

CHATSWORTH NATURE PRESERVE COALITION

Working Together to Save a Crucial Wildlife Habitat in Los Angeles-San Fernando Valley

A Meadowlark Needs a Meadow to Sing

Tribute to Helen Treend

(February 5, 1932 – July 10, 2015)

In 1971 when Helen Treend learned the city and county officials approved the removal of over one hundred and sixty trees without an Environmental Impact Report in Dayton Canyon-Orcutt Ranch, Treend, and other advocates, chained themselves to trees with a 48-hour sit-in to prevent bulldozing of 34 historical oak trees and 134 eucalyptus trees. This led to a moratorium and the case “Treend vs. the City of Los Angeles”, ultimately resulting in the City officials passing the protective Oak Tree Ordinance for the City and County of Los Angeles.

Treend recognized in the 1970’s that developers throughout Southern California were conducting massive bulldozing of oak trees, *Quercus lobata* (Valley Oak) and *Quercus agrifolia* (Coast Live Oak) and became a dedicated advocate to stop the wholesale slaughtering of these native oak trees and oak tree savannas. In Brown’s Creek alone, August, 1979, bulldozers destroyed over 1,000 trees within a few hours. This led to group sit-ins in Woodland Hills, Agoura, Chatsworth and other communities to preserve oak trees under a Los Angeles Citywide Oak Tree Ordinance.

Treend, a Middle School Science Teacher, Hale Jr. High, believed the most important lessons about nature should be taught in Open Air Classrooms in the then Chatsworth Reservoir-Conservation Area. She led her students in Preserve hike-ins and nature studies through a program she established with the LAUSD. She advocated that the CNP have a Science building and nature studies conducted on-going. The science building, “environmental education building, as an accessory usage, in the 1994 Los Angeles City Ordinance, has yet to materialize. LAUSD field science “open air classrooms” were suspended after Treend retired in 1998.

As President of Save Orcutt Community, Inc. and President of the Oak Tree Coalition, Treend fought for several decades against development plans to convert the Chatsworth Reservoir for various land use including a golf course, Little League fields, consideration of 500 low-cost homes for LA City teachers and UCLA professors, and helicopter pilot training.

Treend respectively earned the title of “The Tree Lady”. Her community leadership recognition and awards accumulated: Improving Orcutt Ranch Park, by the SFV Audubon Society, 1972; Mayor Bradley Awards for the Docent Program at Orcutt Park and for saving a natural stream bed (Dayton Creek); the San Fernando Valley Beautiful Award for 3 years for beautification projects, and the L.A. City Human Relations Commission award as Woman-of-the-Year.

Helen Treend understood the importance of protecting the Chatsworth Nature Preserve as a wildlife refuge, the value of teaching our children to respect and understand all aspects of nature, and to protect all native trees, especially the Valley Oak and Coastal Live Oak.