

Annual Report
July 2025 - June 2026

Friends of the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park

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A grassroots organization, the Friends of the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park works with the City of Claremont to support preservation of the natural setting of the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park and actively protect the Park's environmental resources while maintaining access for low-impact recreation, education, and enjoyment for all, as called for in the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park Master Plan. FCHWP focuses on this support through volunteerism and education.

Leadership Team

Charlie Gale, Chair
Ran Libeskind-Hadas, Vice Chair
Susan Starr, Secretary
Nancy Hamlett, Treasurer
Heidi Arch
Paul Faulstich
Dana Gomez
Scott Marnoy
Wendy Whitney



Introduction

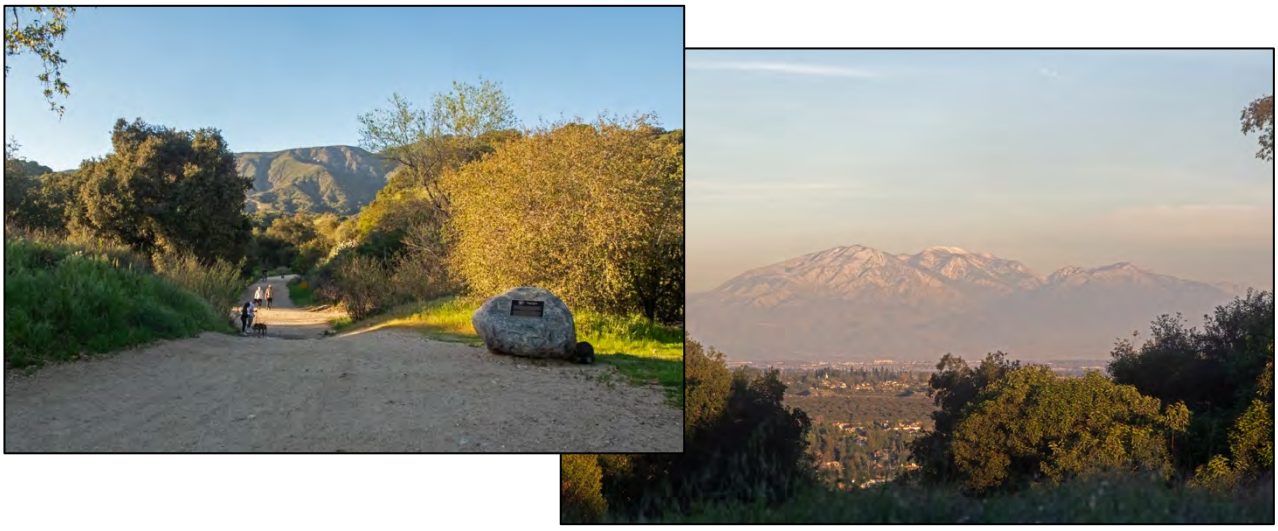
Mission and History

The formation of the Friends of the Wilderness Park is based upon the Master Plan for the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park (Section IP 2.1 of the Implementation Plan): an entity "assisting with recruiting volunteers for various projects, engaging with visitors on the trail to promote positive compliance with rules and trail courtesies, discussing issues of concern, sharing observations, and reporting to and coordinating with staff." It is a group of volunteers supporting the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park.

The Friends was constituted in its present form in Spring 2018. The Friends work closely with the City staff from the Recreation and Human Services Department who are responsible for the day-to-day operations of the CHWP. These staff attend monthly meetings of the Friends' Leadership Team and act as the designated liaison to the Friends organization. The Friends have several working groups concerned with specific aspects of the Park, which are detailed later in this report under "Specific Projects".

Purpose of this report

The Implementation Plan for the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park (CHWP) states that "In order to ensure the Community & Human Services Commission is informed of CHWP issues, the 'Friends' will provide an Annual Report and Recommendations on user experience and park culture to … the Community & Human Services Commission." This report has been submitted in response to that charge.

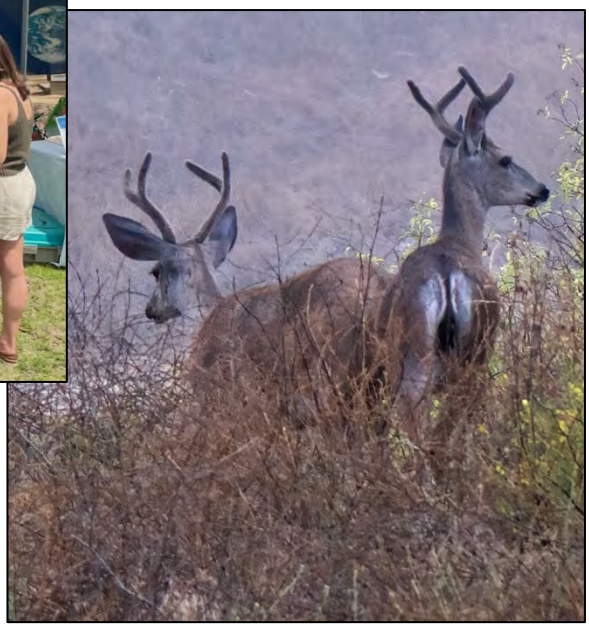


The Year at a Glance

Work on multiple projects continued despite a high number of Park closures.

- The Park was closed for a total of 34 days during the 2025-2026 fiscal year:
  - 29 Rain and Thunderstorms
  - 5 Red Flag Warnings for extreme wildfire risk
- We held 11 “Second Saturday” programs in FY 2025-2026, including two themed educational events.
- The Friends participated in community outreach events:
  - Claremont’s 4th of July Celebration
  - CalBG Native Plant Festival
  - Sustainable Claremont’s Earth Day Celebration
- We continued monitoring Monarch butterflies and milkweed in the Park.
- Our iNaturalist project documenting flora and fauna in the Park recruited new members, added 1,511 observations, and documented 96 new species.
- We continued invasive plant removal in the Park.
- Ninety-eight Friends volunteers contributed 428 volunteer hours to the Park.
- We updated our website, continued our blog, and added 137 people to our email list.





Grant from the Glanville Grill Foundation for Vault Toilets in the CHWP

In the past year, the Glanville Grill Foundation, a private charitable foundation that typically funds low-visibility, high-impact projects, made a generous grant to the Friends of the CHWP to fund the purchase and installation of two restrooms with permanent vault toilets on the CHWP loop trail, replacing the previously existing porta-potties. This grant enabled us to award funding for the toilets to the City of Claremont, and the new restrooms were installed this past spring.

The new restrooms are a huge improvement both aesthetically and functionally. Not only were the old porta potties unsightly and unpleasant to use, but they were also susceptible to being knocked over by high winds or bears. They also had to be pumped out bi-weekly, while the new toilets only need to be pumped out approximately once per quarter.

We are enormously grateful to the Glanville Grill Foundation for their very generous donation.





The new restrooms on the loop trail. Photos courtesy City of Claremont.

Specific Projects

Second Saturday volunteer program

Leader: Susan Starr

The Second Saturday volunteer program is a collaboration of the Friends of the Wilderness Park, CHWP Rangers, and City staff.

Our Second Saturday volunteers promote positive park culture and demonstrate respect for the outdoors by picking up litter on the trails and by providing information about the park to visitors.

Our Friends' volunteers also:

- Answer questions about the kiosk map and trails
- Exhibit and discuss the Friends' biodiversity poster
- Promote the iNaturalist project dedicated to the CHWP
- Encourage visitors to join the Friends email list and sign up to volunteer
- Remind visitors to take adequate water for themselves and their dogs.







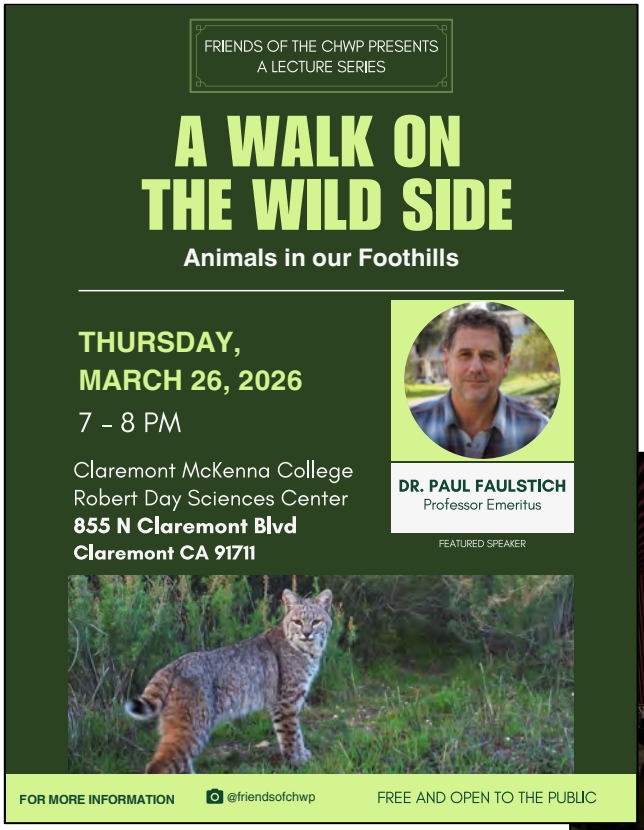
Educational Lectures

Leader: Dr. Paul Faulstich, Professor Emeritus

The Friends hosted our first educational program in March, featuring a presentation by Leadership Team member Dr. Paul Faulstich: “A Walk on the Wild Side – Animals in our Foothills.” Dr. Faulstich photographs wildlife in our mountains and foothills to better understand animal behavior and identify best practices for wildlife management. In this illustrated talk, he introduced the audience to many of the animals he’s encountered and discussed animal behavior and natural history.

Claremont McKenna College offered a lecture hall in its new Robert Day Sciences Center. The room was filled with over 85 community members, ranging from elementary schoolchildren to retirees.

By all measures, the event was a resounding success, and we hope to have more educational lectures in the future.





Bird Walks in the Park with the Pomona Valley Bird Alliance

***Leader:* Scott Marnoy**

This year, the Friends of the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park joined the Pomona Valley Bird Alliance in a series of hikes intended to promote understanding of the bird life and ecology of the Wilderness Park.

Participants were instructed in using two citizen science apps in the field: eBird to document bird sightings and iNaturalist to document the full range of organisms in the park. These apps are familiar to people worldwide. In eBird, 133 bird species have been documented in the park. In the case of iNaturalist, 1000 different organisms have been documented in the park Biota Project.

Due to the popularity of these walks, more are planned this year.





Merlin upper left and Red-tailed Hawk lower right. Photos courtesy of Scott Marnoy.

Monarch and milkweed monitoring

Leader: Nancy Hamlett

Monitoring milkweed plants and Monarch butterflies in the Johnson's Pasture area of the CHWP continued in 2025–2026. We conducted weekly Monarch larvae and egg surveys, biweekly adult Monarch surveys, and monthly milkweed and blooming plant surveys.

The 2025 monitoring season was a banner year for Monarch butterflies in the CHWP.

- **9** Volunteers participated
- **88** Volunteer hours contributed
- **311** Monarchs observed (166 adults, 95 larvae, 49 eggs, and 1 pupa)
- **2** species of Milkweed present (Narrowleaf Milkweed and Woollypod Milkweed)

The number for Monarchs was more than 50% higher than in 2023 – the most recent year with data for a full season.

One unfortunate occurrence this year was the sudden, surreptitious construction of an illegal bike trail through the monitoring area, resulting in vegetation removal and damage to milkweed plants. The City acted quickly to mitigate the damage and no further disturbance has occurred.

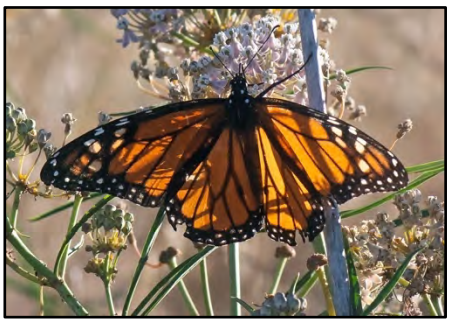












Counterclockwise from top right: Volunteer Patty Nueva-España inspects milkweed plants for Monarch eggs and larvae; Monarch eggs; A fifth-instar Monarch larva; Scott Marnoy inspects damage to milkweed from the illegal bicycle trail; An adult male Monarch; A tiny second-instar larva.

Invasive Plant Management

Leader: Nancy Hamlett

"Invasive plant species degrade native habitat and displace native plants and wildlife, increase wildfire potential; increase slope erosion potential; and degrade recreational opportunities. Therefore, invasive plant species control and management are important components to preserving the integrity of CHWP's native habitat."

— Master Plan for the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park

Mapping

Since most invasive plant locations in the Park (excluding Evey Canyon) have been mapped, no widespread mapping efforts were undertaken. We mapped new occurrences as they were spotted, and we also mapped infestations before removal events.

Removal events

In 2025–2026, we held seven events to remove invasive Croftonweed (*Ricinus communis*), Russian Thistle (*Salsola* sp.), Big Periwinkle (*Vinca major*), Sahara Mustard (*Brassica tournefortii*), Mediterranean Cabbage (*Brassica fruticulosa*), and Fountain Grass (*Pennisetum setaceum*). A total of 62 volunteers contributed 154 volunteer hours and collected 52 large contractor bags of invasive plants, plus a large pile (50–100 plants) of Croftonweed.





Left: Volunteers removing Big Periwinkle (*Vinca major*) from Cobal Canyon.
Right: Volunteers with their collected bags of Mediterranean Cabbage.

Newly spotted invasive plant species

***Pulicaria paludosa* (Spanish false fleabane)** is on the California Invasive Plant Council (Cal-IPC) Watch List. It is an annual, biennial, or short-lived perennial that thrives in moist areas. It is native to the Mediterranean region of Portugal and Spain and was first reported in Orange County, California, in 1946. *P. paludosa* has since spread across Southern California, favoring wetlands, riparian corridors, and other damp, disturbed sites. It can form monocultures where it has become established and is considered a threat to native riparian species. It is difficult to control due to its ability to resprout from rhizomes. When we removed Croftonweed from the stream in Cobal Canyon, we spotted and removed a single *P. paludosa* plant that had been hidden by the Croftonweed.



Spanish False Fleabane (*Pulicaria paludosa*) in Cobal Canyon.

Biota Project: Documentation of All Park Species

Leaders: Carol Blaney and Nancy Hamlett

To help lay the groundwork for effective Park conservation management, especially of special-status and invasive species, the Friends are cataloging all the Park's known species of animals, plants, and other organisms. Our main tool is iNaturalist, a non-profit platform that stores observations from millions of naturalists worldwide, including 435 who have made observations in the Park so far. Users upload a photo or sound recording (with location) of any wild plant, animal, or other organism. Then iNaturalist's image-recognition software and iNaturalist community members – some of whom are world-renowned researchers – help identify the organism.

To compile iNaturalist observations of Park species, the Friends initiated the "Biota of the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park" (https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/biota-of-the-claremont-hills-wilderness-park) community science project in 2019. In addition to documenting Park flora and fauna, the project fosters awareness of and appreciation for the Park and its biodiversity. The current iNaturalist project counts are:

- **1,051** Total species observed (96 new since last year)
- **366** Plants (20 new)
- **21** Mammals (1 new)
- **78** Birds (4 new)
- **11** Reptiles (1 new)
- **4** Amphibian
- **5** Mollusks
- **423** Insects (54 new)
- **42** Spiders, mites, ticks (1 new)
- **9** Protozoans (1 new)
- **86** Fungi & lichens (14 new)



Some organisms newly observed in the Park this year. Clockwise from top left: Peregrine Falcon ©Scott Marnoy, Green-tufted Stubble Moss ©Ava Jackson, *Pepsis pallidolimbata* Tarantula Hawk ©Nancy Hamlett, Behr's Metalmark, © Nancy Hamlett.

This year, more than 1,500 iNaturalist observations were made in the Park by nature enthusiasts, who photographed everything from deer with velvet antlers to tiny insect eggs and many native bees and butterflies visiting wildflowers. Here are a couple of interesting finds:



California Dogface
The California Dogface butterfly (*Zerene eurydice*) was designated the official State Insect in 1972. The butterfly is found only in California from the foothills of the Sierra Nevada to the Coast Ranges and from Sonoma south to San Diego. The male has a yellow silhouette of a dog's head on its wings, which you can see here if you use your imagination. ©Nancy Hamlett



Coast Patchnose Snake
Adding a new reptile to the Park's All-Species list is relatively rare, and this Coast Patchnose Snake (*Salvadora hexalepis* ssp. *virgultea*) is also rare — it's designated as a Species of Special Concern by the California Department of Fish & Wildlife.

Coast Patchnose Snakes are considered uncommon along the southern coast area due to land changes from heavy grazing, development and loss of former habitat, and loss of prey. ©Nancy Hamlett

The Friends Biota Team continued to update the *All-Species List for Claremont Hills Wilderness Park*, which includes all the Park species reported not only on iNaturalist, but also in Calflora, the Consortium of California Herbaria, and eBird, as well as by local experts. This comprehensive list now includes 1,304 species, of which 39 are special status (rare, threatened, or endangered).

FINANCIAL REPORT

Beginning balance July 1, 2025	464.06
Income	
Grants	148,236.00
Donations	1,096.93
TOTAL INCOME	149,332.93
Expenses	
Awards given	148,236.00
PayPal Fees	27.02
Fiscal sponsor fees	87.75
Liability Insurance	594.00
Program expenses	305.15
TOTAL EXPENSES	149,249.92
Profit for the year	83.01
Ending balance June 20, 2026	547.07

Recommendations to the City

- We recommend the city continue educating visitors on proper trail etiquette through the “Share the Trail” campaign and enforce the City’s municipal code as it relates to regulating e-bicycles. We also recommend the city continue to eradicate and naturalize new “social trails” when discovered to prevent habitat damage.

- This past year, the city developed a habitat restoration plan for Johnson’s Pasture with guidelines for invasive species management. We recommend the City continue seeking funding to implement this plan and continue supporting the Friends’ efforts to eradicate invasive species through volunteer activities.

- We recommend that the city prioritize funding for the proposed parking lot at Evey Canyon.

- We recommend that the city identify funding for the proposed interpretive center and restroom facility at the main entrance.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to:

The City of Claremont
for providing:
- Our liaisons – Eric Ey, and Luis Vaquera
- Rooms for meetings and training sessions
- Storage in the Rangers’ shed and use of the Rangers’ tools

Glanville-Grill Foundation
for generously providing funding for vault toilets in the Park