

Hike for 3/19/97 9:30 AM George Z. Thomas

Last week there was a request for a "Look at the Flowers" Hike,

This is a short hike. Just right for some of us. We can spend some time looking at the flowers. Maybe more refreshment time ! I'll bring extra drink and Goodies.

HIKE 35

STUNT HIGH TRAIL

Maps:	Malibu Beach, topo
Distance:	4 miles
Elevation:	950' gain and loss
Time:	2½ hours
Trailhead:	Stunt Road

Stunt High Trail is special for several reasons. The variety of plant communities is unsurpassed, the trail takes us along Cold Creek through a beautiful Riparian Woodland, then uphill and across some sloping grassland into an Oak Woodland. The upper trail winds through a magnificent stand of Chaparral. Wild animals frequent the Cold Creek watershed. One of the few mountain lions remaining in the mountains is seldom seen but is known to live in the canyon.

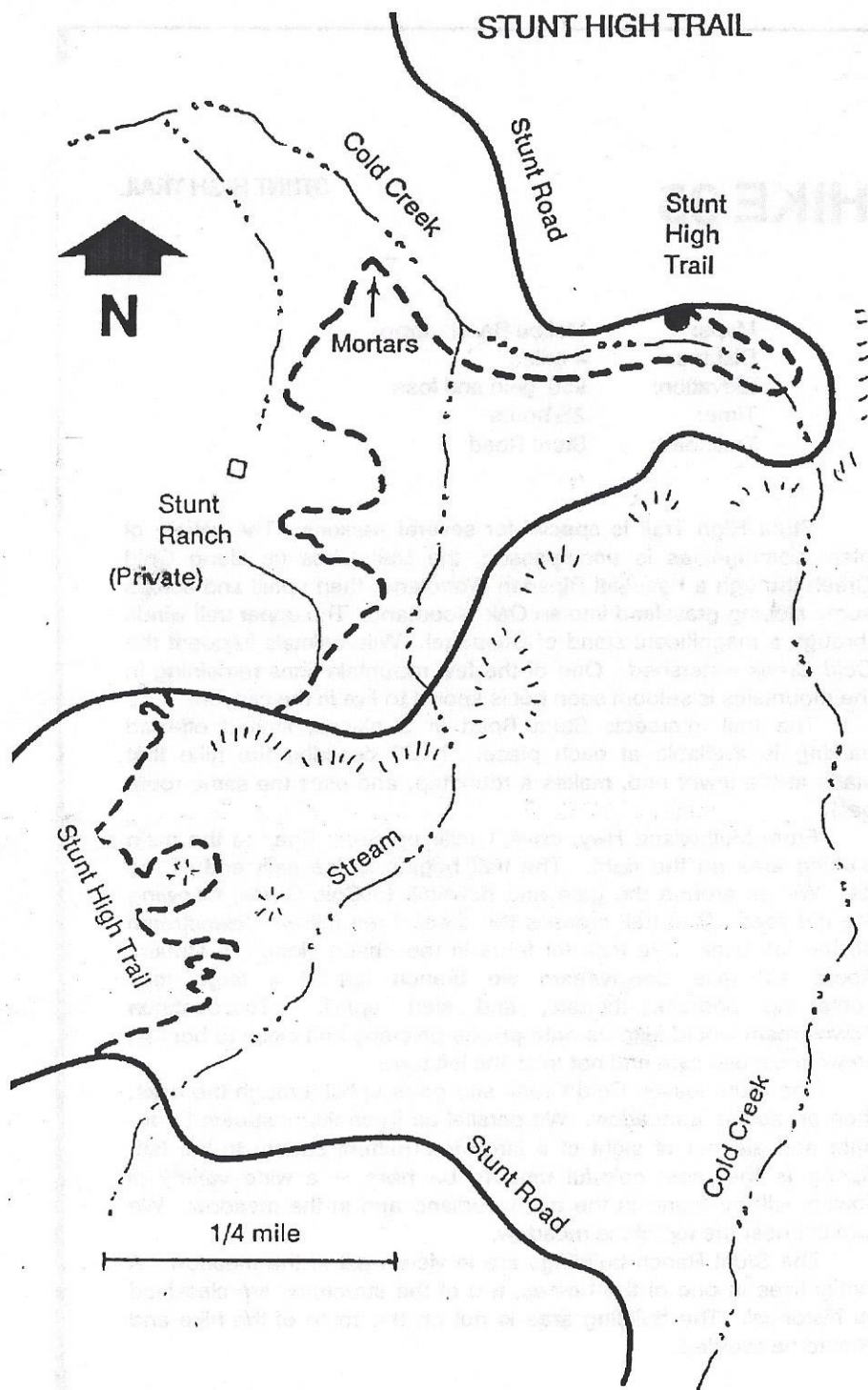
The trail intersects Stunt Road in 3 places; limited off-road parking is available at each place. I will describe the hike that starts at the lower end, makes a roundtrip, and uses the same route back.

From Mulholland Hwy, drive 1 mile up Stunt Road to the main parking area on the right. The trail begins at the east end of the lot. We go around the gate and downhill to Cold Creek, following the old road. The trail crosses the creek then follows downstream on the left bank. We look for ferns in the shade along the stream. About 1/2 mile downstream we branch left at a large rock containing bedrock mortars, and start uphill. To continue downstream would take us onto private property and close to homes, so we must use care and not miss the left turn.

The route leaves Cold Creek and goes uphill through the oaks, then on across a meadow. We parallel an intermittent stream to our right and are out of sight of a large intermittent stream to the left. Spring is the most colorful time to be here — a wide variety of flowers will be found in the oak woodland and in the meadow. We turn left near the top of the meadow.

The Stunt Ranch buildings are in view west of the meadow. A family lives in one of the homes, two of the structures are classified as historical. The building area is not on the route of the hike and should be avoided.

STUNT HIGH TRAIL



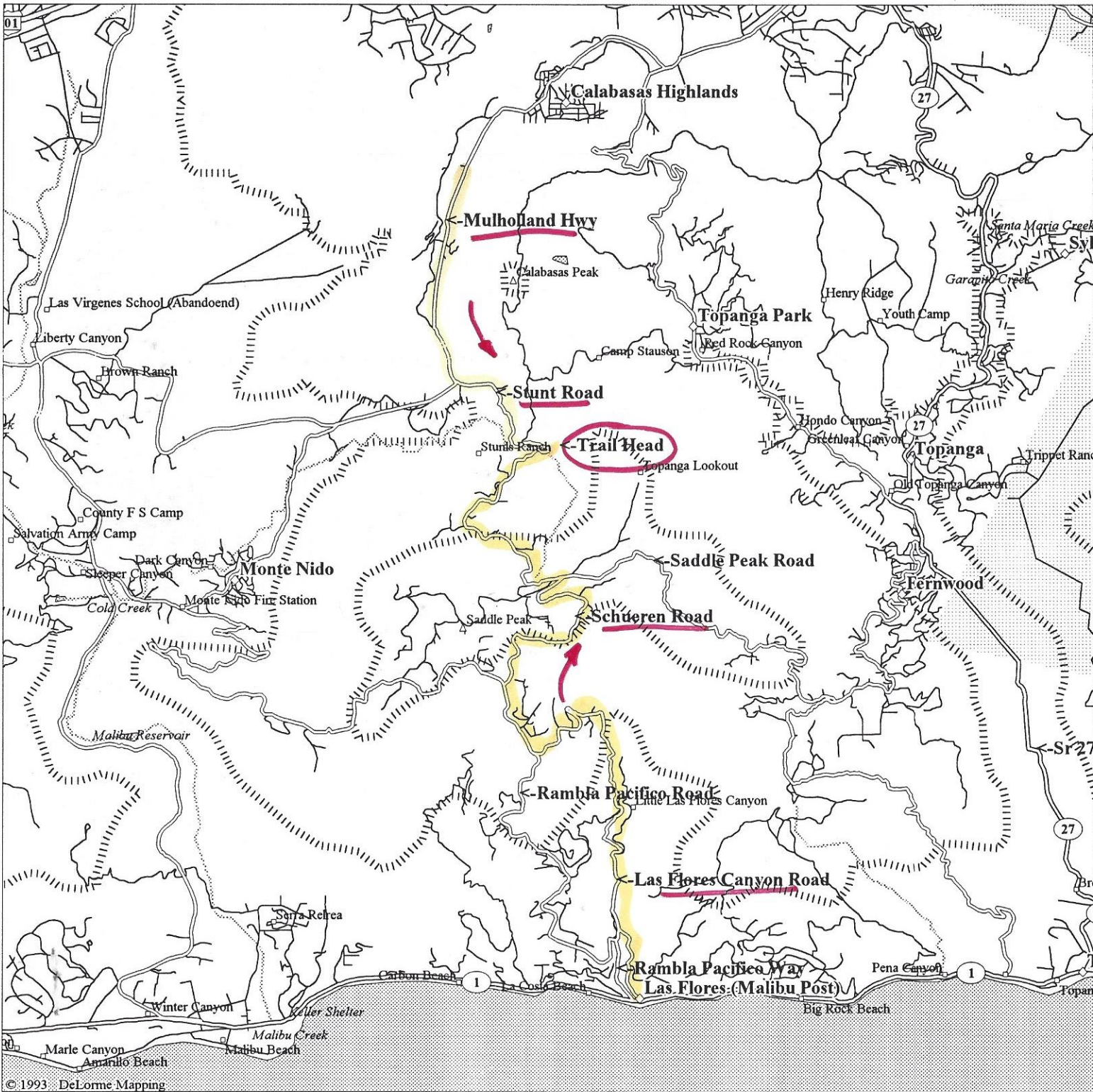
After turning left at the top of the meadow, the trail gains altitude and climbs into a chaparral forest. After a couple of switchbacks the trail intersects the Stunt Ranch entrance road. We turn left and walk to Stunt Road, then turn right and walk uphill along the road about 400 yards. A parking lot has been graded along Stunt Road near the ranch entrance road. It is expected that this lot will be used by people attending naturalist activities.

After the short walk along Stunt Road we look for the continuation of the trail on the south side. The entry to the trail is through a riparian plant community of Ferns, Poison Oak, and Oaks. After a couple of quick switchbacks we enter a forest of Chaparral — a mixture of Ceanothus, Chamise, Scrub Oak, and Redshank. The trail passes some sandstone formations including one in the shape of a seal called "Seal Rock." The trail turns often and is of a gentle grade even when ascending the steep hillside, before reaching the road and the end of the trail.

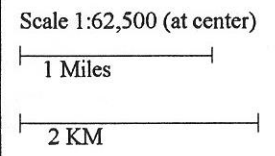
The Santa Monica Mountains Backbone Trail comes down the north slope of Saddle Peak. We can access the Backbone Trail by walking a few hundred feet downhill on Stunt Road to a trail on the left. This .3-mile-long trail leads to an intersection. We may then turn right to go west, or left to go east on the Backbone Trail.

We turn around at Stunt Road to retrace our steps. Car shuttle options can add variations to this hike. The return hike offers beautiful views of the Cold Creek watershed and Stunt Ranch. The high ridge east of us looks down upon Hondo Canyon and the Topanga watershed beyond. Calabasas Peak and its massive tilted sandstone outcroppings is on the north. Malibu Creek is several miles west.

The land over which the trail has been built was operated as ranches into the 1970's. The Stunt Ranch was homesteaded in the late 1800's, the Murphy Ranch in 1909. Kathleen Murphy donated her 530 acre ranch to the Nature Conservancy who developed it as the Ida Haines Murphy Preserve (Cold Creek Canyon Preserve), an outstanding pristine area. The Mountains Restoration Trust — a nonprofit land trust dedicated to preserving public access opportunities in the Santa Monica Mountains — has recently assumed responsibility for management and preservation of the Preserve. The Stunt Ranch has been purchased by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. A Nature Trail is planned for the lower part of Stunt Ranch and will be available as a self-guided tour. A brochure is being prepared.



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LEGEND

- Population Center
- State Route
- Geo Feature
- Town, Small City
- Hill
- US Highway
- Street, Road
- Hwy Ramps
- Major Street/Road
- State Route
- Interstate Highway
- River
- Open Water
- Contour