

# Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation



Spring 2013

## Helping Raptors Help Our Gardens



*County Ag biologist Beth Slate stands near one of the 20 raptor perches she monitors.*

the Wild Wing Company in Cotati, which helped install the perches.

Even private citizens can install raptor perches to encourage predators to hang out and catch rodents that might be damaging a garden. Homeowner and Foundation member Chris Chapple, whose Rockspring Drive property in Walnut Creek abuts Shell Ridge, built and installed his own raptor perch about two years ago. “No sign of anyone using it so far,” says Chapple, who put in the perch to discourage gophers and voles from homesteading in his garden. He speculates that redwood trees on his property and across the street may be serving as raptor perches instead.

For tips on dealing with rodents and other garden pests, Beth Slate recommends the UC Davis integrated pest management website: [www.ipm.ucdavis.edu](http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu).

“This is all owl barf.”

That’s how Beth Slate colloquially describes the owl pellets she’s analyzing at the base of one of the 20 raptor perches she monitors in Walnut Creek and Concord open spaces. Owls swallow their prey whole and regurgitate what they can’t digest in the form of owl pellets.

Slate is an agricultural biologist with the Contra Costa County Department of Agriculture and one of her tasks is figuring out who uses the raptor perches and what they consume. The perches were installed in treeless areas of the open spaces, “to encourage raptors like red-tailed hawks, golden eagles, owls, and other birds of prey to utilize them to help cut down on the rodent population,” Slate says.

“You hope that by putting up artificial tree snags—that’s what those perches are—that they’ll be used by a predator that’s going to go after rodents,” Slate says. “And that will help the neighbors and open space managers reduce the population enough so that people are not forced to go out and purchase over the counter rodenticides, which are the most toxic rodenticides, the ones that are the worst for the environment.”

Is it working? When Slate finished analyzing the two owl pellets, she found that they contained “a lot of fur, plus the remains of a gopher, a vole, and a Jerusalem cricket.” Raptors 2, Rodents 0.

The perches were paid for by a grant from County Fish and Wildlife money from fines collected by Fish and Wildlife wardens—and cost about \$55 each.

They’re produced by



*Beth Slate dismantles owl pellet, finding lots of fur and some vole bones*

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## Coming Soon: New, Improved Website

Our website, [www.wcosf.org](http://www.wcosf.org), will soon have a new look, new features, new photos, and refreshed content.

First going live in 2003, the Foundation website was created by Foundation members Bill Hunt, Jerry Christopherson, Bob Brittain, and the late Jerry Fritzke. The website became a major repository of photos and articles about our Open Space and descriptions of Foundation activities. Hunt served as webmaster since the beginning and has acknowledged being burned out after nearly 10 years of writing, updating info, and adding new photos. Hunt has sought a new webmaster for the past couple of years.

“Katrina Nagle’s offer to take over the website was most welcome,” says Bill Hunt. “She and her husband

David have done a fine job of creating a fresh, attractive design that will inform and impress visitors to our website.”

Nagle, also the Foundation’s Board Secretary, acknowledges that “neither David nor I had been formally trained in the language and art of website design, so we learned as we went along. The new design has a different flow to the organization and brings with it updates to our current and past restoration projects.” There’s also a Google calendar to show upcoming Foundation events, an interactive map feature and lots more.

The Foundation extends thanks to Bill Hunt for presiding over the website for a decade, and welcomes Webmistress Nagle and the new website.



*Bill Hunt, one of the founding creators of the Foundation website, which went live in 2003*



*Katrina Nagle, with husband David, is the new webmaster for the WCOSF website.*

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## Mayor’s “Spotlight” Features Restoration Projects

Walnut Creek Mayor Cindy Silva’s popular “Second Saturday Spotlight” series, set for April 13, features some of the Foundation’s restoration projects near the Sutherland Gate of Shell Ridge and at nearby Indian Creek Pond. Second Saturday Spotlight gives participants “behind the scenes” tours of Walnut Creek programs.

Foundation members will guide visitors to restoration sites, explain the process of collecting seed and planting and nurturing native grasses and other plants, trees, and shrubs, along with weed abatement techniques.

Scheduled for 9 to 10:30, the program will be followed by an optional hike along Indian Creek Trail.



## Annual Bird Walk Set for May 5th

The Open Space Foundation's annual Walnut Creek Spring Bird Walk is set for Sunday, May 5 from 8:00 a.m. to noon at Lime Ridge South. No guarantee you'll see a burrowing owl like the one in this photo captured by amateur ornithologist and photographer David Hancock at Lime Ridge North. But the annual bird walk, led by Maury Stern and assisted by Foundation Advisory Board members Harvey Ceaser and Bob Brittain, promises plenty of ornithological action.

Meet at Valley Vista staging area for Lime Ridge South Open Space (across from Boundary Oak Golf Course Clubhouse) Elevation gain: 700'. Length: 4 miles. Bring water, sunglasses, binoculars and sunscreen. Hiking boots and a hat are suggested. Everyone welcome. Moderate rain cancels.

Questions? Contact Harvey Ceaser, 925-937-1406 (Cell 925-457-5433 on 5/5 only) or Bob Brittain, 925-938-5831.



## Local High School Students Pitch In

The Foundation's Oak Habitat Restoration gurus, Dick Daniel and Ralph Kraetsch, hold regular oak maintenance work parties on selected Saturday mornings. The two have led a 20-year project to restore oaks at our open spaces, and are now doing routine maintenance of viable oaks and cleanup of failed sites. A recent Saturday saw local high school students pitch in and help.

Note to Parents: If your kids are in high school and need community service hours, why not encourage them to help us out on Open Space projects? For info, email us at: [contact@wcosf.org](mailto:contact@wcosf.org).



*Pictured from left: Nathane Tucker (Campolindo), Mila Rotershteyn (Acalanes), and Megan Zhu (Campolindo).*

### "GOING GREEN"

#### *We'll Email Your Newsletter*

If you're a regular computer user, you know that many non-profit organizations are producing their publications electronically, to save paper, save money, save time, and help save the environment. The Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation is going green too. (We'll keep printing them too, if that's your preference.)

Beginning with our 2013 Fall edition, the WCOSF newsletter will be available in pdf format, emailed directly to your inbox. If you've given us your email address, you may have already received an email from us about this. If you'd like the pdf version of the newsletter and you haven't heard from us, please send us an email to let us know: [newsletter@wcosf.org](mailto:newsletter@wcosf.org).

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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 drop us a note or email, or visit our website at [www.wcosf.org](http://www.wcosf.org). Fill out this form and mail it to: WCOSF, Box 309, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0309.

**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**

- Patron.....\$500
- Benefactor.....\$250
- Sustaining.....\$100
- Sponsor.....\$50
- Family.....\$40
- Individual.....\$25

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