



Stone Canyon Trail

Vogel Flats Campground to Mount Lukens
8 miles round trip; 3,200-foot elevation gain

Mount Lukens, a gray whale of a mountain beached on the eastern boundary of Los Angeles, is the highest peak within the city limits. A hike up this mile-high mountain offers a great aerobic workout and terrific clear-day views of the metropolis.

Theodore P. Lukens, for whom the mountain is named, was a Pasadena civic and business leader, and an early supporter of the first scientific reforestation effort in California. A self-taught botanist, Lukens believed that burnt-over mountainsides could be successfully replanted. During 1899 alone, Lukens and fellow mountaineers planted some 65,000 seeds in the mountains above Pasadena. He started an experimental nursery atop Heninger Flats that grew thousands of knobcone pine, spruce and other trees for replanting in burnt-over areas in the San Gabriel and San Bernardino Mountains. Today, this nursery furnishes a large percentage of the young trees planted in Southern California mountains.

After the death of Lukens in 1918, a 5,074-foot peak was named to honor the one-time Angeles National Forest Supervisor and Southern California's "Father of Forestry."

Stone Canyon Trail is by far the nicest way to ascend Mount Lukens. (Other routes are via long wearisome fire roads.) The trail climbs very steeply from Big Tujunga Canyon over the north slope of Lukens to the peak.

Carry plenty of water on this trail; none is available en route. A city map—the Auto Club's "Los Angeles and Vicinity" is one good one—is fun to unfold on the summit to help you identify natural and man-made points of interest.

Hike #145

Season: All Year

9/23/92
BILL T.



One warning: In order to reach the beginning of the Stone Canyon Trail, you must cross the creek flowing through Big Tujunga Canyon. During times of high water, this creek crossing can be difficult and dangerous—even impossible. Use care and your very best judgement when approaching this creek.

Directions to trailhead: From Foothill Boulevard in Sunland, turn north on Mount Gleason Avenue and drive 1 1/2 miles to Big Tujunga Canyon Road. Turn right and proceed 6 miles to signed Vogel Flats Road. Turn right and drive into the Forest Service's Vogel Flats Campground and Picnic Area. Turn right on the Forest Service road. Leave your car in one of the many day use parking spaces, near water, restrooms and picnic tables; or proceed another quarter-mile through a private residential area to the end of the road where parking is limited to a few cars and there are no facilities.

The Hike: From the Forest Service parking area, walk a quarter-mile northwest along the paved road past some cabins. The road ends at a barrier and you continue on a trail which travels 150 yards or so along and above the Big Tujunga Canyon creekbed. Look leftward for 1) A good place to cross the creek 2) a metal trail registry on the other side of the creek that marks the beginning of the Stone Canyon Trail 3) well-named Stone Canyon itself, which resembles a waterfall of white boulders. Stone Canyon Trail runs just to the left of Stone Canyon.

After you've signed the trail registry, begin the vigorous ascent, which first parallels Stone Canyon, then switchbacks to the east above it. Pausing now and then to catch your breath, you'll enjoy the view of Big Tujunga Canyon.

The trail leads through chamise, ceanothus and high chaparral. The 1975 Big Tujunga Fire scorched the slopes of Mount Lukens. Stone Canyon Trail could use a few more shady big cone spruce and a little less brush. Theodore Lukens and his band of tree planters would today be most welcome on the mountain's north slopes!

Three-and-a-half miles from the trailhead, you'll intersect an old fire road and bear left toward the summit. Atop the peak is a forest of radio antennae.

If you have the current Angeles National Forest map, you might notice the words "Sister Elsie" next to the peak. Before the peak was renamed for Lukens, Sister Elsie Peak honored a beloved Roman Catholic nun who was in charge of an orphanage for Indian children located in the La Crescenta area.

Enjoy the sweeping panorama of the Santa Monica and Verdugo Mountains, Santa Monica Bay and the Palos Verdes Peninsula, and the huge city spreading from the San Gabriel Mountains to the sea.