

Valley of the Moon Natural History Association

Operations Report: May 1, 2013 – April 30, 2014

Hours of Operation

Jack London State Historic Park was open from 9:30 am – 5pm 7 days a week May 1, 2013 through October 31, 2013 and 5 days a week at the same times November 1, 2013 through April 30, 2014. The park was open every major holiday with the exception of Christmas Day. During this time frame the park welcomed 72, 314 visitors. An additional 1,761 people visited the park to horseback ride with concession, Triple Creek Horse Outfit. Transcendence Theatre Company drew an additional 11,000 attendees during the 2013 summer musical festival season for a grand total of 85,075 park visitors.

The gate to the upper ranch parking lot is open at 8 a.m. to accommodate hikers and cyclists who wish to have an early start on the trails particularly in the hot summer months. This has increased re-peat visitation from the local community. 382 annual \$49. annual passes were sold to individuals.

Special Events

Plowing Play Day, an historic re-enactment of farming at the turn of the century, was held in Beauty Ranch on May 19th. The event is free to public (\$10. parking fee applies) and includes plowing demonstrations, horse shoeing, wagon rides among other demonstrations like quilting, jam making etc. This year a demonstration of turn of the century toys was introduced to engage more children in the event.

A ragtime musical concert was held outside of the House of Happy Walls to coincide with the Sonoma County Ragtime Festival and promoted as the kind of music that was popular during Jack and Charmian's time.

Venue rentals for 22 private events were transacted and limited to the winery ruins, picnic grounds, cottage gardens, and Beauty Ranch meadow. Private events ranged from ceremony only weddings, birthday parties, anniversaries and wedding ceremony and receptions.

Transcendence Theatre Company produced 17 song and dance performances in the winery ruins from June through September.

Interpretive Activities

Every weekend docent tours are offered at 11 am and 2pm free of charge to visitors. Docents also staff the museum and cottage to provide interpretive information to visitors as requested.

Specialty tours have been organized by docents and include *Insider's Express tour of Park; Moonlight Tour to Wolf House Ruins; All about Charmin; the Sporting Life of Jack London and a Wine History Walk.*

These tours are offered throughout the year and made available by reservation. A total of 45 private group tours (adult and school) were conducted by volunteer docents. Specialty tours numbered 35 for a grand total of 80 interpretive and educational tours.

Cultural Activities

Piano concerts are held quarterly on Charmian's Steinway in the House of Happy Walls. Concerts include a presentation of the music that was popular in the London's time. A Jack London book lecture series is conducted by Jack London Scholars. A series of lectures and events were organized to celebrate the heritage oak tree that was thought to be a public safety issue when large limb came down during a 2013 winter storm. Anticipating the possible removal of the tree, VMNNHA collaborated with State Parks personnel to create a storytelling campaign of generational life cycles to help the public understand the potential need to remove the tree. Fortunately working together with team of experts from U.C. Berkeley it was determined that the tree would not have to come down immediately if monitored every year for potential signs of weakening and decay.

Natural Resource Activities

A staff-lead volunteer work crew met regularly to focus on invasive removal, significantly diminishing the French broom infestation in the Beauty Ranch. Eight hazard trees identified by DPR staff were removed. Trails were evaluated and worked regularly to maintain clearances and erosion controls. Downed trees were moved off trails and dispersed after nesting season. Upland creeks and open areas were checked for signs of illegal pot grow operations. Two abandoned grow sites were cleared of debris and irrigation tubing. Park Champions and Social Advocates for Youth were retained to do ongoing maintenance work such as removal of invasive species, spring and fall cleanup of downed limbs and/or hazard pruning near paths and trails. Spring and early summer weed cutting around picnic areas and buildings to reduce the risk of fire was also completed.

Recreation Programs

Organized hikes year round include First Day Hike on January 1, twilight hikes, spring and fall wildflower viewing, bird watching and nature appreciation hikes, a regular Sunday morning hike, “walks into fall and spring”, after turkey day waddle, heritage walks, mindful walks and photography hikes round out the outdoor recreation programs offered. Activities to encourage social gathering included picnic ‘till sundown during the summer months, Art in the Park – a series of art instruction classes in water and oil painting, photography, and pencil drawing, and storytelling with puppets for children. From May through October, on the second Monday of each month the park offers a “Free Day” and includes animal demonstrations from reptile rescue and bird rescue groups.

Concessions

Triple Creek Horse Outfit offers public and private horseback riding tours year ‘round and provides 8% of fees collected back to the park to support operations.