

NEWS & VIEWS

Celebrating 65 Years as the Employee Newsletter of California State Parks



April 2009

Holocaust-Era Artwork Returned to Heirs of Jewish Family

Many who attended the ceremony at Stanford Mansion State Historic Park called the ceremony “powerful and the right thing to do.”

On Friday, April 10, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and California State Parks Director Ruth Coleman returned three paintings, confiscated by the Nazis during the time of the Holocaust, to the heirs of Jakob and Rosa Oppenheimer. Accepting the paintings on behalf of eight Oppenheimer family heirs was Inge Blackshear from Buenos



Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and Director Ruth Coleman, at right, return paintings confiscated by the Nazis during the time of the Holocaust to the heirs of Jakob and Rosa Oppenheimer. The heirs, at left, are Peter Block, grandson, and Inge Blackshear, granddaughter.

► **ARTWORK, Page 3**

Grand Opening Celebration Held at Fort Ord Dunes State Park



Fort Ord Dunes State Park - Congressman Sam Farr addresses the crowd at the grand opening celebration. State Parks Director Ruth Coleman is seated to his left.

It seemed like the windiest day of the century along the Monterey County coastline as around 150 people gathered April 3 to celebrate the official, grand opening of “The Dunes,” as many call it.

On this day, the State Parks’ sector superintendent Dana Jones led a parade of local, state and federal officials through the Grand Opening celebration. She pointed to the former ranges, now gone, where tens of thousands of American soldiers trained. Now restored, it is open to the public, said Jones. It is a place dominated by a continuous coastal sand dune formation that ris-

► **FORT ORD, Page 4**



Director Ruth Coleman

Employees Rack Up One Success After Another

The month of April has been very good to State Parks. We have opened up hundreds of acres of beachfront at the newly-created Ft. Ord Dunes State Park. We opened up a new 21st century visitor center at the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook that we own and operate as part of Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area. That opening led to an article on the front page of the Los Angeles Times' Calendar section, by architecture critic Christopher Hawthorne, touting the exciting new face of State Parks. We re-opened Old Town San Diego with a local operator and on opening day, the lines were 3 hours long. We unveiled new exhibits at La Purisima State Historic Park that add tremendous education value to a visitor center that had been opened in 2004, yet was largely empty inside until now. These events signify the culmination of years of investment and work that has occurred since 2000 when the first park bond passed.

We returned three paintings that belonged to Hearst Castle to the heirs of a German couple who lost the art to the Nazis during the Holocaust. Governor Schwarzenegger presided over the ceremony and his presence brought out an enormous press response. We received positive news coverage all around the world, including an extremely complimentary editorial in the Jerusalem Post.

In more good news, last week the State Treasurer sold enough bonds to enable all our

bond projects to restart. While it will take our control agencies some time to address the complexities of remobilization, not to mention federal tax laws, we look forward to completing major projects like a new campground at Crystal Cove State Park, a new visitor center at Calaveras, some key acquisitions and a host of other projects that had been stalled since December.

Ironically, while we celebrate tremendous successes, we keep hearing about the deteriorating economy and we worry about the impact it may have on us and our operations. Our campgrounds will be full this summer, and our beaches will be packed, but will the Legislature grant us enough funds to cope with those crowds? So far the answer is yes but after the May special election, the Legislature will be revisiting the budget. We simply don't know what will happen so the most important defense we can run is to continue to generate great press and serve the public in such a positive way that Legislators might conclude the very small amount of General Fund we receive is well spent in keeping the tourism economy going in tough times.

For now, we should celebrate our achievements and try to remain as positive as we can in the face of such uncertainty. The quality of our staff and the dedication you all bring make this department great.

Artwork Returned After Years at Hearst Castle

►FROM PAGE 1



The dining room of the Leland Stanford Mansion was packed with press, staff, and guests for the event.



The Oppenheimer family has allowed Venus and Cupid—School of Bordon to continue hanging at Hearst Castle as an educational tool.

Aires, Argentina, a granddaughter of Jakob and Rosa, and Peter Block from Boynton, Florida, a grandson of Jakob and Rosa. Accompanying them to Sacramento was Eva Sterzing, the family attorney from Paris, France, who filed the claim for return of the paintings on behalf of the family.

William Randolph Hearst acquired the paintings in 1935, unaware of the circumstances surrounding their ownership. They were deeded to the State in 1972 with the transfer of Hearst Castle to California State Parks. They have been hanging on the walls of Hearst Castle for decades, their true history unknown until the claim was filed and an investigation was completed.

Director Coleman began the return ceremony by saying, “We are proud to honor the memory of Jakob and Rosa Oppenheimer. With reverence and respect, we willingly correct this Holocaust-Era injustice.”

Governor Schwarzenegger said he wanted to personally participate in the return of the paintings. “The Holocaust will long be regarded as one of the darkest crimes against humanity of the modern era, and I am humbled to play a role in undoing this terrible wrong for the heirs of Jakob and Rosa Oppenheimer.”

The claim for the return of the artwork asserted that the three paintings were the subject of a “judenauktionen,” a coerced sale of Jewish assets by the Nazis. Jacob Oppenheimer died a poor man in Nice, France on June 3, 1941. Rosa Oppenheimer was arrested in France by its German occupiers and sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp where she perished on November 3, 1943.

In agreeing to return the paintings, California State Parks asked if the ownership of one of the paintings could be retained, along with reproductions of the other two, so that the history of the paintings and the holocaust could be told to visitors. This arrangement was accepted. Guides will be trained on the history of all three paintings and will interpret the story in their tour presentations.

Fort Ord Celebration

FROM PAGE 1

es steeply to block ocean views from most of Highway One.

Congressman Sam Farr, from Monterey, was the main speaker of the day. He told the crowd that the day could have turned out differently because when Fort Ord was slated for closure, there were serious proposals for a marina, a major dock area for giant cruise ships, and a series of luxury hotels along the dunes. Farr told the gathering that the Dunes park, and all the other parks now enjoyed in the area, were struggles. He said today marks a new beginning that took 17 years to achieve. Monterey County Supervisor Jane Parker said preservation of the property now makes up a whole string of parks that are a valuable draw for the tourism economy of Monterey County.

It was in 1991 that BRAC, the Base Realignment and Closure Committee, targeted Fort Ord for closure. What followed was an effort to clean up more than 700,000 pounds of spent ammunition from the sand dune hills and remove a series of buildings. In 2006, the property was transferred from the U.S. Army to the National Park Service, State Parks assumed operational control and responsibility for the land. On February 24, 2009, the 979 acres and four miles of spectacular beach property was officially transferred to California State Parks.



State Parks Director Ruth Coleman, left, and Superintendent Dana Jones enjoy the view and compete with the high winds of the day at one of the many interpretive sign locations that tell about the area.



Fort Ord Dunes State Park boasts fantastic views on land previously used by the U.S. Army.



Clockwise from top: three fantastic pictures from Point Lobos, approximately a dozen miles away from Fort Ord Dunes State Park; Fort Ord Dunes State Park.



Nature and Community in the Baldwin Hills

By Stephanie Campbell
Associate Park and Recreation
Specialist, Los Angeles Sector

This month, the Los Angeles Sector celebrated the opening of our newest park, the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook (BHSO). It is the last large swath of open space in one of the most densely populated regions in California.

With a musical welcome from the Dorsey High School Choir we shared the day with community members, elected officials, and partners who helped make the park vision a reality.

Ron Schafer, Angeles District Superintendent, equated the preservation of these 50 acres, supported by the community, with the preservation of the first modern State Park, Big Basin Redwoods, by the Sem-pervirens Club in 1904.

The opening of BHSO on April 18 marks the culmination of California State Parks' Urban Parks Initiative in Los Angeles, following the opening of Los Angeles State Historic Park and Rio de Los Angeles State Park. With the opening of these new parks, California State Parks has established a solid presence in the city's most densely populated areas and demonstrated its commitment to preserving available open space in park-poor neighborhoods.

BHSO, near Culver City, offers trails through restored native habitat, a state-of-the-art visitor center and panoramic views, 500 feet above the Los Angeles basin. During the



Above: Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors member Mark Ridley-Thomas, California State Parks Director Ruth Coleman, and Angeles District Superintendent Ron Schafer pose at the grand opening of Baldwin Hills. Below: the Baldwin Hills visitors center.



opening, visitors enjoyed views from the overlook, exhibits in the visitor center, nature walks, and bird watching. Music provided by the Culver City High School Jazz Combo and healthy food served up by Urban Green Cuisine rounded out what proved to be a pleasant and relaxing celebration.

“We wanted to provide a tranquil respite from big city life,” said State Parks Director Ruth Colman, who spoke at the event. “Park staff, supporters, and young volunteers made it happen not just for the department, but for this entire Los Angeles community and all Californians. They deserve a big Thank You.”

New Landing Craft Begins Service at Angel Island State Park



Its official name is the "Clam." The Clam replaces a military surplus LCM (Land Craft Mechanized), a workhorse relic from the 1960s that has been servicing the island since about 1973. It was worn to the point where it was overdue for retirement. The Clam arrived in March, after making the trip from Sitka, Alaska, where it was built by Allen Marine, which built an identical boat for the National Park Service. The Clam is 65 feet long and capable of hauling about 35 tons of cargo. It is needed to move vehicles and equipment between Angel Island and the mainland, transporting such things as fuel, garbage and sewer service trucks, along with construc-

tion and maintenance materials. During last summer's fires, the old boat hauled 40 loads of fire trucks and fire crews. Those fire crews saved the Camp Reynolds Civil War encampment and other historic sites from burning to the ground. Our boat operator for more than 30 years has been Allyn Schafer, who wrote the final specifications for the boat and handles this tonnage with the greatest of ease. Case Belltawn, Chief of Mobile Equipment, put the bid and contract together and went to Alaska to inspect the construction. And one more point. It is powered by two Cummins QSL9, 9 liter, 285 horsepower engines that meet tier-2 low emission standards.

On Valentines Day, Hearst Castle hosted a tour for 28 young burn survivors and counselors from the Ruch Burn Foundation. Ages 17-20, they were on a Young Adult Summit retreat that focuses on life management, career, education and relationship goals. Guide Wayne Fisk and three Hearst Castle Fire Department representatives led the way. Lunch afterward was provided by the Cambria Lions Club and ARAMARK Hearst Castle, the park's gift shop operator.



Better Go Green

A Poem by Tiffany Aubel

Out gardening my yard,
A sight I did see.
My neighbor threw a can,
On his grass and let it be.

I said to him,
Just as of today,
“Is it your plan,
To just let it stay?”

He smiled at me,
Said “What do you care.”
I said in response,
“It’s something we all share.”

“The ground below us,
The sky up above,
It’s something we should all do,
That’s the earth we must love.”

“What has it done for me?”
He replied with a shrug.
And to his face,
Oh how I wish I could slug.

I held my resistance,
With calmness I reply,
“It’s the air you breathe,
and that pastrami on rye.”

After much thought,
He gave me a look.
A scratch on his head,
His head he did shook.

“I see what you mean,
The things that I need.
They come from the earth,
and I consume them indeed.

He picked up the can,
Off the ground he did take.
More than a wise decision,
For him to just make.

So when walking around,
This information I say,
Better go green,
On this beautiful Earth Day.

Tiffany Aubel is a Staff Services Analyst in the Human Rights Section.

Universal Access Award Nominations are Opening soon

California State Parks’ Disabled Advisory Committee (DAC) would like to announce that the nomination period for the Universal Access Award will begin on May 1. The program was initiated last year to recognize individuals or groups of employees, support organizations, and volunteers for their outstanding achievement in the area of improving universal access in our State Parks System for individuals with disabilities. The intent of the program is to recognize and encourage outstanding, innovative

achievements toward universal access to facilities, services, and employment in the State Park System. Additional information and the nomination form will be distributed through an “All Employees” memo around May 1st. We hope you will take the time to submit a nomination in recognition of outstanding achievement in the area of improving universal access. California State Parks continues to be committed to making all of our visitors with varying abilities feel welcome.

Extending the Campground into the Classroom: The Cahuilla Project

By Sharen Metz Kokaska
Park Interpretive Specialist
Mt. San Jacinto State Park

As the seasonal Park Interpretive Specialist at Mount San Jacinto State Park in Riverside County, I've enjoyed teaching the Junior Ranger program, working in the outdoor classroom and interpreting nature to children and adults. Thus, I welcomed the opportunity this fall, to extend my teaching from the campground into the local elementary classroom. Garratt Aitchison, our sector superintendent, asked me to teach a unit of study in the public schools and requested financial support through our Natural History Association. Upon approval, I reviewed the Web site for the Education and Environmental Initiative (www.calepa.ca.gov/education/eei) where I was able to correlate California's academic content standards with those of the environmental initiative. I identified appropriate objectives and outlined a six-week project to teach

children about local Native Americans, the Cahuilla people. When I offered my "Cahuilla Project" to the principal and two teachers of Idyllwild Elementary School, they expressed elation over having a specialist teach the very material that was specified by their curriculum. Thereafter, we agreed on a time-line to teach 50 children from two classes, the following objectives:

Students would

- 1) Identify basic geographical features in our region. i.e. deserts, mountains, valleys.
- 2) Identify American Indian nations in the local region and their customs and traditions.
- 3) Complete drawings demonstrating elements of the Cahuilla culture.
- 4) Learn how the natives obtained food, clothing, homes, and tools by adapting to the environment.
- 5) Verbalize information about the relationship of regions to

culture and lifestyle.

- 6) Read the duties of a Junior Ranger, take the oath and receive the Junior Ranger pins.

The children and teachers expressed excitement for the project and lessons. I will return to the classroom this spring, to implement a two-day lesson on California Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights.

For further information, contact Sharen Metz Kokaska at s.kokaska@verizon.net or (562) 252-6306



Sharen Metz Kokaska

News & Views

2009

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Submit articles to newsandviews@parks.ca.gov

Please include captions and photographer's name with all photographs.

Photographs must be TIFF or JPEG format. We cannot use pictures embedded in Microsoft Word documents.

Please limit article length to 300 words. Articles may be edited for clarity and length.

The next deadline is June 1 for the August issue.

Chino Hills State Park: Two Days Of Fire, 10 Weeks Of Recovery



John Rowe, Chino Sector Superintendent

Wildfire destroyed 95 percent of Chino Hills State Park in November.

By Ron Krueper, Inland Empire District Superintendent

A whirlwind of repair activity and a tremendous amount of dedicated hard work brought Chino Hills State Park from a charred blackened terrain to lush nature in just 10 weeks.

The hills are green again, the wildflowers are out and the trails are being enjoyed by park visitors. Habitat restoration planning and projects will continue in the years to come.

Little visible evidence remains of the wildfire that destroyed 95 percent of the park in November. The Freeway Complex Fire, fueled by Santa Ana winds, spread quickly and in just two days grew to 30,000 acres, including much of the 14,100-acre Chino Hills State Park. Only Coal Canyon on the south side of the 91 freeway was not impacted.

Firefighters fought the fire on two fronts, as two separate fires started to the east and to the west of the park at the 91 Freeway/Green River exit and Carbon Canyon area, then converged in the middle.

Fire intensities through the park were low to moderate, however very few islands of unburned vegetation remain. Coastal sage scrub, riparian and walnut woodland habitats within the park were the hardest hit. The fire crowned out as it passed through most of the walnut woodland and the riparian habitats.

We are optimistic about crown sprouting, but things will not be the same for many years.

Of great concern is the frequency with which fire is occurring in Chino Hills SP and the occurrence of type conversion

from native vegetation communities to non-natives and the resultant loss of biodiversity.

The successful repair and reopening is due to a tremendous amount of dedicated hard work by Park, District, Southern Service Center and Sacramento Headquarters staff.



John Rowe, Chino Sector Superintendent

Damage was visible the day after the fire was extinguished.



John Rowe, Chino Sector Superintendent



John Rowe, Chino Sector Superintendent

Above: More photographs of the fire from the entrance of Chino Hills State Park. Below: the city of Yorba Linda with the Chino Hills wildfire in the background.



John Rowe, Chino Sector Superintendent



John Rowe, Chino Sector Superintendent

Courtesy of Joe Zeno



Joe Zeno Walks America for the American Cancer Society

On Sunday, March 8, Senior Park Aid Joe Zeno of Shasta State Historic Park started a walking journey across America in association with the American Cancer Society in honor of his mother, Kathy Zeno of the Cascade Sector, Northern Buttes District. Kathy is a cancer survivor who will be cheering her son on while he treks over 3,000 miles on a diagonal path from the southern California coast to New York. Joe has worked with many volunteers scheduling talks at Discovery Shops across America to encourage women to educate themselves about breast cancer and the importance of early detection. You can follow Joe's expedition by visiting www.joewalks.com.

April is for Canoe Hikes and Cleanup



April is a popular month for Humboldt Redwoods State Park's canoe hikes, where rangers lead visitors down the South Fork of the Eel River.

By Ranger Richard Bergstresser Humboldt Redwoods State Park

Saturdays in April the rangers of Humboldt Redwoods State Park lead happy people down the South Fork of the Eel River.

The Canoe Hike program at Humboldt Redwoods State Park has been running for ten years, and grows in popularity each year. Last April, more than 80 visitors participated in four ranger-led trips down the wild and scenic river, partaking of well over 400 hours of interpretation, recreation, and fun.

The vast amounts of rainfall common to the area sometimes thwart our plans, as just one inch of rain the day before a

scheduled paddle can turn a docile river into a churning, chocolate-milk-colored torrent choked with floating debris. Since we generally try not to lose any visitors on the paddle trips, these conditions result in last-minute cancellations.

Rain on the day of a trip, however, can lead to incredibly sublime moments on the river. If properly dressed for the weather, the calming sound of the rain hitting the river and the feeling of solitude can't be matched.

The trips include nature walks that take visitors into areas that otherwise have had little public access since the Canoe Fire of 2003. Walking onto the flat portions where

Canoe Creek drains into the South Fork Eel offers visitors a unique glimpse at the recovery of an old-growth redwood forest after a major fire, and invariably is the highlight of the trip.

Every year also features an Earth Day Cleanup Paddle. Participants forego the nature hike and instead clean up any trash found in the river. The collected haul—usually a dozen bags of trash as well as larger items including tires and appliances—results in nine miles of a dramatically cleaner river and better habitat for the otters, salmon, ducks, and other creatures that call the South Fork home.



John Arnold's Mailbag

I would like to thank you very much for the diligent lifeguard services provided by Mr. Alexander Leslie (State Life Guard, Torrey Pines State Beach, San Diego, California).

A major rip current suddenly pulled me away from the beach (Torrey Pines State Beach) on March the 16 in the afternoon. Despite my all efforts trying to swim toward the shore, I was pulled further away from it. Mr. Alexander rescued me from a very likely tragedy. It took for him less than 2 minutes to reach me and less than 10 minutes to move me to the shore safely. He saved my life.

Thank you so much for having State Life Guards like Mr. Alexander Leslie doing such an important job for such diligence and care.

I am emailing to say thank you very very much for the HD SEAL CAM! How wonderful to have this again... it used to be fed through the National Geographic Nature Webcam site but they have stopped airing it so I am so excited someone there referred me to here.

As someone who has not been shy about complaining, I want to express my gratitude for the diligent efforts of park employees and others who have worked so hard to repair the park. Thanks, Danke, Gracias, etc...

We just read your news release of October 2 announcing the

closure of Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park campground until Memorial Day 2009. Although this is unfortunate, we applaud what you are doing to preserve and protect this wonderful site in the wake of the terrible Basin Complex fires this past summer. Over the years my family and I have camped there many times, and we have appreciated the rich variety of things to see and do at Pfeiffer Big Sur. We wish you well as you remove and replace the bridges, and take other preventive measures to benefit the park. We look forward to returning sometime in the future.

Thank you for a great viewing experience of the sea mammals and birds via the seacam! This allows me to visit the shoreline when I can't actually be there.

I would like to tell you about the finest folks my husband and I met on our trip to CA last month, Elena T. Orozco and Richard Miller.

We were visiting Old Town San Diego on President's Day when a torrential rain looked like it would ruin our visit.

Instead Elena and Richard saved the day. Elena, with a warm CA smile, dragged a second chair from a back room so that Dan and I could comfortably sit inside the visitors center by a window and take in a view of Old Town.

Then, at 11 am Richard suggested that, since a walking

tour would be impossible in this torrential rain, "Let's go across the courtyard to a museum that's not usually open and I'll show you the history of Old Town." He proceeded to mesmerize us for an hour and even let us stay there to see more exhibits after he had to run off to his next assignment. Both Elena and Richard made our day! Thanks, thanks for having such lovely volunteers.

In 1973 a friend and I, during the lowest tide I have ever seen we found a knife sticking out of a rock in the Sacramento river in Crocket CA. We took it to my friends house, busted off as much as we could, till my friends Dad took a hammer and chisel to break off the rest of the rock. In side was a knife/tool about a foot long, 2in. wide, 3/8 in. thick with a 90% turn at the pointed end sharpened side out, with a rounded handle. It looks scratched like some one sharpened it with a rock, It looks like it is made out of at least 3 different metals. It is very magnetic, it is also pitted like it was forged but not hot enough to get all impurities out. Where it was found the water is very saline. How come this knife that was submerged for long enough for a rock to form around it wasn't completely consumed by electrolsis. Do you have some one who can look at this unique knife/tool? Or could you direct us to some one that might be able to help id. this artifact?

Promotions: January and February

Kathy Weatherman Tehachapi District Superintendent



Kathy Weatherman started her state parks career 20 years ago as a park maintenance assistant at Lake Perris. She then served as a ranger in the Angeles District for a little more than a year, before returning to Lake Perris where she remained for 13 years, working her way up the ranks from ranger to supervising ranger to park superintendent. Then, for 2½ years, she served as sector superintendent in the Chino Hills Sector leading two parks: California Citrus State Historic Park and Chino Hills State Park. For the past two years she has been Sector Superintendent for the Lake Perris Sector.

As District Superintendent, Kathy will oversee the district's 11 park units, that include historical units, recreation areas, and one of the few regional Indian museums in the department. In her free time, she enjoys the desert scenery on runs while training for triathlons.

She and her husband Jerry are raising their two daughters, Lindsay and Ashley, ages 14 and 17, respectively.

Danita Rodriguez has been employed with California State Parks for nearly 32 years. She started her parks career as a Park Aid in 1977, working at Silverwood Lake State Recreation Area, the Gaviota Coast beaches, Sugar Pine Point State Park, and Humboldt Redwoods State Park. She then worked as an unbadged PI ranger at Portola Redwoods State Park and Woodson Bridge State Recreation Area for three seasons at which time she attended Butte College and received her POST certificate. Danita accepted her first permanent ranger position at Silverwood Lake State Recreation Area in 1984 and after 13½ years, she transferred to the Gaviota Coast beaches before promoting to Supervising Ranger and eventually to Sector Superintendent at the Santa Barbara Sector of the Channel Coast District. Most recently, Danita has worked as the Sector Superintendent of the Marin Sector. She has her Bachelor of Arts degree in Recreation and Park Management from Chico State University. Danita is married with two grown children.

Danita Rodriguez Marin District Superintendent



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Audits Office
1/1/2009

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Mark A. Deleon
San Joaquin Sector
2/6/2009

Desert Interpretation Training is a Hit!



Members of the interpretive staff listened to Joan Schneider, associate state archeologist from the Colorado Desert District.

By Jean Rhyne, Interpreter I, Mojave Sector

I went to the UID Training Center in a town called Zzyzx in San Bernardino County. It's pronounced, "ZIE-zix" and sounds like sleep.

On my way there, I looked forward to seeing department friends, learning about the beautiful desert, and seeing this mysterious resort with a name that is difficult to pronounce. By the time I left, I had been blown away by the inspirational passion of top-notch presenters and a barrage of great field trips! Every hour was chock-full of intriguing concepts and fascinating demonstrations that I'll be integrating into my own programs.

Our field trips were all nearby so we could squeeze

in a variety of sites, from the historic Kelso Railroad Station to the ancient dry shores of Lake Manix. On-site demonstrations proved completely unexpected geologic phenomena, including remnants of a pre-historic clam bake. We set live traps and found there had been a flurry of activity while we slept! After photographing kangaroo rats like paparazzi, we let each go with their cheeks full of seeds.

Although the desert often lacks a variety of colors and obvious attractions, we learned how to find subtleties and "interpret the ordinary," using common things such as the sun, a bush, and a broom handle.

The ambiance of the site really made the training a special experience. The old

Zzyzx Mineral Springs Resort and Health Spa now houses the Desert Studies Center, a field station of California State University. The area is rich in biological diversity, and history buffs are attracted to this site's pop culture past.

The training was enriching, both personally and professionally. It was both eye-opening for those with prior knowledge, and those with no background whatsoever. I also walked away with a new perspective of this beautiful, and usually under-appreciated, wonder of our world.

Fun Facts

- Antelope Ground Squirrels stay cool by drooling, pressing their thinly-haired bellies onto cool shaded sand, and licking their legs!
- Rattlesnakes have poor vision and use heat-sensitive pits to ambush small prey. Swing a hot water balloon around and the snake will charge it! (Disclaimer: the department does not condone teasing rattlesnakes)
- Female tarantulas build webs across their burrows. Males strum the web to play a love song!

An extended version of this article will appear in the Spring 2009 issue of the Catalyst, the newsletter of the Interpretation and Education Division.