

# THE CONEJO OPEN SPACE FOUNDATION NEWS

Fall 2025



**Native Plantpalooza & Eco Fest returns to Conejo Creek North Park on Saturday, October 11! Join us for at our fourth annual free event featuring dozens of eco-related exhibitors. The event will be held rain or shine from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. *Seen here: Byron Levy with his honeybee demonstration hive.***

## A Few Words from Our President

Hi everyone,

What a wonderful summer it has been! The warm days and cool, foggy mornings have given us plenty of chances to enjoy our open spaces; I know I certainly have. Each quarter when I write this letter, I'm reminded of how **grateful we are for you, our donors, volunteers and supporters.** You keep the open spaces open and beautiful—a jewel of the Conejo Valley. Thank you!

A major part of our efforts to protect and enhance our environment is our **Native Plantpalooza & Eco Fest on Saturday, October 11, at Conejo Creek North Park**, now in its fourth year. This family-friendly event features great exhibitors, fun activities for kids, and lots to learn about native plants: how they conserve water, enhance your garden, and even help protect your home.

In this issue, you'll also meet a **new COSCA Ranger**, catch highlights from our latest **Speaker Series** event, and get to know **Robin Bertolucci**, the newest COSF Board member.

Until then, I hope you get out and enjoy our incredible open spaces. Please respect the trails, share them with others, and consider donating to help us continue our important work in this, our 30th anniversary year. I'll see you on the trails!

**Bill Miller**  
**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 volunteering with a COSF board committee, [please reach out to me](#).

## We Couldn't Do It Without You!

[COSF](#) depends on open-space supporters like you for donations that help us fund volunteer programs, education, scholarships, and so much more. COSF is an entirely volunteer nonprofit dedicated to protecting and promoting the Conejo Valley's beautiful open spaces that are owned and managed by COSCA for the benefit of all trail users.

**Please consider giving a gift to keep our efforts going. And ask your employer if they will match your contribution!**

Thank you for your generosity. It makes a difference.

Donate

Volunteer



**Find native seeds and plants for your garden, meet local plant experts, and amuse the kids at our free annual community event. Seen here: Native monkey flowers, a popular garden choice.**



# Native Plantpalooza & Eco Fest Returns for Fourth Year, Bigger and Better Than Ever

Native Plantpalooza & Eco Fest is back for a fourth year! Please join COSF for our biggest community event: our **free annual educational festival** featuring dozens of eco-related exhibitors and fun activities for kids. The event will be held rain or shine on **Saturday, October 11, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.** at Lakeside, Conejo Creek North Park, in Thousand Oaks.

Get your questions answered about **fire-resistant, water-wise, native-plant gardening and landscaping**, learn how to fight climate change and find tips on living more sustainably—all completely free of charge!

The festival's **35+ exhibitors** include honeybee expert Byron Levy, the UCCE Master Gardener Pollinator Team, the Theodore Payne Foundation, California Native Plant Society and many more.

Kids can learn about plants and animals and what they can do to help the environment. Exhibitors will be selling native plants and other garden-related goodies. There'll be freebies, activities for kids, and swag, too!

[Plus, if you donate to support COSF when you register, you'll get a free drought-tolerant native plant to take home!](#)



**Longtime Conejo Valley resident Will Haver (seen above with his dog) moved from Conejo Recreation and Park District to serve as COSCA's newest ranger.**

## Will Haver Joins COSCA as Newest Ranger

COSCA's newest ranger and Thousand Oaks resident, Will Haver, joined the team in June and has been busy ever since. "I'm very pleased to be able to serve as a steward of our community's invaluable open spaces," says Haver.



"I see this position as an excellent opportunity to build on my passion for environmental conservation."

In his free time, Haver enjoys watching movies, growing plants and fungi, and relaxing at the park.

One COSCA ranger job remains open, but Supervising Ranger Kory Prindle says he hopes to see it filled before year's end.



**Ellie Bolas, our July Speaker Series guest, presented "Lions and fires and humans, Oh deer!" based on her field research as a local wildlife ecologist.**

## **Third Speaker Series Delved into Deer Lives**

Wildlife ecologist Ellie Bolas shared discoveries from ongoing research, conducted in partnership with the National Park Service, about mule deer in the Santa Monica Mountains and Conejo Valley as COSF's third 2025 Speaker Series presentation on July 9.

Bolas' focus is on the impact of human-caused disturbance to the deer's habit, including wildfire. She notes that our native mule deer are both ecologically important as the primary prey of mountain lions and economically significant as a favorite target of hunters.

Bolas is looking forward to adding the Palisades and Franklin Fire zones to her study to find out how deer cope in newly burned open space. "Some studies suggest burned areas are attractive to deer because of the plant regrowth," she says.

Bolas says she is also optimistic about the benefits of the Wallis Annenberg Wildlife Crossing's completion for supporting ecological connectivity for multiple species, including mule deer.



You can learn more about collaborative research between Ellie and her partners at [NPS's website](#).

[If you missed Ellie's talk or any of our other Speaker Series presentations or would like to watch them again, please visit and subscribe to our YouTube channel.](#)



## Spotlight on...

**Robin Bertolucci** joined the COSF board in April, after an extensive career in broadcasting. She was most recently the program director of KFI radio, a title she held for over 20 years.

### **What inspired you to join the COSF Board?**

I left my role at KFI at the end of last year and with more time available I was delighted when I was invited to join the COSF Board. It's a terrific team of people committed to our community and I'm proud to be a part of it.

### **And you're a local, right?**

I grew up in the Conejo Valley. I have loved our open spaces since I was a little girl. I used to ride my horses on our trails. When I came to Thousand Oaks it was a very bucolic, "country" place. Even though it's grown by leaps and bounds I cherish all the open space around us. There's something wonderful about coming into our community from the 101—your shoulders just drop and you breathe a little deeper seeing the hills and the open spaces all around us.

### **What do you value most about COSF's work?**

One of my favorite programs is Trails Education Days which teaches 4th graders in the Conejo Valley Unified School District about our trails and open spaces and helps instill in them a love of nature, of wild places and our wildlife. I think connecting with nature is absolutely essential for our bodies and our spirits and I love sharing that with the next generation.

### **Tell us about your side hustle.**

I am very passionate about our local wildlife and I co-founded a group called [Poison Free Conejo Valley](#) to help educate people about the catastrophic effects of rodent poison. Poison travels up the food chain, killing wildlife and pets.

### **What do you do for fun?**

My husband, Don, and I have three dogs so we're often out walking with them. We have two wonderful grown-up kids and a 3-year old-grandson! I love gardening, dog walking, Pilates, hiking, traveling and hanging out with my husband and our family and friends.



**COSF board members Katrina Nolan and John Noble joined COSF's 2025 Environmental Studies scholar Christian Fonkalsrud on Awards Night at Agoura Hills High School in May. Christian will go to Cornell**



University this fall. Our other 2025 awardee, Isabella Lee of Thousand Oaks High School, will attend University of California Santa Cruz.

## News In Brief

**On September 21, join 350 Conejo/San Fernando Valley at Sun Day**, a day of action celebrating the power of clean energy. Held at 11:00 a.m. at Conejo Creek North Park, 1379 E. Janss Rd., the event will feature demonstrations and information about electric vehicles, induction cooking, heat pumps and home solar. Plus, for kids, there will be art projects —draw your own sun! [To learn more or RSVP, visit Conejo 350's website.](#)

**On September 27, we celebrate National Public Lands Day!** COSCA is holding a trail work day, but registration is now full. But **if you want to volunteer for this special day**, join the National Park Service at **Cheeseboro Canyon** (5792 Chesebro Rd., Agoura) from 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. for trail work or restoration planting. [Learn more or sign up at Eventbrite.](#)

**Save the date: November 19!** Our **fourth 2025 Speaker Series** guest, Jaclyn DeSantis, education program manager at the Ojai Raptor Center, will discuss what **raptor rehab** entails. If you want to learn about how you can help our native owls, hawks, eagles and falcons thrive, don't miss this one. [Register now!](#)

**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 District! 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 11, Los Robles—Triunfo Cyn, Whitehorse, Los Robles East Loop.** Moderately strenuous 4.5-mile loop hike in the Los Robles Open Space. Great views. (3 hours) *Trailhead is end of Tamarack St. Free parking in the Triunfo Community Park lot.*
- **November 8, Cheeseboro—Double Tree, Palo Comado, Dead Cow.** Moderate 4.2-mile lollipop hike with a few water crossings. Canyon view along Dead Cow is fabulous! (3 hours) *Trailhead is at the merge of Doubletree and Sunnycrest Rds. Street parking.*
- **December 13, Simi Hills – China Flat.** Strenuous 6-mile loop climbing China Flat and circling around its perimeter. (3.5 hours) *Trailhead is on Lindero Cyn Rd, just past King James Ct. Street parking.*

Congratulations are due once again to Mike Moessel, who won our Summer Four Seasons photo contest with his photo of a sunrise seen from the Lang Ranch Open Space. Mike also won the Spring wildflower challenge with his photo of woolly blue curls. For our Autumn Four Seasons contest the challenge subject is the Conejo Valley's iconic oak trees. Deadline for entry is November 30. [Visit our website to learn more.](#)

Have a comment, correction, story idea or other **input for the newsletter?** Let us know! Email us at [news@cosf.org](mailto: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.](#)



The Conejo Open Space Foundation (COSF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation formed in 1995 to promote, support and help maintain the open space and trail system of the Conejo Valley, and to educate visitors as to their roles as custodians and protectors of the open space and the environment. We support and help fund ongoing programs sponsored by the Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency (COSCA)  
P.O.Box 2113, Thousand Oaks, CA. 91358

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