

News from the Friends of

The Bernard Biological Field Station

Of the Claremont Colleges

Volume 2 No. 2 June 2001

P.O. Box 1101, Claremont CA 91711

www.fbbfs.org

Recent Activities

Earth Day: We set up an exhibit at Claremont Place, the new assisted living facility on San Jose, on Earth Day, April 21. Mark Acuna conducted a Tongva blessing ceremony and a small area of California native plants, chosen with advice from the Friends, was installed.

The Folk Music Festival: We were invited to set up our children's game booth at the Claremont Folk Music Festival, May 5 and 6 in Larkin Park. The weather was gorgeous and it was really wonderful to listen to the music. Thanks to Tim and Carol Cox, Nancy Hamlett, Mark Acuna, Susan Schenk, March Roseland, Valerie Gustaveson, Steve Nagler, and Paul Faulstich for staffing the booth!



Everyone is invited to the next meeting of the Board of Directors, 6:30 pm, June 14 at 845 N. Indian Hill Bl. Please come and discuss the future.

"A tour of the property readily convinces visitors of the importance of keeping such a beautiful expanse of land, shrubs, and trees for scientific purposes."

(From *An Unfinished Dream*, 1981 by Robert J. Bernard)

What's new at the BFS?

A sign-in box: The Friends purchased an aluminum box to help protect the sign-in sheets on the gate.

The bulletin board just inside the front: The Friends arranged for this to be given new legs and are working on an informational display.

The website: Friend's Director Nancy Hamlett has redone the website (www.bfs.claremont.edu) and it looks great! Several people are working on the plant and animal lists. Please visit!

A pedestrian gate: This was installed in April for student access and is a great success.

An emergency phone: Hopefully, something that will never get used!

A new plywood walkway: This replaced the old one in front of the office. Three large gopher snakes were temporarily evicted but at least one snake was back in place within hours.

Poison oak removal: Plants had sprung up near the path around the lake, some even vining 15 feet up into the trees. Intrepid faculty and student workers bagged and carted off the unwelcome intruders.

☆☆☆Film about the BFS☆☆☆

Lara Glueck graduated from Claremont McKenna College this June with a double major in media studies and biology. As her senior project, she produced a documentary on the controversy surrounding plans to build on the BFS. The resulting film, "**Contested Land**", is a "must-see" for anyone interested in the topic. It will be shown at the **Claremont Public Library on Thursday, June 28 at 6 pm and on Saturday, June 30 at 1:30.** Admission is free.

Opportunities to Help!

Opportunity # 1:

The Friends is run entirely by volunteers. Here is your chance to help with the jobs that need to be done. You can choose a regular task or a once-a-year event. Just a couple of hours during the year would be a great help. Please look over the enclosed list, check off areas in which you could help, and send it back in the envelope provided.

Opportunity # 2:

If you can't give time, give money! The Friends is funded largely by donations which pay for the newsletter, public displays, and improvements to the BFS such as the bulletin board. Contributions of any size will be greatly appreciated!

Another controversy:

The Infirmary at the BFS

The Infirmary was built in 1930 by Pomona College with a \$60,000 grant from Mr. and Mrs. Hiram Cleaver in memory of Colonel Sealy W. Mudd, Mrs. Cleaver's brother. It was designed by the same architects, Marston and Maybury, who designed the Padua Hills Theater. The Infirmary is cream-colored stucco with a tile roof and a lovely, colonnaded porch. There are many small rooms off a central corridor, and airy sunrooms at the sides and the back. The building was used to isolate students who had communicable diseases such as influenza until it failed to meet the more stringent modern earthquake safety standards. In the early 70's it suffered smoke damage due to arson. In spite of its age and neglected state, the building is not a safety hazard.

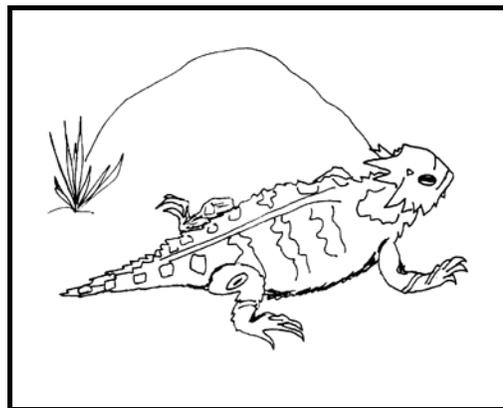
The Colleges' intention to demolish the Infirmary came as a complete surprise to faculty who understood it was simply to be sealed. The outdoor classroom used by students is less than 10 feet from the building. The loss of the Infirmary and damage to the mature oaks and sycamores that surround it would make this area much less attractive. Ginger Elliot, president of Claremont Heritage, has expressed the hope that the Colleges will seriously consider renovating and reusing the building and that, at the least, an environmental impact report will be required prior to demolition.

A reprieve--The City Manager has stated that a demolition permit will not be issued (The Courier, May 30) until CUC submits a master plan for all of its lands (the BFS, golf course, and the quarry). To thank Ms Elliot and support preservation of the infirmary, write or call **Claremont Heritage (590 W. Bonita, 621-0848)**.

✓✓✓ Sightings

- *Bright waves of purple *Phacelia* and gold *Amsinckia* washing over the BFS in April and May.
- *A beautiful butterfly, the Sara Orange-tip, white with bright orange tips to the forewings.
- *Our native perennial milkweed, *Asclepias californica*, with maroon blossoms and white, velvety leaves.
- *A 4 ft gopher snake, while Joint Science students were at the pavilion for a pollination biology lab.
- *A second flourishing stand of our 3 ft tall native rye grass, recently discovered near the pavilion.
- *Clumps of *Penstemon spectabilis*, among the scrub like purple exclamation points.
- *Noisy newborn wrens and coots, keeping their parents very busy.
- *Coyote "beds" in the grasslands.
- *Two more young specimens of the endangered Nevin's Barberry, *Berberis nevinii*.

Meet the inhabitants!



Coast Horned Lizard

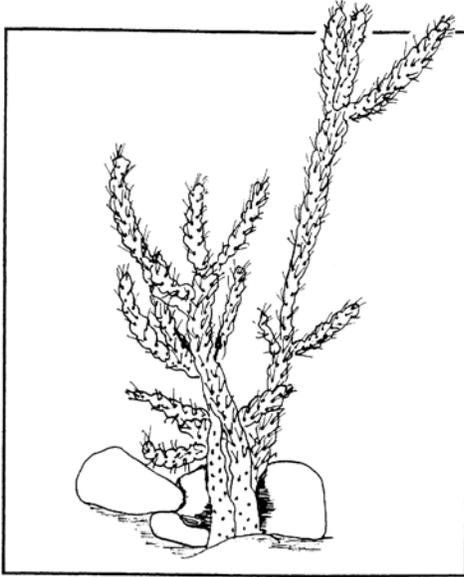
(*Phrynosoma coronatum*)

This fearsome-looking creature is bad news for ants, its primary food, and is frequently found near their nests in open, sandy areas and amongst low vegetation like that at the BFS. Commonly called "horny toads", these lizards range in size from 2.5-6 inches and are generally light brown with darker patches. They like to sun themselves in open areas and bury themselves in fine, loose soil.

They are usually hard to find since they blend into the ground and tend to crouch down and stay still when approached. They lay a clutch of 6-21 eggs in May to June and the babies hatch July through September.

Coast Horned Lizards are generally harmless to people, but if you frighten one, it will inflate with air and may bite in self-defense. As a last resort, it may try to scare you off by spraying you with blood from the corners of its eyes.

These once common animals are now a California Species of Special Concern. This is largely due to habitat loss and, since they spend a lot of time in open areas, to death by off-road vehicles. Some can still be found in Claremont at the BFS and at the Botanic Garden.



Cane Cholla

(Opuntia parryi)

This cactus with short but wicked spines can be found all over the Field Station. It is easy to recognize with its cylindrical stems and upright growth. Like many cacti, the spines are highly reduced leaves and the stems carry out photosynthesis. This arrangement reduces the surface area of the plant and limits water loss. The stems are nearly smooth underneath the spines and undulate with distinct, narrow, raised bumps about one inch long. The 2-3 inch flowers are generally yellow but some are beautiful shades of coral and apricot. The plants are blooming now, along with the purple penstemons--another of the many blue and gold pairings so typical of California.

“When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.”

John Muir

Previously, on the BFS.....

Although arrangements have still not been made with CUC to re-institute access to the Field Station by community groups, here is a description of a California history field trip that took place in March of 1999. On this bright spring day, approximately 45 fourth-graders from Sycamore Elementary School spent half a day at the BFS with a representative of the Gabrieleno-Tongva tribe as their guide.

The lesson began with a walking tour of the station. The guide identified plants used by the former inhabitants of this site and collected samples. As each sprig was taken, a ritual offering of tree tobacco was made to the plant. The guide discussed the uses of the plants for food, medicine, decoration, baskets and housing, and the students were able to sample some of the foods, including cactus fruit. They learned about hunting techniques and tried several games of skill aimed at improving hand-eye coordination. They used a hand-drill to bore holes in shells to use as money as the Tongva did. The children were shown the types of rocks that could be crushed to produce red and white pigments, and tried their hands at painting Tongva signs and symbols. Learning about the original human occupants of this land in the original natural setting made history come alive for these students in away that rarely happens in the classroom.

Here are some of the native plants that the children saw and some of the uses to which the Tongva put them:

Yerba santa: leaves used as a natural gum to quench thirst, and to make a tea; as a liniment for reducing fever, and to make a poultice for sores.

Cattails: basket and hut construction, and diapers!

White sage: rolled, tied, and burned for ceremonies.

Leaves as food; also shampoo and body-wash. As medicine, smoked to treat bronchial congestion

Stinging nettles: boiled in water for soup; also eaten raw! Leaves used as poultice for snakebite. Fibers used in basketry and roots for yellow dye.

Wild cherries: soups and mushes

Willow: baskets and huts. Seedpods eaten as food. Tea from leaves as headache remedy. Bark chewed for toothache (contains salicylic acid as in aspirin). Fibers used for lashing, nets, and clothing.

Wild cucumber: decorative hair combs from spiny fruit; oil from the plant used to give durability to spirit paintings made by shamans.

Oak trees: acorns, pounded, ground, leached and made into a nutritious (but unpleasant-tasting) mush.

Cactus: fruit eaten, pads skinned and sauteed. Spines used as needles for baskets and tatoos. De-spined pads used as dressings for wounds.