



Bobcat at Round Valley Regional Preserve, Brentwood. Scott Hein photo (heinphoto.com)

Bobcats: Common, Yet Seldom Seen

Bobcats (*Lynx rufus*) are relatively common in Walnut Creek's open spaces, as they are across the country, and yet few of us set eyes on them, even if we're inveterate hikers. They are quiet, cryptically colored, and, like housecats, have both a keen sense of smell and keen eyesight. So it was a surprise to Ranger Bruce Weidman, a ranger for 20 years at Sugarloaf Open Space, when he walked out of his house one January morning this year and spotted a bobcat sitting only a few feet away, its back turned, and "staring intently at the creek." Weidman slipped back into the house to grab his camera, but the cat vamoosed in the meantime. He'd never before had such a close encounter, he says, nor one when he had approached a cat unseen.

Often Mistaken for Mountain Lions

Bobcats range in color from gray to brown, weigh between 15 and 30 pounds, and have black-tufted ears and a short tail. But it's easy to think you've mastered these distinguishing details, and very difficult to bring

them all to bear when you see a short flash of cat-like movement in the bushes—which explains why bobcats are often mistaken for mountain lions (*Puma concolor*), particularly in areas like ours, where good wildcat habitat lies literally next door to our own homes. But mountain lions are much rarer, shyer, and more elusive. Ranger Weidman has never spotted one in his 35-year career, all of it in the Bay Area, he says, but he's sometimes seen bobcats present themselves in full view of open space visitors at special events. At a distance.

Supremely Adaptable

Bobcats are supremely adaptable. They'll eat almost anything they can catch: insects, birds, rodents of all sizes and shapes, hares, rabbits, skunks, and even deer on occasion. They're also able to make their homes in widely divergent environments: woodlands, meadows, swamps, deserts, barnyards, and—sometimes—backyards. In turn, they're a potential dinner for coyotes and mountain lions, with coyotes being

(continued on page 2)

Looking Back

Almonds and Barley Grow at Rancho San Miguel

(In his volume, Ygnacio Valley 1834-1970, George Emanuels describes the rich, productive agricultural land south of Ygnacio Valley Road.)

In 1882, bare valley farm land, the best, sold for as high as \$75 an acre. Less desirable land on the valley floor changed hands as low as \$50. Only thirty years earlier many sales by Californios were at \$5. Whatever its price, farmers found every acre adaptable to some crop, and enterprising, knowledgeable agriculturists made the most of its fine qualities.

While Edmund Randall had earlier acquired some 4,000 acres, much of it hill land, he farmed 672 acres of fine soil in the 1880s; his property extended south of Ygnacio Valley Road and west and south from present day Walnut Avenue. After pasturing 180 acres for several years, Randall planted barley on it in 1884. That season he threshed a record 22 sacks of grain per acre, 3,960 sacks in all. He planted a large piece in almonds which did well. Seventy years later his orchard still grew nuts; they were growing in 1955 when Joseph Eichler bought the property, tore out the trees, graded the land, and laid down pavement, pipes, and wires in building his subdivision, Rancho San Miguel.

Your Letters

We love hearing from our readers. If you have comments on our stories, or questions about the Open Space and the Foundation, write to us at P.O. Box 309, Walnut Creek, 94597, or by email: contact@wcosf.org.

Parties at Sutherland



Partying at Fossil Hill— Students from Las Lomas Eco-Action Club and Fremont’s Irvington High help prepare the soil for planting 10,000 natives.

David Ogden photo

The many work parties with varying crews at the Sutherland/Fossil Hill area of Shell Ridge have been hosted by restoration project leader Phil Johnson. Participants number from one to nearly 50 with that largest number representing the Eco-Action Club members from Las Lomas High School.

Additional student volunteers come from Northgate High School and Irvington High School in Fremont

who join other volunteers with the shared objectives of ground preparation and planting of 10,000 artemisia (California sage), *Eschscholzia*

californica (California poppy), *Penstemon heterophyllus*, *Asclepius stipa melica californica*, *Achilla millefolium* (yarrow), and *Monardella villosa* (coyote mint) seedlings.

Between the soggy days of December and the perpetual sunshine of January, conditions have varied considerably and Phil has adjusted the tasks accordingly. “We try, particularly in a drought year, to get everything

planted by mid-January,” he says, so the schedule is really tight. Flexibility is essential when the ground alternates between uber-sticky which means cleaning off the dibble every couple of holes to a light crust, so easy to work with a hula hoe.

Sunny days are perfect for taking out the weedy mustards and obnoxious exotics that impede the spread of native plants. Other good news is that the seedlings of last year’s plantings are already doing well without supplemental water. Many have done so well, in fact, that they have made babies on their own, in some cases in the thousands, with only the natural winter rains.

Check our website and elsewhere in this newsletter for work party dates. Volunteers welcome!

—Karen Van der Veer



CALIFORNIA POPPY (*Eschscholzia californica*)
Bill Hunt photo

A Paean to Poppies

“There is one California wild flower that every Californian, however unobserving, knows and loves, as the Briton his daisy or the Irishman his shamrock, and that is the native poppy or *Eschscholtzia*. Poets apostrophize it; artists paint it and craftsmen work it into their handiwork; it is sown in gardens and tradesmen employ it as a mark for their merchandise.

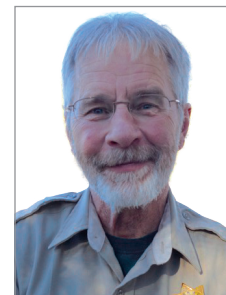
“Every spring millions of its blossoms are brought indoors and set in vases and

bowls, where it illuminates the rooms of half of California with the glow of imprisoned sunshine. To a degree that can be said of no other State device, it is the floral emblem of the Commonwealth—not a token voted by a little knot of flower enthusiasts, but the spontaneous choice of a whole people, who love it and admit it into their daily life.”

—Charles Frances Saunders, 1914

From *California’s Fading Wildflowers: Lost Legacy and Biological Invasions*, by Richard A. Minnich (Culled by Foundation Board member Phil Johnson.)

(Bobcats, continued from page 1)



Sugarloaf Ranger
Bruce Weidman
Staci Hobbet photo

the larger threat. Not only will coyotes attack bobcats, but they compete for the same kinds of prey. “Coyotes can drive bobcats out,” says Weidman.

In Walnut Creek’s open spaces, that hasn’t happened. Once, at an open space event at Borges Ranch, says Weidman, he and fifteen visitors watched as a bobcat came into view carrying a squirrel in its mouth—followed by a coyote. “The bobcat very calmly, without rushing at all, climbed a tree,” Weidman says. The coyote sniffed the ground under the tree, looked up, and walked on.

—Staci Hobbet

Join Us For A Wildflower Walk

There are scores of native wildflowers that appear each year in our open spaces, and one purpose of the Open Space Foundation is to preserve and nurture them. We also like to show them off. Although wildflowers bloom throughout the year, spring is the traditional beginning of the blooming season.

Long-time Foundation board member Bill Hunt will lead a walk in Shell Ridge leaving from the Sutherland Gate and guiding wildflower aficionados around the Fossil Hill loop at 9 a.m. on Saturday, March 21. Meet at the end of Sutherland Drive, off Walnut Boulevard. If you're planning to join us, please send an email to contact@wcosf.org and let us know how many are in your group.

In April, Lesley Hunt—yes, they're related—will lead another wildflower walk at Acalanes Ridge Open Space, date to be determined. Check our website for details, wcosf.org.

David Ogden photos



Amsinckia (FIDDLENECK),
Sugarloaf.



Sidalcea malviflora, (CHECKER MALLOW),
Acalanes Ridge.



Lithophragma (WOODLAND STAR),
Shell Ridge.

Upcoming Work Parties

Except for Deer Lake, all work party hours are 9 a.m. to noon.

More info: contact@wcosf.org

March 2015

March 8, 2015—Indian Valley Pond

March 14, 2015—Sutherland Area

March 28, 2015—Sutherland Area

April 2015

April 4, 2015—Indian Valley Pond

April 11, 2014—Sutherland Area

April 18, 2014—Deer Lake, **1pm to 4pm**

April 25, 2014—Sutherland Area

Going Green: Electronic Newsletter Available

You can view our newsletter on your favorite mobile device or computer. We post it on our website (wcosf.org), and we'll be happy to send you a PDF version as well. For the PDF, just send an email to newsletter@wcosf.org.

What's Ahead for Restoration Projects

Foundation volunteers carry out restoration projects in our open spaces all year. Here's what's planned for 2015.

Open Space Foundation Nursery

A new monthly group is dedicated to planting and maintenance efforts at our Native Plant Nursery. The group meets the 2nd Monday of the month and has been busy preparing and propagating plants to be used in all of our restoration projects.

Wildlife Habitat Restoration

Efforts to create and improve wildlife habitats and corridors continue in 2015. Previous successes with chaparral such as black sage, *Malacothamnus* (bush mallow), and California sage are still thriving, creating ideal areas for wildlife movement, resting, nesting, feeding, and sheltering.

Indian Valley

In 2015 this project will focus primarily on the pond itself and the area adjacent to the pond that recently burned in an unexpected fire event. Efforts in the fire zone will include test plots, seeding of various natives and weeding around existing stands of native wildflowers to help them compete against non-native plants trying to grow in the area.

Heather Farm

In the past couple of years several things have been done to enhance the Heather Farm Lake's habitat values such as the installation of floating islands, turtle basking logs, and wood duck boxes. Over the past winter, volunteers planted native grass and soap root.

Deer Lake

Over the winter volunteers from Mount Diablo Interpretive Association (MDIA) helped to remove debris uncovered by the drought-induced low water levels at Deer Lake. Planting native grasses, *Epilobium*, acorns, and buckeye seeds in strategic restoration areas on the west side of Deer Lake have already begun and will continue on throughout the year.

Other restoration sites include the Sutherland/Fossil Hill area (detailed elsewhere in this newsletter) and Bayberry Pond, site of major native plant projects. Volunteers always welcome. Check our website or send an email to volunteers@wcosf.org.



PO BOX 309
WALNUT CREEK, CA 94597-0309

Non-Profit Org
U.S. Postage

PAID

Walnut Creek, CA
Permit No. 981

RETURN SERVICE
REQUESTED

 **Yes, I want to help protect and preserve Walnut Creek's Open Spaces.**

We invite you 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. Interested? Drop us an email at volunteer@wcosf.org, visit our website at www.wcosf.org, or fill out the form below 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) _____

PATRON-\$500 BENEFACTOR-\$250 SUSTAINING-\$100 SPONSOR-\$50 FAMILY-\$40 INDIVIDUAL-\$25

I WOULD LIKE TO VOLUNTEER TO: MAINTAIN OAKS PLANT NATIVES CREATE WILDLIFE CORRIDORS HELP WITH OUTREACH

**Walnut Creek Open Space
Foundation Newsletter**

Editorial Team:
David Ogden, Katrina Nagle, Linda Judd,
Karen Van der Veer, Staci Hobbet

Design and Production:
Lorianne Mayo, Mayo Design

Printing: Craig Tanner,
City of Concord Printing Services

Contact us: contact@wcosf.org

Website: www.wcosf.org

Visit us on Facebook



This issue of the WCOSF newsletter
has been printed on recycled paper.
© Copyright 2015 Walnut Creek
Open Space Foundation

WCOSF Governing Board

Katrina Nagle—President, **Bill Hunt**—Vice President, **Stuart Mangini**—Secretary, **Karl Snover**—Treasurer
Dick Daniel, Barney Howard, Phil Johnson, Sean Micallef, Gary Muerle, Joe Stadum, Florence Stone

WCOSF Advisory Board

Bill Barnard, Sonia Binning, Bob Brittain, Jake Bronson, Janice Bronson, Cory Carr, Harvey Ceaser,
Jerry Christopherson, Christina Hagelin, Jo Ann Hanna, Brad Heckman, Lesley Hunt, Jamie Jobb,
Linda Judd, Larry Johnson, Russ Jones, Ralph Kraetsch, Tom Lee, Connie Loosli, Carla Ludwig,
Bob Moran, Pat Moran, Brian Murphy, David Ogden, Bob Simmons, Mike Weiss