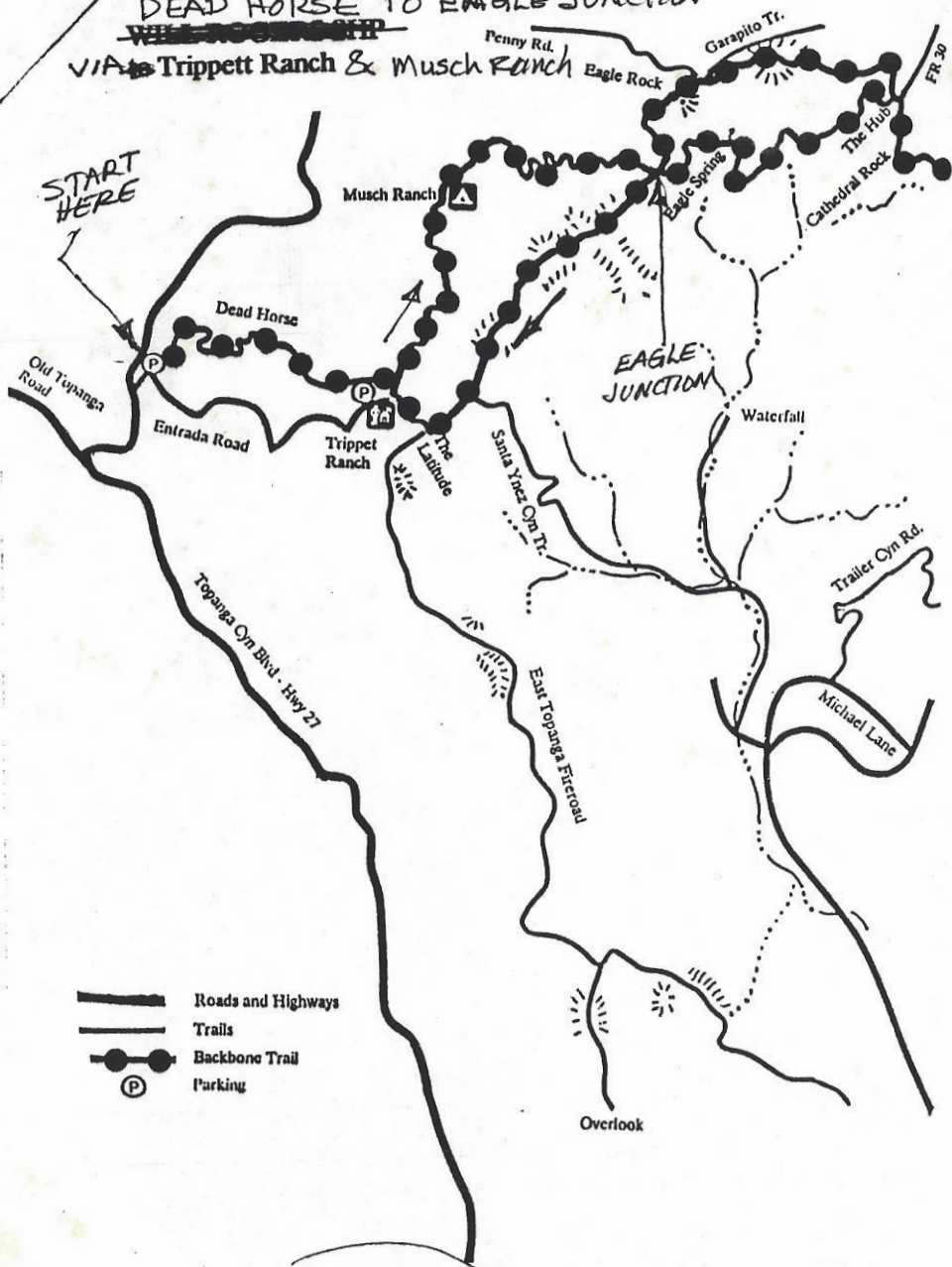


JULY 29, 1992 9:30 UTTER/BROWN  
6.2 mi., 800' EL.

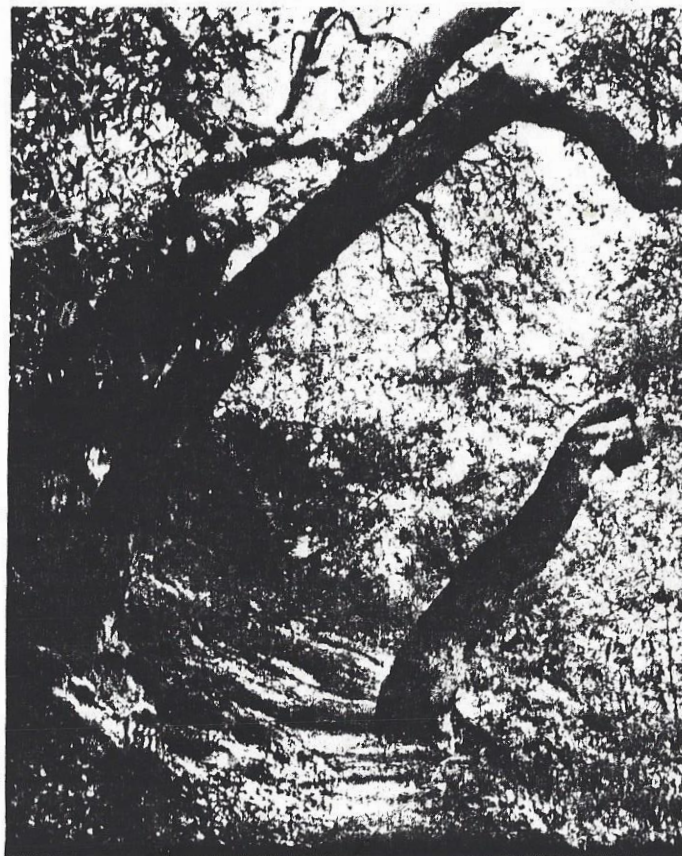
DEAD HORSE TO EAGLE JUNCTION  
~~VIA TRIPPET RANCH~~  
VIA Trippett Ranch & Musch Ranch



70

PCH

The Dead Horse Trail is about 1 1/4 miles long. The east end is at Trippett Ranch; the west end at the Dead Horse trailhead. The trail was built in the late 1970s by a Sierra Club volunteer team. During construction the crew suggested different names for the trail until one day as the trail neared completion, the crew arrived at the trailhead to find that overnight someone had buried a small horse in the trail. "Dead Horse Trail" has been the name since.



James P. Kenney

*Dead Horse Trail through the oak woodland*

At Eagle Junction the Backbone Trail again takes two routes. The right trail (Musch Ranch Trail) drops down to a campground at Musch Ranch. Overnight camping, showers, restrooms, and water are available.



James P. Kenney

*The campground at Musch Ranch. Horse corrals are on the left; camping on the right under eucalyptus trees.*

The Musch Ranch Trail is the site of fires in the chaparral over a long period of time. The Topanga Canyon fires of 1948, 1961, and 1977 are of recent history as is the prescribed burn of 1984. All of these fires burned over what is now Musch Ranch Trail. Of interest to users of the trail is that frequent burning has set back the chaparral, opening up opportunities for wild flower

displays. The left trail stays on a ridge following the fireroad, turning right at the Latitude to Trippet Ranch. The distance between Eagle Junction and Trippet by way of Musch Ranch is 2.2 miles. The distance by fireroad is 1.5 miles.

Trippet Ranch is headquarters for Topanga State Park. The address is 20825 Entrada Road, Topanga, CA 90290. The phone number is presently (310) 455-2465. A pay telephone, parking lot (fee), picnic ground, rest rooms, and a self-guided nature trail are available. A ranger lives at the house south of the parking lot. Another ranger lives at Musch Ranch. (🚗🚗🚗🚗)

From the picnic area at Trippet, walk past a bulletin board and head north across the small dam. Turn left and hike west on the trail at the edge of the oak woodland. The trail is almost level until it leaves the oaks and enters a chaparral forest. Then you start a downhill grade that is usually gentle with two or three short, steep sections. Two-thirds of the way to the trailhead you drop down to a riparian woodland of sycamore and bay trees. The trail crosses a stream on a wooden bridge installed in 1986. The bridge was brought in without damaging the environment — a highly responsible bit of engineering. Take time to savor the shade in the creek canyon because a lot of the Backbone Trail is in the sun, and shade is rare.

At the bridge you might risk poison oak and climb down to the streambed. The original trail — before the bridge was built — goes to the stream. Vegetation has grown so don't expect a clear path. A small waterfall, pools of water, sweet cicely, geranium, grape, and four species of fern grow along the banks.

The trail comes closer to civilization as it approaches the parking lot at the Dead Horse Trailhead.

Because this trail starts near a pond, goes along the edge of a meadow, in and out of coast live oaks, and then through pure chaparral before dropping down to a riparian woodland by a stream, you will see a wide variety of plant communities. This gives the botanist in you an excellent chance to see the ever-changing biotic variation along the trail.

Most of the trail is on sandstone until the last stretch which is on basalt, a fine-grained volcanic rock. The final 100 feet to the parking lot, is steeper, and the solid basalt is covered with imported gravel making the tread a little unsteady.

The Dead Horse trailhead is one-half mile north of the Topanga Post Office on Topanga Canyon Blvd. Turn east on Entrada Road, go 100 yards and turn left into the parking lot. We must take care driving into the parking lot coming uphill on Entrada. The turn into the lot is left on a blind curve.

Restrooms are available. The lot is closed and locked at night. Parking is free. This may change.

START  
HERE

WE WILL GO IN REVERSE  
OF THIS DISCRIPTION.