

PAW PRINTS

Newsletter of the Eaton Canyon Nature Center Associates

Docent /Member Calendar

BAG LUNCH MINI-INSERVICE:

Wed. April 2, 2025, Noon to 1 pm
Hastings Ranch Library Meeting Rm.
3325 E. Orange Grove Blvd. Pas. 91107
Cristhian Mace, Natural Areas Biologist
“Examining Current Conditions of
Post Fire Effects and Ecosystem
Recovery at Eaton Canyon”
RSVP to maryfoltyn5@gmail.com

ECNCA Board Meetings

ECNCA Board Meetings are held on
the second Wednesday of the month at
7 pm via zoom. If you are interested in
joining a meeting, please send an email
to eatonmember@gmail.com at least
2 days prior to the meeting.

Public Calendar

■ **Pasadena Audubon Society**

For meeting info see their website:
www.pasadenaaudubon.org

■ **California Native Plant Society**

For meeting info see their website:
www.cnps-sgm.org

■ **Pasadena Group Sierra Club**

For meeting info see their website:
www.sierraclub.org/angeles/pasadena

Paw Prints Production

Editor: Amanda Getty

Graphic Designer: Diana Gonzalez

Contributors: Elaine Brown,
Lindsay Bremner

Paw Prints is a monthly publication
of the ECNCA. The deadline for sub-
missions to the May 2025 issue is
April 16, 2025. Send submissions to
ajgetty@gmail.com.

PARK IS CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE



Photo: Brenda Hurst

ECNCA BOARD VISITS NATURE CENTER WRECKAGE

by **AMANDA GETTY**

“Take that deep breath of hope,” Los Angeles County Parks Director Norma García-Gonzalez encouraged members of the ECNCA board who gathered at Arcadia Park on a drizzly Saturday morning. “We’re all ready. We’re going to move as fast as we all can.”

This encouraging promise about the Nature Center rebuild inspired some optimism at the March 1st meeting and site visit for board members and committee chairs—the first (sanctioned) opportunity since the fire and subsequent flooding and debris flows for ECNCA leadership to visit the burn site and view the wash.

Following a grounding somatic breathing exercise led by a We Hike to Heal ambassador, who acknowledged the heavy grief carried by the Eaton Canyon community, county staff presented a recap of the Parks Department’s post-fire community support efforts, as well as lessons learned from the Bobcat Fire, which destroyed the nature center at Devil’s Punchbowl in 2020.

With support from the Los Angeles County Parks Foundation and the committed backing of Supervisor Kathryn Barger (whose letter to ECNCA in the wake of the Eaton Fire is reprinted in this issue of *Paw Prints*), county staff assured meeting attendees that the average 5-year timeframe estimate for park building would not apply in the case of Eaton Canyon.

“Consultants are being hired *now*,” García-Gonzalez emphasized, “as opposed to four years later,” as in the case of the Bobcat Fire. Sparano + Moody Architects and landscape architecture firm Studio-MLA also attended the meeting

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Photo: Elaine Brown

The nature center burn site was visited by ECNCA volunteers on March 1, 2025

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and traveled with county staff and ECNCA volunteers to the burn site, where they surveyed the site and learned about its history—and about what makes Eaton Canyon Natural Area and its Nature Center so beloved to its community. Their planning and design process is scheduled to begin in April 2025.

Restoration of the canyon will take time, and restoration and rebuilding efforts above all else “must be safe, and they must protect the ecology of the park,” explained Natural Areas Administrator Kim Bosell, who added that Eaton Wash faces at least five years of potentially significant sediment and debris flow activity. The park is under a hard closure for the remainder of 2025, with the Forest Service widely expected to renew the closure through the end of 2026.

In the meantime, the county assured ECNCA volunteers that they would have an active role to play in Eaton Canyon’s

recovery. Museum committee representatives will be onsite when disaster relief organization Samaritan’s Purse comes to safely sift through the Nature Center wreckage in search of surviving artifacts, and county staff assured meeting attendees that the Army Corps of Engineers would clear the site only after this important recovery work is completed. Additionally, ECNCA board members will be part of an interdisciplinary team of consultants, including indigenous leaders and academic subject-matter experts, to build consensus that will inform the county’s restoration efforts. That committee’s efforts will kick off in May 2025.

“We have an opportunity to really think about materials, placement—every aspect of the building,” stressed García-Gonzalez. “We have to learn from history. But we’re going to be going through this together.”

In Gratitude: A Message from the Editor

The Eaton Fire brought so much change to our community. The inimitable **Brenda Hurst**, whose generosity of time and spirit has long been a driving force behind much of ECNCA’s impactful activity, stepped down as *Paw Prints* content editor in February. **Carole Scurlock**, whose graphics expertise gave the newsletter its clean and classic look, has also laid out her last *Paw Prints* edition (March 2025). We want to thank both Brenda and Carole for their service to our Eaton Canyon community, and for sharing their wisdom and guidance as we take the *Paw Prints* reins. It is thanks to tireless efforts like theirs that this passionate, committed community endures despite the loss of the Nature Center, and that it continues to inspire and nurture love and committed stewardship of our natural spaces. We will do our best to make you proud!



Sprouting Hope: Fire Followers

by AMANDA GETTY

There may not be words to adequately describe the devastation wrought by the Eaton Fire on the canyon and on the Altadena and foothill communities more broadly. But as nature stewards it may be comforting to remember that fire is an essential component of our Southern California ecosystem. Smoke and heat are necessary to awaken certain sleeping seeds, and a light blanket of ash will actually nurture fresh plant growth. In fact, plants that are *dependent* on fire are key to the biodiversity that makes Eaton Canyon so special.

So-called “fire followers” sprout well only after fire has cleared the shrub canopy, leaving behind plenty of sunlight and mineral-rich soil. When the winter rains come, as they did to Eaton Canyon in February and March, their seeds germinate, anchoring the soil and reducing erosion. As the chaparral gradually returns over the following seasons, these species will fade until wildfire begins the cycle again.

Bush mallow requires heat to germinate, meaning its pink and white flowers are often only found in burn scars. Also stimulated by heat shock, phacelias as a group are classic fire followers, and their tiny delicate leaves are already sprouting up all over the Eaton burn area. Smoke, on the other hand, helps trigger the germination of the elusive fire poppy, which will bloom only briefly in a single season and then return to dormancy until the next blaze.

Though not specifically native to Eaton Canyon, California’s endemic “fried egg” Matilija poppy also requires smoke to germinate. The hillside of Matilija next to the park’s main entrance driveway is currently sprouting from the ashes, with hundreds of new leaves coming up at the base of burned scrub. Matilija also sprouts from underground rhizomes, making it extra fire-resistant.

At the ECNCA board’s visit to the burn site in March, volunteers were thrilled to also observe lots of mugwort, wild rye (a native grass), California sun cup, wild currant, bush sunflower, and California sagebrush, as well as some true sages and other native species, sprouting in the burn area.

Golden currant (top) and California sun cup (bottom) return to the Eaton Canyon burn area following the spring rain. Several other “fire follower” species are sprouting amidst the wreckage too!



Photo: Amanda Getty



Photo: Amanda Getty



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

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TEL: 213-974-5555 FAX: 213-974-1010

KATHRYN BARGER
SUPERVISOR, FIFTH DISTRICT
CHAIR OF THE BOARD

February 10, 2025

Eaton Canyon Nature Center Associates
1355 N. Mentor Avenue, Box 40167
Pasadena, CA 91104

Dear Eaton Canyon Nature Center Associates:

This is to express my deep sympathy for the loss of the Eaton Canyon Nature Center to the Eaton Fire. I know your staff, volunteers, visitors, and the community at large are grappling with unimaginable grief.

The spirit and resolve of the Altadena community remains stronger than ever. As we work to rebuild, I am wholly committed to prioritizing Altadena's rich and storied history. Throughout every step of the recovery process, I will bolster the voices of my constituents, who have always been determined and resilient. Recovering from the Eaton Fire will be challenging, but our shared spirit of commitment will carry us through.

As we embark on the road to recovery, the community's needs will continue to be my priority. Los Angeles County will equip you with every resource to rebuild. As your Supervisor, I am here as a listening ear and an advocate for you every step of the way.

Sincerely,

KATHRYN BARGER
Supervisor, Fifth District
Chair of the Board

KB:ges



ECNCA Executive Board Members

President: Diane Marcussen

Vice-President: Karen Mateer

Recording Secretary: Sarah Richart

Corresponding Secretary: Mary Veselich

Treasurer: Terry Ginsberg

ECNCA Appointed Board Members

Ramie Case

Rose Haig

Susan Hopkins

Brenda Hurst

Judy Jenkins

David Kristoff

Diane Lang

Nature Center Director: Richard Smart

NCA President: Laura Nicholson

Eaton Canyon Nature Center Associates (ECNCA) is a chapter of the Nature Center Associates (NCA), a non-profit support group of the natural area park system of Los Angeles County. Founded for educational and scientific purposes, its primary mission is to develop in children and adults an appreciation of the natural world and to preserve Eaton Canyon as a natural area for future generations.

The Eaton Canyon Nature Center and Natural Area Park are located within the unincorporated area of Los Angeles County in the Supervisorial district of Kathryn Barger. The Natural Area and Nature Center are operated by the County of Los Angeles, Department of Parks and Recreation, in partnership with the Eaton Canyon Nature Center Associates.



Become A Member of the ECNCA (Eaton Canyon Nature Center Associates)

To join the Eaton Canyon Nature Center Associates, visit www.ecnca.org/become-a-member, or fill out the form below and mail with your check, **payable to the ECNCA, 1355 N. Mentor Avenue, Box 40167, Pasadena, CA 91104-9998.**

Name: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Please check appropriate box and mark return envelope "Membership"

- ☐ Individual \$30 ☐ Family \$45 ☐ Senior \$15 ☐ Senior Family \$30 ☐ Student \$15
☐ Friend of the Canyon \$75 ☐ Sage Saver \$100 ☐ Chaparral Contributor \$25 ☐ Riparian Guardian \$500
☐ Oak Woodlands Protector \$750 ☐ Wildlands Angel \$1000 ☐ NEW ☐ RENEWAL

Enclosed is my MEMBERSHIP in the amount of \$_____ Enclosed is my additional DONATION of \$_____

All contributions are tax deductible.