

Edgewood



Explorer

March 2004

Volume 11 Number 1

WILDFLOWER WALKS SET TO BEGIN

By Julie Foster

Spring is Here!

...and that means it's time for the Spring Wildflower walks at Edgewood Natural Preserve. The first mosquito bills (a.k.a. shooting stars), Indian warrior, hound's tongue, trillium and more are already in bloom...and we're all optimistic that the consistent rains this winter will result in beautiful displays of wildflowers in the coming months!

The wide variety of plant communities and flowering plant species at Edgewood means we're sure to find lovely displays of wildflowers throughout the spring season.

We're in for a big change of walk locations this year. In compliance with the County's request, we will no longer be leading wildflower walks from the I-280 Park & Ride Lot. The trail leading down the embankment near the overpass will be closed. Though we're disappointed in the loss of this start location, we're looking forward to the opportunity to create new wildflower experiences for the public.

Wildflower walks will be led from the Day Camp area *each* Sat and Sun from March 13 through June 13. **In addition**, we will be "test-driving" two new hike start locations: On April 3, April 17 and May 1 we will lead hikes starting from the Clarkia Trailhead, and on April 10, April 24 and May 8 we will lead hikes starting from the Edgewood Trailhead.

Join us for a wildflower walk and provide feedback on the new walks - we'd love to hear from you! Please see the enclosed walk schedule and enhanced park map for details. See you on the trails! ^

DESIGNING THE INTERPRETIVE CENTER AT EDGEWOOD

By Julia Bott

Numerous studies for the interpretive center are underway. These include surveying and geotechnical work, as well as the traffic and biological studies required for environmental review.

You may have noticed the temporary signs that were placed to let park visitors know that non-native brush was being cleared to facilitate surveying of the site. Surveyors have produced a base map with natural and man-made features, utilities and elevations. This map is necessary to begin the architectural drawings.

Since the center is being designed to fit with the natural surroundings and will include outdoor amphitheaters and a deck, the geotechnical engineers have also been on-site, conducting soil sampling and borings to determine subsurface conditions. Their studies also yielded important information necessary for the siting of the new pedestrian bridge over Cordilleras Creek.

Environmental consultants have been preparing the documents required under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). These

(Continued on page 5)

INSIDE THE EXPLORER

Herps of Edgewood	2
Friends Receive Volunteer Grant	3
Treasurer's Report	3
Northern Flicker	3
Habitat Restoration	4
Adopt-A-Highway Update	6
Membership Dues	7
Upcoming Events	8
Looking for Storage Space.....	8

HERPS OF EDGEWOOD: AN OVERVIEW

By Roger Myers

Throughout recorded time, reptiles and amphibians have often been vilified and made the object of irrational fears and biases. How many times on your hikes has the random encounter with one of our scaly or slippery friends elicited an “eewww” or fearful shriek from someone in your group?

Most of us within the docent community have come to understand that the vast majority of these fears and biases are unfounded. Indeed, we know that most herps are completely harmless and play an important role in the balance of nature and can be as beautiful and fascinating in their own right as can the more popular birds, butterflies, and flowers.

Here at Edgewood we enjoy considerable variation in terrain, vegetation, moisture, and soils. Such variation leads to increased diversity among its floral and faunal communities. This is true for the reptiles and amphibians as well.

With its watercourses and shady forest cover, Edgewood provides a refuge for delicate amphibians such as the California Slender Salamander and Pacific Tree Frog. The hot and often parched grasslands and chaparral are home to the more heat-resilient Western Rattlesnake and Western Fence Lizard.

In the ecological nooks and crannies between these extremes we often find the Southern Alligator Lizard, Western Skink, and Pacific Gopher Snake. On a lucky day we might spot a California King Snake or Western Yellow-Bellied Racer.

Our Mediterranean climate tends to give us a “reptile season” and an “amphibian season”. During the period of cool winter rains the reptiles seem to disappear for the most part. One may spot a determined (or desperate!) fence lizard basking on a sunny rock between storms, but that’s about it. Being cold-blooded (Can you say “ectotherm?”), a reptile’s activity level

decreases proportionately to the ambient temperature.

The reptiles don’t really hibernate, but rather enter into a state of inactivity. When in this state they need very little in the way of food and rely largely on fat reserves taken on during the summer. All their bodily functions slow down to less than a crawl (...sorry!). In fact, a fence lizard revealed by overturning a rock or log might often be so cold that it is completely unable to move. It is not deep in a hibernative sleep. It is awake. But it just can’t do a darn thing to respond to the situation.

Though also cold-blooded, amphibian physiology allows these creatures greater mobility and activity than their reptilian cousins during winter’s chill. Slender salamanders appear to venture out into the grasslands and can be found under pieces of dead wood or rocks where they could never survive in the summer.

In truth, they probably do not migrate so much laterally as they do vertically. When summer returns to the grasslands, the salamanders move ever downward along cracks or burrows in the soil to wait out the summer heat in the cooler, damper darkness below ground. When the rains return they move back up to forage at the surface.

Pacific Tree Frogs also frantically work to make hay while the rain falls (a fractured metaphor, admittedly, but you get the idea). Virtually every winter the ever-optimistic creatures seek out the vernal frog pond along the Serpentine Loop Trail to take a chance at beating the odds and producing a new generation of tree frogs.

Many a spring I have watched their efforts dry up before the little tadpoles have a chance to metamorphose and hop away to safety. I’d like to think they win more often than lose. But they appear to at least be holding their own.

With the onset of warmer, drier weather, the amphibians recede to seek shelter in cool, damp

(Continued on page 6)

FRIENDS RECEIVE VOLUNTEER GRANT

The San Mateo County Parks Foundation donates \$15,000 each year to Parks and Rec to support volunteer programs at SMC parks.

This year the Friends of Edgewood applied for and received a grant of \$750 to be used to support our docent program.

Other groups receiving grants were:

- Friends of Huddart and Wunderlich Parks (\$2,000)
- Friends of Fitzgerald Marine Reserve (\$1,500)
- Volunteers For Baseball Field (\$1,200)
- San Pedro Valley Park Volunteers (\$640)
- Flood Park Staff & Bird Box Volunteers (\$500)
- Edgewood Park Staff (\$500)
- Huddart and Wunderlich Park Staff (\$360)

The Friends of Edgewood thank the Foundation and Parks and Rec staff for making this money available. `

TREASURER'S REPORT

By Peter Ingram

For the calendar year 2003 the Friends of Edgewood had income from membership dues, donations, a grant for the EGIS mapping project, and the sale of such items as wildflower brochures and T-shirts.

Principal expenses for the year included the 10-year anniversary event, "Powers of 10", producing and distributing the Edgewood Explorer, conducting the docent-led wildflower walks, and completing the initial phases of the EGIS mapping project.

At year's end the Friends took in about 11% (\$1,462) more in revenues than monies expended.

Thanks for your continuing support. For more information, please feel free to contact me any time. `

NORTHERN FLICKER

By Lee Franks

Hikers strolling through the Park may be surprised by a woodpecker flushing from the ground before them. As the Northern Flicker beats a hasty retreat, it reveals an unmistakable white rump and red wing linings. The Northern Flicker's name comes from this rump patch and the bright color of wing and tail linings, flickering. It is the least arboreal of our woodpeckers, and it spends more time feeding on the ground than other woodpeckers. Often, it is only when the Northern Flicker is around its nest cavity in a tree that it truly behaves like other woodpeckers; clinging, rattling, and drumming.



Dr. Lloyd Glenn Ingles © California Academy of Sciences

The Northern Flicker, *Colaptes auratus*, is a complex species, having 5 subspecies; Yellow-shafted Flicker, Red-shafted Flicker, Gilded Flicker, Guatemalan Flicker, and the Cuban Flicker. The first three are found in North America. The Yellow-shafted with its yellow

(Continued on page 4)

HABITAT RESTORATION

By Ken Himes

Please join me in helping to remove invasive species from Edgewood’s native habitats. Weeding sessions take place **Friday mornings all year from 8:30 am**. Once daylight savings time begins, our work sessions will also take place on **Wednesday evenings from 5:30 pm**.

Here is the Wednesday evening schedule:

Date	Meet at 5:30 pm	Work Site
April 7	West Kiosk	West Kiosk Meadows
April 14	West Kiosk	Mow Site 1
April 21	Day Camp	Upper South Wing Sylvan Loop
April 28	Day Camp	Edgewood Trail, Bush Mallow Site
May 5	West Kiosk	Mow Site 3

For more information, call me at (650) 591-8560. For the Friday sessions, call me or contact John Allen at jcakwa@earthlink.net.

(NORTHERN FLICKER, Continued from page 3)

under wings and black mustache is found in the northern and eastern parts of the country. The Red-shafted with its deep salmon under wing is found in the west, and the Gilded with its golden under wing coloring is found in the southwest. The remainder of this article will be about the Red-shafted species, as this is the one we see in the Park during the fall and winter months.

Appearance

A large brown woodpecker, 13 inches long with a 20-inch wingspan. Males and females are the same size. Overall a grayish brown with irregular transverse dark-brown bars above which makes the bird cryptic when seen on the ground. They have a black crescent mark on the upper breast. The underside of their flight feathers are bright salmon. The white rump patch is conspicuous in flight. They have a gray head with a brown

crown and nape, and the male has a red mustache stripe. Their bill is large, long, and chisel-shaped.

Food Habits

The flicker feeds primarily on the ground, for ants and other insects by probing and hammering in the soil with its powerful bill. Its tongue is an amazing tool. When extended it is 4 times the bill length. Beginning with a cartilage sheath anchored to the right nostril, it splits into two “horns” that run over the top of the head and then into the mouth through the base of the skull, the two sheaths meeting and connecting at the tongue bone. The accordion-like extension of these horns is what gives the tongue its impressive length. The whole assembly is up to 5 inches long. The tongue’s tip has barbs that the bird can spear insects with, as well as sticky saliva to hold insects.

Sounds

The flicker has a complex array of vocal and nonvocal sounds, all emitted in specific contexts, and all produced by both sexes. The vocalization most often heard in the Park (**klee-yer**) serves as a “signatures” call, enabling individual birds to recognize each other. Two nonvocal sounds are produced; “drumming” and “tapping”.

Flicker drumming sounds like a miniature pneumatic drill. Drumming is produced by rapidly and sharply beating the tip of the bill on a resonating object, usually a dead tree limb or branch. Flickers drum in conjunction with territorial defense. They make a variety of tapping sounds, most of which are incidental to nest excavation. Tapping, a slower, more rhythmic sound than drumming, is sometimes ritualistic, occurring only at the nest site, wherein, one member of the nesting pair taps upon the return to the nest site of the second member.

Behavior

Flickers hop slowly for short distances on the ground when foraging, seldom walking or

(Continued on page 5)

(*INTERPRETIVE CENTER, Continued from page 1*) include reviewing the proposal and suggesting mitigations for any biological or traffic impacts. This effort includes the development of a restoration plan for the reach of Cordilleras Creek. Invasive non-native plants will be removed. Additional native plants will be planted in order to increase the riparian buffer. There will be a public workshop on the environmental review documents this spring.



Groundbreaking is envisioned in spring 2005. The project is projected to cost \$1.5 million, including a small fund to support volunteer recruitment, staffing, exhibit replacement and maintenance. Support from the local community is key to the success of the project. In addition to cash grants, donations of materials will also play an important role in the effort – both by reducing the amount of money the Foundation needs to raise and by adding qualitatively to the “green building” approach.

Would you like more information about the interpretive center at Edgewood? The San Mateo County Parks and Recreation Foundation now has an 8 minute video (also available in DVD) they'd love to share with you. The video includes cameo performances by Julie Foster, Carol Hankermeyer, Elly Hess and Ken Himes.

For more information, please contact Julia Bott at (650) 321-5812 or Julia@SupportParks.org.

(*NORTHERN FLICKER, Continued from page 4*) running. When foraging in trees they hop on tree branches, limbs, and vertical trunks, moving up, down, or laterally. Their flight has an undulating trace, that is typical of woodpeckers. Bursts of wing-flapping alternates with nonflapping phases during which wings are folded against the body.



Nesting

Flickers usually excavate nest cavities in dead or diseased tree trunks and large branches of soft wood trees. Both sexes participate in cavity excavation, but the male plays a dominant role. They “chisel” away small chips of wood with their bill. Periods of “chiseling” are interspersed with shorter periods of tossing chips

from the cavity opening. It takes 12 to 15 days to complete the excavation. The cavity curves quickly downward beyond the entrance, and the diameter rapidly expands beyond the entry hole. The entrance is just large enough to accommodate entry and exit of adults, and the interior is large enough for adults to turn around.

Summary

That the flicker has more than 130 nicknames—hairy-wicket, heigh-ho, and yawker bird among them—indicates how thoroughly it has captured the popular imagination. It’s not just the almost surreal vividness of their face markings, or the surprise flash of breathtaking color; they are gregarious, enthusiastic drama queens. From the rapid **wick-wick-wick** call announcing their arrival, to the drumming on resonant wood to both challenge and attract other flickers, and their comical courting rituals, they have long entertained watchers in the woods.

Reference

The Birds of North America, No 166, 1995; William S. Moore.

(HERPS OF EDGEWOOD, Continued from page 2)

recesses and leave the Edgewood stage for the reptiles. Since more of us tend to be walking the trails in spring, summer, and fall, we are more likely to encounter a reptile along the way. Many of us may have never even seen an amphibian at Edgewood except, perhaps, for the tadpoles in the frog pond in early spring. Amphibians also tend to be nocturnal and secretive. If you want to find them you often have to actively search for them in their hiding places, a disruption we endeavor to avoid here at Edgewood.

The Natural Resources Database, www.nrdp.org, lists nine species of herps that are known to occur at Edgewood, all of whom I have seen on the preserve and previously mentioned.

From my observations at Pulgas Ridge and in the neighborhoods surrounding Edgewood, I suspect there are at least two more species that have not yet been spotted at Edgewood: the salamander *Ensatina* and the Western Ringneck Snake. I am also fairly confident that there are Northern Alligator Lizards on the preserve that have been seen and mistakenly presumed to be the far more common Southern Alligator Lizards. Only a close examination by someone who knows what he or she is looking for can tell the difference.

There is even a report I heard from one of the rangers of a Pacific Giant Salamander being observed once while clearing a culvert near the intersection of Edgewood Road and Cañada Road. Curiously, our most commonly seen local amphibian, the California Newt, has not been observed at Edgewood or Pulgas Ridge to my knowledge.

If any of you are fortunate enough to spot a species of herp not on the official Edgewood list, please be sure to report the sighting. Use the online form at the Natural Resources Database website or pass on your information to Bill Korbholz for addition to the database.

In upcoming issues of the Edgewood Explorer I intend to feature more detailed reports on the subgroups or individual species of herps found at Edgewood. Stay tuned. `

ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY UPDATE

By Ken Seydel and Bill Korbholz

Our road warriors now clean the eastern side of I-280 alongside Edgewood on the first Saturday or Sunday of **every** month. Over the past 3 months, 14 volunteers logged over 50 work-hours and collected some 35 bags of trash. Pretty impressive!

Our regularly scheduled December cleanup was rained out. So we rescheduled for the following weekend. But only six hardy souls showed up! Brian Cole, Carolyn Dorsch, Bill & Kathy Korbholz, Ulla Peterson, and Ken Seydel had to work past noon in order to finish.

What a glorious day it was on December 8th. It started out crisp and clear at 45°, but then warmed up to near 60°. The hills were newly green with the nourishment of the recent rains.

As much as I love walking the trails of Edgewood Park, there is something special about walking off-trail on the soft earth! If you think you would also enjoy this experience, please join our group.

As always we found interesting things with which to fill our bags. At one place there was a frozen dinner, a bottle of port, and a ten-dollar bill. (Some kind of party?)

We met a 3 ½ foot gopher snake. Found a tennis ball and two golf balls (where do they come from?), and a number of flags, and pieces thereof. The public probably needs to be educated about the proper disposal of worn out flags. They will only survive a limited number of miles at 70 mph.

We found the usual hubcaps, and a surprising amount of car parts. There had been several cars off the freeway during the rains. It is surprising how many pieces these plastic cars break into when they go over an embankment. The CHP admonition to slow down in the rain really should be heeded!

(Continued on page 7)

(ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY, Continued from page 6)

There is a great deal of land between the freeway and the Edgewood Park fences. We enjoy keeping it clean, and consider it an extension of the Park. I'm certain the flora and fauna don't recognize any boundaries.

On January 3rd the Saturday crew was represented by Carolyn Dorsch, Katherine Greene, Margaret Marshall, Susan Russell, Pat Bennett, and Kathy and Bill Korbholz.

We collected 16 bags of trash in 2 hours. Carolyn found a brand new crisp \$20, and Bill removed about 2 pounds of raw hamburger meat from the lot (yuch!).

We also probably made history by claiming a boat and trailer and its contents as trash. These were abandoned in the P&R lot. Well, they weren't really abandoned, as they had a For Sale sign on them, but the CHP has tagged them for removal.

Sandra Cooperman, Sarah Divine, Alan Huckabay, Billy James, and Ken Seydel comprised the Sunday crew on February 1. It was a beautiful spring-like day, and we collected 9 bags in 2 1/2 hours.

We also encountered the following not-so-wildlife: 1 doe, 1 mole, and 1 coyote (all dead), and 2 egrets soaring over the Cañada Rd. onramp (quite alive). Not to mention a Bill Clinton mask.

We are very grateful to our dedicated crew who give up a piece of their weekend to help keep this segment of the highway looking respectable. As an extension of Edgewood, we want it to reflect the same degree of love and care as Edgewood receives.

If you have an interest in joining our great group please contact Ken Seydel. We will see that you are safety-trained and equipped with your very own Picker, hard hat, goggles, gloves, and bright orange vest.



MEMBERSHIP DUES

New or renewing members may clip and complete this section to pay **tax-deductible** annual membership dues. Please send your check payable to **Friends of Edgewood Natural Preserve** to the return address on the back of this panel. Renewing members can determine their membership expiration date by checking the six-digit code to the right of their name on their mailing label. For example, if the code is 06/2001, membership runs through June 2001.

Questions, call Bob Young.

Name

Address

City State Zip

Home Telephone Work Telephone

- q \$15 Basic Membership (includes newsletter)
- q \$25 Family Membership (newsletter)
- q \$7 Student/Retired Membership (newsletter)
- q \$50 Supporting Membership (newsletter, *Edgewood Checklist of Plants*, and Edgewood photo greeting cards (boxed set))
- q \$100 Benefactor Membership (above premiums plus Toni Corelli's 360-page fully-illustrated Flowering Plants of Edgewood Natural Preserve while available)
- q \$250 Patron Membership (above premiums plus 16x20 photo-poster)
- q I am enclosing a gift of _____.
- q Please send ___ copies of the *Edgewood Checklist of Plants* (\$2), ___ copies of Flowering Plants of Edgewood Natural Preserve (\$25). Includes tax, S&H.
- q Please do not send any premiums.

I would like to participate in the following:

- q Docent program
- q GIS/GPS mapping
- q Newsletter/web
- q Public relations
- q Weed management
- q Schools outreach
- q Habitat restoration
- q Adopt-A-Highway



UPCOMING EVENTS

q *Saturdays and Sundays, March 13 - June 13,* **WILDFLOWER WALKS.** See insert.

q *Sundays, March 28, April 18, May 16, June 27,* **SUNDAY BIRD WALKS.** Meet Lee Franks at the Day Camp kiosk at 8:00 am.

q *Sun. March 7, Sat. April 3, Sun. May 2, Sat. June 5,* **ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY.** Contact Ken Seydel for information.

q *Sat. & Sun. April 24-25,* **CNPS SPRING WILDFLOWER SHOW.** Mission College in Santa Clara. 10 am to 4 pm. Also visit the **SPRING NATIVE PLANT SALE,** *Saturday May 8,* 10 am to 4 pm, at Hidden Villa.

LOOKING FOR STORAGE SPACE

Over the past 10 years the Friends have accumulated lots of interesting and historical assets. In addition to surplus newsletters, we have extras from various publications, dozens of poster boards (remember Powers of 10?), our large banner, 2 canopies, and many other items, both large and small.

All this stuff is currently scattered in various temporary locations, where it is subjected to the vagaries of weather, bugs, and the occasional car bumper.

If you can provide storage space the size of about 1/4 of a garage in or near Redwood City, please contact Peter Ingram. We will be very appreciative. `

The Edgewood Explorer is published quarterly by the Friends of Edgewood Natural Preserve, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving Edgewood for the human, plant, and animal generations to come. The newsletter is produced by Bill Korbholz with assistance from Laverne Rabinowitz and contributions from many Friends. For more information about the Friends of Edgewood, visit our web site at www.friendsofedgeswood.org, mail us at PO Box 3422, Redwood City, CA 94064-3422, call or fax toll-free at (866) GO-EDGEWOOD, or email info@friendsofedgeswood.org.

Friends of Edgewood Natural Preserve
 PO Box 3422
 Redwood City, CA 94064-3422

NONPROFIT U.S. POSTAGE PAID PERMIT NO. 179 REDWOOD CITY, CA 94064
