

President's Message



Bill Hunt

It's been quite a winter. The unusual amount of rain will keep our Open Space

plants healthy but it has caused serious damage to many trails in the Open Space. Repairs will require heavy equipment and the cost will require more funding than the City's Open Space Budget provides for. The Foundation may be able to help with the trail restoration efforts as volunteers and by raising money to pay for the restoration expenses.

East Bay MUD removed a water storage tank on Shell Ridge itself this winter. They have finished the removal and done some work to put the area back in order. They don't seem to have decided on the fate of this property so far. If EBMUD decides to sell the property, we will want to be sure that it becomes part of Shell Ridge Open Space rather than being developed. The Foundation may have a role to play in raising money to acquire the property in cooperation with the City of Walnut Creek.

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Rare Native Wildflower Discovered in Shell Ridge



Gilia tricolor, not uncommon but rarely seen in our area, discovered in Shell Ridge Open Space this spring. Last sighted in our area by botanist William Brewer in 1862. Photo: Phil Johnson

During the last days of April and the first week of May, 1862, William Brewer, a Yale educated botanist, camped in Walnut Creek and made a number of botanical collections, now housed in the Herbarium at Harvard.

A number of these plants, including *Limnanthes douglasii* (White Meadow Foam), *Castilleja affinis* (Indian Paintbrush) and *Trifolium fucatum* (Bull Clover) have not been seen in the Walnut Creek area since. Other plants he listed in his collection that he described as "common on the foothills", such as *Allium sera* (Jeweled Onion) and *Delphinium patens*, are now only rarely seen.

On March 8, a small group of *Gilia tricolor*, a not uncommon California wildflower, was discovered in Shell Ridge (common name, Bird's eye

gilia, or Bird's eyes). Except for a collection of it in Concord in 1875 and a collection in Clayton in 2013, the last time this plant was seen in the Diablo Valley area, including Briones, Las Trampas and Diablo Foothills, was in 1862 by William Brewer.

Plans are underway to collect seed and increase its population numbers on our Fossil Hill native plant restoration site. Here it will join the burgeoning population of *Gilia achilleaefolia*, a wildflower found only in two small patches on Shell Ridge, even though it was described by Brewer as "Common throughout the western part of the state," and *Sidalcea malvaeflora* (Checkermallow), a wildflower only recently discovered Shell Ridge Open Space.

—Phil Johnson



Storm damage in Shell Ridge—Mike Vickers, City Public Works Manager, stands thigh-deep in gully created by massive runoff from winter storms.

Storms Had Severe Impact on Open Spaces

The 2016-17 season ranks as the second wettest in 122 years of record-keeping. The first major storm of the season started on January 10th. The storm had City Public Works crews working late into the night and early morning clearing storm drains, clearing streets of mud slides and removing downed trees. As the winter season continued, so did the rain. Unfortunately, our open spaces were severely impacted. The massive amounts of water and runoff eroded trails and created over 75 mud slides.

There are approximately 60 miles of trails in the open space. More than 15 miles of trails are now in need of grading due to the extensive rutting. Much of the silt from the eroding trails and mud slides was deposited into small holding ponds throughout the open space. The silt has reduced the water holding capacity in many of the ponds, causing a negative impact to wildlife until the situation is corrected.

Due to state clean water regulations, the grading of the trails was delayed until April 15th. Restoration measures will include the grading of both single and double track trails with required erosion control methods along with the de-silting of the impacted ponds in the open space. Staff has requested the additional funding needed to make the repairs during the mid-year budget update in April.

—Mike Vickers, Public Works Manager, City of Walnut Creek



Muir Reservoir Demolished

Perched on a hilltop overlooking Indian Valley Elementary School and the Lakewood district, EBMUD's Muir Reservoir, with a capacity of 0.3 million gallons, was built in 1984 and served homes in the area until it was demolished in December, 2016. Kathryn Horn, an EBMUD community affairs representative, notes that utility officials determined that the newer and larger (3.4 million gallons) Hawthorne Reservoir, off Whitecliff Way, could provide the same level of service to the area, eliminating the need to rehabilitate the older reservoir.

The reservoir's two acre-plus property is not yet classified as surplus land, but if it is, as expected, the City would likely have first right of refusal to purchase the land. If the City does end up purchasing the land, WCOSF may contribute funds toward the purchase. The land sits in Shell Ridge and rightfully should become a part of this open space.



Dick Daniel Leaves WCOSF Board

Long-time WCOSF board member Dick Daniel retired this year. He was co-founder of the Oak Habitat Restoration Project. For two decades, he and co-founder Ralph Kraetsch marshalled scores of volunteers young and old to plant acorns on vast areas of our open spaces. Approximately 2500 plantings were made over the years, and of those, about 800 valley oaks, blue oaks, and coast live oaks remain viable.

It's unknowable how many young (and not so young) people from the Walnut Creek area were inspired by participating in these events, but many lives, along with acres and acres of natural lands were enriched, thanks to Dick's leadership.



Peregrine Team members learn the landmarks of the cliffs on the 2017 training day in February.
 Photo: Ranger Carolyn Kriso

Protecting the Peregrine Falcons

Peregrine falcons, in decline since the 1950s due to the use of DDT and other pesticides, were reintroduced to the Castle Rock area in 1989, and continue to nest there and reproduce. The nesting area is technically in Mount Diablo State Park, but it's possible to view the area from vantage points in Diablo Foothills Regional Park, near Castle Rock Recreation area.

The peregrine falcons need protection because the rocks in which they nest are very attractive to rock climbers and hikers. But the area is off-limits during nesting season, from February 1 to July 31, because the birds, if disturbed, may not complete their reproductive cycle.

Natural history docent Staci Hobbet, a longtime volunteer with the Mount Diablo Interpretive Association, in 2015 organized a group of volunteers to keep watch over the area and educate hikers and climbers who might trespass into the area during nesting season.

This year, Hobbet has again formed the "Peregrine Team" to protect the birds. Members of the team intercept hikers, typically during afternoons and weekends, who may have missed warnings about trespassing, and educate them about the reasons for closing the trails during nesting season and give them options for their routes that don't cross the closure zone.

The team can always use more volunteers. If you're interested in helping, send an email to Staci at: anastasiahobbet@gmail.com.

President's Message

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Long time board member Dick Daniel retired from the board this fall after several decades of service. Along with Ralph Kraetsch and Dan Cather, he founded the Oak Habitat Restoration Project in 1991. His leadership got a number of people involved with the Foundation and many stayed to become regular volunteers, project leaders and board members. Lesley and I started as volunteers at the beginning and we're still here. We've acquired lots of good friends working with other volunteers and felt that our efforts were worthwhile. Every volunteer organization needs leaders who inspire others to be involved with their community. Thank you, Dick for all your efforts.

Speaking of volunteers, how about coming to one of our habitat restoration events this spring? If habitat restoration isn't a fit for you, check our website this spring for other volunteer opportunities.

—Bill Hunt

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.





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I would like to join the Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation

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

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