

Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation



Fall / Winter 2009

A Message from the President

We've been busy in the past few months as the articles in this newsletter document. We continue to restore oak habitat, riparian habitat and the Nature Area in Heather Farm Park. It's time to renew your membership and support our work. If you are able to volunteer on our projects, mark that on your membership form and supply your email address. We'll keep you informed of opportunities. If you think a friend, a neighbor or a family member might like our work, let them know about the Foundation.

The City of Walnut Creek is soliciting input on city priorities in a time of required budget cuts. If you care about the future of Walnut Creek's Open Space, you should add your input. You can find out more about this project at the city web site at <http://www.walnut-creek.org/>. Look for "Drop in to weigh in on City goals". Here is an excerpt from the project description:

Come to City Hall's 1st floor training room at any of the times listed below and "invest" a symbolic \$500 among the goals and sub-goals you feel are most important.

- Bill Hunt

Dates and Times to Drop by City Hall:

Monday, Nov. 30, 4 - 8 p.m.

Tuesday, Dec. 1, 7:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Wednesday, Dec. 2, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Thursday, Dec. 3, 4-8 p.m.

Sunday, Dec. 6, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

HEATHER FARM NATURE AREA AND OPEN SPACE RESTORATION

Heather Farm: We will be planting a variety of native plants in the Nature Area this winter - bunchgrass, poppies and other flowering plants, trees and shrubs. We will be working with students from local schools and other volunteers on 12/13, 1/9, 1/24 and 2/6.

First and Third Wednesday Work Groups: These groups work from 9am until 11:30am on the first and third Wednesday mornings of each month to do tasks related to habitat restoration. On any given day, we might be weeding in an area we have planted or intend to plant, monitoring and maintaining previous plantings, watering plants or helping to measure changes in our open space. The work will take place in Walnut Creek's Open Space areas and in the Nature Area in Heather Farm Park. The location will vary depending on the day's activity.

Send us an email at BillH@wcosf.org to get on our email list. Before each work day, we will send an email describing what we will be doing and where to meet. There is no obligation to attend all the events. You may come when it fits your schedule and the day's work suits you.

OPEN SPACE MANAGER'S REPORT

Challenging Times for the Walnut Creek Open Space Division

2009 has been a very challenging period for the staff thereafter. One temporary worker has supplemented the of the Walnut Creek Open Space Division. For many maintenance staff but many projects have not been years the 2,704 acres of Open Space and all the paved addressed due to the lack of staffing. trails in the city have been operated by a staff of three While the permanent staff are beginning to return to Rangers and three Landscape Maintenance Workers. full duty the economic picture has not improved. Many When one of the maintenance workers retired just over thanks go out to the volunteers who have helped keep a year ago the city froze the position due to financial things running during these difficult times. As staff must constraints. In 2009, two of the three rangers were prioritize the areas where they spend limited time we absent for extended periods due to medical issues and ask your indulgence and for your support. We all remain one of the remaining maintenance workers missed half committed to protecting the natural resources and the year on injury leave and remained on light duty working together we hope for a return to better times.

- Dan Cather

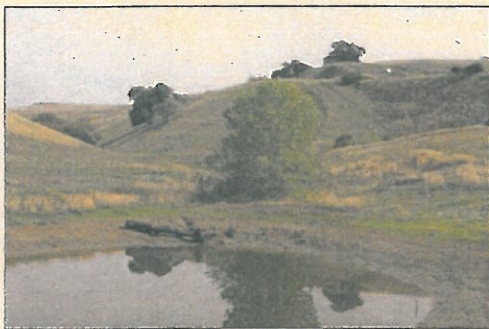
BAYBERRY POND - ONE YEAR LATER

The Bayberry project is a year old now, a good time to take stock. The grass, flowers, shrubs, and trees we planted last winter came through their first summer in good shape. The plants are healthy and there were fewer losses than anticipated. As we start through the cycle again, we are finding fewer weeds. We continue to see new animal species visit the pond, especially birds.

One of the big questions after Bayberry Pond was deepened was how far into the year would the water last? The answer was late July. Based on experience in Shell Ridge, this is long enough to support the breeding cycle of red-legged frogs – very good news indeed. To provide habitat for western pond turtles, another declining species we want to attract, Ranger Art Janke has installed a log in the pond to provide a turtle basking place. Water birds drop by the pond, but there isn't enough habitat to support them yet.

The big October storm filled the pond almost to the brim and unfortunately also caused some erosion at the inflow point. Apparently this happens only in big storms since we didn't see it last winter. We are looking for ways to mitigate the problem.

Things have gone well this first year. We have already done enough to make a difference. With the addition of more plants and as existing vegetation grows larger, we hope even more animals will come to Bayberry Pond.



Bayberry Pond after October 2009 storms



Two-year old toyon at Bayberry Pond



Ranger Art Janke's turtle log

WALNUT CREEK WILDLIFE CORRIDOR - A VISION COMPLETE



Matt Duncan and Griffin Ormond

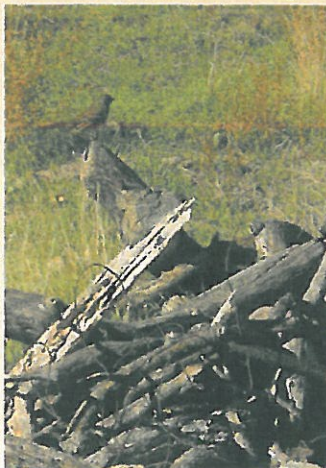
Over a decade ago, Bob Wisecarver began work in the Walnut Creek Open Space between the Borges Ranch corrals and Twin Ponds. He envisioned a wildlife corridor in this part of the open space for the many birds, reptiles and mammals that call this area home. Bob's main focus was Quail Habitat, and improving the habitat for quail also benefited other creatures. With financial help from the Foundation, Bob and a number of volunteers installed fencing (to keep the grazing cattle out) and planted a variety of trees, bushes and vines in the area which now provides refuge to many birds, rabbits and reptiles. Bob began building brush piles from Bull Pond towards Twin Ponds. He passed away in May 2008, before the project was complete.

Foundation members Brian Murphy and Tim Ory have been carrying on Bob's work. "To finish the wildlife corridor between Twin Ponds and Borges Ranch we will need to build brush piles to

aid the movement of small wildlife from one area to the other," noted Brian Murphy. In early November of this year with the help of the McDaniel Callahan Real Estate Team (brush delivery) and two De La Salle students, Matt Duncan and Griffin Ormond, the brush piles were assembled and now extend



Brush delivery



An early visitor to the brush pile

from Borges Ranch to Twin Ponds completing Bob Wisecarver's vision. By the time the last brush pile was in place, the first two piles were already being visited by song birds. It took half a day to haul the material to the sites, a couple of hours to assemble the material into brush piles and only minutes for them to be discovered by these song birds.



Native Plant Nursery's "Tuesday Group"

LET A THOUSAND NATIVES BLOOM

Where can you find a native plant nursery in Walnut Creek with thousands of seedlings poking their green heads out of the soil, grateful to be alive and well? At the newly-completed Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation nursery behind the City's Civic Arts Center at the corner of North Wiget Lane and Ygnacio Valley Road. The modest structure is the brainchild of long-time WCOSF Board member Lesley Hunt. Funding to purchase the materials for the nursery came from a grant made by the Contra Costa County Fish and Wildlife Committee.

The nursery was built by Hunt's team, dubbed *The Tuesday Group*; a gang of hard-working volunteers who meet every Tuesday morning. The group collects seeds of our native plants from various Walnut Creek Open Space locations then plants and nurtures them prior to putting them back in the ground from whence they came. The team gathers seeds from all of Walnut Creek's open spaces - Lime Ridge, Shell Ridge, Acalanes, and Sugarloaf - harvesting a variety of native grasses, plus seeds from a range of trees, plants, and shrubs such as buckeye, willow, cottonwood, toyon, manzanita, coyote brush, deer weed, and scores of wildflowers.

The 11 volunteers who make up The Tuesday Group have donated hundreds of hours to the nursery project. The project leader, Don Mount, a local landscaping and irrigation contractor, has generously donated his labor and considerable expertise in constructing all facets of the nursery from design, excavation and irrigation to fencing and bench-making.

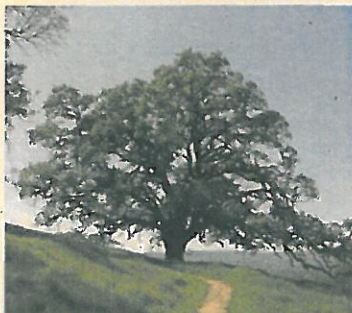
The WCOSF Native Plant Nursery will be the site for propagation of thousands of native plants which will be planted at open space locations in Walnut Creek for the enjoyment of our residents and to ensure the diversity of the plants and wildlife that call these preserves home.

Want to join in the fun? Visit our website at wcosf.org, or contact Lesley Hunt by email, lesleyh@wcosf.org.



Tuesday Group workers install fencing around the nursery site

OAK RESTORATION PROJECT - 18 YEARS AND COUNTING



This year the Foundation marks the 18th year of oak restoration and the results have been impressive. Even so, there are still many areas in need of more oak trees, particularly those areas which have been grazed over the years by cattle.

Acorn collection for this year was complete in early September. After collecting the acorns we built screen cylinders for planting in early November. The planting season is currently in full swing and will go until late January. In April and May we will check the plantings for seedling success.

We can always use more volunteers in this effort. It is truly satisfying to follow the acorn from planting to seedlings, then saplings and finally trees. If you would like to join us, please check out the activity schedule on the foundation website, www.wcosf.org. All are welcome to join in this project.

PREDATOR PERCHES IN LIME RIDGE NORTH AND BORGES RANCH



Open Space visitors have noticed the installation of new raptor perches at two Open Space sites - Lime Ridge North along the Ygnacio Canal Trail and the pastures around Borges Ranch in Shell Ridge.

The County Agriculture Department received a grant to erect raptor perches in areas known to have an over population of ground squirrels. The bait many people use to control squirrel populations will soon be labeled as a "caution" pesticide and its distribution will be more restricted. The perches will encourage raptors to provide natural predation on squirrels and other pest species. County Agriculture will be monitoring the number of raptors, the change in the numbers of observed pest species, and the change in the amount of pesticide sold. This project is important to Bayberry Pond because it benefits both predators and prey by removing poison from the ecosystem.

- Nancy Dollard, Lesley Hunt

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

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RETURN SERVICE
REQUESTED

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.

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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