




Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council

Protect ● Preserve ● Maintain

Spring 2021

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Swallowtail Butterfly - *Papilio rutulus*
Humboldt's Lily - *Lilium humboldtii*

RON WEBSTER, MASTER TRAIL BUILDER AND ADVOCATE FOR TRAILS

"in wildness is the preservation of the world" - Thoreau

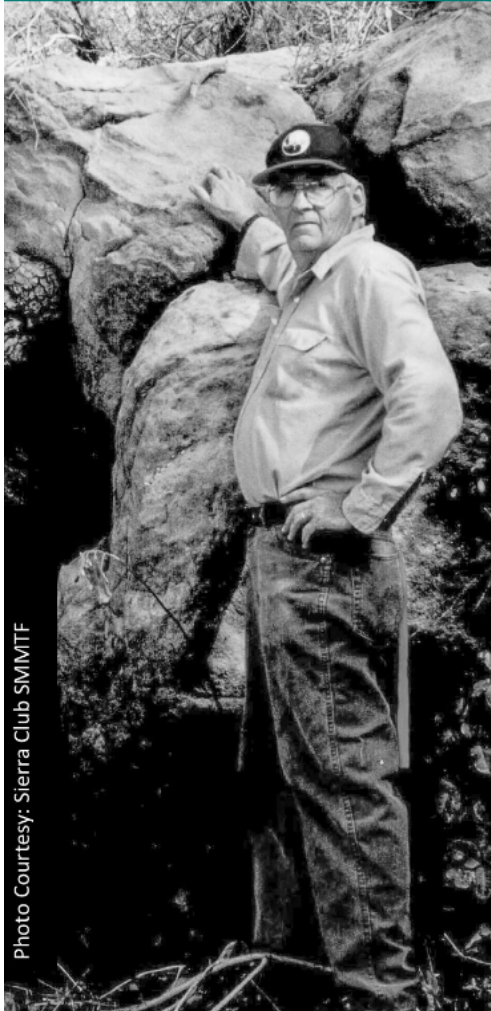


Photo Courtesy: Sierra Club SMMTF

Ron Webster

2/27/1934 - 1/6/2021

BBT Segments Built/Realigned

- 1983 Musch Trail
- 1986 Latigo
- 1987 Newton Canyon
- 1987 Saddle Creek
- 1989 Ray Miller
- 1990 Blue Canyon, Chamberlain
- 1990 Saddle Peak
- 1992 Wood Canyon Vista
- 1993 Hondo Canyon
- 1993 Piuma-Mesa Peak
- 2001 Rogers Road Bypass

Ron built or realigned 31 miles of the Backbone Trail!

We are forever grateful to Ron Webster because he stands tall among the many people who worked together to create and build the awesome trails here in the Santa Monica Mountains, trails that we happily travel along while seeking enjoyment and solace in Wildness.

Ron Webster passed away January 6, 2021.

Ron Webster and the Backbone Trail

The Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council applied for and received grant money to build trails during the 1980s and 1990s. The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy provided the grants. For nearly a decade, these grants were used to pay Ron Webster to design & build trails. In rapid fashion, trails were laid out on a map, flagged and then built. Inspiration for the Backbone Trail was a desire for a path, connecting the Santa Monica Mountains from one end to the other. Ron Webster led the way in building and/or realigning 31 of the 67 miles of this trail!

Cutting, chopping and occasionally cussing at brush are part of flagging and aligning a trail. Dense chaparral grows where the path will be created, it blocks the view, pokes, scratches and blocks forward progress at every turn. Clearing brush and creating a trail corridor also means exposure to poison oak and biting insects. Ron and his crew persevered, week after week and then year after year, building trails in often harsh conditions so that future generations will have trails to enjoy.

Creating an alignment for a trail that

gives the trail user the maximum exposure to natural resources while also protecting those resources is a unique skill. Ron's mantra was that a trail should "lay lightly on the land." He avoided using heavy machinery to build a trail, favoring hand tools and manual labor in all trail construction.

Building trails is one thing, maintaining them is another, Ron led the Sierra Club's Santa Monica Mountains Task Force for many years, repairing tread, clearing drains and brush. Ron connected past, present and future trail crew leaders with the goal of protecting and preserving trails.

In the 40 plus years that Ron advocated for trails as well as designing and building them, he is probably the most important individual contributing to the development of the hundreds of miles of trails in the largest urban park in the nation. He was a true Trail Champion.

"Appearing at the right moment and place was Ron Webster. Ron had the right skills, knowledge, life situation and determination required to see this project through." -Milt McAuley

"PEOPLE WALK ALL OVER MY BEST WORK." - RON WEBSTER



The Backbone Trail

Volunteer of the Year



Doctor Dave Perlmutter, 2020's [Hank Grateful award](#) winner, has worked on our trails for more than a dozen years. Words like "hard-working", "affable" and "energetic" kind of describe Dave - but when you learn Dave turned 90 last year in November - you realize how exceptional in terms of health and fitness he is. This talented volunteer could give his time and energy to many other organizations – that he chose our organization is an exceptional gift to trail users in the Santa Monica Mountains. A force of nature, an extraordinary volunteer and a most humble person - we are happy to keep up with Dave and look forward to many more years of cutting brush, digging drains and fixing tread issues!

Hiking During the Time of COVID-19

I haven't always been an avid hiker; growing up in Chicago provided little opportunity to connect with nature. Since moving to Southern California, I've been fortunate to have access to some of the most beautiful scenery that the Santa Monica Mountains trails offer! I'm no longer a newcomer to hiking, but have in fact, become a regular at the Westridge, Temescal and Los Liones trails. However, once we were told to stay home, hiking took on a more important role in my life.

Hiking was not just another form of exercise. Walking along a trail offered the benefit of improving my mental and emotional health. Breathing in fresh air, listening to birds singing and pausing at spectacular vistas, has been key in getting through these trying times!

Hiking provides the ability for me to relax and meditate in nature. It provides clarity and helps me to focus. A panoramic landscape of the ocean and mountains has both a calming effect on me when I'm anxious and a rejuvenating impact when I'm fatigued. The combination of exercise in a picturesque setting improves my mood and shifts my thoughts to a positive outlook.

Hiking also provides a social aspect during the pandemic. Whether hiking on my own or joined by friends (wearing masks or 6 feet apart), hiking provides the opportunity to interact with others, even if it's just a passing "hello" to other hikers. Typically, on a hike, I may see parents sharing their love of nature with their children, couples bringing their dogs along or single hikers enjoying the majestic beauty of the outdoors. Hiking has something for everyone, especially during the pandemic. Now get out there and hit the trails!

- *Carole Miles*

Generous Supporter

Award Winning Luxury, Fitness & Wellness Retreat

THE RANCH
MALIBU™

SMMTC Workplace COVID-19 Prevention Plan

COVID-19 continues to be a public health threat in our community. Strict adherence to prevention procedures can greatly reduce the spread of the virus, thereby protecting our volunteers as individuals and our community as a whole. Therefore, the following Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council (SMMTC) specific COVID-19 prevention specific workplace plan is established. All volunteers should keep in mind that it is everyone's responsibility to take action to protect themselves as well as others on our projects.

Planning: In order to more effectively manage the COVID-19 prevention protocols, the following procedure shall be used:

Due to frequently changing regulatory requirements, a long-term trail maintenance schedule will not be published.

Trail maintenance events will not be publicized on the SMMTC website. Rather, volunteers will be notified directly of upcoming events.

Crew size will be limited to 12 volunteers.

Volunteers will be limited to our trained and experienced crew leaders and a few of our more experienced, regular volunteers.

Specific Work Procedures

- Drive to the meeting place alone, or only with family members.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will be provided to all volunteers. For this plan, PPE is defined as face masks and disposable, latex gloves. Volunteers are encouraged to bring their own leather work gloves. Latex and SMMTC provided work gloves will be disposed of after use.
- Volunteers are encouraged to bring their own tools.
- Occasionally, it will be necessary to carpool from the meeting place to the trailhead. In these situations, all volunteers in the vehicle should wear a mask and windows in the vehicle should be kept partially open to increase ventilation. These carpool trips should be kept as short as possible.
- Masks may be removed while working on the trail as long as a six foot distance between volunteers is maintained.
- Maintain a six foot distance from passing trail users. If conversation or prolonged close contact with a passerby is established, a face mask should be donned.
- All shared (SMMTC) tools will be disinfected after each project.
- Cleanup supplies (soap, water, hand sanitizer) will be provided to all volunteers at the completion of the event.



PRUNUS ILICIFOLIA
HOLLY LEAF CHERRY

NATIVE PLANTS PAGE

What happened to the spring flowers? Reduced amounts of poorly timed rainfall resulted in a comparatively limited selection of flowers. After two years of spectacular blooms, this year will be a bit more muted. Enjoy them now before they set seed and return to the soil, having done their job.

The Woolsey Fire in November 2018 followed by plentiful rain produced spectacular blooms in 2019 and 2020. The amount of rainfall and its timing influence the numbers of blooming plants. This year's lack of rain suggests that smaller quantities of the hardiest plants will bloom. This was most noticeable with the sparse coverage of flowers in February and March. Most years, we would see the delicate annuals providing vivid splashes of color along the trails and hillsides.

After the first rains, flowers that bloom in winter were easy to find. By February, with few annuals in bloom, they still outnumbered everything else. In particular, the blooms of manzanita and currant flowers were more noticeable than they usually are. Late winter bloomers such as chocolate lilies (*Fritillaria biflora*) and shooting

stars (*Primula clevelandii*) showed up in smaller numbers. Others, such as two-tone everlasting (*Pseudognaphalim biolettii*) with its lemony scent, are more plentiful. Or perhaps with less competition they are simply more noticeable.

Less rainfall and this season's irregular timing equals drier, harder soil with less water being absorbed into the ground. The seeds of annuals are not likely to germinate if the moisture level in the soil is too low. Tree roots tap into the water table and depend on its availability. Weakened trees are the result, if they cannot take in what they need to sustain themselves. Insect damage, fire and drought followed by strong winds have been busy taking down many of our majestic oaks. Let us hope next year brings the rain in frequency and quantity that plants need to maintain their existence.

When you are out on the trail this spring, be vigilant and you will see flowers. With any luck you may even see one you have never seen before!

Where flowers bloom, so does hope.
- Lady Bird Johnson
- George Sherman

Want to know more about native plants? We have resources on our website for you to learn more about the plants that provide, food, shelter and cover for insects, animals and birds. Need help identifying a plant you saw? Send an email with an image of a plant to mail@smmtc.org and we will do our best to help identify what you found.

- SMMTC Native Plant Web Links
- Plant Gallery - images & descriptions
- Plant of the Month Archives
- NPS Wildflowers Finder
- www.smmflowers.org

Based on the continuing COVID-19 crisis, we are not scheduling public events at this time.

Trail Report Maintenance Report Sep20-Mar21

In March 2020, our established trail maintenance schedule for the year was suspended because of the COVID-19 shutdown.

On the trail we practiced social distancing rules. We changed strategies and decided to work on the same trail - start to finish and we picked a trail that required up to 9 miles round trip of hiking. We completed the Blue Canyon, Chamberlain Trail and Fossil Trail, worked on the rock step on Cage Creek, and we made 3 trips to Hondo Canyon. We managed to work nearly every Saturday and repaired some segments of trail that have needed repairs for several years! This added up to **1600 plus volunteer hours**.

Dates & Trail	Events	Hours	Vol#	Work Accomplished
February 2021 BBT Near Hondo	3	144	24	Brushed and trimmed - a long problematic segment was re-routed much to the glee of many trail users. Removed lots of poison oak as well.
January 2021 Cage Creek, Malibu Creek State Park	2	100	18	Used power tools, sledgehammers and picks to reduce a big rock step into something more manageable for equestrians and hikers.
November to December 2020 Fossil Trail, Point Mugu State Park	4	142	24	Tread work, cleaning & installing drains.
October to January Blue Canyon & Chamberlain Trail	9	455	58	Tread work, cleaning & installing drains, installing steps and correcting extensive erosion problems. Five plus miles of trail!
October 2020 Upper Sycamore Canyon	2	113	18	Brushing and fixing the tread.
October 3 - 10 Serrano Canyon, Point Mugu State Park	2	9	54	Completed brushing all the way to Serrano Valley
October 17-24 Upper Sycamore Trail, Point Mugu State Park	2	18	132	Cleared brush on this trail from the bridge to Danielson Fire Road crossing.

Boney Mountain State Wilderness - Did You Know?

The California State Wilderness Act of 1974 created wilderness areas in the San Jacinto and the Santa Rosa Mountains. This act provided further protection to lands that were already part of the California State Parks system. **Boney Mountain State Wilderness was added by the California Parks and Recreation Commission in 1981.** This section of Point Mugu State Park is bounded by Sycamore Canyon on one side and to the East by Circle X Ranch.

The Backbone Trail provides access to the Boney Mountain State Wilderness via the Blue Canyon and Chamberlain trails. Many of the trails in the wilderness have degraded over time from old ranch roads to single or double tracks. Dramatic views abound and are the prize for your efforts to obtain them. On foot or on the back of a horse, create your own adventure and return home refreshed and ready for a return visit!

Chamberlain Trail - Restoration Finished January 2021



The further a trail takes you from the nearest road, the more likely that trail is a candidate for sporadic maintenance. Hiking five miles and carrying tools reduces the number of willing volunteers! These trails need maintenance — so every few years we arrange for either a massive number of volunteers or a spike camp. With COVID-19 forcing us to make different choices, this past season we endeavored to work 8 Saturdays and a Wednesday to get the job done. Dave Edwards — whose idea this was — led the effort and kept us focused on the segment we were working while providing a bit of inspiration, suggesting that we could finish the job if we kept moving forward up the mountain.

Blue Canyon

The Blue Canyon Trail begins at the Danielson Ranch and follows a drainage to where it intersects and joins the Old Boney Trail. This section moves around after flooding. Removed in the process were downed trees and brush encroaching on the trail. Water now flows off the trail,

using two additional drains. Silt was cleared from several existing drains. We positioned several large rocks to hold up a section of trail that was being eroded and built an inside drain to route water away.

Chamberlain Trail

Chamberlain Trail traverses up a ridge and connects to Circle X Ranch. Another group had worked on segments in the first mile. Progress here was quick, as we only had to deal with shrubs and burned branches leaning into the trail. The further up the trail we went, the denser the brush became. Our brush cutters allowed us to make progress at a faster clip and kept a crew of volunteers busy removing the cuttings from the trail. Using a combination of hedge trimmers, loppers and saws, we removed a considerable amount of brush. When we first encountered this segment - it was hard to see where the trail went. The trail bed was there, but plants had nearly hidden the tread.

Damage From the Woolsey Fire

The 2018 Woolsey Fire burned and top killed (leaves and limbs) nearly all plants in its path down to the junction with Blue Canyon. Underground, most shrubs and trees survived and began

sprouting soon thereafter. The following months brought rain. With no plants to hold back the flow of water, thousands of rivulets formed on many slopes. The flowing water displaces dirt and rocks, creating a mixture that scours the terrain as it finds its way downhill. As the water crossed the trail, sections of the trail lost soil but gained thousands of small rocks with more than a few larger rocks mixed in. Overflowing drains sent water down the middle of the tread, further damaging the trail. All that rain did provide for an amazing bloom of flowers during the past two years and encouraged the regrowth of chaparral.

Hand built by Ron Webster and crew in 1990, this trail provides ocean views including the Channel Islands and most of Point Mugu State Park. Chamberlain Trail takes you far from the road and into a wilderness. Without regular trail maintenance, Mother Nature will eventually reclaim this path.

- George Sherman



452 Hours of Labor
12 Volunteers
5 Miles of Trail
Brushed,
Drains Cleared,
Drains Added

Roger Young & Mallory Ham worked on this very eroded section. Two large drains were installed. Three others were cleaned. After smoothing out the worst section they installed a large drain to divert water and protect the trail from future storm damage.

Backbone Trail -
Chamberlain Segment
Point Mugu State Park



Several Saturdays and hikes up to 5 miles & 2,300 feet elevation gain. We cleared brush and repaired tread over a 5 mile stretch of the Backbone Trail. This segment looked like a stream bed before we began working on it. Amazing, what a group of dedicated volunteers can do!

BOARD MEMBER NEWS

Lylene Sheets has retired from the board after more than 30 plus years of service. Lylene was active behind the scenes working at Trail Days, organizing our Annual Dinner and assembling & mailing the newsletters. Her dedication to detail made our events run smoothly. For many years she also worked as a volunteer in the kiosk at Sycamore Canyon Campground. Those of us on the board will remember that she made some of the best lemon bars in the Santa Monica Mountains.

Carole Miles joined our board in February 2021. She has lived in Santa Monica for over 10 years. Carole enjoys hiking in the mountains and running by the ocean. She has completed several marathons, including the LA Marathon. She hopes to use her analytical skills and project management experience, honed in her role as VP of Dynamic Pricing at Live Nation, to help guide the Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council into the future. She is easing into the role of newsletter editor.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Join

Dues are on a rolling 12-month basis. Membership dues are effective the first of the month following receipt; membership will be effective for 12 months. Please make your check payable to SMMTC and mail it to P.O. Box 345, Agoura Hills, CA 91376 or you may use your credit card with PayPal. @<http://smmtc.org/membership/>

Name: _____
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Individual Membership

- Annual - \$35
 Lifetime - \$360 Can also be paid over 3 consecutive years @\$120
 Donation →

Business Membership

- Supporter - \$100
 Patron - \$250
 Benefactor - \$500

Thank you for your continued support.

SMMTC is a tax exempt, non-profit organization under IRS code 501(c)(3)

Upcoming Events

- **40th Annual Santa Monica Mountains Trail Days** *Canceled*
~~April 23 — April 25th, 2021 Pt. Mugu State Park~~
- **Backbone Trek — May 1, — May 8th, 2021** *Canceled*
~~Registration begins February 1st, 2021~~
- **Annual Dinner Meeting** — Thursday, Oct 21st
 6pm social, 6:45pm Complimentary dinner for trails community.

Board Meetings (Currently held via Zoom)

Board Meetings are open to the public and are on the 4th Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm. They are held at Diamond X Ranch, 26412 Mulholland Highway, Calabasas, CA 91302. There are 4 exceptions: No meeting in August; April meet on the 3rd Thursday; Nov & Dec, meet on 1st Thursday.

OUR STORY

Since 1969, the Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council has been the only organization devoted to representing all trail user groups in the Santa Monica Mountains.

We are a volunteer nonprofit organization, dedicated to establishing, preserving and maintaining the public trail system throughout the Santa Monica Mountains and adjacent areas through education, advocacy and partnership with public and private sectors.

We coordinate with various government agencies to enhance and preserve the trail system. We assist in negotiations with property owners regarding specific trail alignments. We promote public awareness and build, monitor and maintain trails.

CONTACT US

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