



# 10 WAYS

You Can Help Your National Forests in Southern California

## DEAR VISITOR:

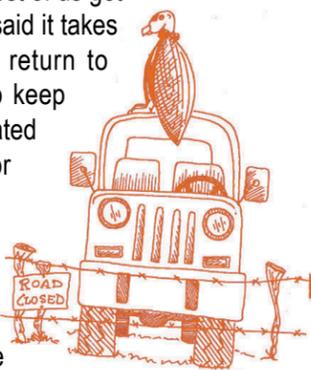


Hi, my name is Roy O. Toad. (That's my nickname – my real name is Southwestern Arroyo Toad or *Bufo californicus*, but you can call me Roy.) Boy, it's getting harder and harder to find my buddies these days. Those scientists who study us say we're "endangered." Now that doesn't sound too good to me! Anyway, the Forest Ranger asked me to talk to you humans about us and our homes here in the forest. She said that folks might like to know what we critters think. So I called a meeting and invited every wild critter around. We had a lot to talk about, and it was a very long meeting, but we finally agreed on the most important things we want you to know about us. Thanks for listening to what we have to say!



**Rebecca Raccoon** was hoping to sweet talk you into putting all your trash back into those fancy packs you carry it in here with. She said that even though people stuff sometimes tastes better it usually gives her a stomachache. She said that some critters choke on plastic or foil they find out in the forest, especially if it smells like food. Rebecca figures if you brought it in here then you ought to have room in your bag to take it out. Heck, carry out any trash you see, not just your own. But please leave the rocks and sticks and bits of history here where they belong. They're part of our home!

**Louie the Snake** wanted me to mention that sometimes, big cars and trucks go driving all over his house. He said that when vehicles go where they shouldn't, they kill a lot of plants and scare the heck out of him. The weeds that grow back aren't as tasty to the little plant-eating animals, and then the little animals aren't as tasty either! (That's really important to a snake like Louie!) Also Louie said the tires smash the dirt and make it hard for digging or crawling, which is, after all, how most of us get around in the forest. He said it takes years for a meadow to return to normal. So remember to keep those vehicles on designated routes and watch out for Louie and his friends!



**Carrie Condor** asks you hunters and target shooters to please use non-lead bullets in the forest. We all understand the food chain, and many of us critters hunt to eat too. But Carrie, who's a scavenger and eats dead animals, sometimes finds lead bullets in gut piles left by hunters. Some of her cousins have died from lead poisoning. Even I sometimes notice a funny taste in the water from the lead residue sprayed from guns near the creek. So if you hunt please bury your gut piles; even better you could try and find some different kind of bullets. Carrie tells me that there are new kinds of non-lead bullets available that are safer for condors and other scavengers.

While we're on the subject of poisonous things, my friend **Jack Rabbit** was wondering if you could change your antifreeze to the less-toxic variety. Seems that Old Jack is always finding his little grand-bunnies licking up the sweet smelling goo that leaks out of people's cars and trucks. That stuff, even the tiniest lick, is dangerous for bunnies and other animals, even dogs and cats and human kids. So please think about changing to the less-toxic kind. A lot of stores have it

and it works just fine. (Editor's Note: Check your warranty before changing antifreeze in your vehicle.)

**Diego Deer** wants you to know more about the grasslands where he eats most of his meals. He said that sometimes people bring in hay for their horses that has weed seeds in it. This may be tasty for the horses, but the weeds grow better than the yummy native grasses and then Diego and his family can't find enough good things to eat. Diego said that if people brought "weed-free" food to give their horses, then there would always be plenty of good grass for everyone to eat.

The Forest Rangers are always coming out here to check up on us and make sure everything is okay. Sometimes, if they find a problem, they might put up a sign to keep human folks out of the area for a while. For example, **Ernie and Edna Eagle** might be nesting and need a little quiet, especially when they're trying to raise a family, or maybe there is risk of a fire. Why, even old Roy O. Toad needs some peace and quiet sometimes. If you see a sign that asks you to stay clear of an area, please think of us and cooperate. If you want to know more about a closure, just call the local ranger station, they'll be happy to explain.

I can't forget my friend **Ollie the Wise Owl**. He had plenty to say at our meeting. Maybe you can't see Ollie when you're out in the woods, but he sees you and your pets. Ollie says he has seen a lot of good dogs forget their manners and chase wildlife. Now that might be fun for your dog, but it sure scares the heck out of the forest critters! Ollie asks that you please keep your pets on a leash at all times. And one other thing, Ollie feels really bad when he sees a dog or a cat or some other pet left alone to fend for itself in the forest. (Yes, it does happen.) If you don't want your pet anymore, please take it to a good shelter. Don't leave it in the forest. Chances are it won't survive, and even if it does, it won't make a good neighbor at all for the wild animals.

Here's a scary thought for all of us who live in the woods - FIRE! Fire is a good thing, most of the time. A natural fire now and then helps us with our "housekeeping" and improves the grass, bushes, and other plants we eat and live among. But, an uncontrolled wildfire can destroy our food supply and our homes, and the homes of our human neighbors, too. Please - always be FIREWISE in the forest. Learn how to build a safe campfire or use a stove or barbecue the proper way. Be careful about where you smoke and how you operate your vehicle or chainsaw. Always check with your local ranger station to find out about current fire restrictions. (Sometimes, when the fire danger is really high, you can't build campfires or even

## LOOK INSIDE

for more information on what makes Southern California's National Forests so special!

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use a barbecue in the forest.) Remember: If you're safe, we're safe!

Now it's my turn! The **Roy O. Toad** family, I'm proud to say, lives in that really nice neighborhood down by the creek. We live there because we depend on the water and shade. Sometimes people accidentally crush our house when they drive across the creek or walk along the stream bank. What's worse is when they dump trash or knock a bunch of dirt into the water. It's hard on us, and our fish friends really suffer. While we're at it, soap in the water may make you clean, but it makes us really sick! So, please be careful about where you cross the creeks, try to stay off the stream banks, and don't put anything bad in the water. By the way, did you know that most of the water that comes out of your faucet came from the forest? It's true!

This last request is for the forest and the Forest Rangers. Think about being a Forest Volunteer. You can help (and have fun while you're at it) doing all kinds of stuff. You can pick up trash, fix trails, talk to visitors, answer the phone – even count animals! Think about it and give the Rangers a call, won't you?

Well, the critters at our meeting all wanted you to know that they love to share the forest with you, and they are excited that people are listening to the animals and their needs. If you can help us and the Forest Service by following these suggestions, then we'll all be happier and healthier. If you hear croaking out here at night, it's just me saying "Thank you!"

Sincerely,

Roy O. Toad 

# WHAT MAKES A FOREST SPECIAL?

## Pebble Plain Habitat

San Bernardino National Forest



Scott Eliason

Pebble plain is a unique habitat, or life zone, found only in the northeastern San Bernardino mountains. It occurs at higher elevations in areas with less than 25 inches of rain. It is the home of seventeen protected plant species and four rare kinds of butterflies. Three of these butterflies are found nowhere else in the world. Pebble plain habitats are open patches of rocks surrounded by junipers, pinyons, and other pines. Plants and grasses grow low and sparse among the pebbles. You may remember seeing pebble plains at Big Bear Lake, Coxey Meadow, Gold Mountain, Holcomb Valley, North Baldwin Lake, Sawmill, South Baldwin Ridge, Sugarloaf Ridge, and Arrastre Flats.

So why is this habitat so fragile? The plants here are accustomed to the exact kind of soil found in pebble

plains. They receive just enough moisture and the right amount of sunlight they need to grow. Because the plants in this community grow so slowly, when something disturbs the soil or pebbles, or crushes the

“Because the plants in this community grow so slowly, when something disturbs the soil or pebbles, or crushes the plants, weeds that don’t belong in pebble plains quickly move in.”

plants, weeds that don’t belong in pebble plains quickly move in. Sometimes dust from nearby roads can disrupt a plant’s natural cycle of photosynthesis and reproduction. Roads also sometimes disrupt the natural flow of water across the pebble plains.

Human activities over the past one hundred years have damaged some pebble plain areas. An estimated 150 acres of pebble plain habitat was lost by creation of the Big Bear Lake reservoir in the

1800s. Historic gold mining, cattle grazing and rock collection also affected the habitat. Even now roads, recreational activities, off highway vehicles, development, and fire suppression activities can damage pebble plain areas.

In 1990 the Forest Service and The Nature Conservancy developed a plan to protect this fragile habitat and the rare plants and butterflies associated with it. In 2002, the plan was updated. You may have noticed that some pebble plain areas now have boulders to block off-highway vehicles from entering. You may see signs asking you to stay on the trail, or not enter certain parts of the forest. The Forest Service staff is working to eliminate non-native plants, or weeds, to encourage the more fragile native plants to grow. They have seeded and planted areas and monitored the health of the plant community. It is hoped that the threatened and rare plants and butterflies will grow and thrive in the little pockets of pebble plain habitat that remain among the trees of the San Bernardino Mountains.



## The California Condor

Los Padres National Forest

The California condor is one of nature’s most amazing creatures. It is the largest flying bird in North America, with a wing-span of over nine feet, yet weighing in at only 17-24 pounds. In flight the condor rarely flaps its wings, but rather soars and glides majestically on air currents. It’s easy to see why some American Indians believe that their spirit is carried to the next world on the wings of a condor.

Condors are unique in several ways. They don’t build nests, rather they lay their eggs directly onto a cave floor or rock ledge high on a mountain cliff. They usually lay only one egg every other year. The 4-inch egg incubates for 53-60 days and the chick may take an entire week to hatch!

Unlike most birds and animals, condors don’t have a voice box. They communicate by hissing, grunting, and by using body language.

Condors are scavengers and feed off the remains of dead

animals rather than hunting live prey. They may eat 2-3 pounds at each feeding. That might sound unappetizing to you, but it’s a very important part of a healthy ecosystem. Scavenger animals help to “clean up” the forest so that nothing goes to waste.

With all these peculiarities, on top of their impressive size and appearance, it is little wonder that the California condor is such a fascinating and important species.

“Hunters are strongly encouraged to use non-lead bullets, and to bury gut piles.”

Unfortunately, not all people respect or understand the value of condors. For many decades, condors, like other large scavenger birds, were frequently hunted for sport. As a result, their population was greatly reduced during the last century.

Humans continue to be the most serious threat to this majestic bird. Pesticides have contaminated their

environment, resulting in eggshells so thin that they break before the chicks are ready to hatch.

Since condors are scavengers, some have been poisoned by lead shot and bullets left behind in game carcasses and gut piles. Poisoning from vehicle antifreeze spills is another potential danger. In flight, some condors have collided with overhead power lines. As a result of all of these pressures, condors were on the brink of extinction in the 1980s.

Fearing that the birds would soon become extinct, biologists began to capture the condors to begin a captive breeding program. In 1987, the last California condor was brought in from the wild. There were only 27 condors left in the entire world, all in captivity.

Releases of California condors back to the wild began in 1992, after captive breeding programs had

raised a number of chicks. As of 2002, there were 118 condors in captivity and 74 in the wild.

It will take many, many years and a lot of work to bring the California condor population back to a point where it can sustain itself naturally.

The condor’s habitat and traditional nesting spots, most within the Los Padres National Forest, are already protected. To prevent losses from lead poisoning, hunters are strongly encouraged to use non-lead bullets, and to bury gut piles.

Some power companies have installed special guards on overhead power lines, or converted to underground lines to help improve the condor’s chances of survival.

The long-term goal of the condor recovery program is to establish at least three self-sustaining populations of 100 or more birds each – one in captivity and two separate populations in the wild. We hope that future generations will be able to enjoy this magnificent creature as it once was – wild, healthy, and free.



## Fire In the Chaparral

Cleveland National Forest

Today more than ever, people are living next to national forest lands. The Cleveland National Forest, surrounded by the fast-growing populations of San Diego, Orange, and Riverside counties, is an island of nature in a sea of cities.

Originally established in 1908 for watershed and fire protection, the Cleveland National Forest still has this primary management focus today.

Yes, you'll find all the usual things on the Cleveland – wilderness, wildlife, trees, streams, rocks and grassland. But, like several other California forests you'll also find chaparral – a brushy vegetation type that needs fire to survive.

Fire and drought are natural parts of chaparral's life cycle. Over millions of years the plants and animals of the chaparral community have adapted to and depend upon frequent fires and long periods of drought. Once fire is ignited in chaparral, some plant adaptations,

such as oily or waxy leaves, actually help sustain the fire.

While fire may be healthy to the plant and animal communities, it can be a threat to human communities.

One match, one ember from a campfire, one spark from an exhaust pipe – one careless moment and fire in the chaparral is threatening the communities which now surround the forest.

Over the last century, many wildland fires were suppressed in order to protect towns and cities. In time, scientists learned that the landscape depended on fire to be healthy.

In an effort to safely reintroduce fire into the ecosystem, land managers now conduct controlled, or prescribed burns – fires that are intentionally lit by experts under carefully monitored

weather and fuel conditions.

When chaparral ages, it becomes more woody and dry, with a greater chance of burning hot and fast. Younger stands of chaparral do not burn as hot. If there is a fire in younger chaparral, it can be easier to control.

Prescribed fires keep the plants young and the chaparral clear of dead dry plant material. They also improve conditions for wildlife by encouraging healthy young plants to grow. This provides animals better food sources and more suitable habitat to live in. Prescribed fires also protect water sources from the disastrous erosion caused by wildfire.

Most importantly, perhaps, prescribed burns reduce the fire hazard for people and their homes.

Fire protection is a big job. It cannot be accomplished by government agencies alone.

### So what can be done to help?

**Create a defensible space.** Landowners both within and outside the forest can help by making sure they have enough clearance around their properties. If a wildfire does start, your house may have a better chance of being saved.

**Talk to your children.** We can all help by educating our children about the consequences of playing with matches and fire.

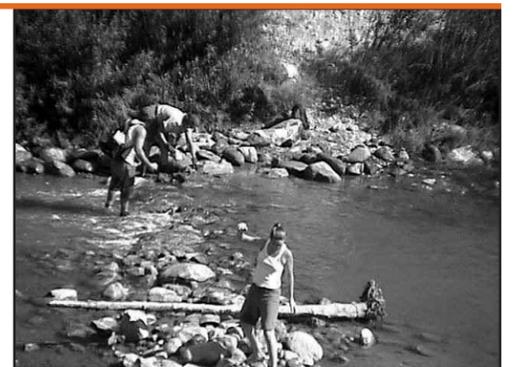
**Be Careful!** Please remember that fire regulations are in effect for the safety of the chaparral community – both the forest and human communities. When fire danger is high, areas in the Forest may be closed to all fires – even cigarette smoking. Take the time to find out what fire regulations are currently in effect, act responsibly, and be safe!

Where wildfire is concerned, an ounce of prevention can save a forest.



## Be In the Know About H2O

Angeles National Forest



Water makes up two-thirds of the planet and two-thirds of our bodies. We see water in many forms, but sometimes we hardly notice it. We pass by concrete-lined canals or wide, sandy channels. We pass by rocky, tree-lined creeks and by streams hidden among giant reeds. We splash in calm pools and shiver in pounding rain storms. We drink, we bathe, we wash our clothes – but do we think about where the water comes from?

**“We drink, we bathe, we wash our clothes – but do we think about where the water comes from?”**

The Los Angeles, San Gabriel and Santa Clara rivers provide 35% of our drinking water. They begin as tiny springs bubbling up through the rocky ground deep within the

Angeles National Forest. Fed by many springs and streams, they grow and grow until they reach the cities below. These rivers will never reach the size of the mighty Mississippi, but their importance is no less. Their watershed and the water it provides us is more sustainable and much less expensive than importing water from other parts of the state.

Naturally, the water that bubbles up in mountain springs is tinged with minerals but otherwise pure. Then why does this water have to be treated so extensively before it reaches our faucets? Between the mountains and the faucets, the rivers flow through industrial areas, farms and ranches. Contaminants from these sources, along with water from storm drains and runoff from city streets, contribute to water pollution. Even up in the Forest the water is not truly pure. Trash left behind by visitors and debris from wildfires that roar through these mountains are the biggest problems

to keeping water clean. Trash has become so common along the San Gabriel River that the Forest Service is under state orders to clean it up. Every year, more than 150 tons of trash is taken out of that area alone.

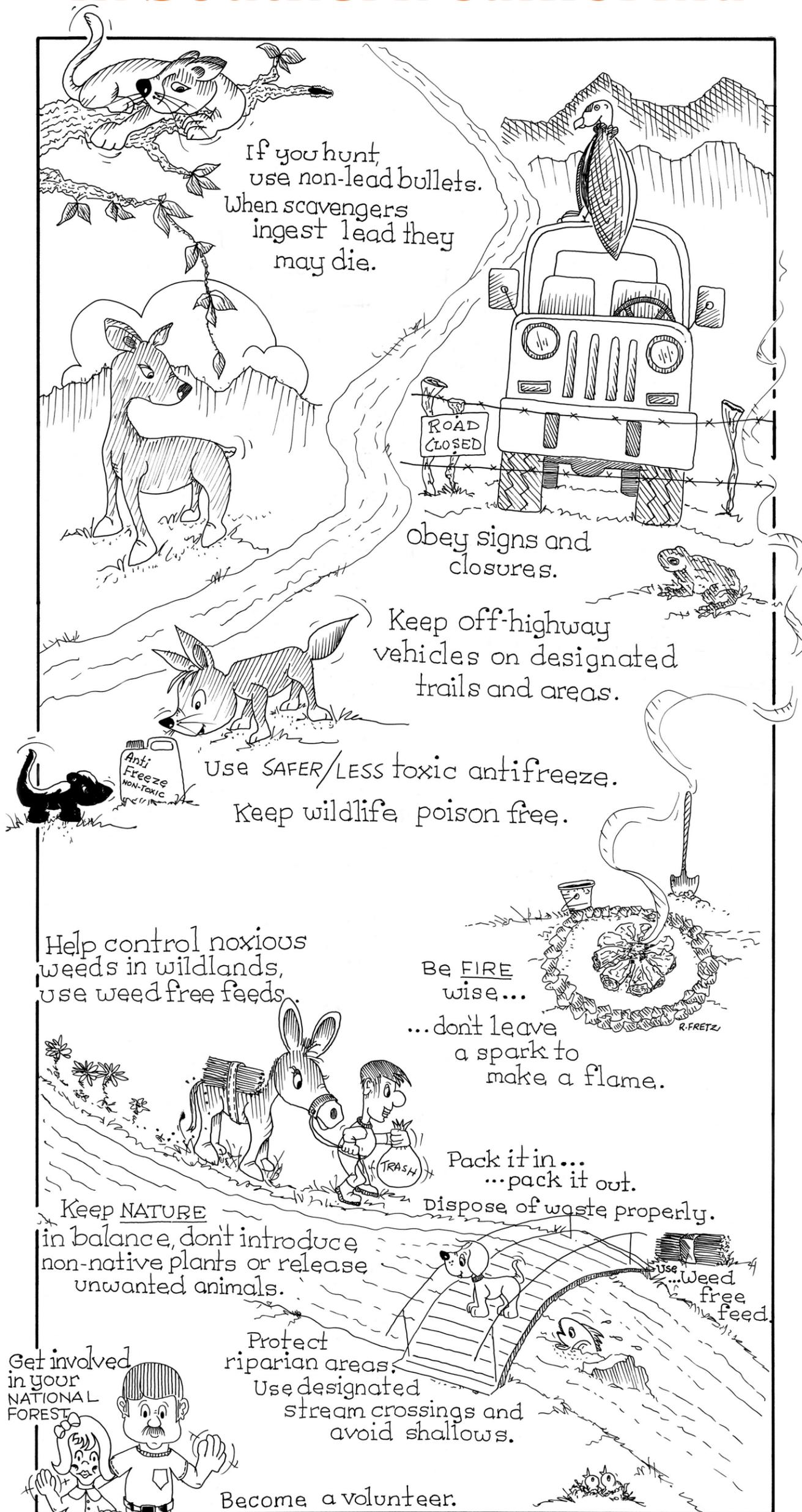
Wildfire increases the already rapid erosion rate. The San Gabriel Mountains are some of the fastest growing mountains in the world and they are also some of the fastest eroding mountains in the world. When a wildfire occurs in the forest, the vegetation that keeps soil firmly rooted to the earth is stripped away. When it rains, riverbeds fill with swirling sediment and ash that turns the water a muddy brown color. This is not what we would like to see happening to our land or coming from our faucets.

Sediment-filled water isn't the best drinking water for wildlife, either, nor does it provide healthy habitat for fish.

### So what can you do to help?

Think before you throw trash down. It may end up in your drinking water. Think before you drive through a stream. Oils, antifreeze and gunk that washes off your vehicle may flow downstream into your drinking water. Think before you wash your hands with soap near that stream. Those bubbles may be on their way to your tap. Think before you leave a campfire smoldering. The wildfire it may cause destroys more than trees. The next time you take a glass of water from your faucet, think of its journey from the beautiful mountains, through meadows and farms, into your community. Think of how many people cooperated and worked together to keep it clean and safe along the way. Most importantly, think about what you can do to protect your rivers and streams.

# 10 ways YOU can help your National Forests in Southern California



If you hunt,  
use non-lead bullets.  
When scavengers  
ingest lead they  
may die.

obey signs and  
closures.

Keep off-highway  
vehicles on designated  
trails and areas.

Use SAFER/LESS toxic antifreeze.  
Keep wildlife poison free.

Help control noxious  
weeds in wildlands,  
use weed free feeds.

Be FIRE  
wise...  
...don't leave  
a spark to  
make a flame.

Pack it in...  
...pack it out.  
Dispose of waste properly.

Keep NATURE  
in balance, don't introduce  
non-native plants or release  
unwanted animals.

Protect  
riparian areas.  
Use designated  
stream crossings and  
avoid shallows.

Get involved  
in your  
NATIONAL  
FOREST

Become a volunteer.



**Lend a hand...Care for the land!**

