

Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation



Summer 2007

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The City of Walnut Creek recently launched an effort to develop a vision for its 2,700 acres of designated open space by establishing the Open Space Visioning Task Force, a seven-person task force serving as a subcommittee under the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Commission. The City reserved one spot for the Foundation, and we selected Bill Hunt to serve as our representative, with Ralph Kraetsch as the alternate when Bill cannot attend a meeting. Bill and Ralph are Board members and both are prior PROS commissioners. The City anticipates that this effort will take 12-18 months.

I think the Task Force is a good idea. Our Open Space areas were first established 30 years ago, and the current plans are quite out-dated and provide for a level of recreational development that is no longer desired. Also, this is one of the action items under General Plan 2025. General Plan 2025 has two goals for the Open Space: (1) Maintain and enhance

open space lands, and (2) Acquire additional open space lands or conservation easements.

The first action item is to "prepare and adopt a plan for the protection and management of the City's open space lands." This is an important effort for the future of our open space. It will serve as a guiding document for at least 20 years and perhaps longer. There are many issues that the Task Force will have to address. They include types of desired uses and activities, acquisition of additional lands, trail management, the treatment of invasive non-native plants, and the re-establishment of native vegetation, among others. The meetings of the Task Force will be open to the public and there will be notice of those meetings. The Foundation plans to be active in presenting its views on the future management of our open space. I encourage you to attend and express your opinions about your open space.

Bob Simmons, President

Manager's Report

For many years the Walnut Creek Open Space Division has conducted environmental and history programs at the Borges Ranch in the Shell Ridge Open Space. Seasonal interpretive staff have worked under the direction of Open Space staff to provide programs which described life on a turn of the century ranch in Walnut Creek. These programs continue to sell out for all the available time slots during the season and we receive very positive feedback from the teachers and parents who attend.

A new program has recently been offered by Ranger Bruce Weideman at the Sugarloaf Open Space. Elementary school age children are learning about the native residents of the Bay Area through hands on programs. The native California Indian program begins with a story of what a typical day in the life might have been like. The program then moves into a number of hands-on learning experiences involving hand pump drills, acorn grinding and various stick games used by the natives. Musical instruments and toys are explained and shared and for the older age classes the students learn the skills needed to build a boat of tule reeds.

As with the program conducted at the Borges Ranch, the Native California Indian program meets the school curriculum guidelines for the appropriate grade classes. Staffing levels for the Walnut Creek Open Space Division are very minimal and it remains a constant challenge to maintain and protect the city's natural resources. The Open Space Division realizes the importance of educating the future stewards of this precious resource and will continue to develop and present these programs for our community.

*Dan Cather
Public Services Manager*

FOUNDATION RESTORATION PROJECTS

Quail Habitat/Nature Area



Yes, we might as well face it, more and more critters in addition to the quail are making their presence known and demanding equal time.

Little green tree frogs are the newest residents, and you won't believe where we found them; in our water barrel reservoir. Upon opening it we found seven frogs swimming in the tank. They slipped in under the cover and have found a convenient home. The frogs have suction cup-like feet and climb up and down the plastic sides of the tank with apparent ease. I presume they raise young in the tank, and come out at night to feed and fill the night air with their chatter.

The other critter which seems to have found a home, or a way station on its way north, is the Monarch Butterfly. We have not previously been aware of it, but there is a large patch of Milk Weed in the lower fenced area of our North Lime gully. The Milk Weed is now in full bloom and there were many Monarchs flying around feeding and presumably laying eggs. Milk Weed, as you probably know, is the primary habitat for the Monarch. Two more critters have been added to the wildlife our project is supporting.

As for the quail, we have no late reports, but presume the calm spring should have resulted in a good crop of chicks. Stay tuned for the next chapter in our wildlife cast of characters.

Heather Farm

We have continued to remove cattails from the small creek in the Nature Area. It is hard work but it has given us space to plant several species of water-loving wildflowers. The yellow monkeyflowers we planted along the creek last winter bloomed profusely and have produced seed. Scarlet monkeyflowers bloomed later. We have been watering the maples, box elders, buckeyes, oaks, roses, dogwoods and snowberries weekly to get them through their first summer.

In July and August, we will be "solarizing" the area to be planted with native grasses and wildflowers this winter. (We mow and rake an area to expose the soil and the lay down sheets of clear plastic. The sun's heat cooks the unwanted seed of non-native plants.)

Oak Habitat



We're looking forward to the next planting season with high hopes for improving this past year's success rates. This anticipation will be partly due to nature and partly to our learning. The nature aspect is due to the dry spring which has resulted in an abundant acorn crop. Last year the very wet spring subdued the acorn crop so that we had just a handful (only one!) of blue and valley oak acorns and a few hundred coast live oak acorns. The dry winter caught us unprepared and by the time we started watering it was too late to recover many of the new plantings. We've kept the failed planting sites and will use them next season, along with new sites we plan to build. Come join the acorn harvest on September 8th!

Native Plant Regeneration

On May 1st people from the California Native Plant Society led a seed collecting trip in Shell Ridge and taught us how to identify more of the resources we have. We collected seeds from two riparian species that we hope to propagate.

During the rest of May a group of WCOSF volunteers made weekly seed collecting trips primarily for grass. We have a good supply of eight species to support the winter planting season and are waiting for a ninth species to ripen. This represents significant progress. In the early years we planted only one species; the last two years we have had four. We have also collected some flower seeds but most species are not ripe yet.

Weed Control Project



We found this year's dry spring positive for weed control. The yellow star thistle is a late sprouting plant and got a poor start this year. Many plants dried off without forming seed heads. A similar situation has occurred with vetch. Black mustard was also affected and is much shorter than normal. Thistles enjoyed their usual abundance and we attacked them along the Ridge Trail and around Ginder Gap in Shell Ridge. We also mowed several areas of black mustard. This method has been successful in slowly pushing back some of the occurrences.

Badgers Discovered in Lime Ridge

Recently a road-killed badger was discovered on Ygnacio Valley Road at Lime Ridge. Shortly after that, in late June, WCOSF Board Member Brian Murphy spotted a live badger in the Lime Ridge Open Space. No den has been located nor is there any evidence of young, although there are several possible sites in the area. However, prey (gophers, voles, etc.) is abundant – plenty to support a badger family or two.

Last summer we reported that badgers had re-established themselves in east county and were moving westward. We thought they would reach us someday, but we never expected to see them so soon. This is very good news indeed!

Since badgers are a species of special concern locally, it may be necessary to undertake measures such as fencing to prevent further road kills.

"SAVE MOUNT DIABLO" CELEBRATES MANGINI RANCH ACQUISITION

On June 3rd, Save Mount Diablo held a celebration of its' acquisition of the Mangini Ranch property. Board members of the Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation were invited as were representatives of other organizations that contributed to the acquisition. Speakers from several groups and the Mangini family talked about the property and the acquisition and Save Mount Diablo led hikes to show the important features of Mangini Ranch.

This property is part of the wildlife corridor that links Lime Ridge Open Space to Mount Diablo State Park and other public lands. Keeping the Mangini Ranch land as open space is essential to the health of our open space. The property also has unique features such as a desert olive grove not found elsewhere on this side of Mount Diablo. For these reasons, the Foundation pledged \$10,000 to match contributions from Walnut Creek residents.

This was the first use of our land acquisition fund. The Foundation worked with our conservation organizations including Save Mount Diablo, The Coastal Conservancy, East Bay Regional Park District and with the City of Concord. We hope to cooperate with these and other organizations on future land acquisitions that affect our open space.



Attendees gather by the Dessert Olive grove



Mangini Dedication

WALNUT CREEK OPEN SPACE EVENTS And HAPPENINGS



HARVESTING HOWE HONEY

Sunday, September 9th

2:00 p.m. / Howe Homestead Park

We will be busy as bees as we harvest and sample fresh, local honey. Come and learn about honeybees and enjoy a taste of their labor. Call Ranger Art "Buzz" Janke at (925) 930-7731.

MOON STALKERS-NIGHT HIKES IN THE PRESERVES

Join us on one or both of these popular hikes as we take to the trails when the sun goes down. We'll do some nightfall activities as we explore the world of darkness. Bring binoculars and a flashlight. Call Ranger Bruce at (925) 944-576

Wednesday, September 26

7:00 p.m. Acalanes Ridge Preserve

The Fruit Moon will be full as we hike the

Sousa Trail and cross the magnificent Putnam Creek Gorge and then gain altitude to reach the ridge top. With breathtaking views of Mt. Diablo, this trail has some ups and down. Meet at the end of Sousa Drive.

Thursday, October 25

7:00 p.m. Shell Ridge Preserve

Get ready for Halloween's Blood Moon. This time we'll hike the Costanoan Trail and head for Deer Hill and the rock caves. The blue oak woodland should provide great shadows. Meet at the end of Snyder Lane.

RESTORING SANS CRAINTE CREEK

Saturday, September 29

10:00 a.m.

Today is National Public Lands Day and your help will make a big difference. Join us for a morning of habitat restoration in Sugarloaf Preserve's creekway. We'll be removing overgrowth, old fuel build-up and invasive plants. No experience necessary. You will need sturdy footwear and gloves. Bring a favorite pruning saw or hand lopper if you like. Refreshments provided, so please let us know if you will join us. Call Range Bruce Weidman at (925) 944-5766.

EDUCATIONAL BIRDING SERIES: FALL RAPTOR MIGRATION

Friday, October 19 & Sunday, October 20

Fall is a wonderful time to watch for migrating birds of prey. Have you ever wondered what type of hawk or falcon is flying overhead? Take part and learn which eagles, hawks and falcons can be observed in our area. We will split our time between the classroom and Lime Ridge Open space. Fee: \$15.00; class size limited to 15. Call Ranger Dan at (925) 942-0225.



HOWE HARVEST FESTIVAL

Sunday, October 28

11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

The Howe Harvest Festival combines a celebration of the life of James Pomeroy Howe with a variety of old-fashioned Harvest and Halloween activities for the entire family. This year's activities include pumpkin carving, crafts, games, and scarecrow making. Visitors can venture into the "Spooky Maze" or take a stroll in the Community Garden. Call Ranger Art Janke at (925) 930-7731

**PETS NOT PERMITTED AT
PROGRAMS OR EVENTS**

Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation
PO Box 309
Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0309

Non-Profit Rate
U.S. Postage
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Yes, I want to help protect and preserve Walnut Creek's Open Space

We invite all who share this goal to join the Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation. Memberships and contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law. There are numerous areas where you can help. If you are interested, please leave a message at 925-939-6610, drop us a note or email, or visit our website at www.wcosf.org.

I would like to join the Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation

Name _____
Address _____ City _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ Email (*we never share*) _____
Skills I am willing to share _____

I would like to volunteer!

- _____ Oak Restoration Project
- _____ Native Grasses
- _____ Quail Habitat
- _____ School program

MEMBERSHIPS

Benefactor.....\$250
Sustaining.....\$100
Family.....\$40
Individual.....\$25
Senior.....\$15

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