

Daley Ranch News

Friends of Daley Ranch

Summer 2026

Learn all about turtles! Daley Ranch Discussions With Friends Sunday, July 12 at 11 a.m. at the Ranch House

When you picture Southern California's wildlife, you may think of mountain lions or sea lions, but tucked away in our local streams is a quiet, ancient survivor that is rapidly running out of time. The Southwestern Pond Turtle is our region's only native freshwater turtle, a fascinating creature that splits its life between hunting in rushing creeks and hiking deep into dry, sandy hillsides to nest. Sadly, this local icon has quietly vanished from up to 80% of its historic home.

Please join our Daley Ranch Discussions With Friends to learn lots more about this important native creature. FODR Board Member and habitat expert Donna Leon will present at 11 a.m. at the Ranch House on Sunday, July 12. You may hike up to the Ranch House or take a complimentary shuttle from the main parking lot at the top of La Honda Drive. **You must RSVP by visiting our website at daleyranch.org. We have a strict limit of 45 attendees due to Fire Department Regulations. First come, first served!**

Donna Leon is an ecologist with over seven years of experience dedicated to studying and protecting



California's delicate ecosystems. Drawing from her background as a former Preserve Manager, she brings a wealth of hands-on habitat conservation and wildlife management expertise to the fight for our native species.

Save Two Dates for Fall!

October 24: Volunteer Work Day

The Friends of Daley Ranch invites you to invest a little "sweat equity" to help out at the Preserve. We will work on projects like removing invasive species, trail maintenance, and trash pick up.

November 7: Annual Picnic

Come enjoy a complimentary lunch at the Ranch House and learn what's new at Daley Ranch.

Details to come in fall newsletter

Escondido 7th graders treated to Daley Ranch!

Rick Mercurio, Trip Coordinator

Even after 15 years of involvement with FODR's signature field trip program, the thrill of seeing youngsters excited by the wonders of Daley Ranch still inspires me!

This past spring nearly 1500 seventh graders from Escondido Union School District middle schools enjoyed a full day field trip featuring five learning stations. FODR partnered with the City of Escondido rangers and EUSD to sponsor 11 days of outdoor education. The stations include

- **Mammals**, with taxidermy specimens of mule deer, mountain lion, bobcat, raccoon, and coyote; students match photos with replicas of paw prints and scat
- **Amphibians, insects and reptiles**, with students allowed to hold a live king snake and also experience a live rosy boa and tarantula
- **Nature hike**, introducing native plants and evidence-based discovery of animals in their natural habitat, such as seeing large nests of wood rats
- **All About Daley Ranch**, showcasing the historic Ranch House, the old farm equipment, the history of Daley Ranch, and concepts of preservation and conservation
- **Native American culture**, with examples of clothing, tools, musical instruments, games and how Indigenous Peoples lived in harmony with nature

The day begins with an exhilarating one-mile uphill walk from the Hilltop Picnic area of Dixon Lake to the Ranch House area, where the program is located. Of course the hike down at the end of the day is much easier, but exercise is a major component of the experience.

FODR is proud to be part of a coalition of organizations that provides outdoor education to EUSD students at every grade level from kindergarten through eighth



FODR's program features five learning stations, as 7th graders rotate to each during the full day field trip. At this station students learn about the mammals of Daley Ranch, viewing taxidermy specimens like coyote, bobcat, raccoon, deer and mountain lion.



The team that provides a day of fun and learning for Escondido's 7th graders: From left to right: Ranger Joe Gutierrez; volunteers Rick Mercurio, Donna Sellier, Dennis Vollrath, Laura Conlon, Diania Caudell, Ray Radtkey, Mike Cerda, and Jennifer Radtkey.



Pollinators play important role in Daley Ranch habitat; Discussions audience learns about native bees, more

Her passion was palpable! Jennifer Radtkey's eyes twinkled as she described the numerous species of bees and other pollinators that make Daley Ranch their home. It was obvious that the biologist and bee researcher loved her "little friends," and she shared that enthusiasm with the 38 guests in the Ranch House on April 12 at Daley Ranch Discussions With Friends

Jennifer and her husband Ray Radtkey both earned biology degrees and are currently conducting research on the bumblebees of Daley Ranch. They monitor several remote locations there, and capture, study and release the bumblebees, who serve a critical function in the health of the local ecosystem. Bumblebees do not have hives, but instead burrow into the ground.

Jennifer's PowerPoint presentation included photos of the myriad species of native bees, which

come in all sizes and colors. Some bees depend on specific flowers, which in turn rely on that species of bee for survival, a symbiotic relationship that has evolved.

Honey bees, guests learned, are actually invasive to North America, introduced from Europe many years ago to pollinate commercial orchards. Jennifer pointed to research showing that where honey bees are present, native bees are negatively impacted. But Daley Ranch still has a viable population of native bees, including the bumblebees that Jennifer and Ray study.

FODR is grateful to the Radtkeys, who are docents for the 7th grade field trip program. They lead the learning station showcasing the smaller creatures of Daley Ranch, allowing students to hold a king snake, pet a rosy boa snake, and see a live tarantula up close.

Page 1 has details on next Discussions!

Species of the Season

Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus Plexippus*)



Have you spotted a Monarch yet? They can be seen fluttering during summer and into early fall in San Diego County. These butterflies travel up to 3,000 miles across North America to overwinter in Mexico or California. Their migration journey takes four generations to complete. If you're interested in helping this declining species, plant native milkweed, rather than tropical, in your garden.

Our Mission

The mission of the Friends of Daley Ranch is to support and promote the City of Escondido's efforts to protect and maintain Daley Ranch Conservation Bank habitats and wildlife. Our goals are to:

- * Educate the next generation of Environmental Stewards and provide service-learning opportunities that supplement our educational programming.
- * Develop and implement enhancement projects that support the conservation of Daley Ranch.
- * Cultivate relationships with sister organizations and encourage responsible recreational opportunities

Volunteer Opportunities

Contact Greg Gould at 760-839-4345 to volunteer for Bike Patrol, Foot Patrol, Horse Patrol, or Trail Maintenance.

Hike Schedule

Call Ranger Station at 760-839-4680 for the hike schedule. Hike information is also available at <https://daleyranch.org/news-events-2/> No sign up required.

FODR Membership: Renewals & Donations

FODR is a 501(c)3 non-profit. Your donation is tax deductible. You may join and donate online at daleyranch.org or mail this form with a check to FODR, PO Box 461173, Escondido, CA 92046

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We will go green and email your newsletter unless you check this ____

Phone (optional):

____ \$25 Student/Senior ____ \$50 Sponsoring ____ \$100 Contributor

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What do you love about Daley Ranch?

FODR Executive Board

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Social Media: Brocade Wu Harmon
Webmaster: Chris O'Donnell
President Emeritus: Fred Woods

FODR email: info@daleyranch.org

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