



Fall 2018

## Greetings from the James

There is never a dull moment at the James Reserve! Since our last newsletter we have had an eventful few months.

The summer was dry and windy, creating dangerous wildfire conditions across California, including Idyllwild. At the same time as our local fire broke out, the Cranston Fire, we had a pleasant surprise--the arrival of new residents, black bears (*Ursus americanus*)! Though black bears are common in the San Bernardino Mountains, the bears at the James are the only two bears that we know of that live in the San Jacinto Mountains.

This fall has been the most stunning that I can remember in my six years of living in residence as Director at the James Reserve. For weeks, we have enjoyed perfect 70-degree days and spectacular colors, from yellow to orange to rust.

As we near the winter season, Assistant Director, Mr. Andrea Campanella, has been busy splitting wood and insulating the pipes for our seven buildings. Idyllwild awaits the lighting of the holiday Idyllwild tree and the coming snow with eager anticipation.

We wish you safe and happy holidays and look forward to

seeing you at the James next year at the summer Trailfinders' Reunion and James Reserve celebration, but remember that you are part of the James Reserve family and we welcome you to visit us at any time. Just let us know when you plan to drop by and we'll leave the porch light on for you!

With best wishes,  
Jen

Director of the James and Oasis  
de los Osos Reserves



## What's new at the James?

### Cranston Wildfire

As many of you experienced first-hand, this was one of the

most destructive years for wildfires in the history of California, including in Idyllwild, the community that is nearest to the James Reserve.

On July 25, 2018, the Cranston Fire started near highway 74, where visitors from desert cities enter Idyllwild. The Cranston Fire spread quickly to the very edge of town, but firefighters kept the fire at bay and the town only lost a few homes. No lives were lost. Nearly 600 firefighters were involved in battling the fire. Fortunately, the James Reserve was entirely unaffected by wildfires.

The Cranston Fire burned a total of 13,139 acres (53 km<sup>2</sup>), and after two weeks it was fully contained. The fire struck the communities on the other side of the Hill from the James, including Idyllwild and Mountain Center, as well as recreational areas in the Lake Hemet area, San Bernardino National Forest and Mount San Jacinto State Park.

Over 7,000 people were evacuated, 12 structures were destroyed, and power lines and highway guardrails south of Idyllwild, were destroyed. Highway 74 remained closed for weeks, as did several local businesses. The fire severely impacted Idyllwild's economy.



The effects of the Cranston fire seen from the lookout tower on top of Tahquitz.

The fire was started by a 32-year old man from Temecula who was charged with 15 felony arson counts facing a potential life sentence.

### Surprise Visitors at the James Reserve

On July 8, 2017, a researcher stayed at the Trailfinders lodge to monitor California Spotted Owls (*Strix occidentalis occidentalis*). After his first night at the James, he woke up to a mess in the kitchen. Piles of sugar and scattered sugar packets littered the floor. The plastic container that held the sugar packets was punctured with tell-tale canine-shaped holes. The owl researcher did not hear anything during the night and suggested that mice had invaded the kitchen cupboards. A visiting graduate student studying Dark-eyed junco behavior (*Junco hyemalis*) later caught the bear trying to break into the Trailfinders Lodge again.

Both bears were translocated by local California State Fish and Wildlife officials. One was from the San Bernardino Mountains crossed the San Gorgonio Pass in Banning. The other was tranquilized in Indio and translocated to the Santa Rosa Mountains. The last time a bear was observed on the Hill was in 1999!

“Our” bear paid us one more visit on July 11 2017 before disappearing until the night of August 31, 2018. That morning we found the trash scattered all around, two big plastic utility sheds pulled apart and punctured, and some bird feeders stolen. With trail cameras, we caught this culprit.



Bear selfie at the James Reserve on Sept 10, 2018 at 11:06 pm. We use camera traps to monitor bear behavior at the Reserve.

Since this summer, the two bears pay frequent visits to Lake Fulmor trash cans and dumpsters. During the last couple of weeks, they seem to have lost interest in the James Reserve, but we know better than to let down our guards. It is our mantra that there is never a dull moment at the James Reserve!

### Featured James Reserve Scientist

UCLA doctoral candidate, Amanda Robin, has begun an exciting new project at the James that investigates the reason that squirrels decide to “eat in” or “take out” food at feeding stations. Her focal species, California ground squirrels, (*Otospermophilus beecheyi*) and Western grey squirrels, (*Sciurus griseus*) have been studied for the last 100 years (Grinnell and Swarth 1908).

We asked Amanda a few questions about her research.

#### ***What is the most interesting or unique behavior you have observed while out in the field?***

I really enjoy watching the California ground squirrel mothers look after their young. One ground squirrel in particular that we call Grace (after Grace James) lives in a burrow right across from the lodge. She can often be seen standing directly adjacent to her burrow keeping a close eye on her three little pups.

#### ***What is the most challenging aspect of working at a remote field station (at the James)?***

The summer was my first real field season. I quickly learned that no matter how much effort I put into planning the perfect field season, when working in nature with wild animals there are many challenges from the natural environment that determine

success for a field-based research project.

***What advice has helped you through your own journey through life and science?***

To persevere. My academic advisor, Dr. Peter Nonacs, has said to me: “no one is born in a lab coat.” I started community college in 2010 at a 7th grade math level. I transferred and earned my B.S. from UC Berkeley and I am working towards my Ph.D. at UCLA. I am motivated by completing each individual smaller journey and goal, in addition to dreaming about larger destinations along the way. There was no way I would have been able to predict that my Ph.D. would surround squirrels when I began the biology courses in community college, or even when I was an undergraduate at Berkeley.

To read more about Amanda’s squirrel research, visit her blog (<https://www.squirrelgazer.com/blog>). She was recently featured on CBS2/KCAL9 news’ STEAM Sundays.

The video can be seen here: <https://www.squirrelgazer.com/media.html>

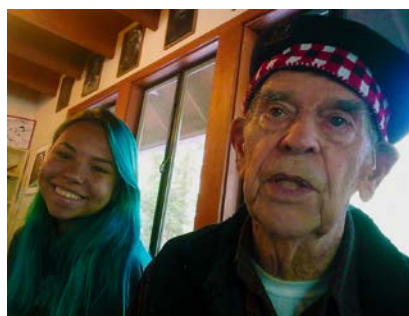
**2018 Trailfinder Fall Reunion Report**

We met at Carrow’s of South Pasadena for the second year in a row. Jim Halley organized the event and reserved us a big room, but only a few folks actually were able to attend the meeting. Those present were Jim Halley’s daughter, Abby, Bud Halley, Janet Sebenius,

Lynn and Dion Neutra, Alan Parks, Andrea Campanella, and Jennifer Gee.

Several people who RSVP’d could not make it at the last minute, including Jim Halley. Jim has to miss the reunion because he had a scare with his wife’s health. It turned out to be just a scare and his wife is fine. As Jim put it, “Probably something she ate.” Jim Moule was en route from Madrid, Spain but his flight was cancelled due to smoke from the fires that affected SFO.

Bud started the reports with some stories, prompted by Abby, his granddaughter who took Jim’s place for the event. Bud’s birthday was the day before the reunion. As an aside, we also learned that Bud and Em Sebenius shared a birthday. Bud turned 96 years old and still goes out for his daily walk. Andrea got to hear stories about his mountain climbing and skiing in Italy, places that our native and pro climber, Andrea, has never even been!



Bud Halley with his great-granddaughter, Abby’s daughter, at the 2018 Summer Reunion in the James Reserve.

Jen and Andrea followed with news of our new residents,

black bears that were relocated here from our neighboring San Bernardino Mountains. Thanks to the fire, they may be lucky bears that escaped fires across San Geronio Pass up north. The bears have enjoyed a safe refuge relative to the rest of California. The bears are wilderness pranksters, making life interesting in our neck of the woods. We track their paths, mostly through footage we gather on our trail cameras. With very few of their kind in our San Jacinto Mountains, their lives are especially interesting journey to follow through the seasons and wildfires.

At the mere mention of bears, Janet Sebenius chimed in with a couple of memories of her family’s life with bears. One was a Trailfinder story. A bear stole a huge bowl of proofing yeast, intended to make rolls for the Trailfinder campers. A ranger visited the Trailfinder camp and asked whether the incident of their exploding bear had anything to do with the yeast robbery!

Janet also told us about an old family tale of a dog getting in between her ancestor and a black bear. Her relative climbed a tree when the bear came after the dog who took refuge from their great-great-relative (I forget the exact family connection). The person climbed a tree and was chased and pulled to the ground by the bear that scalped him and left him with broken limbs. He crawled back to camp and survived but he was left less-than-able bodied for the rest of his shortened life.

Janet's other news was about her recent cruise to Cuba. It was on her bucket list to visit there, but from her description of Cuba, I feel lucky to live in the US and especially to live at the James Reserve. What a charmed existence we James Reserve denizens have experienced!

Dion and Lynn are also jet-setting as usual. They most recently spent time in Portugal. Dion is productive as ever. Dion shared a couple of new publications with us, including a guide for neophytes in architecture. For more about Dion's on-goings, check out *DION - My Life* and for more about his legacy: *The Neutras then and Later-V1*.

Alan is always full of surprises, like the time that he, too, pranked Harry James by introducing crayfish to Lake

Fulmor. Alan sent Jim a message that added to our data bank about the bears, "Look up bears on the Reserve website." Alan and Jim agreed that bears were probably not a common presence during the years that Harry ran the summer camp.

In sum, it was a small meeting but it was fantastic to get a chance to have more time to visit with everyone that was able to join us at the 2018 Fall Reunion! At the summer reunion, June 3<sup>rd</sup>, we hope to get a chance to learn more about you and your adventures from their days as young Trailfinders throughout your diverse and accomplished life paths! Save the date and mark your calendars for the Trailfinder Reunion and James Reserve Celebration on the first Sunday in June!

Lolomi,

Jennifer, Andrea and Kim

Director of the James Reserve,  
Assistant Director of the James  
and Faculty Director of the UCR  
Reserves

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### ***Emmons Sebenius Fund***

*Em was a dear friend and trusted leader of the Trailfinders. Janet, Katie and Jim Sebenius continue to celebrate Em's life. As we go about our daily work and enter a new era, we fondly think of Em and we are guided by the course he helped set for the James Reserve. Em's wife, Janet Sebenius, established an endowment in Em's name for the James Reserve that will ensure we can take care of Lolomi, Harry James' cabin. We invite you to remember Em by donating to a fund that the Sebenius family established in his name.*

## ***The James Reserve Wishes you a Safe and Happy Holiday!***



***If you wish to donate to the Sebenius endowment, please do so in the following way:***

***Write the check to the UCR Foundation. In the memo line, write Emmons Sebenius Fund for the James Reserve. Send check to UCR Foundation, PO Box 112, Riverside, CA 92502-0112***

**Director, Jennifer, Assistant Director, Andrea, and Dexter and Bug (the James Reserve's resident dog and cat at Lolomi with the resident human, Jen)**