

## Update: Our Restoration Projects

Scores of community volunteers pitch in to plant, protect, weed, water, and otherwise maintain six Foundation open space restoration projects each year. What are they restoring? Native plants. The arrival of cattle in Contra Costa County, in the mid-1800s, also brought lots of “exotics”— non-native plants – that aggressively took over from the natives. Most of the plants we see on our hillsides are not natives. The idea behind restoring the land with native plants is to help the land and the flora and fauna that depend on it retain its equilibrium and diversity.

### Oak Habitat (Lime Ridge)

The oak habitat volunteers have been converting a grassland swale of North Lime Ridge into a blue oak forest. Progressively parts have been cultivated into planting beds by removing thick turfs of nonnative vegetation. Then sowing collections of local acorns and seeds of chaparral and other native strongly adapted plants. Thereafter effort included vigorous springtime repeated weeding and summer watering. Hard work. Yet pleasing to see the gradual return of our wildlife!

—Gary Muerle

### Deer Lake

In an examination in early March of the areas outside of the main enclosure and the elderberry enclosures, there are 23 sites with young buckeyes and 18 sites with young oaks. There is one young elderberry. There are additional plantings inside the enclosures, but they weren’t inspected on this first inspection, partly because most of those plantings were done with acorns, which haven’t sprouted yet.



Photo: David Ogden

**Fossil Hill Helpers** – Members (and leaders and friends) of Scouts BSA Girl Troop 302 gathered at Fossil Hill, Shell Ridge, recently to pull weeds and learn about the native plants there. With a mass of tidy tips (*Layia platyglossa*) in the foreground, volunteers are, left to right: Rachel, Ainsley, Sara, Fiona, Audrey, Nolan, Ginny, Jennifer and Evan.

Special thanks to the Boys Team Charity for their planting work this winter. The area will be inspected again in early April when the acorns have likely sprouted.

—Bob Simmons

### Bayberry Pond

Last fall, we discovered that the tiny creek at the top of the Bayberry drainage had a number of water-loving native plants of 3-4 species scattered along it. Since we had a few specimens of these species from appropriate sources in the nursery, we planted all we had along this creek. We also put in several elderberries and buckeyes that we had expected to plant and a sedge

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## 2018 Walnut Creek Open Space Trail Survey: Results

A web-based trails usage survey was conducted by the WCOSF in July of 2018. Members of the Foundation were contacted via both email and U.S. mail and asked to participate; notices for the general public appeared through the Foundation website and social media. In addition, the list of email addresses of all attendees of the Trails Committee Public Meetings was used to solicit survey responses.

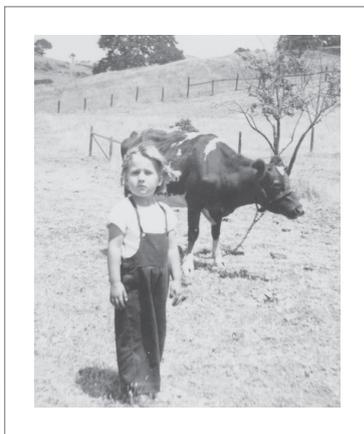
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## A Look Back at Shell Ridge in the 1950s

For little Marie Dougherty growing up in Oakland, visits to her grandparents in Walnut Creek were always special. Marie Dougherty Kecskemeti, now retired and living in Rocklin, California near Sacramento, contacted the Foundation recently and offered a remembrance of her adventures with her grandparents, Albert and Sigrid Selling. She wrote:

“In the springtime, hiking the mini alps of Shell Ridge, covered in green with wildflowers hidden among the blades of grass and inspecting lichen on the shell-encrusted limestone boulders strewn across the land, what a wondrous and beautiful time to be alive and alive we were...

“...We visited the neighbors, the Joaquins, at the ranch at the end of the road, where Donny let me ride their big



Marie Dougherty, about 6, poses with Maggie the cow, Shell Ridge in background, early 1950s.

bay horse, and Joe, Sr. let me ride his paint horse, Chita, the Lopes', where I loved to eat the ripe loquats from their trees, and Mrs. McConnell across the way, where I was amazed by her stove, a beautiful long-legged cream colored enamel one, standing there in the kitchen where we sat.”

People familiar with Walnut Boulevard in the Walnut Heights area will recognize the names Selling, Joaquin, and McConnell.

To read Marie's complete account of her adventures, please visit our website using this link:

<http://wcosf.org/enjoy/1950memories.html>

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species from south Lime Ridge that was an addition to the biodiversity we found. As the seed collection season begins, we will be looking for more species to enhance this area further.

—Lesley Hunt

#### Fossil Hill

Spring has busted out all over on Fossil Hill at the Sutherland Entrance to Shell Ridge Open Space. After 7 years, we are approaching 3.0 acres of mustard removal and native plant restoration. Every year presents its own unique combination of successes and failures and this year is no different. We have several areas where diligent mustard removal and other exotic (non-native) weed suppression combined with the introduction of local natives has resulted in beautiful wildflower colonies free from weeds. Look later this month under the two large heritage oaks on the lower slopes of

Fossil Hill for huge and pure stands of purple *Collinsia heterophylla* (Chinese Houses).

Further up slope near the rocks look for the large colony of *Eschscholzia* (California poppies) that have established themselves on their own under another heritage oak. The Mustard here used to be so thick that the deer had made a level sleeping platform hidden behind the mustard. Why the poppies are growing under a large oak tree is beyond my comprehension, but what we are trying to do here is to create an environment where the native plants can establish themselves where they prefer. Our goal is to limit the competition from the non-native weeds and to introduce local genetic material that can reproduce (or not) on their own. Come see what we have accomplished so far. Feel free to walk into the flower fields. We plan on cutting some paths later this month

for you to follow, but do watch out for rattlesnakes. They are part of the restoration effort as well.

—Phil Johnson

#### Indian Valley Pond

The focus for Indian Valley Pond is on improving the native structure in and around the pond. To that end, we have been working on planting wetland and emergent plants including three species of rushes and yerba mansa (*Anemopsis californica*) near the pond edges. These plants give native amphibians such as the western toad and Sierran treefrog places to escape and to attach their eggs. We have also been planting riparian structure around the pond including buckeye, elderberry and willow trees to provide shading for the pond and native cover for wildlife.

—Sean Micallef

# Work on Buckwheat Hill



Photo: Linda Judd

Students from Laura Spain's 3rd grade class at Springhill Elementary in Lafayette help out with weeding and planting on Buckwheat Hill, Shell Ridge.

The hill just to the left of the gate at the Sutherland entrance to the Shell Ridge Open Space is covered with almost a dozen native plants.

One of these, the California Wild Buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*),

is found in large patches here, and also hidden among the grasses along the trail on the eastern side of the hill. We are encouraging the spread of buckwheat by intensive weeding of grasses and weeds that compete with them.

The tough little buckwheat thrives in areas that are windy and hot. They bloom in late spring, flowers are on long stems, cream colored, turning to rust color in summer, and are long lasting

Volunteers from the Open Space Foundation are working on this hill, and third graders from Laura Spain's class at Springhill Elementary in Lafayette helped plant *Stipa cernua*, a native bunchgrass, and *clarkia*, a native wildflower, in February. One year old *cernua* planted last year are flourishing.

—Linda Judd

## 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](http://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](mailto:newsletter@wcosf.org).



## 2018 Walnut Creek Open Space Trail Survey: Results (continued from page 1)

Responses were obtained from 700 survey forms in approximately 72 hours between 7/8/2018 and 7/11/2018.

The survey questions gathered information relating to user demographics, utilization of the open space, negative encounters with other users, and the effect of speed differential and trail width on the user experience. Suggestions for how to improve the user experience in the Open Space were also solicited.

Some results: the most popular uses of the open space were hiking, biking, and dog walking, in that order. The scenery, exercise, and being outdoors were listed as the most popular reasons for use. Cyclists reported the largest number of negative interactions with other users with the more serious incidents mostly with hikers. 75% of equestrians had threatening experiences with cyclists. Issues with dogs not under the owner's control, however, was the second most reported problem by all groups. Survey responses regarding trail bed width indicated that about four feet was the average trail bed width people felt safe on when being passed on trails used by all groups.

Suggestions for improving the user experience tended to be mostly directed at reducing conflict which underscores the importance of finding solutions as soon as possible.

—Kime Smith, WCOSF Board Member



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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](mailto:volunteer@wcosf.org), visit our website at [www.wcosf.org](http://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**

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

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