

Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation



Winter 2009

A MESSAGE FROM THE OUTGOING PRESIDENT

My two years as President were very exciting and passed all too quickly. We accomplished many things during these two years.

Mangini Ranch: we contributed \$10,000 to Save Mount Diablo for the Mangini Ranch acquisition. We are also working with a neighborhood group to get protection for a highly visible piece of private land that many mistakenly think is part of our open space.

Shell Ridge: Bob Wisecarver Quail Habitat Restoration Area. Before the area was named by the City of Walnut Creek after our former Board Member who started this restoration activity, we cleaned up the area by removing a lot of old trash and creosote wood beams, and removing 3 flat-bed trailers. The foundation planted some acorns in 2007 and will be planting some willows later this winter. We also started to extend the potential quail habitat from Borges Ranch to Twin Ponds and planted about 20 acorn sites at Deer Lake.

Lime Ridge: we protected some additional area from grazing and continued planting acorns, willows and other native plants to provide beneficial habitat for wildlife. At Bayberry Pond, we dug out the silted wildlife pond, removed non-native plants, and planted both acorns and buckeyes. This will provide enhanced habitat for wildlife.

Two new plants were discovered on Lime Ridge. We coordi-

nated with the City, Save Mount Diablo, and the California Native Plant Society to protect the newly-discovered species.

North Acalanes Open Space: we fenced in a small area designated by the ranger to protect the small oak seedlings from grazing and enable them to grow into mature oak trees.

Sugarloaf: we planted about 20 acorn sites at a heavily grazed area. Overall, the foundation watered about 140 acorn sites during the 2008 summer and, hopefully, all will become, with time, mature oak trees.

We also successfully opposed the construction of a new communications tower in the open space. The experience teaches us how important the Foundation is to the proper management of our open space areas. Just recently, the Foundation reached a compromise with the City that will enable the tower to be built on an existing structure.

I continue to be impressed by how diligent the members of the Foundation are in preserving and protecting our precious open space areas. I am proud of the work that the members of the Foundation did over the last two years, and consider it a privilege to serve the Foundation as its President. I look forward to continuing to help the Foundation with habitat restoration projects, and I also hope to see you out in our open space areas!

Bob Simmons

OPEN SPACE MANAGER'S REPORT

30+ years after the establishment of the Open Space most users realize that times have changed. More people have discovered our sites and some recreational pursuits, like mountain bikes and paint ball guns, were not activities that the public engaged in when the Walnut Creek Open Space was formed. Staff has relied on educating the public through the posting of regulatory signs, one-on-one public relations activities and the issuing of written warnings to enforce municipal codes and policies and procedures. The time has come to give Ranger staff an additional tool to use in enforcement.

This summer staff was trained by the Walnut Creek Police Department in city policy and procedure for writing citations and for working closer with the police in enforcing municipal code violations in the Open Space. All Rangers have previously completed POST (Peace Officers Standards and Training) PC832 training so this training served as both a refresher and will help staff work more cooperatively with Walnut Creek police personnel.

One-on-one education and the posting of signs will continue to be important tools that Rangers will use to make the Open Space a safe, enjoyable recreation area. Rangers will use their experience and judgment to select the proper tool to address the specific infraction. If you have any questions about this change in procedure, please don't hesitate to contact staff.

Dan Cather

THE RESTORATION OF BAYBERRY POND

The formal Bayberry Pond restoration project in Lime Ridge North was launched last summer with a combination of Foundation and Civic Pride Grant funds to deepen the pond. For a couple of years we had planted acorns and mowed the mustard there. We also gathered seeds of various native plant species from Lime Ridge as part of our general activities. Then the July 4 fire burned part of the area and the stage was set.

The Foundation has done several substantial restoration projects – oak planting, quail habitat – but they have been focused on a single element. Bayberry is the most comprehensive project we have undertaken and it required a more formal approach. We formed a committee to plan it. First we inventoried the native plants and animals that were present. Then we researched what new animals we could attract by enriching the habitat. We were especially looking for Species of Concern that we could help. Next we created our planting plan. The area inside the fence (roughly an acre) will be restored primarily as riparian habitat but there will also be elements of chaparral and grassland. As a final touch we laid out a path for visitors. Throughout this process we worked with the Open Space staff and benefited from their expertise, especially Supervising Ranger Nancy Dollard (path) and Ranger Dan Bylin (birds).

After some delay we got a Fish & Game permit and the bulldozer operator deepened the pond the week before Thanksgiving. A few days later it rained enough to create a puddle in the bottom about two yards square. It looked as though the pond was going to hold water well.

Meanwhile, we got to work removing the weeds in the pond area so the bulldozer wouldn't spread the seeds when it came. Then we weeded tiny mustard plants from our first planting area where students would be planting native grasses on our big volunteer work days. We have tried a variety of weeding methods and are waiting to see which ones work best.

And finally the payoff for all this preparation – since the winter rains began, we have been planting acorns, buckeyes, native grasses, toyon, and other things to start establishing this new habitat.



The bulldozer begins to deepen the pond



Volunteers plant native grasses



Compacting weeds prior to bagging



The newly deepened pond holds well-water (12-22-08)



After some much needed rain, the pond is full (2-9-09)

Heather Farm Habitat Project



On January 18, students from Monte Vista High School CSF chapter helped us remove non-native mustard, thistles and black locust shoots. It was hard work but everyone did their part well. On Martin Luther King Day, we planted grasses, poppies and buttercups in previous years' areas with members of Joan Tomasini's youth group. After being flooded out by a water leak in January in this winter's prepared planting area, we were finally able on February 1 to plant native grass, poppy seedlings and buttercups with both Monte Vista students and Joan Tomasini's group.

Western Bluebirds and the Oak Habitat Restoration Project



Three years ago the Oak Habitat Restoration group started planting oaks in North Lime Ridge, a vast grassland with few oaks. Because the area is also used for cattle grazing, the group protects the plantings with enclosures. These oak enclosures have been discovered by grassland perch-feeding birds, specifically the Western Bluebird.

Bluebirds are being seen more frequently in Lime Ridge North because our habitat restoration work gives them more places to perch and hunt. However, they will not become permanent residents unless they have somewhere to nest and there are very few old trees with the cavities the birds need. The Foundation would like to put up some bluebird nest boxes to help them. The boxes must be monitored every two weeks for about three months in the spring. Monitors keep records on nesting activity and fledging success. Lime Ridge

South also needs someone to monitor boxes there if you prefer that location. If you would like to help or get more information, please call Brian Murphy at 937-8835.



Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation Spring Bird Walk



The foundation's annual spring bird walk will be held on Saturday, April 25th at 8:30 AM. Join Maury Stern for a four mile walk on Lime Ridge to view birds and spring flowers. The walk will start from the kiosk at the parking area at the end of Valley Vista Rd., across from the Boundary Oak Golf Course Clubhouse, and climb 700 feet to the transmission tower atop Lime Ridge and then return to the parking area about noon. Bring binoculars, sunshade and water. Hiking boots recommended. Rain cancels.

Information: Contact Harvey Ceaser, 937-1406

UPCOMING OPEN SPACE PROGRAMS SPONSORED BY THE CITY OF WALNUT CREEK

Beginning Birding Program, Hummingbirds, Saturday, March 21, 9:00 AM

Ranger Dan Bylin will meet you at Old Borges Ranch to search for the three species of hummingbirds that frequent the ranch in the early spring. Along the way you will also learn about the six species that can be found in Contra Costa County.

Ancient Ways Saturdays, Saturday, March 21, 10:00 AM

Ranger Bruce Weidman will be at Howe Homestead to share games that originated thousands of years ago. This program is appropriate for anyone ten years and older.

Old Borges Ranch Tour, March 28, April 25 and May 23 at 2:00 PM

Join Ranger Dan Bylin on a tour to explore the old Borges Ranch. Explore the National Register of Historic Places buildings and learn about life on a ranch 100 years ago.

Moon Stalkers – Night Hikes In Shell Ridge, Friday, May 8, 8:00 PM and in Sugarloaf, Saturday, May 9, 8:00 PM

Join Ranger Bruce Weidman 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. Reservations are required for all participants. Friday, May 8, meet at the end of Snyder Lane. Saturday, May 9, meet at the end of Youngs Valley Road

SAVE THE DATE....June 13th is Heritage Days at Old Borges Ranch. 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

For more information about these programs please call 943-5899. Reservations are required for all programs if you are bringing a group of five or more. Dogs are not permitted at any City programs. Please carry water, wear a hat and sturdy hiking shoes. Rain cancels most programs.

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

Non-Profit Rate
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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

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