

Los Angeles Times CALENDAR weekend



WITH THE KIDS

Flora, fauna and Frisbees

A tour-guide at Franklin Canyon ends his hikes with something unusual: a Frisbee toss

By Brenda Rees
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With lots of outdoors options these days for nature nuts as well as the wilderness-resistant, volunteer docent Mike Orloff decided to add something extra for participants in his monthly "Hikes With Mike" at Franklin Canyon.

Orloff ends his guided tours not with a heavy-handed speech about the benefits of tree-hugging. No, he leads hikers to a big grassy field and dumps out flying discs for a good old-fashioned Frisbee toss.

"The kids really seem to love it," says the 47-year-old North Hollywood resident, who also leads a monthly "Nearly Full Moon" hike at the canyon (part of the Santa Monica Mountains Recreation Area and managed by the National Park Service and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy).

Orloff sees this urban park as accessible and abundant with plant and animal life. "It's unnatural to spend so much time in cars, on concrete and with CNN," he says.

As a child, Orloff went camping only once with his family ("It was a miserable experience," he relates) and never attended summer camp. Still, his love of the outdoors prevailed.

Today, as a professional woodworker and day trader, Orloff claims Franklin Canyon as a second home — and last year he decided to clean house. Spending about 325 hours, Orloff cleared up one of the park's side canyons, hauling out nearly 30,000 pounds of broken concrete, asphalt pieces and plumbing parts in makeshift carts.

After all, you gotta have space, right?

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"Hikes With Mike," Sooky Goldman Nature Center, 2600 Franklin Canyon Drive, Beverly Hills. Sunday, 10 a.m.-noon. Free. (310) 858-7272, Ext. 131.