

# Calendar

## Blink-Out Zones

### North County Hikes

Several lifetimes ago, it seems, people who wanted to affect political change organized protest marches. Now some of them are organizing nature hikes.

The members of Preserve Calavera in coastal North County give their hikes names like "Last Chance Hike" and "The 14 Million Dollar, 1.3 Mile, Destroy Our Nature Preserve Twilight Hike." Besides touting the ocean views and scenic farmland to be seen on these outings,

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hike leaders point out the "coastal sage scrub that will be destroyed" when the new

four-lane highway is built — to accommodate all the new housing developments.

But Gigi Orlowski of Calavera Hills, who leads one of the twilight hikes, says the mood isn't glum. "Some people are only now realizing that these spots exist, and they're in awe of them. The wonderful thing about these hikes is that people of all ages walk together: senior citizens, people with small children, people carrying babies on their backs. The real story here is that the people of Carlsbad, Vista, and Oceanside are working together to try to create a regional preserve."

This weekend, Diane Nygaard of Ocean Hills will lead a morning hike to the summit of Mount Calavera. She says the extinct volcano is the "centerpiece" of the area, which is currently 3000 acres of



Calavera preserve

open space. "But there are about half a dozen developments proposed, so that over 60 percent of it will be lost over the next couple of years. And we're not saying that there should be no development but that it should be done responsibly, so it minimizes adverse effects."

Preserve Calavera not only wants land to remain open; the 500-member group also wants the parcels to be contiguous, because of the danger of otherwise creating what are known as "blink-out zones." "These are wildlife preserves in name only, because they are surrounded by roads or houses," says Orlowski. The birds in those areas may do all right, because they can fly over the highway to get from one preserve to the next. "But bobcats and mountain lions that try to follow the same path will get crushed by traffic. So they become isolated and tend to weaken and die, because there's no new blood coming into their gene pools. That wildlife isn't sustainable."

The words of these women are measured. They are used to meeting with developers; they know that compromise is key. And so Orlowski, like Nygaard, is

careful to mention that she isn't against all development. "You can't stop it, but it could be done in a way that's sensible. It doesn't have to be so random and so project-by-project. If it's planned well, it doesn't have to be either/or. Wildlife can continue to thrive alongside development."

Not so decorous are the words of some who have posted messages in the forum section of the group's website, [www.preservecalavera.org](http://www.preservecalavera.org). They are angry that dirt bikes find easier access into the area, thanks to pathways left by bulldozers. They want walls built around their neighborhoods, not roads leading through them. "As to the argument that [the time saved by a new road] may mean 'life or death' for one old fart someday," writes Phil of Carlsbad, "well, okay, then move next to the hospital if you're so worried about it."

A few people who have expressed opinions are appalled that the Carlsbad police want some acreage for an outdoor shooting range. The current range may be displaced by Carlsbad's proposed new municipal golf course.

Asked about the status of these projects, Orlowski says, "We are hoping to meet with the city soon and discuss the various plans. We did meet with a developer last week." She admits being frustrated by "all the ifs, ands, and ors. There's still a lot of uncertainty."

One thing is clear in her own mind: she looks to L.A. as an example of what San Diego should *not* aspire to be,

although she finds it difficult to think of an example of good habitat management planning, or HMP, as it's known in bureaucratic circles. Finally, she recalls hearing a series of stories on public radio about what's being done in Nepal, where planning for contiguous wildlife corridors is "a country-wide thing, and I mean, we're talking elephants and tigers."

In the meantime, her hike, according to the website description, may be one of the last chances to see the western part of Calavera Hills before it becomes 781 more homes.

— Jeanne Schinto

#### Hikes with "Preserve Calavera"

**Mount Calavera**  
**Saturday, August 11,**  
**9:00-11:00 a.m.**  
**Meet at 8:45 a.m.**  
**in parking lot of Oak Riparian Park,**  
**off Lake Boulevard**  
**Oceanside**  
**Free**  
**Info: 760-724-3887**

**Calavera Hills**  
**Thursday, August 16,**  
**6:30-7:30 p.m.**  
**Park at Calavera Community Park**  
**(2997 Glasgow Park)**  
**Meet at Carlsbad Village Drive and**  
**College Boulevard**  
**Carlsbad**  
**Free**  
**Info: 760-729-2945**



Gigi Orlowski, Calavera Mountain in background

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