FALL NEWSLETTER

Enhancing public awareness of the importance of maintaining and restoring the unique natural habitat within Chino Hills State Park through interpretive and educational activities

AT A GLANCE

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CHSP Day at Ontario Tower Buzzers Baseball Game

On September 6, Friends of Chino Hills State Park was honored to be featured as the Community Spotlight recipient at the Ontario Tower Buzzers Single-A baseball game. The Buzzers faced off against the Rancho Cucamonga Quakes that rainy afternoon. It was a memorable day both on and off the field.

We were able to set up a booth, which was located in the main concourse. It quickly became a popular stop for fans. Our members greeted visitors, shared information about Chino Hills State Park, and highlighted the many ways the park serves the community — from scenic trails and wildlife viewing to educational programs and recreational opportunities. We also introduced fans to our nonprofit mission and the work Friends of CHSP does to support conservation, education, and recreation throughout the park.

The concourse activity was boosted by the rain and a lengthy game rain delay, which kept fans under cover and gave them extra time to explore. The weather turned into an advantage, allowing us to connect with more visitors, answer questions, and showcase our interpretive

merchandise. Many fans purchased plush wildlife, maps, shirts, hats, and other items — with every dollar directly supporting projects that benefit the park.

A highlight of the day came during the break in the middle of the second inning, when our one-minute promotional video was played on the stadium's jumbo screen for the entire crowd. Seeing Friends of CHSP featured so prominently was a proud moment for our board members and supporters.

The Tower Buzzers' Community Spotlight program provided a meaningful platform to raise awareness, build connections, and celebrate the natural treasure we work to protect. Rain or shine, the event was a tremendous success, and we are grateful to the team, the fans, and everyone who stopped by to learn more about Chino Hills State Park.





Niagara Water Volunteer Day

We want to thank Niagara Water yet again for coming out for a workday at the Park in August. Almost 100 Niagara Water employees helped us to restore the Native Plant Garden at the Rolling M Ranch. They removed non-native weeds from the area while caring for the native plants. It was a big effort on a warm day. Thank you Niagara Water and it's employees!






CHINO HILLS STATE PARK

Naturalist Nights at the Discovery Center

In its second year, Naturalist Night has become the place where curious adults come to go deeper into Chino Hills State Park. On the final Friday of every month (shifted when a holiday gets in the way), we gather to learn from people who have spent their careers, and their weekends, studying this landscape.

These programs are built for adult learners and taught at an adult level. Kids are never turned away, but younger visitors may find the material over their heads. If you have been waiting for a chance to learn the park the way the experts know it, this is your night.

Reading the trail

Lori Lawrenz kicked off 2026 with the tracking class we had all been waiting for. And when I say waiting, I mean *waiting*. It drew the largest crowd Naturalist Night had seen to that point. You could say it left quite an impression. Lori sent everyone home with a pocket guide for the trail and track sheets to study, and the next day participants put their new skills to work on the trail itself.

In February, Olinda resident Nick Staddon, a plant specialist and falconer, brought a stunning photo display of the park's flora and fauna. He paired it with the stories that led him to where he is today. His secret to seeing the park at its best? Be in the right place at the right time, which in Chino Hills might mean everywhere at once.

Gardens and tiny monsters

Master Gardener Steve Williams and arthropod photographer Rich Schilk bookended the season in March and October. Both are masters of their craft, and both brought deep insight and contagious curiosity.

Many of Steve's participants left ready to bring native plants into their home gardens. Volunteers also gained new care and know-how for the plants they help propagate in our Native Plant Nursery.

Rich's photography brought the tiniest monsters that fly overhead into vivid, full-color view. His message stuck with us: we respect what we see, and we protect what we respect.

What's at stake, and who's jumping

Kavita Rajahboyer reminded us all what is at stake in the climate crisis. Some of our most sinfully good foods, like avocados, grapes, and coffee, may have fewer than 100 harvests left where they grow today, given current farming practices and our climate trajectory.

The good news is that we can act locally. We can buy seasonal, locally grown food, support producers who use hand tilling and small-machine tilling, and learn where to find information about how our food is farmed.

Then Brendon Rajahboyer shared his love of jumping spiders with a group that turned out to be just as obsessed. Through photos and a hands-on moment with a class pet, participants learned what sets jumping spiders apart from all the other fun creepy-crawlies. Interest in arachnids really jumped that night.

A taste of history

Historian Paul Spitzzeri brought the human story to Naturalist Night this year. With 18 months of natural history nights under our belts, his tales came alive as we pictured the real habitats and hideaways in our mind's eye. Paul took us from the Brea oil fields to the gangsters foiled in Soquel Canyon.

And he's not done yet. Paul will return on November 20th with a special guest, Claire Schlotterbeck, to share the history of what this land could have become without the park.

A taste of Chino

Shelly Imler presented the History of Chino with help from the Chino School House Museum. Visitors didn't just hear the story, they tasted it: classic sausages from Hottinger Family Meats, pastries from Chino Bakery, farm-fresh strawberries from Family Farms, and sugar beets, Chino's original agricultural crop. Honestly, that menu just can't be beet.

Closing the year with a book party

We wrap up 2026 on December 18th with an Author's Book Party as Sherry Schmidt brings her book, *A Natural History of Chino Hills State Park*, to life for us. I have read this book, and I can promise you are in for an incredible literary treat.

Coming in 2027

Next year brings even more to explore. January we already have our first topic of the year, Habits and Habitats of Hummingbirds with Kavita returns with more on environmental impact, Gary and Liz come back to talk about California lichen, and Shelly presents on tree intelligence. After that, get ready for geology and astronomy.

You can see the details for each event at the Events page at www.ChinoHillsStatePark.org.

Mark your calendar for the final Friday of every month. We'll save you a seat.





Interpreter's Corner

Signs of the Times: New Interpretive Panels at the Discovery Center

Our signs got a glow-up. The interpretive panels at the Chino Hills State Park Discovery Center are brand new, made of tough porcelain enamel, and they sit along a freshly rehabbed Discovery Trail. Come see them.

Signs on a trail? Yes, really.

Maybe you come to the park to escape words. Fair enough. But a good panel isn't homework. It's a friend who knows the trail. You pass a gray-green shrub, the sign says California sagebrush, and suddenly you're crushing a leaf just to smell it. That's the magic.

People look for these signs. A study at a park in Virginia found almost every visitor went hunting for signage, and most wanted plain photos and text over apps and screens. Makes sense. A good photo lets you name that hawk overhead or those tracks in the mud, no field guide required.

Nobody reads signs? Not true. Researchers who study museum and park visitors found nearly everyone reads at least a few. So we make every one count.

Who stops to read

Just about everyone. First-timers use them to get their bearings. Families huddle up so the kids can point at pictures while a parent reads aloud, and half the time the kids spot the real plant first.

Walkers soak up more than joggers or cyclists. Older visitors who like to linger often read every word. For English learners, and anyone who learns by seeing, a photo of a coast live oak or a California quail says plenty. And our regulars? They walk this trail every week and still find something new.



What a sign can do that a talk can't

I love our Junior Ranger talks and Naturalist Nights. Nothing beats a great story told in person. But talks keep a schedule. Panels don't. They're on duty at 8 on a Tuesday morning and on a sleepy holiday afternoon, no sign-up needed.

A panel stands right beside what it describes, so you read and look at once. Skim a line and keep walking. Or come back next spring and read it all. The photos show what you might miss: a bobcat at dusk, a wildflower that blooms for two short weeks, a hillside just after a fire. Often, the question a panel sparks is what brings someone back for a guided hike.

Solo or with a group, you'll leave with a park story all your own.

Built for a lifetime

The new panels are porcelain enamel, which means glass fused onto steel at high heat. Summer sun? No problem. Winter rain and curious hands? Bring it on. They're made to last a lifetime, with bright colors and crisp photos.

They went in alongside the Discovery Trail rehab, so the panels and the plants finally share the spotlight. Read about the native plants and habitats we care for, then look up. There they are.

Come say hi

The park is open every day, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. You'll find the Discovery Center and Discovery Trail inside Chino Hills State Park. Parking is $3 an hour, or free with a California State Library Parks Pass. Check one out with any California public library card; it covers day-use parking for one car at more than 200 state parks.

The panels are here for the long haul. Don't wait to visit.



Discovery Center Store

If you are looking for fun park-related items, stop by the Friends Store at the Discovery Center. There are book, shirts, hats, stickers, stuffed birds and other items. And you would also be supporting the Friends and the programs at Chino Hills State Park.



Odds & Ends

Check out our social media for current information about the Park at:

https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofChinoHillsStatePark

https://www.instagram.com/friendsofchinohillsstatepark

Dogs are welcome in the Park only on the paved Bane Canyon Road. While dogs are not allowed on any of the dirt trails in the Park, bring your pup out on the paved Bane Canyon Road while still enjoying the Park.

Do you know of any groups that may want to support the Park? Does your employer have a matching donation program that you can target towards CHSPIA? Let us know, or if you have any questions, please email eric@chinohillsstatepark.org.

Reach out to us

For questions, feedback, article ideas, or story contributions, email info@chinohillsstatepark.org.

If you want to volunteer at the park, for more information go to:

https://app.betterimpact.com/PublicOrganization/9c092e9f-8c6e-46e9-b19f-48d3f4f3a41c/1

Help the Park and make a tax-deductible donation to Friends at www.ChinoHillsStatePark.org or at this QR Code:



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