

Birds in Rose Canyon Win the Bronze - Thanks to 5th Grade Girl Scouts

Last February I received a phone call from a young girl who said in a small but determined voice that her Girl Scout troop wanted to make bird boxes for the birds in Rose Canyon, and could Friends of Rose Canyon help? With that call, fifth grader Robyn Wilkinson and her fellow scouts set themselves, their parents and Friends of Rose Canyon off on an adventure that was Troop 3012's [Girl Scout Bronze Award Project](#).

We had no idea how to do this, so we called Richard Griebe, who has built and installed bird boxes in Mission Trails Park for years. In no time he had secured a grant for materials from the California Bluebird Recovery Program, purchased the lumber, pre-cut the pieces, and brought everything, including power screwdrivers, so that every girl could assemble and decorate a bird box. Then he helped us scout out good locations in Rose Canyon in University City, and taught the girls how to put up the boxes.

Most of us would have thought that was the end of it. But the California Bluebird Recovery Program involves something far more interesting: the girls were to go out with a parent every week to monitor and record what was happening in the boxes. Within a few weeks, the first excited emails from parents reported nest building in a number of the boxes. Soon after that, eggs! Then chicks! And by June, empty nests. Gretchen Nell, from Friends of Rose Canyon, helped with the monitoring, collected all the data, and sent it to the California Bluebird Recovery Program.

The scouts also planted native plants that are good for birds: lemonadeberry, toyon and elderberry donated by Recon Nursery. The scouts planted them on canyon slopes at three homes where the homeowners agreed to care for the plants until they were established and could survive on their own.

Troop 3012 has girls from Curie Elementary in University City and Hawthorne Elementary in Clairemont. The purpose of a [Girl Scout Bronze Award Project](#) is to make a difference in the community and inspire others to act. Troop 3012 succeeded on both counts:

Making a difference: Among birds there is fierce competition for suitable nesting spots, so providing additional nesting spots can help the birds reproduce. In addition, for aesthetic and safety reasons people frequently cut down decaying trees that would otherwise provide nest sites. Bird boxes help replace those dead trees with man-made nesting sites.

Inspiring others to act: The Girl Scouts inspired Friends of Rose Canyon to become involved in a project that we otherwise would not have taken on. We learned a lot, had great fun and saw the benefits for birds. This year, 30% of the boxes were occupied, and next year that should go up. There were three species of birds, and that could go up as well. We'll be looking for new monitors - so let us know if these scouts have inspired you and you'd like to help.

Deborah Knight, President, Friends of Rose Canyon