

# Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation



Spring 2008

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

### UPDATE ON THE PROPOSED COMMUNICATIONS TOWER IN LIME RIDGE

In the last newsletter, we reported on a proposal by Sprint/Nextel to build a new 80' communications tower on the Contra Costa Water District's Newhall reservoir site in the Lime Ridge Open Space. We opposed that proposal and have appealed the Planning Commission's decision to approve the permit application to the City Council. Our appeal is now scheduled to be heard at the May 6 City Council meeting.

After our appeal was filed, we learned that the City and Sprint-Nextel were negotiating to lease an existing site at the top of Lime Ridge. Representatives of the City and Sprint-Nextel came to our Board meeting in March to discuss this proposal and to get our feedback.

Following that meeting, it appeared that City staff had worked out a compromise that would place Sprint-Nextel's communication equipment on an existing communications site at the top of Lime Ridge without a new tower. This alternative would have combined all Sprint-Nextel's communications equipment on that site without any new buildings. Sprint-Nextel would have to reduce the size of the existing fenced area, remove all of the facilities, including the power poles, at the end of the lease, and withdraw the application for the tower at the Newhall reservoir. Finally, the City would have initiated the planning process to eliminate the possibility of another communications tower application in any of our open space preserves.

While we would much prefer that the existing communications facilities at the top of Lime Ridge be removed, this approach was acceptable to the Foundation board because of the commitments made by both Sprint-Nextel and the City. However, it now appears that there are other problems with the existing communications site at the top of Lime Ridge and that we might have to

proceed with the appeal hearing regarding the proposed communications tower at Newhall Reservoir.

We are opposed to the 80' communications tower project for several reasons. We believe that the proposed project is an inappropriate use of our open space. The people who worked so hard to establish the open space preserves and to protect them from residential development would be very unhappy to see them now being used for communication towers or other forms of commercial development. We also believe that the project is not in compliance with Walnut Creek's General Plan or with its wireless communication facilities ordinance. Since the PROS Commission, which has oversight over our open space, voted unanimously against this project, we believe that the City Council should reverse the 3-2 decision of the Planning Commission and deny the permit. At a minimum, the applicant should be required to submit a full alternatives analysis with information on cellular coverage and the application should be returned to the Planning Commission (and the PROS Commission) for their analysis and review.

We are also concerned that Sprint-Nextel's tower proposal may be the first of many proposals to build new towers within our open space, and we do not believe that our open space areas should become a forest of communication towers.

The hearing is set for May 6, 2008. If you agree that this tower is an inappropriate use of open space, please consider either speaking at the City Council meeting or writing to the City Council to express your opposition to this project. We need your help to show that this issue matters to Walnut Creek residents.

*Bob Simmons  
President*

### SPRING HAS SPRUNG!

Now, please go out and enjoy spring in one of our beautiful open space preserves!



# HEATHER FARM PARK RESTORATION

A productive winter planting season at Heather Farm Park was completed by the Foundation and its volunteers in mid February. In addition to about 5,000 native grass seedlings, we planted poppies, buttercups, yarrow, soap plant and penstemon flowers in the same area. Also planted were many trees and bushes including oaks, buckeyes, western dogwood, wild roses, native honeysuckle, clematis vines, willows, box elder and toyon bushes. The acorns planted this winter in the Park are starting to appear now.

The volunteers cleared another long section of the small creek in our nature area, removing cattails. We have planted more grasses and flowers in the area that was cleared last winter.

Among our volunteers were many high school students from Walnut Creek, Alamo and Danville schools. In addition, students from as far away as Antioch and Fremont also helped. Many Foundation members supervised workers and did heavy jobs such as drilling holes for seedlings. The Volunteer Center of the East Bay continues to be essential in putting us in touch with school groups such as the California Scholarship Federation, the National Honor Society and the Red Cross clubs.

## WALNUT CREEK OPEN SPACE EVENTS

And  
HAPPENINGS



### HERITAGE DAY AT BORGES RANCH

**Saturday June 14th**

**11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.**

Come join the fun as we celebrate the history of the Old Borges Ranch with music, food, dancing, family games and crafts, silent movies, 4-H farm animals, pony rides, blacksmith demonstrations and much more. As you wander around the ranch you can meet local Borges family members, watch weaving, quilting, and sheep sheering demonstrations, and visit with vendors and educational and environmental community groups. Park at Northgate High School for the free shuttle.

\$5.00 per family entrance fee. For more information please call Ranger Dan Bylin at (925) 942-0225.

### ANCIENT WAYS

**Saturdays, 10:00 a.m., 6/21, 7/12, 8/23, 9/6**

Join us for an assortment of games, crafts, skills, and music making, as we learn about, and experience, the creative technologies of those that came before us.

For more information, please call Ranger Bruce at (925) 944-5766

**Saturday, June 21. Game Marathon**

Check out a full display of primitive tools

and crafts, and then test your aboriginal skills through a variety of games. Play Solip, Bone and Stick Games, Acorn Tops, and more.

### **Saturday, July 12. The Bullroarer**

Make this flat instrument that sends out a unique, deep drone far and wide. The Bullroarer was developed long ago by cultures all over the world. This requires some crafting skills and is good for participants over 12 yrs.

### **Saturday, August 23. Hunting Skills.**

Toss the Atlatl. Throw the Rabbitstick. Learn about snares and traps. This requires physical skills and is good for participants over 12 yrs.

### **Saturday, September 6. Elderberry Flute**

The Elderberry Flute creates soft, haunting notes. We'll make our flutes and get a chance to play. This requires some crafting skills and is good for participants over 12 yrs.

### **MOON STALKERS -**

**Night Hikes In The Preserves**

**June 18, July 18, August 16**

Join us at dusk (8:00 or 8:30) for one or all of these 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, and maybe get a chance to see nature's "night shift" in action. Bring binocs and a flashlight. Be a MOON STALKER! Get your button. Info: Ranger Bruce at (925) 944-5766. These hikes last about 1 1/2 hrs.

### **EVENING REPTILE RAMBLE:**

**Saturday July 12th,**

**8:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. Old Borges Ranch**

Enjoy the summer evening at the Old Borges

Ranch looking for our slithering friends as they come out for the evening. Ring-necks, night, king, and maybe even a rattlesnake or two; who knows what we might find during our search? Children must be accompanied and supervised by an adult. Bring a flashlight and meet the ranger in the parking lot at Old Borges Ranch.

Group size is limited to 20; call Ranger Dan Bylin at (925) 942-0225 to register.

### **BIRD WALK WITH RANGER DAN**

**Saturday July 19th, 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.**

**Acalanes Open Space**

We will hide in the shade and search the riparian and oak woodlands along Putnam Creek for some of our summer breeding residents. We will watch for flycatchers, vireos, and warblers along this beautiful creek. Meet at the end of Souza Dr.

**Saturday August 16th, 8:00 a.m. - 10:00**

**a.m. Shell Ridge Open Space**

Join us as we search the oak woodlands and willows around Bob Pond for acorn, downey, and Nuttall's woodpeckers, and then we will hike up the Hanna Lane Trail searching for birds of the oak savannah. Meet at the Hanna Grove/Bob Pond parking lot at Borges Ranch.

For more information please call Ranger Dan Bylin at (925) 942-0225.

**PETS NOT PERMITTED AT  
PROGRAMS OR EVENTS**

## VOLUNTEERS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE!

The Foundation accomplished a lot of planting this winter and it is a pleasure to see things grow from our efforts. Acorns and buckeye seeds were planted in Lime Ridge, Shell Ridge and Sugarloaf Open Space Areas. We planted native grasses and plants and wildflowers in Lime Ridge and Shell Ridge. An area in Acalanes was fenced to protect some young volunteer oaks. The Bob Wisecarver Quail Habitat Recovery Area was cleaned up to make room for more plantings. None of this could have been accomplished without the help of all of our one-time and repeat volunteers. Thank you!

Recently, we heard from an informal group which calls itself the 'Alamo Crazies'. They have been volunteering on various projects to improve the open space, such as removal of weeds and improving the fencing around the entry points. We were pleased to hear that other groups are out there and interested in improving our open space. Hopefully, we will be able to work on some projects together.



## IF IT IS SPRING, THERE MUST BE WILDFLOWERS



California Poppy

Spring is a marvelous time of the year. Here are a couple of images of wildflowers taken recently in our open space. This is certainly the best time of the year to see wildflowers. So, treat yourself to a wonderful wildflower walk in one of our open space areas. If you will be visiting Shell Ridge, try a walk in Acalanes or Sugarloaf. There are wonderful views from those areas. If you have young children or grandchildren, be sure to take them for a walk (but please take water and sun protection).



Blue-Eyed Grass

Spring is also the time that we get to see if our hard winter work was successful. We had a lot of help this year with the planting of acorns and buckeye seeds, and planting native grasses and wildflowers. It is great to see the acorns sprouting into oaks and to see the native grasses grow. We will soon switch into the next phase, as we water the new trees during the warm summer months of their first year.


### Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation' Spring Bird walk Announcement

Join us for the Foundation's annual Spring Birdwalk which will be held on Sunday, April 20, 2008 on Lime Ridge. Led by Maury Stern, the birdwalk will start at 8:00 am and end about Noon. The route will go from the east end of Valley Vista Road (park across from the Boundary Oak Gold Course Clubhouse) and ascend to the transmission tower atop the ridge. Elevation gain is approximately 700'. Total length is approximately five miles. Bring water, sunglasses, binoculars and sunblock. Hiking boots are recommended. Non-members are welcome. Heavy rain cancels.

Questions: Contact Harvey Ceaser, 925-937-1406.

## FOUNDATION RESTORATION PROJECTS


### Quail Habitat/Nature Area



The foundation expanded its activities to improve quail habitat this winter. In Shell Ridge, near the Bob Wise-carver Quail Habitat Restoration Area, we are working on developing a connection from Borges Ranch to Twin Ponds via a planted chaparral corridor.

In North Lime Ridge, we planted quail bush, coyote bush, willows and cottonwoods. While it will take several years for these plants to grow sufficiently to attract quail, it is a good start. The new plants will be watered this summer to help them survive until the next rainy season begins.


### Oak Habitat



Approximately 100 sites were planted in North Lime Ridge this year, including the replanting of about 25 of last year's failed sites and 75 new sites. We also planted 25 sites near Deer Lake in Shell Ridge and 10 sites in Sugarloaf. There were no cancellations of planting dates this year. A recent check of the plantings in North Lime Ridge show seedlings in well over half the sites indicating a very successful planting season. The sites have been watered twice to compensate for the lack of rain

after mid February. We will begin installing tree shelters in mid-April and plan to water monthly into September.

### Native Plant Regeneration



We have now planted nearly 2/3 of our first Sutherland restoration site and all of the second one, which puts us in the pleasurable position of selecting a new site for next year. Once we do, we'll mow it to reduce the seed bank of exotic annuals in preparation for next winter's planting

Native grass was planted in the Marshall area of Shell Ridge in February and early March. Recent checks while watering indicate good success. We'll need to water all spring and perhaps some into the summer, but after that they should be independent.

We have continued to collect and propagate new species. A high percentage of our elderberry cuttings rooted successfully and we have transferred them to real soil. We germinated and planted buckeye seedlings – a high value species for butterflies – in Lime Ridge North. We learned that while buckeyes germinate quickly, bay trees take months. After losing last year's toyon crop to a virus, we rinsed this year's seeds in

disinfectant before planting them. So far, so good, but it's too early to tell for sure.

### Invasive Plant Control Project



Thistle control was started in early March with application of Transline in three areas of Shell Ridge, parts of the Ridge Trail, the Ginder Gap area and locally around Sutherland Drive. In the past, we experimented with mowing black mustard before it blossomed for fear of sprouting from the stump. As yet, we have not found that the stumps are sprouting new shoots. This finding will extend our mowing season for at least one month. We have observed an increase in black mustard and thistles in Lime Ridge north, so we can address that challenge any time before seeds set.

The City of Walnut Creek has a new herbicide use program which requires all applicators to be trained by County personnel and that areas to be worked be signed two days before and two days after the dates of use. We only use Roundup and Transline. Both are relatively mild herbicides. Roundup can be purchased in any hardware store, for example.

A few folks have questioned the use of any herbicides at all. We would be happy to discuss the issue with them.

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](http://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

#### OPEN SPACE FOUNDATION BOARD

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