

President's Message



Bill Hunt

Volunteers Make the Foundation Work

The Foundation is an all-volunteer organization. We have no paid staff and we rarely pay outside individuals. Without volunteers, the Foundation would not be doing restoration projects or any other work to support our open space.

We get single volunteers and groups who have never worked with us before. We arrange their work so that they can be productive the first time they come to work. Some volunteers come several times to fulfill a school or public service requirement. When they finish that requirement, they usually don't come back. We are grateful for their help.

It is those volunteers who come back time after time without any requirement that are the backbone of our projects. They become very productive and gain knowledge that helps first time volunteers become productive. Some regular

(continued on page 3)

Trails Committee Formed, Plans Trail Day April 21st

The Open Space Foundation Trails Committee—Bob Simmons, Kime Smith, David Ogden, Caedmon Bear, Barry Mendelson, and Elizabeth Hudson—has hosted five very well attended community meetings to discuss trails and trail users.

Attendees have principally been equestrians and cyclists, but some hikers have also attended. At our meeting on March 22, the Committee put forward several ideas about trail use. At the core of the ideas was a proposal for a multi-faceted pilot program that includes recommendations to (1) designate two single-track trails as open to mountain bike use, (2) create a Trail Ambassador Program to improve safety on trails, trail etiquette, and to ensure protection of natural resources near the trails, (3) improved signage, and (4) development of some metrics to measure impacts on the trails.

Finally, the committee has re-established a Trails Day, during which people volunteer their time to improve trail conditions. The Trail Day is set for April 21st and notices are being placed in the open space entry kiosks. We hope you'll be interested in helping on Trail Day. We will use Facebook to provide notice of any future community meetings.

—Bob Simmons

Join us for 2018 Earth Day!

Lime Ridge Open Space Trail Maintenance

Saturday April 21st



When: Saturday April 21st, 8:30—noon

Where: Lime Ridge Open Space, Montecito Rd. entrance

For more information or to sign up:

Email: wcosstrails@gmail.com or call: 925 679 5226

Sponsored by:



Poster: Caedmon Bear

Muir Reservoir Site Update

In 2017, the EBMUD informed the City that it was declaring as surplus a 2.4-acre parcel within Shell Ridge it describes as the Muir Reservoir property. EBMUD had previously removed a water tank that had been on the property for many years. The Foundation wrote to John Coleman, the EBMUD Board Member for this area, supporting the transfer to the City.

(continued on page 3)

Heading for the Hills

As we swing into spring, scores of volunteers are heading for the hills—and the valleys, ponds, swales, and trails—to help restore native plants, shrubs, and trees in our open spaces. Native plants thrive in their own environment and attract other natives—insects, birds, and other wildlife—to help our open spaces flourish. Here's a project-by-project update:

Fossil Hill

The Fossil Hill Native Plant Restoration Project is looking forward to a floriferous spring.

The California poppies are starting to flower and we expect a very good showing this year. They have multiplied by the thousands in some areas. Some of our newer introductions, such as tidy tips (*Layia platyglossa*) and popcorn flower (*Plagiobothrys*), reproduced very well from the few plants we had last year. Yarrows (*Achillea*) are also coming up by the hundreds, as well as seedlings of bush monkey flower (*Mimulus aurantiacus*). We expect a very rich and diverse show of flowers next year.

We are still playing catch-up with some of the plants wiped out by the vole invasion last year, including vinegar weed (*Trichostema lanceolatum*),

telegraph weed (*Heterotheca grandiflora*) and golden aster (*Heterotheca sessiliflora*). Some of the young perennial grasses that we had thought we had lost to voles are slowly returning from their roots. Contact philj@wcosf.org if you're interested in volunteering for this project.

—Phil Johnson

Deer Lake

The Boys Team Charity, a local organization in which teenage boys and one of their parents donates their time to support a community organization, came out on January 28 and helped us plant. We planted all of the acorns and buckeyes we had, as well as several native plants that had been grown from seed collected in the Shell Ridge Open Space.

As of the date of the newsletter, the acorns and buckeyes hadn't sprouted yet, but there were buckeyes and oaks growing from the past years' plantings in 44 of the protected sites and all three new elderberry trees were thriving. Contact bobs@wcosf.org if you'd like to get involved in this project.

—Bob Simmons

Indian Valley Pond

The Indian Valley Pond restoration project continues to progress well. After several years of focusing on the pond surroundings, this past year we concentrated on the pond itself. We were finally successful in keeping willow trees alive over the summer and now have several that are doing well, and a number of buckeye and elderberry continue to grow well.

Within the pond, we have had a good amount of success in getting rushes to grow, including toad rush, grey rush, slender rush, and finally, iris-leaved rush, which was just planted out this year. We also discovered two new species of native Mexican love grass in

the pond. These species are uncommon in our area and the pond is currently their only known population within our open space! Contact seanm@wcosf.org if you are interested in volunteering for this project.

—Sean Micallef

Oak Habitat for Wildlife

Our objective continues to be restoring of oak woodland in the Rock Oak watershed of North Lime Ridge. By early January this included planting of blue oak acorns, toyon, and coyote bush, as well as planting of black sage and coastal sage. The dry winter has meant added work of very early watering as early wilting of seedlings began. This effort will continue through the fall season of 2018. Contact Gary Muerle at 925-324-9597 if you want to help out on this project.

—Gary Muerle

Bayberry Pond

After several years of planting chaparral species at Bayberry, we have concluded that most are not happy in Bayberry's soil and we need to focus on other species. Accordingly, we'll be looking at shrubs and perennials from other habitats as we do our seed collecting this season. We have extended the work area both below and above our enclosure and planted grass and wildflowers. We should have a nice display of poppies and wine cup clarkias right near the gate in April or May.

The pond has filled, dried, and filled again. There was no amphibian breeding this year. The most noteworthy wildlife sightings have been a huge female red-tailed hawk in January and a great blue heron in March. Contact lesleyh@wcosf.org if you'd like to volunteer for this project.

—Lesley 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.



Watch Out for Snakes in the Grass



Rattler Ready – Warm weather means snakes and other wildlife are active in our open spaces. While rattlers prefer small rodents, they don't like to be stepped on or otherwise bothered. Stay safe and heed the warnings outlined below. This rattler was spotted by naturalist and photographer Dirk Muehlner in Shell Ridge, near Bullfrog Pond.

Photo: Dirk Muehlner

If you're hiking in the Walnut Creek Open Space, you should have an appreciation for all wildlife and see the benefits of our diverse populations. But that doesn't mean that you should take to the trails in the spring as if you had not a care in the world.

Snakes, notably rattlers, are present and they can be dangerous.

So what do we suggest that open space users do to be safe?

- A general rule is that tee shirt weather is a good temperature for snakes. If you're comfortable being out and about in a tee shirt, not too cold or too hot, then snakes are comfortable as well. This is only a very general rule and being alert is always the order of the day.
- For the protection of open space users and the resources, stay on authorized, maintained trails. Don't walk through high grass.
- Keep your hands and feet where you can see them at all times. No reaching into crevices or stepping over a log without looking first.
- Dogs being the curious creatures that they are means that a leash should always be at the ready to help you control your pet in case of emergencies.

—Nancy Dollard, Supervising Ranger

President's Message

(continued from page 1)

volunteers become Foundation board members after a few years. We invite people who have demonstrated a love for our open space, a willingness to work to preserve and restore it, and an ability to work cooperatively with others.

As they gain experience and knowledge, some regular volunteers develop their own projects. New projects require committed, creative leaders and an adequate supply of volunteers. Existing projects also need new volunteers to replace those who regulars who no longer participate.

I think that attracting new volunteers is the most important task the Foundation faces for its long-term health. Help ensure that the Foundation can continue to support our open space by volunteering in one of our projects.

—Bill Hunt

Muir Reservoir Site Update

(continued from page 1)

Late last year, John Coleman informed the Foundation that EBMUD was considering using the site for a communications facility. On February 28, Foundation President Bill Hunt responded with a letter describing the importance of including this site into the open space and urging EBMUD to discuss with the Foundation our concerns before making a decision on the future use of this unique property within Shell Ridge Open Space. We hope to provide you with more information in the next newsletter.



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 **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**

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Open Space Foundation

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