negative changes to our environment.





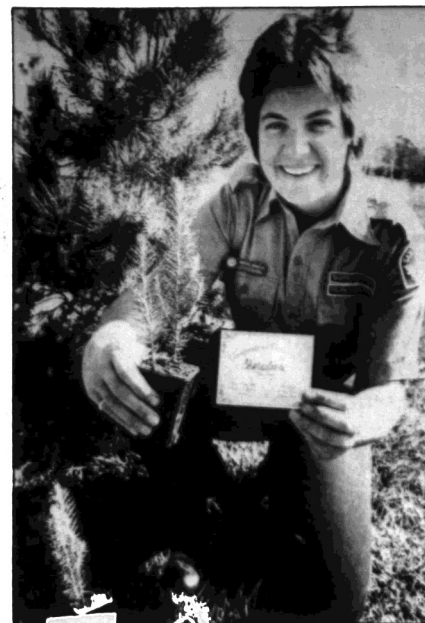
# Martha's Grove

By Rita Lee

Did you know that Martha's Grove is named after Park Ranger Martha Harville?

Martha Shawn Harville was born on 25 Jul 1957 and died 18 Aug 1988 in her North Park home of malignant melanoma, a deadly form of skin cancer.

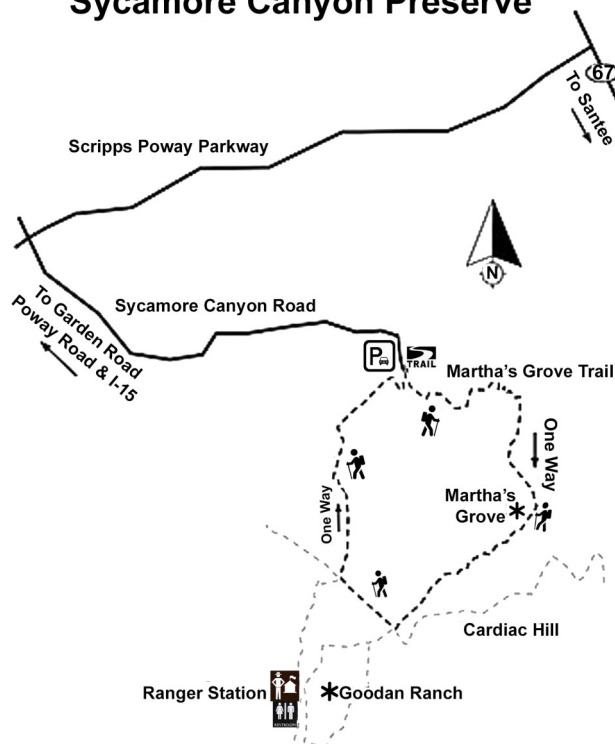
She was a graduate of Helix High School in La Mesa and studied both at Grossmont College and San Diego State University. She joined the Parks and Recreation Department as a park ranger in 1978. She was stationed at El Monte and Lake Morena County



Park ranger Martha Harville with seedling ready for adoption

CLIPPED FROM  
Imperial Beach Star-News  
Imperial Beach, California  
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## Martha's Grove Loop Sycamore Canyon Preserve



Parks as a Park Ranger. Ms. Harville had been instrumental in establishing environmental history museums in both Felicita and Lake Morena county parks.

She belonged to the Western Interpreters Association that sponsors displays, exhibits and interpretations in the field of the natural sciences and environmental concerns. She was editor of their Newsletter. Native American history was a subject she was especially interested in; she documented historic sites and led school children on hikes through Felicita County Park to show them real grinding stones that Native Americans used to prepare their food. At age 28, she was appointed District Park Manager, making her the youngest ranger appointed to this position. Her responsibilities included managing Guajome, Felicita, Live Oak and other North County parks.

Before she passed in 1988, and in recognition of her many contributions the Parks Service and to local cultural preservation, the San Diego County Parks and Recreation Department established a trail in her honor: The Martha Harville Oak Grove Trail in Sycamore Canyon/ Goodan Ranch County Preserve. The area designated in her honor is pretty. There is shade along the trail provided by willows. Visitors can read a memorial to Martha placed here.



# Ranger's Report

- ♦ Mary Elena Goodan and family toured the Visitor Center on 5/29. This was the first time many in the family had visited the ranch. The family was very impressed with some of the improvements and shared stories as they viewed the old ranch footage from the 1920-30's
- ♦ We hosted Night Hikes and Star Parties on 6/18, 6/24, 7/16, and 7/22. 55 guests in total were in attendance and enjoyed the activities.
- ♦ Staff continue to patrol for unauthorized use in the Preserve and have been actively in addressing these issues.
- ♦ We were very excited to hold our first wedding ceremony at Goodan Ranch on 6/11. There will be additional improvements to the wedding/amphitheater area made in the Fall, and we hope this wedding was one of many to come.
- ♦ Road improvements were made on Cardiac Hill and leading to the 67 Staging Area. Par staff coordinated with the El Cajon Operations team on this work which consisted of covering bare rock, filling erosion, and improving drainage.
- ♦ Staff purchased SB 1383 compliant organic mulch for landscape improvements and use around newly planted trees. These organic mulches will be used throughout the year. They are aesthetically pleasing, aid in moisture retention, and help to combat the effects of climate change.
- ♦ We are happy to welcome new Park Hosts at Goodan Ranch. Chad and Channele Neuzil will be spending the next year with us providing customer service, landscaping, and maintaining our Visitor Center.
- ♦ Ranger Patrick Wiener participated in a Locals Hero's Story Time at the Poway Library on 8/25. Many youth and adults were in attendance to enjoy a few books and play games.
- ♦ Staff painted all of the exterior railing at the Visitor Center and staff from the Department of General Services installed new hand dryers in the restrooms. We hope to have our floor completely refinished within the next few months.
- ♦ All work on the greenhouse and chicken coop are complete. Our 6 hens are growing quickly and becoming a popular addition to the ranch for many return visitors. Additionally, the chicken manure is being used in our composting area and staff continue to educate the public on the benefits of composting.
- ♦ Two new Park Attendants joined the team recently, Roy DeRego and Michael Beck. Please stop by and say hello on your next trip into the canyon!

# Tracking Report

We conducted the quarterly wildlife survey on Friday, July 29, with three volunteers. The weather was mild, with considerable clouds for the duration of the survey. The County was fixing up the road by dumping and dragging fill dirt, so there was a fair amount of large truck traffic during the survey. Probably due to this, we found fewer tracks and scat than we normally do, but we still recorded significant animal presence. We found sign for Bobcat, Coyote, Gray Fox, Mule Deer, Black Tailed Jack Rabbit, Striped Skunk, Raccoon, and Kangaroo Rat. We found both tracks and scat for Raccoon, the first raccoon sign we have recorded on this transect in more than a year. We had more new Woodrat nests, and with the vegetation thin due to the drought, we had less trouble finding nests than we have in the past year. We also found plenty of sign for ground squirrels, small rodents, and cottontails, including Bachman's Cottontail (Brush Rabbit).

-Phoenix

## San Diego's Rarest Butterfly

San Diego County is full of beautiful and unique things. One of these is Southern California's rarest butterfly, the small, bright yellow-orange spotted Hermes copper butterfly. This unique butterfly lives only in San Diego County and northwestern Baja California where it occupies coastal sage scrub and chaparral habitats. In 2003, and again in 2007, wildfires wiped out most of the known Hermes copper butterfly population, along with its primary source of nectar, the California Buckwheat. Now this pretty butterfly is on the brink of extinction. On December 21, 2021, the Hermes copper butterfly was designated as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFW) also warned that a single large wildfire could wipe out all remaining populations of the butterflies.



Hermes copper butterfly on  
California Buckwheat



Hermes copper butterfly on redberry bush

A great deal about this butterfly is unknown because of its rarity. This is what we do know. The adult Hermes copper butterfly is active from May through July. During this time, the females deposit single eggs on the new growth of the spiny redberry shrubs (*Rhamnus crocea*). Hermes eggs remain dormant during the late summer, fall, and winter. The following spring, the larvae hatch and mature over about 14 days. The larvae feed solely on the leaves of the redberry shrub where it hatched. The adult butterfly, however, gathers nectar almost entirely on California buckwheat, *Eriogonum fasciculatum*. Because of this, these butterflies live only in an area that has both these plants nearby.

With this in mind, the USFW has designated the Hermes copper butterfly protected habitat in three areas:

Lopez Canyon Unit (410 acres)

Miramar/Santee Unit, including parts of Sycamore Canyon parkland (7,092 acres)

Southeast San Diego Unit (27,525 acres)



(Continued from page 8)

The USFW also outlined the worst threats to the Hermes copper butterfly:

Wildfire - has the potential to destroy both habitat and the species quickly and concurrently.

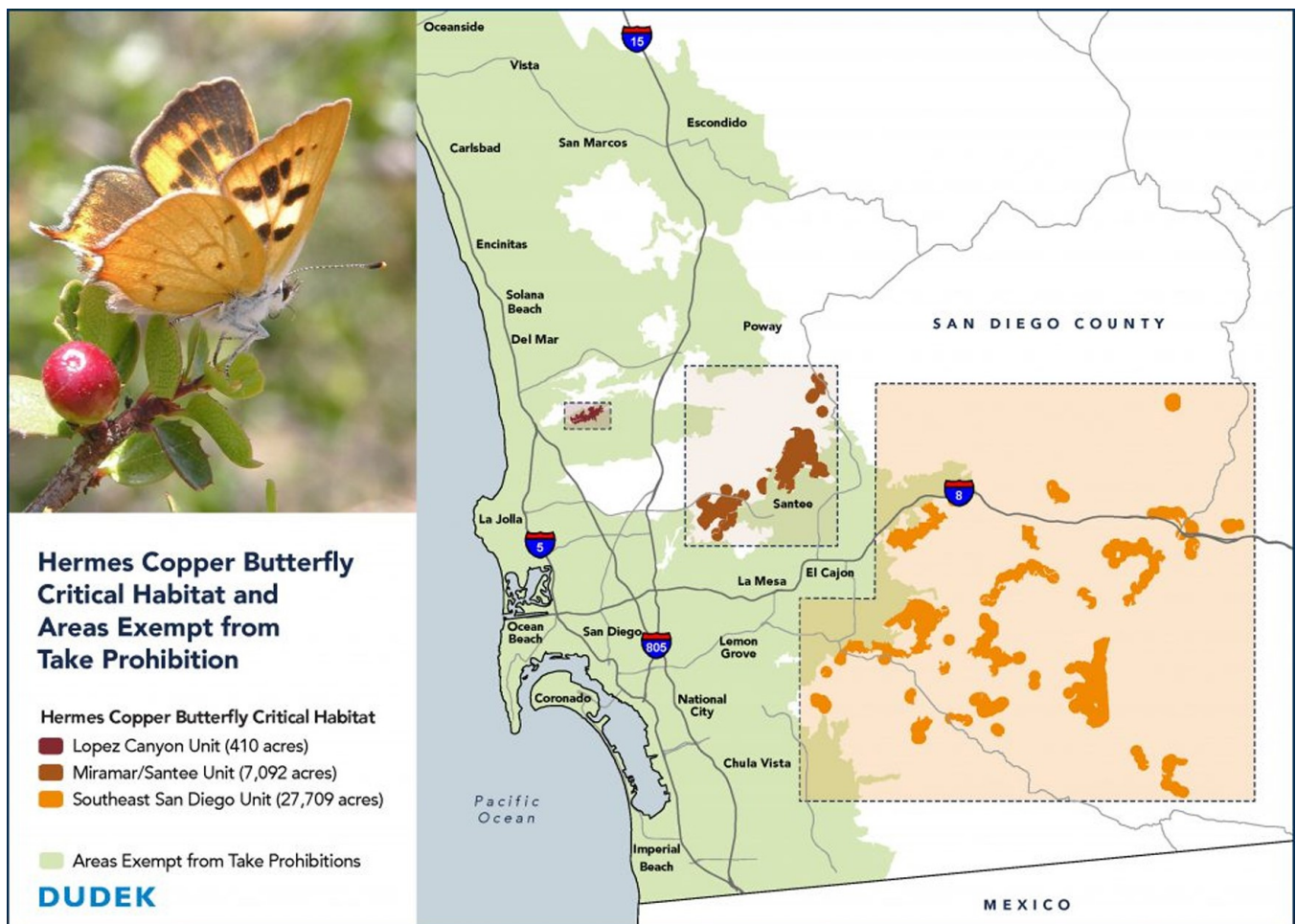
Drought - can intensify the effects of fire, preventing recovery of the habitat and promoting weed growth.

Land use change - These butterflies do not migrate, so the loss of habitat and fragmentation of their habitat can be deadly. We have already lost many populations recorded from El Cajon, Fairmont Canyon, Kearny Mesa, Scripps Gateway, and numerous sites near the City of San Diego urban core.

Let's do what we can to save these beautiful butterflies along with the other species that live in our areas.

Wildfires can occur anywhere, including designated protected habitats. Land use change must be watched and carefully calculated as to its effect on wildlife. And climate change and drought can severely affect all of us.

It's up to us to preserve our wildlife.





**Friends of Goodan Ranch  
&  
Sycamore Canyon Open Space**  
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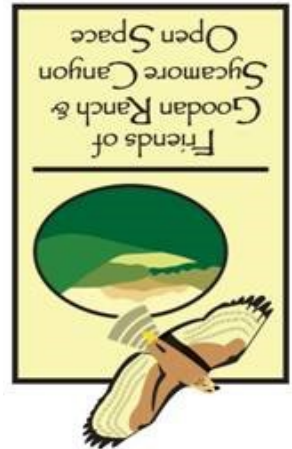
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