

Open Space Restoration Projects—*An Update*

Foundation members are spearheading six restoration projects this year in our Open Spaces. Here's an update on how they've progressed and what's planned for 2014.



Daniel

Oak Maintenance—Project leader **Dick Daniel**, with cohort Ralph Kraetsch, has led several work parties this year in clean up operations—removal of unused fencing, Tubex, t-posts, and rebar from failed oak planting sites. For the past 20 years, Kraetsch and Daniel, with scores of volunteers, planted about 2500 sites throughout our Open Space with acorns; of those, about 800 grew into maturity. Now, Daniel is leading the cleanup effort. He plans to continue the cleanup this winter and into 2014. Want to help? You can contact Dick via email at: oakhabitat@wcosf.org.



Johnson

South Slope Fossil Hill Restoration—A part of the more ambitious Sutherland Open Space Entrance Native Plant Restoration in Shell Ridge, the Fossil Hill project, led by **Phil Johnson**, will involve planting thousands of seeds and native grass seedlings in an area that has been scoured of non-native weeds such as *Brassica nigra* (black mustard) and *Hirschfeldia incana* (a member of the mustard family). The planting will occur this fall, winter, and early next year. Johnson will be planning many work parties in the next few months and needs many hands to help—planting is one of the most rewarding parts of restoring our Open Space. To get in on the fun, contact Phil at: phil360@astound.net.



Micallef

Indian Valley Pond Restoration—Much of the work undertaken this year by project leader **Sean Micallef** and other volunteers involved removal—removal of mustard patches, *Torilis* (a weed which Micallef calls the “sock destroyer”), horehound, spiny cocklebur, and others. Micallef also marshaled several debris cleanup efforts, one of which involved volunteers from Chevron (see photo, page 3). These teams removed “probably thousands of pounds of concrete, metal poles and stakes, non-native wood, tires, and trash from the pond and surroundings,” Micallef reports. Later this year and into 2014, volunteers will plant hundreds of native grass plugs (seedlings), plus scores of native perennials and annuals. If you live near Indian Valley School in Walnut Creek, it's a quick trip to Indian Valley Pond. Sign up to help by contacting Sean at: skmicallef@astound.net.



Muerle

North Lime Ridge Wildlife Corridor—Project leader **Gary Muerle** and compatriots Brian Murphy and Tim Ory have worked this year in the Rock Oak Creek section of North Lime Ridge, clearing mustard and thistles and creating a wildlife corridor designed to host birds, mammals, reptiles, and other creatures to the area. They'll continue working on augmenting the existing natives like milkweed, sedge, creeping wild rye, and cottonwood and willow trees with other native plants, including: California sage, cottonwood, toyon, black sage, chemise, buckeye, monkeyflower, and others. “We're serving wildlife and human aesthetics with this project,” Muerle says. “The ideal for wildlife management is a mosaic pattern of habitats and that's what we're creating there.”



WCOSF Board member Linda Judd tells Sustainability Fair nursery visitors about the Foundation's restoration practices and native plant propagation.

Sustainability Fair Draws Nursery Visitors

WCOSF was proudly represented by the Outreach Committee at the first ever Sustainability Fair sponsored by our colleagues and nursery neighbors, the Contra Costa Master Gardeners, at their “Our Garden” facility. Despite searing temperatures, the fair reached its goal of nearly 800 attendees. About 100 guests visited the Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation Native Plant Nursery, with 60 staying for the talks by Katrina Nagle and Linda Judd, “Why Natives?” Katrina and Linda related the importance of biodiversity with its complex web of mutual dependencies, increased carbon sequestration, and the innate beauty and practicality of native plants.

Visitors also scrutinized the seed samples Lesley Hunt had prepared. Of special interest was the purple needle grass (*stipa pulchra*),

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Simmons

Deer Lake Restoration—Project Leader **Bob Simmons** has worked to restore native plants in the Deer Lake enclosure for the past several years, working in three areas. One goal is to “create a high-quality habitat area inside the large enclosure with a wide variety of native plant species”. Outside the large enclosure, Simmons has planted native trees (oaks and buckeyes) that he expects “will help support the richer habitat inside the large enclosure.” He’s also planted native grasses and nurtured a large existing milkweed population. If you want to help the Deer Lake restoration effort, contact Bob at: robertsimmons@astound.net.



Hunt

Bayberry Pond—Project Leader **Lesley Hunt** has divided the fenced pond enclosure into five planting areas, each a slightly different habitat. She says, “The enclosure at Bayberry looked like the only chance to introduce a seed source of native species for the future. Accordingly, we packed it with a wider variety of species and vegetation types than would normally be found in such a small area.”...“We’ve made a lot of progress covering the ground with natives in the last five years. We have several species of flowers including blue eyed grass, yarrow, coyote mint, verbena and others.” Hunt, leader of the Tuesday Group, which has done much of the work at Bayberry, plans to add more native grasses and forbs in the coming planting season. To help, contact Lesley at: ldhunt@astound.net.

Nest Box Survey Results for Cavity Nesters



Female bluebird on nest box with predator guard.

Editor's note: The Foundation works with the California Bluebird Recovery Program (CBRP) to provide and monitor nest boxes to bolster the populations of bluebirds and other cavity-nesting species. These species declined because there is a shortage of old trees with suitable natural cavities, but are doing better with the nest boxes as substitutes. Below is the annual summary from Bob Brittain, who heads our local project:

I have compiled data that summarizes cavity nest results for 2013. One of our goals for this year was to determine whether predator guards affect the success rates for our boxes. Of 94 total boxes, 55 had guards and 39 did not. There was about 10% greater chance of nesting in boxes without predator guards. Disappeared or unhatched egg percentage was almost identical at 13%. The percentage of dead chicks was double for unguarded

boxes. The percentage of eggs that led to fledged chicks was 80% for guarded boxes and 75% for unguarded.

My take on this is that we should continue to install guards when an animal expands the size of the entry hole. Otherwise, it doesn't seem to make much difference whether we use guards at the initial installation.

Overall we averaged 2.2 fledged birds per nest box but 2.94 fledglings per actual nest. Our numbers are down from last year but there were some adverse impacts of our cool and dry spring.

—Bob Brittain July, 2013

Sustainability Fair Continued From Page 1

which, within an hour of harvest, bends its awn 90 degrees as an effective ratchet to drill its seed like a swimming stroke into the ground.

Phil Johnson's seed ball efforts were also enriched by students, this time from Freedom High School in Oakley. These enthusiastic young people stepped right up and made scores of seed balls. Many visitors saw the truffle-size morsels and expressed strong interest in this project.

For its prominent and positive presence at the Fair, the OSF came up roses...natives, of course.

—Karen Van der Veer



Going Green

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Indian Valley Pond Cleanup

Ten hardy volunteers from Chevron helped remove debris from Indian Valley Pond recently, reporting for work on a crisp September morning (wearing white shirts in photo, right). Project leader Sean Micallef, left foreground, gives the group a history of the pond and current efforts to restore native plants and wildlife there.



Right, foreground, is Burt Bogardus, retired state park ranger, who has helped scores of cleanup projects in Mount Diablo State Park and surrounding natural lands like our open spaces. Silent partner in these efforts is the iconic Bogardus 1965 Chevrolet C 20 (left foreground), a three-quarter ton two-wheel drive pickup truck. Bogardus purchased the truck in 1975 for \$850. It's been helping him remove tons of concrete, fence posts, barbed wire, and related junk from parks, open spaces, and other natural lands ever since.

Says Burt: "Whenever I think about restoring it, or even repainting it, I realize that it would be a waste of money because then I would be constantly worrying about scratching it. In its present condition, I don't give a second thought to throwing big chunks of concrete into it. As long as I am involved in cleanup projects, I'll certainly hold onto it."

Meet Karl Snover, Volunteer Coordinator



Snover

The Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation is an all-volunteer organization. Over the years, hundreds of youth and adult volunteers have pitched in and helped plant native trees, shrubs, grasses, and flowering plants. To help get the word out about our work, we formed an Outreach Committee (Linda Judd, Katrina Nagle, and Karen Van der Veer), and to coordinate and recruit volunteers, we've appointed board member Karl Snover as our Volunteer Coordinator.

In addition to Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation, Karl is active with TaxAide, West Oakland Green Initiative, and many other Bay Area nonprofits. Karl and his wife, Michele, have lived in Walnut Creek since 1985.

Prior to his recent focus on nonprofits, Karl lead the finance, operations and IT functions for several consumer-value oriented financial service companies in the Bay Area. If you want to help us out on the land, send Karl an email: volunteer@wcosf.org. He'll sign you up, find out what open space interests you have, and plug you into a project that meets your needs—and ours.

A Few Words About Ygnacio Valley's Early Settlers

Ygnacio Sibrian's grandmother, Dona Juana Sanchez de Pacheco, received a land grant of several thousand acres, including a twenty-seven square mile grant called Rancho San Miguel. She sold 1,000 acres to Ygnacio in the 1840s. "Most importantly," writes George Emanuels in *Ygnacio Valley 1834-1970*, "he inherited 255 acres more which today belong to the John Muir Hospital, to the City of Walnut Creek for its Heather Farm, to the St. John Vianney church, and to the owners of the multiple dwellings above the church.

"Sibrian built his home on the east side of Shell Ridge, near the pungent spring which gave his home site, Sulphur Springs Ranch, its name. Both mineralized and fresh water bubbled up from the ground close by the summit of Ygnacio Valley Road. Today the sulphur spring still flows near a pepper tree at the edge of St. John Vianney Church's parking lot, virtually across the road from the John Muir Hospital entrance. Many of today's drivers sniff the odor while passing the church, little realizing it has scented the air since before man inhabited the valley."

Ygnacio Sibrian is long gone, but the valley that thousands of people call home bears his name.



Yes, I want to help protect and preserve Walnut Creek’s Open Spaces

If you share this goal, 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 (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) _____

Skills I am willing to share _____

I would like to volunteer Maintain Oaks Plant Natives Create Wildlife Corridors

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