



Palomar Park Post

Proposed transmission tower update

While Palomar Mountain is not the preferred site for a 140 mile 500 kv transmission line between Imperial County and Temecula, it remains a possible alternative site, an SDG&E representative explained at the annual meeting of the Palomar Mountain Planning Association, Saturday, May 23 at the Palomar Mountain Fire Department.

The transmission towers would be up to 191 feet high and would be placed every 1500 feet along the proposed route, explained Melinda Keesee, the SDG&E representative. Access roads to each tower would need to be 14-16 feet wide and each tower would require a 250 foot right of way. Currently the proposed route snakes through a portion of Anza Borrego State Park and heads northward toward Temecula on a route east of the Palomar Mountain area. Some of the route will be on private property, which would be acquired through eminent domain. The utility plans to submit its application to the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) at the end of the year. CPUC would then do its own impact analysis during a 30 -day evaluation prior to ruling on the proposed route. The proposed Golden Pacific Powerlink is estimated to cost \$2.3 billion.

Keesee said power to the towers could be shut down in seconds in the event of a wildfire. That decision would be made by the California Independent System Operator (CAISO) which controls electrical grid operations in California and parts of Nevada. It was noted that both the Paradise fire in 2018 in Butte County and the Eaton Fire in Altadena almost 18 months ago were ignited by transmission lines, and that the Palomar Mountain area is subject to high winds.



Several mountain residents have organized a Save Palomar Mountain effort to oppose the transmission tower construction on the mountain community. Their website is www.savepalomarmountain.org Mountain resident Jim Hamerly is the leader of that effort. He can be reached at savepalomarmountaintaskforce@gmail.com Opposition to the proposed route through Temecula is also triggering community opposition in that community, and supporters of Anza Borrego State Park have also objected to the route traversing the park.

Friends of Palomar Mountain State Park (FPMSP) is dedicated to:

Supporting the park in its mission to enhance the public's experience through educational and interpretive programs and to preserve the park's unique biological, geological, archaeological, recreational, and scenic resources... for the benefit and enjoyment of the public. Keeping the park open...and with full services.

FPMSP mourns death of board member John Bruce

Friends of Palomar Mountain State Park board members were saddened to learn of the sudden death of our newest board member John Bruce, 70, on January 5 in Oceanside. He died in his sleep. John was the retired captain of the Oceanside Fire Department, where he worked for 30 years, and a member of the San Diego County Search and Rescue unit and was an Emergency Medical Responder at the time of his death. "John was an avid cyclist who participated in numerous 100-mile (century)bike rides and was considered 'uber fit' so his death came as a shock to all of us," board president Rosemary Johnston said. Bruce played upright bass in his bluegrass band and the Leucadia String Band, which performed at the park's annual Harvest Festival Nov. 1.

Bruce volunteered for eight years as a 'trail angel' to hikers on the Pacific Crest Trail, providing them with food, water, and rest along the trail, which stretches from the southern border to the Canadian border. A native of Kensington, a San Diego suburb, Bruce graduated from Hoover High School and stayed connected to his classmates by planning numerous reunions. Bruce had a long history at the park, attending Patrol Boy camp there as a boy and later camped and picnicked there with his parents and siblings, then with his own four children on numerous occasions. "They all caught their first bluegill at Doane Pond," he said. He had hiked all the trails in the park as well. "I could always count on John to volunteer to help at our events," Johnston said. "The standing room only crowd at his memorial service was testimony to his commitment to the well-being of his community."



photos by Walt Johnston

FPMSP funds Boucher Tower repainting

Friends of Palomar Mountain State Park recently approved the expenditure of \$31,513 for the repainting of the exterior of the Boucher Hill Lookout Tower in the park. The tower, which is open May 1 until late November and staffed largely by volunteers, provides a panoramic view to the north, west, and southeast and is equipped with Osborn Firefinder instrumentation that allows trained lookout volunteers to accurately report the location of smoke and wildfires to first responders. The San Diego Riverside chapter of the Forest Fire Lookout Association (FFLA) trains and schedules lookout volunteers. (FPMSP board member Ernie Cowan is an FFLA volunteer at Boucher Lookout).

The original tower was built in 1921 and replaced in 1934. The current building was built in 1948 and was fully refurbished in 2013. In 2001, the tower was turned over to Palomar Mountain State Park for staffing and maintenance. There is another High Point Lookout Tower closer to Palomar Observatory that is also staffed by FFLA volunteers. It surveys areas to the east of the mountain. However, it was closed recently because of structural deficits that will cost an estimated \$140,000 to repair. For more information about how to volunteer at the Boucher Lookout, contact training@ffla-sandiego.org.

Colorful Lazuli Bunting bird returns to Palomar

Spring on Palomar Mountain brings the return of one of California's most colorful songbirds, the Lazuli Bunting. Males are especially striking, with bright blue heads and backs, warm cinnamon-colored breasts, and white wing bars. Females are much subtler in appearance, with soft brown plumage that helps camouflage them while nesting. Despite their small size, Lazuli Buntings are often easy to identify during the spring because males frequently sing from exposed perches along roadsides, meadows, and woodland edges.

Lazuli Buntings migrate to California each spring after spending the winter primarily in western Mexico and parts of the desert Southwest. Most arrive in Southern California between late March and April, and they remain through the breeding season before beginning their southward migration in late summer. On Palomar Mountain, they are most commonly found in brushy habitats, riparian areas, forest openings, and recovering chaparral where dense shrubs provide nesting cover.



Their ecology is closely tied to these shrubby habitats. Lazuli Buntings feed heavily on insects during the breeding season, including caterpillars, beetles, grasshoppers, and other small invertebrates that provide important protein for raising young. Later in the year, seeds become a larger part of their diet. Females usually build nests low in shrubs such as wild rose, willow, or sagebrush, helping conceal the nest from predators.

One interesting aspect of Lazuli Bunting ecology is their association with post-fire habitats. In the years following wildfires, recovering chaparral often produces abundant wildflowers, grasses, and insects, creating favorable conditions for buntings. As a result, they are sometimes more common in recently disturbed areas where vegetation is regenerating.

The species is also known for its pleasant, warbling song, which is commonly heard on spring mornings throughout Palomar Mountain. Birders often detect the song before spotting the bird itself perched at the top of a shrub or small tree. Their bright coloration earned them their name, which comes from the gemstone lapis lazuli.

Lazuli Buntings are also scientifically interesting because they occasionally hybridize with the closely related Indigo Bunting in areas where the two species overlap in the Great Plains. Researchers have studied these hybrid zones for many years to better understand how species evolve and maintain distinct populations.

Although their stay on Palomar Mountain is relatively short, Lazuli Buntings are an important and highly anticipated part of the mountain's spring birdlife. Their arrival signals the start of the breeding season and adds both color and song to the forests and meadows of the region.



JoAnn Rizzo, our new campground host

Joann Rizzo, a veteran camper and outdoors person, has been named the new campground host at Palomar Mountain State Park. Rizzo said her first camping experience as a child was at Doheny State Beach, and 'I was hooked.' Rizzo grew up in Upland, CA, and then moved around in the state, finally settling in Tucson, AZ, where she owns a home. Her camping experience has included frequent stays for a week or two at the park.

In addition to arranging for the sale of firewood to campers, Rizzo can answer questions about hiking and fishing options in the park and troubleshoot needed repairs in campground facilities.

Apple Festival Set for Oct. 17

The annual Apple Festival sponsored by Friends of Palomar Mountain State Park will begin at 10 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 17 in the Silvercrest area near the park entrance, according to William Meyst, park interpreter and the CAL representative on the FPMSP board. "We are planning on creating an opportunity for participants to create apple cider from fresh apples. Participants may also assemble applewood jewelry and corn husk dolls. A sack race and other games are also in the works as well as live bluegrass music," he said. The Palomar Mountain Christian Conference will provide a hot lunch. "It's a wonderful family oriented opportunity to visit the park and the historic apple orchard near the park entrance," board president Rosemary Johnston said. "And we are happy to see the Apple Festival returning to its original event title. "There are lots of Harvest festivals this time of year, but our Apple Festival is pretty unique." The event will conclude at 4 p.m. More information will be available on the Friends' website (www.friendsofpalomarsp.org) and social media as well as the next edition of the Palomar Park Post in September.



Your support makes our work possible.

Friends of Palomar Mountain State Park relies on donations and sales of firewood and park related merchandise to support our work. This past year we were able to purchase a new storage shed near the entrance kiosk to store firewood and merchandise. We also purchased a popup canopy with our logo on it for community events when we are invited to host an information booth about the park and our organization. Information about how to donate to Friends of Palomar is available on our website at www.friendsofpalomarsp.org, linked below.

We appreciate your support and look forward to meeting you in person at future events!



You can keep up with our activities and upcoming events on our website: www.friendsofpalomarsp.org or on our Facebook and Instagram pages. If you have ideas for future newsletters, please contact our editor and board president Rosemary Johnston at fpmspinfo@gmail.com

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