



WCOSF Makes First Land Purchase Donation

If you read the Contra Costa Times, you know by now that WCOSF offered \$10,000 in matching funds to support Save Mt. Diablo's acquisition of Mangini Ranch. When the Board created the Land Acquisition Fund a year ago, we never expected to have an opportunity to help purchase land so soon. There are several reasons we decided to participate in this acquisition.

First, the property is contiguous to our Lime Ridge Open Space and is an important step in connecting Lime Ridge to Mt. Diablo State Park and other permanently protected open space. Our open space was acquired to preserve quality of life by protecting viewsheds and preventing development. Ecology was in its infancy in 1974; concepts like wildlife corridors and landscape-scale preservation had not been invented yet. Our four open space parcels were not contiguous to other open space. Shell Ridge has subsequently been connected. Sugarloaf and Acalanes will always be islands. That leaves Lime Ridge. After the Mangini acquisition is finalized, only one more transaction will be required to connect Lime Ridge to the state park.

The second reason Mangini is important is that it contains the headwaters of Galindo Creek, a year round water source. Water is scarce in Lime Ridge. Although Galindo Creek is too far away to be of use to our small animals, it will benefit the larger ones and the birds.

And third, Mangini Ranch is a corridor for Alameda whipsnakes. We know we have whipsnakes in Lime Ridge and we take very seriously our responsibility to be good stewards for this endangered species. We want to be sure that our population remains connected with the larger population to maintain both its viability and genetic diversity. Acquiring Mangini Ranch is an important step toward that goal.

And the final touch: As we went to press, Gary Bogue announced that all our funds have been matched and the fundraising goal has been reached. Now the cycle begins again, because we must replenish the Land Acquisition Fund to be ready for the next opportunity. Please consider making a donation to the fund along with your regular membership dues.

Manager's Report

The Borges Ranch has recently completed improvements to a couple of long time features which had been suffering from age related difficulties. Bob Pond at Hanna Grove had been leaking water for a long time and in order to keep the water level high enough to support the aquatic life, the Open Space staff pumped well water into the pond during the summer. With the addition of flush toilets at Hanna Grove and increasing visitor use the amount of water used from our well increased markedly. Methods of sealing the pond were investigated and the decision was made to purchase bentonite, a natural material found in Texas and Oklahoma, which expands greatly by absorbing water. Bob Pond was sealed in early October and approximately 40,000 gallons of water was added to begin the sealing process. We expect winter rains will complete the job and we hope for success by next summer.

Also completed in October was a replacement for the Borges Ranch windmill. A contractor constructed the windmill from drawings and reinforced the base area with additional concrete. The hand water pump was retained for use by visitors and the old fan blade was installed on top. Just as the original look of the Ranch has been restored we are again welcoming classes of school children to experience the sights and sounds of early day Walnut Creek.

WALNUT CREEK
OPEN SPACE EVENTS
And
HAPPENINGS



OAK PLANTING

Saturday, December 2
Saturday, December 16
Saturday, January 6
Saturday, January 27

Meet at 9:00 at the Rock Oak Road entrance to Lime Ridge North, located at the end of Rock Oak Road. Walk uphill to the right. Bring gardening gloves if you have them; we will provide the other tools. **Real rain cancels.** For information call 939-6610.

GRASS AND FLOWERS

Sunday, December 31
Saturday, January 13
Saturday, January 20

Meet at 9:00 at the Sutherland Drive entrance to Shell Ridge, located at the end of Sutherland Drive. Bring gardening gloves if you have them; we will provide the other tools. **Real rain cancels.** For information call 937-6791.

HEATHER FARM PLANTING

Saturday, December 9
Sunday, December 30
Sunday, January 14
Monday, January 15

Meet at 9:00 in the Equestrian Center parking lot in Heather Farm Park. Follow San Carlos around the bend past the lake, continue across the low wooden bridge, and turn left into

the gravel parking lot. Bring gardening gloves if you have them; we will provide the other tools. **Real rain cancels.** Additional dates are scheduled. For information check the website or call 937-6791.

PRE-SUPER BOWL BIRD WALK,
Saturday, Feb 3, 8:00 am

Sugarloaf Preserve

If Miami is for the Dolphins, then Walnut Creek is for the Birds! Join us for this yearly "Not-too-early" stroll along the headwaters of Sans Crainte Creek and into the orchard in search of our avian friends. Bring binoculars. **RAIN CANCELS.** Meet at the Ranger Station at Sugarloaf Preserve. For more information, please call Ranger Bruce Weidman, 944-5766.

EDUCATIONAL BIRDING SERIES

The Real Winter Snow Birds
Friday, Feb. 9 and Saturday, Feb. 10
Borges Ranch

and Shell Ridge Open Space

Watch the seasons change in an all new way, not by the color of the leaves on the trees, but by the type of birds passing overhead. This new program on bird identification will introduce you to our feathered friends that call our home their home during the winter months. This two day program will include a two hour classroom session on Friday night from 6 - 8:00 pm at Borges Ranch and a three hour field session in Shell Ridge on Saturday from 9:00 am-noon. The fee for the complete program is \$15.00 and class size is limited to 15 participants. Call Ranger Day Bylin at 942-0225 for more information and to register.

ONGOING EVENTS

**OLD BORGES RANCH
HISTORY TOURS**

Fourth Saturday of Each Month
2:00 p.m.

Meet at the Old Borges Ranch parking lot at 1035 Castle Rock Road. Join Ranger Dan Bylin on a tour of the historic Old Borges Ranch. A visit to this Nationally Registered Historic Site is like taking a step back in time. Learn about the Borges family that arrived in the Walnut Creek area in 1899 and the history of their family.

LIME RIDGE HIKE

Second Saturday of Each Month
9:00 a.m.

Put on your good hiking shoes, grab a water bottle, a snack, and a hat, and join this Ranger-led hike into the incredible Lime Ridge Preserve. This hike will pass through oak woodlands, grasslands, and inland scrub habitats that many animals call "home". **RAIN CANCELS.** Meet at the kiosk staging area located at the corner of Cowell and Ygnacio. Call Ranger Art Janke at 930-7731.

MONTHLY BIRD WALKS

Third Saturday of Each Month
9 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. 12/16, 1/20, 2/17
As the seasons change, so will the birds. We will see year-round residents and cool season migrants and visitors. These walks are for everyone, including first time birders. Bring binoculars, bird book, water, and wear good hiking shoes. For information on these walks, call Ranger Dan Bylin at 942-0225.

**PETS NOT PERMITTED AT
PROGRAMS OR EVENTS**



November and December are
Busy Planting Months in the
Open Space.

We can always use an extra set of hands.

Please visit our homepage for a complete
list of planting dates and activities.

Land Acquisition Fund

Contributions received since July 1, 2006.

Tim Ory and Diana Minnick

In Honor of Tom Henry and Family

Fred Garson

The Land Fund welcomes contributions for any reason or occasion. Please send contributions to the Foundation address.

FOUNDATION RESTORATION PROJECTS

Quail Habitat



Seems like every once in a while we get a new occupant in what originally was habitat designed for quail. Birders are going to have a hard time believing this one, but we now have a sora rail making its home in a pond in our fenced area at Lime Ridge North!!! The pond and cattails are typical sora rail habitat, but not in the middle of a few hundred acres of dry cattle pasture. Brian Murphy took a few pictures a month ago, and a week later it was seen again in the same place. We hope the sora rail will stay all winter, but no doubt it will leave in the spring to find companionship in a more lush marshy surrounding

New fencing is scheduled to be added to increase the habitat corridor in Lime Ridge North by the end of November. The big news, however, is that due to Brian Murphy's excellent grant request, the city council gave us a Civic Pride Grant of \$6,300. This will be enough to cover all this fencing and a large number of plants.

Seven brush piles have been added in and around the areas to be fenced. Also, three of four brush piles have been added to start a corridor from the last house on Rock Oak Road to the lower end of the new fencing. So, it looks like things are almost

in place for the brush planting. All we need now is more rain to soften the ground.

Heather Farm

During August, foundation volunteers mowed and raked the new planting site to remove as many of the weed seeds as possible. Then we put down plastic for solarizing and left it in place for six weeks. In late October we watered to germinate the remaining weed seeds. Once they are an inch or so high, we will flame them to kill them and then we'll be ready to plant.

This year we decided to concentrate on riparian species and have purchased a number of plants. We have planned a workday to remove cattails from the canal so we will have a place to put them. Once again this fall, the first graders at Sun Terrace School in Concord have planted California poppies for us. We have also started some poppies, and we'll be planting them along with the grass.

Oak Habitat

We've watered our surviving seedlings monthly and they look healthy. As readers may recall we're planting in a grazed area with few trees for the first time and are learning some difficult lessons. Of 55 original plantings we have only 15 remaining. This disap-



pointing situation resulted from cattle damage, ground squirrels and vandalism. We put fence protection on each planting. Of the 3 varieties used, only the heaviest survived rubbing by the grazing cattle. And the posts set to hold the fencing were mostly tilted to 45 to 60 degrees. This coming season's plantings will use only the heavier fencing and we'll try installing the posts deeper. With so few trees in the area cattle seem to have little to rub on except our plantings. We've also seen considerable vandalism and plan to place signs at the entrances to inform visitors of our program.

This September we found an abnormally short acorn crop in the open spaces. We found no useful valley oak acorns, perhaps a dozen blue oak acorns, but about 150 coast live oak acorns. We've planted about 25 acorns in plastic pots and will try planting them to discourage very hungry ground squirrels from digging after the planted acorns. We'll also place our protective screens deeper to discourage squirrel damage.

Native Plant Regeneration

The grass we planted at Sutherland last winter is still green, a fact attributable to the unusually wet spring. Unfortunately, that same rain prevented us from mowing this year's planting site until after the

weed seed had dropped. Chevron volunteers raked it to remove as much of the weed seedbed as possible.

Volunteers from Chevron and Wells Fargo started nearly 15,000 grass seedlings for use in Shell Ridge and Heather Farm. Since we have a higher proportion of melica this year and a significant amount of it does not germinate, we expect to have about 11,000 to plant once the rains begin. The new planting sites will be adjacent to the previous ones.

This summer we learned about more wildflower species that are present in the open space and gathered seeds from them. We have planted a number of species of flowers and some of them are growing well. Others have yet to germinate.

Weed Control Project

Last spring and summer we've been able to work on only one area in Shell Ridge and none in the other open spaces. That one area is about a quarter mile out of the Marshall Drive entrance, on the easterly (left) side. There, after mowing the black mustard we found a heavy crop of bull thistle started. We mowed that and later put Roundup on the relative few thistles that escaped the mowing.



STATE OF OUR ECOSYSTEM

Some tidbits about the state of our local ecosystem from Seth Adams of Save Mt. Diablo:

- Overall, the news is good. Many threatened and endangered species are more numerous than they used to be.
- Decline in the use of 1080 poison over the last 30 years has been one of the most important factors in many species' recovery. Much of this has to do with ground squirrels. They are an important prey species and their burrows provide shelter for many other animals, including rare ones. For example, tiger salamanders estivate there.
- Badgers are present again at Los Vacqueros and Black Diamond Mines. They are a grassland species and given time will probably work their way back to us. There is also a disjunct population in the Tassajara area.
- Ponds that dry up in the summer favor red-legged frogs over bullfrogs because bullfrog tadpoles take two years to mature.
- Alameda whipsnakes live in chaparral, as is generally known, but they use it in ways most people would not expect. One individual was observed hunting by moving across the tops of the bushes rather than on the ground. Another was photographed 20 feet up in a tree, unfortunately eating a lesser goldfinch, another species of concern.
- The king snake population is declining.
- They collected seeds from the Mt. Diablo buckwheat last year and have propagated them successfully.

Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation
P.O. Box 309
Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0309

Non-Profit Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
Walnut Creek, CA
Permit No. 981

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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