



Native Plantpalooza & Eco Fest returns October 7! Join us to learn about our local pollinators and wildlife and native plant gardening. (More info below.)

A Few Words from Our President

Great people make our community work and I am so excited that our Conejo Open Space Foundation board has brought on two extremely talented and compassionate leaders recently with the additions of **John Noble and Katrina Nolan**.

John brings with him a real passion for the critters in our community including those amazing snakes and lizards, and Katrina brings with her valuable skills in strategic thinking that will help COSF realize its full potential. You'll find lots more about John below and look in the next issue for a chat with Katrina. **Help me in welcoming these two amazing people making a big difference.**

Our board, however, isn't the only place people make a difference. For the many of you who have participated in COSCA's Trail Work Days in the past, a tremendous thank you. With all the interesting weather we've had this year, the need for trail upkeep has significantly increased. **Please consider joining us monthly to have a little fun, get in some hard**

work and keep our trails looking great. See below for information on the next Trail Work Day coming up. It's a tangible way to do something good for the Conejo Valley and enjoy a little sunshine.

And don't forget one of our most popular events is back. Plantpalooza! This is a great opportunity for community friends of all ages. Learn about native plants, get to know some indigenous wildlife and engage with local vendors making a difference in your Conejo Valley. Mark your calendars now and plan to bring your friends. Don't forget to stop by the COSF booth and say hello to us. See you on October 7!

Tania Garia
President, Conejo Open Space Foundation

P.S. Do you have the time and energy to be a part of our team? Let us know today! If you're interested in serving on the COSF board, please reach out to me at: president@cosf.org

We Couldn't Do It Without You!

COSCA relies on volunteers to help build and maintain trails, act as extra eyes and ears for the rangers, carry out educational programs and support the open space in many other ways. Please consider volunteering for a program that interests you.

COSF depends on open space supporters for donations that help fund COSCA volunteer programs and so much more.

Thank you for your generosity. It makes a difference..

Donate

Volunteer



The Santa Monica Mountains Fund will be back this year with more free native plants, along with nursery director Antonio Sanchez, who will speak at 10:00. a.m.

Native Plantpalooza & Eco Fest Returns Oct. 7

On Saturday, October 7, the Conejo Open Space Foundation will host its **second annual free event featuring dozens of eco-related exhibitors and fun activities for kids.** Native Plantpalooza & Eco Fest will be held rain or shine at the Lakeside Pavilion area in the Conejo Creek North Park in Thousand Oaks from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

The festival's exhibitors include butterfly experts from **Betina's Butterfly Garden**, noted wildflower painter and author **Stacy Ruda Best**, and many more (see list below).

Exhibitors will have native plants and other eco-related goodies for sale, as well as plenty of freebies. Attendees can learn about water-wise, fire-resistant native-plant gardening and design, how to adapt to climate change, and get tips on living sustainably and being a good steward of our public lands, while kids can learn about plants and animals and what they can do to help the environment.

There will be two special presentations in the Lakeside Pavilion:

At 10:00 a.m. Antonio Sanchez, nursery manager and restoration volunteer coordinator for the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, will speak about growing milkweed and the Milkweed Project he has spearheaded.

At 11:00 a.m. Animal Actors of Hollywood will introduce kids and adults to some of the animals they may see in the open space and how to interact with them.

Scheduled exhibitors include:

- Acorn Design Studios
- Athens Services
- Betina's Butterfly Garden
- California Wildlife Center
- Citizen's Climate Lobby
- Conejo Climate Coalition
- Conejo Valley Audubon Society
- Conejo Valley Botanic Garden
- COSCA
- Growing Works Nursery
- National Wildlife Federation representing the Wallis Annenberg Wildlife Crossing
- Santa Monica Mountains Fund Nursery
- Southwestern Herpetologists Society
- Theodore Payne Foundation Nursery

Thanks to attendee suggestions from last year, we will have snacks and soft drinks available for purchase at the **Snackpalooza tent** and **live music** between 12:00 and 1:30 p.m. **And special thanks also to our marquee sponsor this year: Calleguas Water District!**

Attendees who preregister and donate to support COSF get a small free drought-tolerant plant to take home. [Registration is open now, so let us know you'll be there!](#)



Bank of America was one of the groups whose volunteers attended the kick-off of COSCA's monthly trail work program. Next work day will be September 23.

COSCA Initiates Monthly Trail Work Events

The Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency (COSCA) kicked off the agency's **new monthly volunteer trail work program** with an inaugural event at Westlake Village Community Park on August 26. About 20 community volunteers turned out to cut back brush and improve tread on the Wishbone Trail, with Ranger Ryan Stead supervising and the Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council providing crew leaders.

Brian Stark, COSCA administrator, notes four new ranger positions has given COSCA the personnel needed to conduct trail work days more often than in the past. "We previously had two trail work days each year, one in the spring and one in the fall. And those are some large-scale projects," Stark says.

Now COSCA will host smaller work days—engaging between 20 to 25 volunteers—on a monthly basis to focus on smaller maintenance projects throughout Conejo Open Space properties. "Now, when people want to volunteer, there's going to be an event available sometime in the next 30 days. We're excited about this because we can engage more with the community," Stark says. "We think that's really going to expand volunteer hours and effort on the trails."

Stark is hopeful that this new effort will inspire more people to get involved with the trail system and build a culture of stewardship. "People love our open space, and they want to contribute to it," he says. "If we can harness the interest of the community, we can really make some great improvements."

The **next COSCA trail work day will be September 23**, held in conjunction with National Public Lands Day. The event will be at the Rancho Potrero open space and will involve removing invasive plants and fixing ruts and drainage issues. [Registration \(required\) is through the CRPD website](#) and you will need to create a free account if you don't already have one. COSF is handling event notifications, [so please make sure you're signed up with us as well.](#)—
Sean Crommelin



Native Angeleno and CSUN grad Luis Jimenez is COSCA's newest ranger.

Ranger Luis Jimenez Joins COSCA Team

As a child growing up in East Los Angeles, Luis Jimenez loved nature and the outdoors, even if his exposure to the natural world was limited to National Geographic magazines and the Discovery channel. When he was in high school his family moved to the San Fernando Valley and Jimenez went on to study geography and environmental science at Cal State Northridge.

In 2014, he joined the National Park Service in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area as a biological science tech intern. After his CSUN graduation in 2016, he was hired into SMMNRA's interpretative division, where he helped lead school, volunteer and internship programs. Of his 7 years with the National Park Service at the King Gillette Ranch Visitor Center, he says, "I learned a great deal about our local native fauna and flora, restoration projects and fire ecology in Southern California."

Now, he says, "I am excited for the opportunity to be a ranger with Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency. From the day I started, the entire team has been supportive and welcoming."

Jimenez is an avid musician and plays guitar and saxophone. He loves to hike, camp and play video games in his free time.



Spotlight on...

John Noble is a Conejo Valley native and notes that he was the last baby born in Thousand Oaks in 1963. Today, he is the lone carpenter for the Conejo Valley Unified School District, where he has worked for 24 years. He and his daughter Shandi are both active rattlesnake relocators and respond to about 20 calls a year. He was also a rock drummer for many years. His hobbies include hiking, photography and geocaching, as well as camping, exploring and wine and beer tasting.

When did you join the COSF board and why?

I joined the board this year. The Conejo Open Space is very near and dear to me. I have led groups of students on every hike every day for Trails Education Days for the last 20 years. I spend a tremendous amount of time hiking our trails. With retirement only two years and four months away, I knew I needed to have a plan to spend my time. COSF as well as COSTAC and being the Adopt-a-Trail coordinator seems like the ideal fit.

Why is open space important to you?

I am an avid outdoorsman. Nature is my church. I love getting up early and going out hiking on

our amazing trail systems. To say we are lucky is an understatement. I travel a lot, and have seen some amazing places, but there is nowhere else I want to call home, and that is because of our open space.

What advice do you have for open space visitors to get the most out of their time here?

Research, ask questions, get involved! We have so much to see here.

What do you like to do in the open space?

I'm a bit of a flower nerd. So having hiked all of these trails for so long, I know where certain flowers bloom and when. I keep a detailed log of all of my hikes that includes flowers and wildlife seen.

What's your favorite Conejo Open Space? Favorite animal? Favorite plant?

Tough question!! I enjoy different parts at different times of the year for different reasons. One of my favorites is the Lake Eleanor Trail in late March, early April. The weather is good, lots of great wildflowers, fantastic view of Organpipe Mountain, and you can see three different bodies of water on the same hike.

Favorite animal? Can I just say all? I am a huge reptile guy, so snakes are probably the more specific answer. Southern Pacific rattlesnakes, California mountain king snakes and coachwhips are at the top of the list, but any snake is enough to get me excited and happy. I also have a huge soft spot for our Blainville's horned lizard (seen in photo above).

Plants are a little tougher. The Humboldt lily is without question the flower that excites me the most. While they are in the Conejo Valley, I have yet to see one in the Conejo Open Space. I get excited about clubhair mariposa lilies, coast paintbrush, wooley bluecurls, chocolate lilies, and Parry's phacelia. But coming home after a day in the hills smelling like sage is pretty awesome too!

What are your hopes for the future of COSF and/or the Conejo Open Space?

I hope that we can continue to do what we do. To secure more property for open space and continue to educate people on how to be good stewards of this amazing little oasis that we live in.

Any other thoughts or words of wisdom?

"Of all the paths you take in life, make sure some of them are dirt." That's John Muir.



Future Eagle Scout David Vallance with the new Parkview Trail kiosk he and his team from Troop 730 constructed as part of his trail improvement project.

News In Brief

David Vallance, a Newbury Park High School senior and member of Scout Troop 730, worked with COSCA Ranger Nick Ferrari to complete his Eagle Scout project over the summer. He and members of his troop built a bench on the Vista Del Mar Trail, repaired an existing Vista Del Mar bench, and added a new kiosk, trash can, and Mutt Mitt dispenser at the Parkview Trail entrance. David managed the project from start to finish. Because he raised more money for supplies than he needed, **David donated the remaining funds to COSF**. He said, "I really appreciate all the help you gave me to complete my project, and I love the care that COSCA takes of my local area." Thank you, David, for your hard work, dedication, and generous gift to COSF, which will be used to support projects benefiting the Conejo Open Space.

Congratulations to our June, July, and August winners of the "You in the Conejo" selfie contest: Randy Wagner, Christine Elowitz, and Barbara Welch. If you would like to be added to the email list for the contest, please sign up at our website.

Join a free Open Space Appreciation Hike, held monthly on the second Saturday, starting at 8:00 a.m., courtesy of Conejo Recreation and Parks! No pre-registration required. Rain, fire, or red-flag alert cancels. A responsible adult must accompany hikers under 18. For more info call CRPD at (805) 495-2163. This season's hikes will be:

- October 14, **Dos Vientos – Conejo Mountain Edison Rd.** Moderately strenuous 6-mile out and back with elevation gain/loss about 1,200 ft. (3.5 hours).
- November 11, **Lang Ranch – Albertson Motorway, Alapay, Meadow Vista.** Moderate 4.5-mile loop with elevation gain/loss about 800 ft. (3 hours).
- December 9, **Reagan Ranch, M*A*S*H site and (maybe) Lost Cabin Trail.** Moderately strenuous 5.5-mile out and back with elevation gain/loss about 1,000 ft. A local history hike with lots of sights (and sites!) along the way. (3 hours).

Have a comment, correction, story idea or other **input for the newsletter?** Let us know! Email us at news@cosf.org



If you would like to have this newsletter emailed to you quarterly, along with other occasional messages about our activities, subscribe here.

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Want to Volunteer? Here's How!

The COSCA Volunteer Corps has many ways for residents to help maintain and preserve the open space that surrounds our beautiful Conejo Valley. By joining with others, we can make sure that the trails, canyons, and ridgelines will be enjoyed by visitors for generations to come. You can read about the specific volunteer opportunities below, and you can submit a request to volunteer, noting your specific interests, [here](#).

- [Adopt-a-Trail Program](#)
- [Bike Bell Box Replenishment](#)
- [Trail Watch Program](#)
- [Trail Ambassador Program](#)
- [Trail Work Days](#)
- [Trails Education Days](#)

COSF

The Conejo Open Space Foundation was formed in 1995 to promote and maintain the open space and

trail system of the Conejo Valley and to educate residents as to their roles as custodians and protectors of the open space and the environment. Our [web site](#) illustrates ongoing Conejo Open Space programs supported by the Foundation that help preserve and protect our precious open space.

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