

Wilderness Link

San Geronio Wilderness Association

November 2023

Volume 11, Issue 4

Calendar of Events

These are the major events planned for 2023. Some dates may change as circumstances evolve. Check your email and the volunteer calendar at www.sgwa.org for updates.

November

28 Officer elections

December

9 Holiday party

January

TBD Annual Board Retreat

March

15-16 Banff Mountain Film Festival

April

22 Earth Day

May

18 Orientation Day

25 Summer season begins
Ranger Talks begin

August

9 Smokey Bear's 80th birthday

September

7 Last Ranger Talk

28 National Public Lands Day

October

12 Awards Potluck

2023: Another Great Season

Despite the challenges presented by climate change – particularly damage resulting from major debris flows – SGWA volunteers in 2023 continued the arduous work of making wilderness trails safer for hikers and educating the public about how to enjoy and protect the forest. Our volunteers have acquired serious



Trail crew volunteers begin the arduous task of removing a tangle of trees from the Johns Meadow Trail in October. Photo by David Bratt

skills and know how to have fun, whether it's sawing 52-inch-diameter trees with a crosscut saw or talking to amphitheater audiences about the natural world. It's that camaraderie and sense of purpose that makes SGWA so awesome.

More than 140 volunteers contributed 16,400 hours in the San Geronio and Cucamonga Wilderness areas, which the Forest Service calculates is equivalent to more than \$521,000. Volunteers helped approximately 25,000 visitors appreciate and enjoy the forest, nearly 11,000 of them on wilderness trails.

See Accomplishments on Page 2

Giving Tuesday Nov. 28

Giving Tuesday, the annual celebration of generosity, is Nov. 28 and provides another opportunity to support the work of the San Geronio Wilderness Association.

Your donation will support the work of trail crew volunteers, who contribute thousands of hours every year to remove fallen trees from trails, repair damaged tread, and reroute trails washed out by floods.

Cash contributions also support backcountry patrols, interpretive programs, and activities at various visitor centers.

To support the work of SGWA go to www.sgwa.org and click the Donate button.

Accomplishments

Continued from Page 1

Volunteers picked up more than 226 bags of trash, cleaned up 67 illegal fire rings, and removed 747 fallen trees from the trails. The presence of SGWA volunteers in uniform is a deterrent to littering and resource damage in the forest.

Interpretive programs, including outreach educated more than 2,000 visitors about fire safety, Leave No Trace ethics, and how to appreciate and share the forest with the plants and animals that live there. In a season shortened somewhat by the closure of Highway 38 near Heart Bar in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Hilary and mudslides in Forest Falls, the Barton Flats Visitor Center served more than 3,000 people; volunteers at the Big Falls

Recreation Area talked to more than 7,200 visitors; and Front Desk staff at the Mill Creek Ranger Station assisted nearly 3,500 visitors.

2023 Board of Directors

President – Rex Philpot

Vice President – Bettye Miller

Treasurer – Curt Lindemer

Secretary – Dee McCoy

Directors – Kent Johnson, Rocio Nuñez, Andrew Sauer, Roxanne Smith, Ana Soltero, Paul Valiukis, Nelva Valladares, Bob Williams

Celebrating Wilderness

Gifts to the San Gorgonio Wilderness Association help support our efforts to preserve the wilderness and the forest surrounding it. We are thankful for these supporters whose generosity makes it possible for us to further our mission to serve, protect and educate. This list includes lifetime members and individuals who have contributed to SGWA since January 2020. If you would like to make a gift in memory of a loved one or to honor someone special please contact our office at (909) 382-2906, or visit our website at sgwa.org. Gifts may be mailed to: San Gorgonio Wilderness Association, 34701 Mill Creek Rd., Mentone, CA 92359

Corporate

Adventure 16
Amazon Smile
Boeing
EarthShare
Edison International
Goodshop
Greater Good
San Manuel Band of
Mission Indians
Santa Ana River Cabins
Association
U.S. Forest Service
WilderNext Corp.

Monthly Donors

Linda Griffith
Bob Oppermann
Steffan Slater
Brittany Nickelason

December 2022

Deanna Eickhoff
Bettye Miller
Phil Rosenkrantz
Ted Sledzinski
B.J. Withall

January 2023

Allan Chang
Kyle Heinemann
Jim Hill
Suzie Kirkwood
Sabrina Jimenez

February 2023

David Schumacher
Sean Reed

March 2023

Terry Grill
Scott Warden

April 2023

Tyler Bishop
Bettye Miller
Kathy Wing
Elsa Yadao

May 2023

Igor Ermakov

June 2023

Daniel Callies
Marc Chaidu
Diana Cosand
Lhawang Dhondup
Omar Martinon
Monika Spann
Jay Watson

August 2023

Camp DeBenville Pines

September 2023

(Andy) Peifer and Eileen
Hay Foundation

Memberships via Banff Film Festival

Judy Atkinson
Wayne Burke
Andrew Christopherson
Ashleigh Covarrubias
Cindy Foster
Linda J. Foster
Gwyn Frost
Melinda Garcia
Melanie Hendrickson

Sonia Hermosillo
Matilda Kaneshina
Jerome King
David Maerzke
Jim Matiko
Meike Murone
Michael Richman
Phil Rosenkrantz
Luis Salazar
Caitlin Smith
Suraj Trivedi
Ben White

Four Volunteers Honored For Decades of Service

Four longtime volunteers were recognized Oct. 14 for many years of service to SGWA. They are:

Val Silva ,40 Years



Wherever Val Silva goes, fun and hard work are sure to follow. As SGWA’s executive director, she has fostered the camaraderie and development of skilled trail volunteers for which SGWA is known. As a volunteer, she has donated more than 11,500 hours; helped recruit equestrians to patrol wilderness trails; served on the SGWA Board of Directors; and helped staff the Mill Creek Front Desk.

Phebe Baty, 35 Years

Phebe Baty nurtures a sense of wonder about the forest among children who visit the Barton Flats Visitor Center. She has contributed more than 3,500 hours; served on the SGWA Board of Directors; patrolled wilderness trails; and volunteered at the Mill Creek Front Desk. She also teaches others how to weave baskets using pine needles and raffia.



Sandy Messner, 30 Years



Sandy Messner has donated more than 3,200 hours in a variety of roles. She has volunteered for wilderness patrols, staffed interpretive activities at Horse Meadows, and answered visitor questions at the Barton Flats Visitor Center, the Mill Creek Front Desk, and the Forest Festival. She also has served on the SGWA Board of Directors.

Walter Roth, 25 Years

A certified naturalist, Walter Roth is a popular presenter of Ranger Talks at the Greyback Amphitheater. Who doesn’t appreciate rattlesnakes after listening to him? Walter has contributed more than 1,600 hours in 25 years, volunteering for trail patrols and



trail maintenance, and serving as coordinator of Ranger Talks.



Director’s Desk Val Silva

SGWA is a family of volunteers who work together to protect the wilderness. San Gorgonio Wilderness is a jewel in the Southern California area. Experienced hikers come here to get prepared for long Sierra trips. Inexperienced hikers come to enjoy the wilderness and learn about getting back to nature, enjoying the serenity of the wilderness.

Wilderness is special, and so are the volunteers who help preserve it.

We help promote enjoyment of the wilderness. We give information at Barton Flats, Mill Creek and on the trail. We provide educational entertainment at the Greyback Amphitheater and other events. We work to clear trails.

SGWA volunteers are the protectors of our wilderness. All of us play a part in preserving the wilderness for the enjoyment of the public and for future generations. We work hard and enjoy what we do; we do like to have fun. I look forward to seeing all of you again at Orientation Day in May.

Chipmunks of the Year

Five first-year volunteers – aka Chipmunks – each contributed more than 100 hours in 2023. They patrolled trails, worked on the trail crew, helped staff the Mill Creek Visitor Center, and volunteered at the Forest Festival. They are:



Guy Burnett



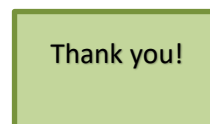
Mitch Chivetta



Debbie Dunn



Rudolph Schwendiman



Sarina Schwendiman

The 300+ Club

These volunteers each donated more than **300** hours of service during the 2023 season.

Topping the list of volunteer hours donated this year is **Roxanne Smith**, with more than 900 hours. Roxanne is familiar to visitors at Mill Creek Visitor Center, where she provides information about roads, hiking and picnicking; answers questions; and sells merchandise. She also serves on the SGWA Board of Directors.

David Bratt, with more than 800 hours, is one of our fabulous trail bosses. David surveys trails and helps identify projects before trail crews tackle them, and leads volunteers as they clear trees and repair damaged tread.

Winter, spring, summer, or fall, **John Howell** likes them all as he patrols the backcountry. John, who donated more than 800 hours this season, is especially partial to Dry Lake, where he advises hikers about bear safety, water sources, and the best places to camp.

Paul Eickhoff isn't daunted by gnarly trees blocking trails or washed-out tread. A stalwart member of our dedicated trail crew, he contributed more than 500 hours this season.

For several years **Eileen Hay** has coordinated SGWA trail projects and led a team of multi-talented trail bosses and sawyers. Her organizational and leadership skills were on display as she donated more than 500 hours.

Antonio Huerta is a valued member of the trail crew, donating more than 500 hours. If there's a humongous tree blocking a trail, you'll find him and his fellow sawyers ready to tackle it.

If you've wondered who picks up trash littering Mill Creek and does a variety of chores at Mill Creek Visitor Center, look no further than **John Provot**. John donated more than 500 hours.

What should you do if you run into a bear on the trail? Ask **Jean Rogers**. Jean, who contributed more than 500 hours, coordinates the Ranger Talk program and is the lead volunteer at Barton Flats Visitor Center.

Nelva Valladares is a cheerful and skilled trail boss who relishes the challenge of removing complicated trees and repairing damaged trail tread. She also serves on the Board of Directors. This year she donated more than 500 hours.

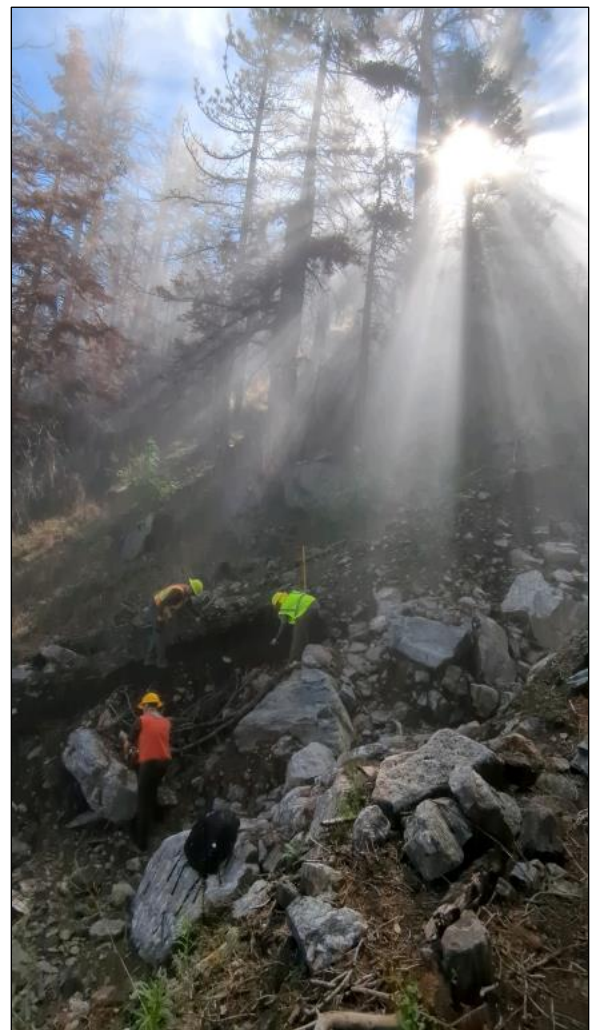
The job of volunteer coordinator requires attention to detail, patience, and good humor. **Bob Williams** displayed all of these skills and more as he

contributed more than 500 hours this year. He also serves on the Board of Directors.

In his first year as an SGWA volunteer **Guy Burnett** donated more than 400 hours patrolling the backcountry in both the San Gorgonio and Cucamonga wilderness areas.

John Do is a familiar face to hikers in the Cucamonga Wilderness, checking permits and answering questions of hikers about trail conditions. John donated more than 400 hours in the 2023 season.

Have camera, will travel. **Michael San Filippo** is known for his gorgeous photos of the backcountry as his dedication to patrolling wilderness trails and assisting hikers. He donated more than 300 hours this year.



Nelva Valladares' photo of significant tread repair on the Forsee Creek Trail was the cover of the 2023 SGWA yearbook.

Wanted: Photos for SGWA Publications

The 2024 season is young and the need for photos that records our activities is ongoing.



As you patrol the backcountry, volunteer on the trail crew, or conduct interpretive activities please remember to take photos and share them with us for possible use in the yearbook and various publicity opportunities, such as this newsletter. Please send them to gorgoniogal@gmail.com.

Holiday Party Dec. 9



It's time for SGWA's annual holiday party and the popular gift-stealing event. Bob and Katherine Williams will host this year's party on Saturday, Dec. 9, at their Riverside home starting at 11 a.m.

Bring your favorite potluck dish. Participation in the \$20 gift exchange is voluntary. Sign up on the SGWA volunteer calendar.

Free Online LNT Course

The Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics is offering a free, online Leave No Trace course.

"Leave No Trace 101" is an introduction to Leave No Trace and what all of us can do to protect the planet, from the backcountry to our own backyards.

Topics covered include what Leave No Trace, why it's important, and the seven principles: plan ahead and prepare; travel and camp on durable surfaces; dispose of waste properly; leave what you find; minimize campfire impacts; respect wildlife; and be considerate of others.

Sign up for the course at <https://learn.lnt.org/courses/101>.

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Editor: Bettye Miller

Contributors to this issue:

David Bratt, John Flippin, Rex Philpot, Val Silva, and Nelva Valladares

Submit story ideas and photos to

sgwa@earthlink.net or gorgoniogal@gmail.com



SGWA sawyers remove a charred tree on the Forsee Creek Trail in September. Photo by John Flippin

Go Figure

Here is a selection of comments/suggestions hikers sent SGWA 20 years ago.

"A small deer came into my camp and stole my bag of pickles. Is there a way I can get reimbursed? Please call"

"Instead of a permit system or regulations, the Forest Service needs to reduce worldwide population growth to limit the number of visitors to wilderness."

"Found a smoldering cigarette left by a horse."

"Trails need to be reconstructed. Please avoid building trails that go uphill."

"Too many bugs and leeches and spiders and spider webs. Please spray the wilderness to rid the area of these pests."

"Reflectors need to be placed on trees every 50 feet so people can hike at night with flashlights."

"The places where trails do not exist are not well marked."

"Need more signs to keep area pristine."

Highway 38 Is Open

Caltrans reopened Highway 38 between Jenks Lake Road East and Rainbow Lane on Nov. 17. One-lane flagging operations are in place Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. No construction work is planned on weekends, unless there is an emergency. Delays of 30 minutes are possible.

Tropical Storm Hilary caused significant damage to the highway, necessitating \$11.6 million in repairs. Work is expected to continue through spring 2024, according to Caltrans.



President's Corner

Rex Philpot

It has been an honor to serve again this year as your president. For decades SGWA has put forth the effort to protect the wilderness, educate the public and maintain the trails of our wilderness.

It has been my privilege to work next to many of our awesome volunteers and welcome new volunteers into the family.

With the rain totals of this last year, people visiting the wilderness have had full lakes, streams,

springs, and lots of wildflowers to enjoy this year. The beauty of our wilderness is a wonder to behold and enjoy. Get out and feel its good tiding.

Thanks to all of you volunteers, who give of your time to help make SGWA work. From greeting people in our visitor centers, programs at the amphitheater, Big Falls, trail patrols, trail crews and many who work behind the scenes to help organize and keep everything going.

All cannot be done without you. You all rock!

I leave you with a John Muir quote: "To sit in solitude, to think in solitude with only the music of the stream and cedar to break the flow of silence, there lies the value of the wilderness."

SGWA

San Geronio Wilderness
Association
34701 Mill Creek Road
Mentone, CA 92359
P: (909) 382-2906
F: (909) 794-1125
E: sgwa@earthlink.net
Website: www.sgwa.org

Serve

Protect

Educate