

Our Dictionary Hill

DHOSA

Dictionary Hill Open Space Advocates

Western Fence Lizard



Summer 2019

www.dictionaryhill.info

Dozens Watch Fireworks Safely from Dictionary Hill

July 4, 2019 was a special day in the San Diego County Dictionary Hill Open Space Preserve. For decades the top of Dictionary Hill has been party central on July 4th where rowdy people drove to the summit to drink, watch fireworks, start campfires and leave trash.

This year many local residents, including families with children, hiked up the hill with lawn chairs and picnics to enjoy fireworks with County Ranger Craig Newson. Even though the preserve is technically closed at dusk like all county parks, a special exception was allowed for community members interested in walking up to the top on the 4th July.

Chris Pearson, who lives on the edge of the preserve, was pleasantly surprised at the totally different atmosphere now that Dictionary Hill is a county open space park. In an email to friends on July 5th he wrote:

"Wow. We've been going to the top of the hill to watch fireworks on the 4th for 33 years. This is the first year there were no pickup trucks doing "donuts" at the top kicking up dust and rocks, blasting music with campfires and folks tossing empty beer bottles onto the rocks.

Instead, there were lots of families with little kids having a nice time. Change for the better. Outstanding job by Ranger Craig; the Sheriff's Department and DHOSA."

Those of us who have given our volunteer hours to DHOSA over the years have seen how our Spring Valley community has come to treasure the hill. There is a growing feeling that Dictionary Hill belongs to us all and will be preserved for our children and grandchildren - and for the amazing variety of plants and birds and insects and mammals and reptiles.

For information about DHOSA contact Chris Heiserman at cheise9400@aol.com

Hooded Orioles on the Hill

Our hooded orioles are about the most colorful and noisy birds you'll see on the hill. You will easily spot their bold black and yellow plumage among the palm trees and undergrowth on the skirts of the hill, especially at the end of South Barcelona Street. Listen for their chattering call as they feed.

They are one of nine species of oriole found in the US. Hooded orioles nest only in California and Arizona. Other orioles are in decline whereas our hoodies are increasing in number. They are partial nectar feeders, and the theory for their success is that they

have adapted to feeding on our garden hummingbird feeders. They have evolved a narrow beak for feeding on nectar from flowers and also the sugar water we put out for our hummingbirds. Their chief food is insects. Maybe the sugar water is their dessert treat.



Trail Maintenance

DHOSA volunteers have previously worked with the County Parks Trail Crew and Volunteer Coordinator to cut back brush and install trail markers on the county trail easement through Bancroft Creek Canyon. We are planning another project in late September for energetic and willing volunteers. Watch for information on the DHOSA website and Facebook page.

Rattlesnake Awareness

Southern Pacific Rattlesnakes are present on Dictionary Hill and can be dangerous.

Snakes are part of the balance of nature on our hill where they control the rodent population. Please do not kill our snakes. They were living here long before the arrival of humans.

If you keep to the trails and are alert then a snake encounter is unlikely. However, if you decide to strike out through the undergrowth then you are at risk.

Startled rattlers are going to be the most dangerous. The first person spotting any snake should call out "SNAKE". That person should point continuously directly at the snake or its last known location or where it was seen sliding away. The group should stop if possible until they know which way to move away from the snake's zone.

Move slowly and deliberately once the snake has been spotted. Keep at least six feet away from any snake. Check that all of your party are aware of the location of the snake. If you are unsure of the identity of a snake then treat it as a rattlesnake.

And of course - keep that dog on a leash.

If you need to remove snakes from your property, call County Animal Services at (619) 236-2341



Dictionary Hill in Your Will

Now that Dictionary Hill is owned by the county as a preserve what is our next step as community members? The county is working hard at designing trails and making this a wonderful resource for future generations.

Talking about future generations...have you thought of including Dictionary Hill Preserve in your will or trust? You can designate money to go to Dictionary Hill Open Space Preserve for the purchase of additional land, or for improvements and programs in the park. Do make sure you specify our lovely little gem in the wording.

Call Jessica Geisler at San Diego County Parks Society 858-966-1331

The Fire Season Has Arrived

The down side of our wonderfully wet winter is upon us. All that lush green vegetation we saw back in March and April has dried out and turned brown. It's just waiting for a cigarette butt or a careless match. This summer and fall can potentially become more severe and more damaging than previous years.

If you live next to the hill have you cleared that defensive zone and the loose brushwood from around your property?

Casa de Oro Alliance

Fall Festival

Saturday November 9th

9am to 3pm

Spring Valley Academy

3900 Conrad Drive, Spring Valley

Games

Food

Entertainment

Prizes

DHOSA Meetings

We meet 9:30 am on the third Saturday of each month at The Club House, Hatfield Park at 10050 Austin Drive.

We'll enjoy meeting you and sharing our love of the hill with you. Our opportunity to show you how we are working to preserve Dictionary Hill.