



Hills for Everyone

Friends of the Wildlife Corridor

Editor Comments

Welcome to the second edition of our newsletter. We now have over 150 paid subscribers, with more joining every day. Please continue to give us feedback about what you like, dislike or would like to see in future editions. This is your newsletter and we want to continue publishing articles that are important to you.

We can be reached through our new website (see article on page 2), by email to jhenderson@rc.cc.ca.us, and or at our P.O. Box 9835, Brea, California 92822-1835. Hills for Everyone is committed to preservation of the Wildlife Corridor. This remarkable remaining open space continues to exist in heavily urbanized Los Angeles and Orange Counties due to a fortuitous set of circumstances. Oil development, ranching and farming have kept this 31 mile long corridor mostly open. But today, unless urgent steps are taken to buy critical properties, this last large contiguous wilderness corridor will be destroyed.

The good news is that thousands of acres have already been acquired by public agencies or are preserved as dedicated private open space. The effort to acquire the remaining parcels and to preserve the plants and animals and open the area for hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking and the enjoyment of nature, is what this organization is all about.

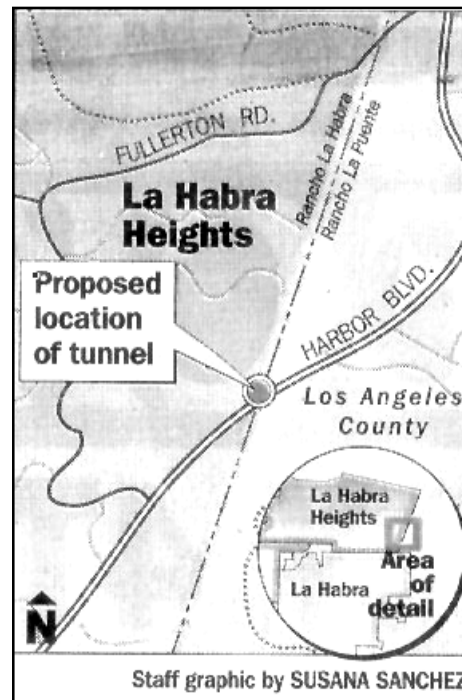
Please join with us in the exciting movement to preserve our unique heritage.

Nothing comes easy!

Thanks to the efforts of environmental leader Senator Hilda Solis (30th Senatorial District), one of the biggest barriers in the Corridor looked like it might be solved. Senator Solis,

nationally known as the legislator who provided the leadership to form the San Gabriel River and Mountains Conservancy, had \$1 million included in this year's State Budget to fund an animal underpass at Harbor Blvd.

Harbor Blvd. is recognized as the most deadly crossing point in the Corridor for



animals, due to its width, volume of vehicles, and high speed traffic. Chris Haas, the Cal-Poly researcher who conducted a two year study of animal movement in the Corridor, reported seeing seven dead coyotes in a three month period in 1998 when he was studying the area. Numerous deer, and other smaller animals, are also lost on a regular basis.

The funds were to go to the Habitat Authority which owns the property on the West side of Harbor. They had an agreement with AERA (i.e., Shell and Exxon Oil Companies) who own the East side. AERA is willing to

cooperate with the project. Engineering details were being worked out.

Unfortunately word has now come down that the Governor has vetoed the measure along with about \$1 billion of other cuts. The Habitat authority Chairman Bob Henderson has indicated that design plans will proceed anyway and that alternative grants are being explored.

CHINO HILLS STATE PARK

by CLAIRE W. SCHLOTTERBECK

Chino Hills State Park has been called a "beautiful island in a sea of urbanization." Indeed, this land appealed to the State Parks Department because it is surrounded by existing freeways. After the oil crisis of the mid 1970's the Parks Department wanted to provide open space close to people. However, being surrounded by urban areas brings all sorts of threats to our Park. Local jurisdictions in the four counties and five cities which touch the Park look to its open space for solutions to urban demands. Almost weekly the Park staff receives new proposals for parking lots or water reservoirs, houses or roads, even dumps and sewage treatment plants! Because no humans inhabit the Park, cities suppose the land is empty and therefore available to satisfy human needs. Yet this Park does address another human need, the need we have for nature and beauty in our daily lives. Look around your own home. If you are like most people, it is filled with representations of nature, from your wall paper to your china to your clothing. The logos of the cities and counties around this Park also contain some reference to the natural hills, not the bulldozed ones. This Park is not a representa-

What's New?

Firestone Boy Scout Reservation (Diamond Bar area) - For several years the Boy Scouts have been trying to sell the Firestone Reservation. The governing council has had difficulty obtaining funds for the operations for the camp and has offered the property to various developers over the last 10 years.

In 1996, WCCA obtained \$10 million from L.A. County Proposition A and proceeded to negotiate with the Scouts to purchase about 2,500 acres of the 3,200 acre site. The remaining 700+ acres were to have remained in Scout hands and be used for a new Scout camp. After several years of negotiating it appeared that the two sides were not able to reach a deal.

In 1999 a new party entered on the stage when the Wilderness Conservancy offered WCCA to take over efforts to make the purchase from the Scouts. Originally this was to have been a partnership between WCCA and the Conservancy, but it soon was apparent that forces were being aligned to try to block the acquisition. To simplify the negotiations, the Conservancy decided to only use their own money. Reportedly, the Conservancy has reached a deal for nearly \$20 million to purchase approximately 2,500 acres.

The Wilderness Conservancy intends to keep the lands in their natural state and use the property as a headquarters for their extensive program of education programs for youth. The organization already spends hundreds of thousands of dollars per year to educate children about nature and will greatly expand their programs with this new center. Thousands of children will have the opportunity to learn about nature in this marvelous facility. At the same time, the Scouts would benefit from millions of dollars and the same natural surroundings that they currently enjoy. Sounds like the all time win-win situation doesn't it?

Unfortunately, a cloud has been put over the deal by local political forces. As outlined by articles in the San Gabriel Valley Tribune, apparently the Tres Hermanos Joint Powers Authority (a JPA between Chino Hills and Diamond Bar) has threatened to condemn some 700 acres for a reservoir and additional land for a road through Tonner Canyon. This threat, and the inability to ne-

gotiate a number of important points with the Scouts, has caused Wildlands to withdraw their offer. Unless something dramatic happens it appears that this great environmental deal is doomed.

Rose Hills Foundation Property (Whittier area) - The last large "piece in the puzzle" of the Wilderness Preserve in the Whittier-Hacienda Heights area is in danger of development by the Los Angeles Catholic Archdiocese as a cemetery. The 952 acre parcel has drawn wide spread support for preservation from the Whittier and Hacienda Heights communities. Public meetings in both communities have drawn large crowds and thousands of signatures on petitions and individual letters urging the Archdiocese to reconsider their potential purchase. Besides the obvious issues of the Wildlife Corridor citizens have expressed deep concern about loss of property values of surrounding properties due to traffic and the impact of construction that would last for years.

In November, the Church indicated that they were in a period of "due diligence" to determine if they could use the property, and that they would report back to the community their decision. Over eight months have now passed, but the Church indicates that they are still "studying the issue". Many nearby neighbors have expressed their frustration in the delay, as it is affecting their property values and their ability to sell their property while the sale remains in question. People who wish to express an opinion can write to Cardinal Mahony 3424 Wilshire Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90001.

Hillsforeveryone.org

Our website is up and running thanks to the efforts of Judi Henderson. The site will allow us to put up expanded articles, colored pictures, maps, gather input from the public, and highlight fast breaking news articles. Go to www.hillsforeveryone.org to see our page and find exciting links to related organizations.

The website is a flexible way for us to communicate items of interest in the Corridor. We need your comments about the site to be sure that it is serving your needs. Please drop us a note on the site or directly to jhenderson@rh.cc.ca.us with your comments and ideas for things you

would like to see.

If there are any web designers, graphic artists, or writers out there who would like to help, we would be most appreciative.

Brea Hills

Concerned Brea citizens have organized an initiative to add a layer of protection to their hillside backdrop. They have formed the citizen's group **Save Brea's Hills** and have hired the law firm of Shute, Mihaly and Weinberger to draft the initiative. The initiative would require a vote of the people if a development project in the hillsides causes unmitigatable, adverse and significant impacts. It also requires that the City establish thresholds of significance for traffic and biology before it approves more projects.

In an astounding period of only 2 weeks, volunteers have collected over **4,500 signatures!** This amounts to about 25% of the



registered voters in Brea, and is way in excess of the 1,800 signatures required. Now the City Council has to either adopt the initiative by a 4/5 vote or put the measure on the November ballot.

WCCA Governing Board Member Glenn Parker and Advisory Board Member Claire Schlotterbeck are part of the steering committee leading the effort. Mayor Bev Perry, chairwoman of WCCA, was a major supporter of the proposal.

The hills in Brea and unincorporated Los Angeles County, north of Brea, are not yet protected for wildlife movement.

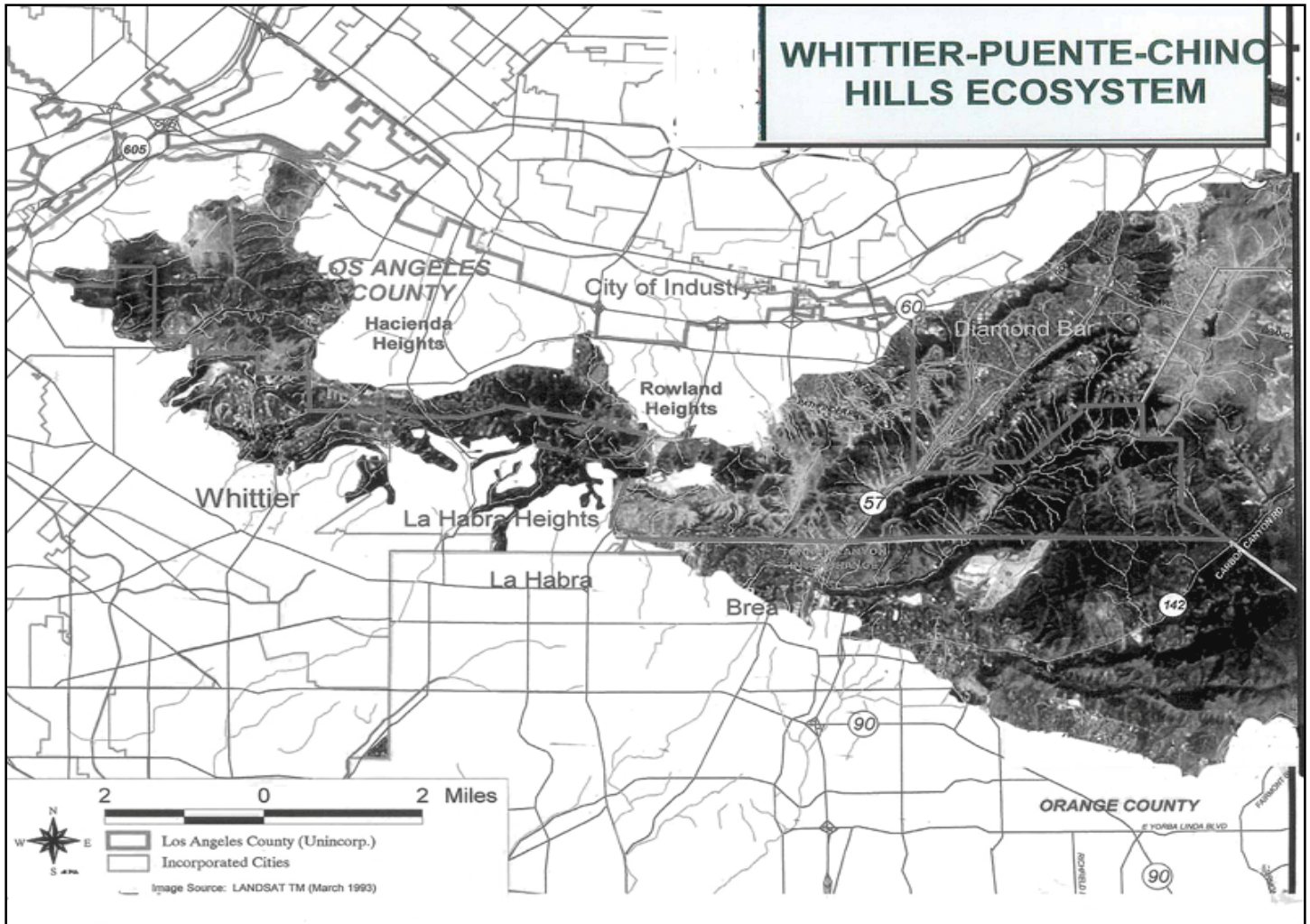
Corridor Priorities

The map below shows the open space areas in the Wildlife Corridor from Whittier Narrows to the western edge of the Chino Hills State Park. Not shown is the connection at Coal Canyon and the Cleveland National Park. Some of these areas are actually developed but with such low density (e.g., La Habra Heights) that there is still a considerable amount of animal movement across the properties.

Corridor the top three priorities are:

Coal Canyon - this vital link between the Cleveland National Forest and Chino Hills State Park is currently the number one priority. State Parks has been working hard with the owners, the Sinclair Company, to purchase the property. The property has entitlements for up to 1,400 homes, so there is great urgency that it be saved immediately. It is rumored that a deal may be near and could be announced in July 2000.

AERA Property - From Harbor Boulevard in La Habra Heights to just east of the 57 Freeway lies a property owned by AERA, a joint venture of Shell Oil and EXXON. This property consists of about 3,000 acres with approximately 2,700 acres in Los Angeles County and 300 in Orange County. Plans are now moving forward to develop this property. WCCA has been working with the owners to assure that the Corridor would be included in any development plan. It is also



In the eastern portion, **Chino Hills State Park** contains about 12,000 acres of protected wilderness. In the west, the **Whittier-Hacienda Heights-La Habra Heights Wilderness Preserve** is coming together with about 2,900 acres already preserved and approximately 2,000 acres more that can be acquired in the next few years.

Tonner Canyon - (See article on page 2 about the Firestone Scout Reservation.) This beautiful canyon has incredible stands of oak and California Black Walnut. The Boy Scouts own about 3,200 acres and City of Industry has about 2,500 acres north of the Scouts preserve. Industry's property is the Tres Hermonos Ranch and the official stated use is for a reservoir.

possible that some portions of the property might be acquired to provide large reserve areas for native species.

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In order to complete the preservation of the

Exploring at night

Editors note: Ray Williams, the author of this article, is an instructor in Biology at Rio Hondo College. He also serves on the Citizens Technical Advisory Committee of the Habitat Authority with David Fretz, who is an instructor at Irvine Community College. Both are highly involved in environmental issues.

After unlocking the gate, we parked one truck inside the closed area. We cruised in the well-used Blazer on the beat-up asphalt roads of the former oil field in the Whittier Hills. Although darkness had set in on this dark-of-the-moon night, the shrub-covered hills and out-of-place eucalyptus trees were clearly silhouetted against the muted glow of unseen city lights. Scraping against overhanging branches, the Blazer crept along as we looked for snakes lying on the roadway. We had hoped the May evening would be warmer than it was, so that some snakes might be resting on the warm pavement. I had “run the roads” many times in the desert for reptiles, but it was different here. The desert roads were well maintained, but these had been abandoned for some time so that weeds were growing in the cracks. The Blazer bent them down in passing over them. Finding snakes under these conditions would be challenging to say the least.

Suddenly, Dave stopped the vehicle and shut off the motor. We opened the doors and stepped out to the staccato calls of several dozen tree frogs. With flashlights in hand, we sought to find a few of them, but they were well hidden. Their marshy home was some fifteen feet lower than the road; the slope between was covered with dense brush. We listened to the chorus for several minutes, then Dave crossed the road to another low area surrounded by dense shrubbery and said there were more frogs there, as well. They were much more tentative in their calls, though.

We resumed our travels along roads of varying widths. Some were about a lane and a half; others were less than a car width. Occasionally, we drove along ridge tops where we could see the city lights. Some roads led us into deep canyons where nothing of the city could be seen.

It was in one of these canyons that I heard a loud squawk from a tall eucalyptus. I asked

Dave to stop and I peered toward the sound—which was repeated—and saw a large nest silhouetted against the sky. We shut off the engine and stepped out to discover the source of the sound. We shined bright flashlights toward the nest, which caused a large bird to briefly raise its wings. With my flashlight held between my knees and shakily pointed toward the nest, I attempted to focus my field glasses on the nest. This proved to be a difficult task to accomplish.

Concerned that we might scare the bird away, we kept the lights on for brief moments. Once, after a few minutes of darkness, when the lights were again focused on the nest, a bird flew away. We thought it might be an owl. But our efforts in checking the nest continued and wings were again raised suggesting a second bird.

During the dark lulls between nest checks, I



was conscious of the urban setting of this long east-west canyon which sloped gently down toward the city, with its lights visible in the distance. We could hear the steady muffled drone of tires on the highways, occasional horns and an intrusive loud stereo. We were quite aware of being under the approach pattern for Los Angeles International Airport.

Dave walked down the road about fifty feet and tried again to see the bird, then called me down to where he said he could see it. After joining him, we shined both lights on

the nest and with my field glasses, I could see what proved to be a red-shouldered hawk. This fit the call far better than our supposed owl. We were surprised and pleased to identify a not-so-common hawk in this former oil well property.

After twenty minutes or so, we left the hawks to sleep and moved on to search for more night life. We climbed up the back side of a high ridge, then descended a steep slope above the resident ranger’s home. Dave shut off the headlights and moved slowly and cautiously to avoid attracting attention. He was uncertain whether the ranger received the telephone message regarding our unusual visit. We reached the bottom of the slope and joined a wider road which led us east toward the entrance gate. Our two-hour adventure was soon to be over as we returned to the urban scene where evidence of wildlife is mostly from roadkills.

Want to Help?

We are looking for people who would like to contribute to making this organization a success. We need:

- Articles on the Hills and the Corridor
- Leaders for Nature Hikes
- Volunteers for Revegetation efforts
- Volunteers to build trails
- Historical articles about the area and its peoples
- Helpers for managing subscriptions
- Clerical help to manage our database and much more.

To volunteer contact the editor, Dr. Judi Henderson, at our P.O. Box or call 562-695-4234.

Steering Committee

The following are serving as a steering committee for Hills for Everyone until elections can be held.

Bob Henderson, Steve Feld, Claire Schlotterbeck, Stephen Blagden, Judi Henderson, Mary Hanson, Helen McKenna-Rahder, Mike Cole, Roland vom Dorp, Ray Williams, Evelyn Stafford, Alan Beoge, Jean Beaton, David Fretz, Chuck Hanson, Glenn Parker, Jeff Yann, and Charles Claver



Kids' Korner:

“Squirrel Watch”

by Sona Ericson - *La Habra Heights*
(Editors note: Sona lives in La Habra Heights and regularly leads children's hikes in Powder Canyon)

The squirrels we see most often in La Habra Heights are the Gray squirrel and the Beechy Ground squirrel. Both are fun to watch if you know what to look for.

You do not need any special equipment to go squirrel watching. Sharp eyes and a pocket filled with peanuts are all you need! Squirrels live almost anywhere in the Heights, but their favorite place to live is in our oak and nut trees.

How does a squirrel climb so well? His feet have four long, slender toes on each front paw and five on the rear. Each toe has a curved nail with a sharp point. The toes are tree hooks that help it to climb up the side of a tree.

Their long tail helps balance and guide them as they leap from branch to branch. If the squirrel happens to fall, the tail spreads out and acts like a parachute. The tail curls over the squirrel's back like an umbrella when it rains and it also serves as a sun shade. The Chippewa Indians called the squirrel “Ahj-duh-mo,” which means “tail in the air.” The Latin name for squirrel used by the Romans is *sciurus griseus*, meaning “shade tail.” In the nest, squirrels use their tails like blankets.

There are many predators in the hills and parks that keep squirrels on the alert. Hawks, rattlesnakes, coyotes, raccoons, weasels, foxes, and an occasional eagle or bobcat are their worst enemies. Squirrels themselves are predators, eating snails and insects.

Hiking in the afternoon may give you the opportunity to see a squirrel jump out of her warm nest made of dry leaves carrying a baby squirrel. Squirrels can have 6 to 7 babies. If danger arises, she must transport each one separately away from the nest. The frightened little animal will scamper down a branch and leap through the air to the safety of another tree nearby. The baby can be seen clinging to its mother's shoulders, its tail around her warm body.

You may hear the noisy squirrel warning other animals that an enemy is nearby. She may be asking them to help defend her family. Squirrels teach us to be alert and protect our nests.

Park (continued)

tion of nature but rather the real thing and needs to be left that way.

The Park can't fill the human need for nature while also filling the human needs for roads and water tanks. Many battles loom ahead for this Park as development comes nearer and economic pressures push responsive buttons in elected officials. Park staff and volunteers are working to ensure that roads and houses don't encroach too close to these wild lands and fray its edges.

Although the Park is not “home” to humans, we usually feel better when we are there. A certain peace enters us when we hear naturally running streams. A certain sense of freedom is stifled when we see the sun against an uninterrupted horizon. Perhaps a memory of our own outdoor adventures is rekindled as we watch children romp through the hills. At these times we can feel grateful that open space lands are still around for them to romp in. This Park, indeed any park, does fill this usually unspoken affinity for nature.

www.hillsforeveryone.org

SAVE THE WILDLIFE CORRIDOR !

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Equestrian Trails

Hills for Everyone is composed of members who are active in many other groups and organizations. In each issue we will try to give you some information about one of those groups. Horse back riding is an important recreation in our hills and we have a number of equestrian groups. Evelyn Stafford gives a brief overview of her organization.

EQUESTRIAN TRAILS, INC. (ETI) A non-profit organization for the entire family is dedicated to the acquisition and preservation of trails, good horsemanship, and equine legislation. Organized in 1944, our national office is located at 13741 Foothill Blvd., Suite 100, Sylmar, California. Each Corral of Equestrian Trails works in its own community to secure trails and to develop connecting links to public parks and recreation centers. Corrals have a number and name. Corral 3, The River Riders, has activities at the Whittier Narrows Park Equestrian Arena located on Rooks Road in Whittier.

Some of our activities include:

* **Educational Clinics** throughout the year on various subjects including riding, training and nutrition.

* **Trial Rides:** One day trail rides or overnight camp outs at various parks. Barbecues, picnics and potlucks, are events the non-riding family members can take part in and are often combined with a trail ride.

* **Mounted Assistance Units (MAU)** are co-sponsored by Los Angeles Park and Recreation and Equestrian Trails, Inc. They are volunteers who spend many hours patrolling Los Angeles County Park Trails and areas not easily accessible to Park Police. Members must be trained in CPR, first aid, and special horse and rider training. They provide information to park visitors, report



President of ETI Corral 3, Lenda Osborn, husband Dave and son Steven are seen here crossing the San Gabriel river in the Whittier Narrows.

unsafe trails and keep an eye out for problems they report to Park Police for proper solution. Marshall Canyon, Bonelli Park and Whittier Narrows Regional Park are three of the active units in the San Gabriel Valley.

* **Junior Program:** ETI National sponsors an annual Junior Ambassador program with many Corrals participating. Winners at the Corral level go on to ETI National competition. Juniors compete in age groups. The competition include public speaking, horsemanship, and good sportsmanship.

* **Disaster Aid:** ETI works with all governmental agencies in times of a disaster, and provide evacuation assistance as needed.

* **Competition:** The Corrals provide horseshows, playdays, trail trials and gymkhanas at the local level.

* **ETI National Convention and Horse Show** is a three day annual event enjoyed by members and non-members alike. ETI has its own High Point Program where members can enjoy year-end awards and recognition for their accomplishments. Also included at the Convention horseshow is a gymkhana competition.

* **Equine Legislation and Trail Preservation:** ETI has helped pass many tax laws, zoning laws and equine drug laws which are beneficial to the community. ETI takes pride in our support of the various organizations involved with saving the Wildlife Corridor and other environmental issues.

* **Charitable and philanthropic activities** include Toys for Tots, St Jukes, Children's Hospital, Earth Day, and California Trail Days.

* Corral 3 has a monthly newsletter giving activities, meeting dates and other news of interest to the members. ETI National has a monthly magazine that gives the upcoming activities and news from the different Corrals.

The membership of ETI Corral 3 (Whittier) is growing with 95+ members. Other Corrals in the San Gabriel Valley are Corral 2 (Pasadena), Corral 15 (La Verne-Marshall Canyon), Corral 35 (Altadena Eaton Canyon) and Corral 55 (West Covina).

With its membership expanding and new Corrals being formed, Equestrian Trails is recognized as a major influence in the equestrian community.



Hills for Everyone
Friends of the Wildlife Corridor

Save the Wildlife Corridor