

Inside this issue:

<i>President's Message / Nature Nights</i>	2
<i>More Kids in the Woods</i>	2
<i>Nature Center Celebrates 27 Years—continued</i>	2
<i>Special Focus—Western Pond Turtle</i>	3
<i>Defenders of Wildlife in the San Joaquin Valley</i>	3
<i>Nature Center Celebrates 27 Years—continued</i>	3
<i>Monarch Update</i>	3
<i>Dates to Remember / Thank You REI</i>	4

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Nature Center Celebrates 27 Years

On Saturday, May 17th, the Oak Grove Nature Center celebrated 27 years of serving the public; providing them with information about the plants, animals and people that made San Joaquin County their home.

James Rexroth, Nature Center Coordinator, started off the festivities with a Nature/ Birding Walk along the Yokuts trail. High lights on the walk included a Swallowtail Butterfly, Acorn Woodpeckers, Anna's Hummingbird, and a Western Bluebird.

A resonant chant by Eaglesky-walker blessed the Native Plant Garden as our group headed toward the new Miwok Village Trail. Dale and Rosalinda Fleming brought their grand-

children, some ceremonial sage, and a wealth of knowledge about Native American plant use. Anne Baird brought greeting from Senator Mike Machado, and Anas Akbar came representing Bear Creek High. Nature Center Co-founder Doris Beckwith and her daughter Barbara brought a Native American mortar to donate to the Docent Council.

Docents, friends and visitors paused at the trailhead, took out 21st century scissors and cut the tule rope that stretched across the trail. Then our group entered a land of long ago, where Miwok and Yokuts once gathered acorns from the towering valley oaks.

Our feet fell on the newly-built decomposed granite trail.



27 years of serving the communities of San Joaquin County with information about the Oak Grove.

Funding for the handicapped-accessible trail had been donated by Junior Aid of Stockton after their representative Abbie Stone advocated on our behalf. "Yes, you do need a trail," she said while dodging branches and knee-high weeds. Construction was quickly carried out by Isabel Cuerpo's College Prep Environmental Science students from Bear Creek High with help from (continued on pg. 2)

Lepidoptera Time Again

Last year, Kathy Schick and 14 other intrepid souls scoured several sites in San Joaquin County looking for butterflies. This year the event will be held on Saturday, June 21st. This is a joint project of the San Joaquin Audubon Society, the UC Cooperative Extension, and

the North American Butterfly Association.

If you would like to participate, please meet Kathy at the Oak Grove Nature Center Parking lot by 8 am. Wear comfortable walking shoes and bring a hat, sunscreen, water and your

lunch. A \$3.00 donation is requested from each participant.

For more information, please contact Kathy Schick at (209) 464-8304 or kaschick@berkeley.edu.



Be sure to mark your calendars for Nature Nights on Thursdays at 7 pm. Hope to see you there.

President's Message

I would like to thank the following Docents and Nature Center Friends for making our 27th Anniversary Celebration a success. Their efforts leading up to and during the event is very much appreciated. Thank you to **Sheldon Barr, Phil Black, Grover and Sharon Bethards, Martha Mallery, Darryl Pedro, Pamela and Rene Reyes, Dave Wagner, and Daniel Wolthers.** My apolo-

gies if I missed anyone.

I will include **Yvonne Mohr** for her time and skill in refinishing and painting the entry sign for the native plant garden.

Finally, let me give a special thank you to our Nature Center Coordinator **James Rexroth.**

A job well done to all of you!

David Marraccini

Nature Nights Return

We are having Nature Nights again. The planned start is June 19th at 7:00 PM. Our first speaker will be **Dr. James Barker, DDS**, who will talk to us about his work with 'Wood Ducks and the use of artificial nest boxes.' Be sure to attend and check the Dates to Remember for other upcoming programs.

More Kids In The Woods



Help us get 'More Kids in the Woods!'

Last Child in the Woods by Richard Louv has inspired a renaissance in getting kids out into nature. At the national level, a bill has been introduced in congress (HR 3036) entitled "No Child Left Inside," and the US Forest Service has established a grant program called "More Kids in the Woods."

"Terrific," our docent council applauded, and at the last Board meeting we adopted "More Kids in the Woods" as our motto.

But we need more leaders!

School tours were almost booked to capacity this spring, and now help is needed for Nature Center staffing, Nature

Night programs, and guided trail walks.

If you can volunteer just a few hours a month to sharing your fondness for nature with children, please phone 953-8814. No experience is necessary. Training is available and always fun.

Martha Mallery

Nature Center Celebrates 27 years—continued

Nature Center Coordinator James Rexroth, our Docents and Park Worker Jennifer Lara.

As the temperature headed skyward our group passed the new acorn pounding rock and stopped before this year's tule hut, built by Martha, James, Docent President David Marraccini, our Docents, members of the Native Plant Society, Professor Dodson's Delta College Natural Resource students, and grammar school children from around the County. The Native American village that

had been envisioned by park planners more than 27 years ago was taking shape. A small buffet of blackberries, jerky and acorn bread baked by Judy Downer awaited us.

But after a very short while our group baked too and we were forced back into the 21st century air conditioning of the Nature Center.

The next event was the official unveiling of the Native Live Animals display wall, which was put together for us by two Eagle Scout candidates, Evan

Watson and Troop 119 of Galt; and Matthew Horner and Troop 10 of Stockton. Matt did the honors of the unveiling.

We then moved to the northwest end of the building for the unveiling of the new Native American Artifacts and Replicas Display Case. Also completed for us by another Eagle Scout Candidate, William Blakely and Troop 119 of Galt. Will did the unveiling honors.

James also pointed out the (continued on pg. 3)

"A small buffet of blackberries, jerky and acorn bread baked by Judy Downer awaited us"

Special Focus—Western Pond Turtle

The Western Pond Turtle, *Clemmys marmorata* is the native aquatic turtle to most of California. Also called the Pacific Pond Turtle, there are two subspecies, *C. m. marmorata*, found from Bakersfield north to Washington State; and *C. m. pallida*, found from the Sacramento region south to the northern third of Baja California.

The upper shell, called the carapace, is low, ranging in color from olive through brown to almost black. There is general a network of dark spots or dashes on the cara-

pace, as well as on the head. The lower shell is called the plastron and is usually yellowish, sometimes with dark markings toward the center.

This turtle is thoroughly aquatic, rarely straying far from the water except to lay eggs. Its diet consists of aquatic plants, insects, and carrion.

Currently, this turtle appears to be in trouble. Habitat loss and alteration, and low recruitment due to predation seem to be the primary causes. The California Department of Fish and Game list them as a Species of

Special Concern and the US Fish and Wildlife Service has them as a Category 2 species in considering them for listing.

At the Nature Center we currently have two Western Pond Turtles, being housed in a large tank near the entrance to the center. We feed them fish food pellets and frozen shrimp and worms.

One last comment about their plight. Competition with non-native turtles released because their owners can no longer care for them, is a problem. Please don't release pets into the wild.



The Western Pond Turtle is the only native aquatic turtle to most of the state.

Defenders of Wildlife in the San Joaquin Valley

Jeremy Terhune, Defenders new San Joaquin Valley Representative, has opened an office in Stockton. California's Central Valley contains most of California's last remaining vernal pools, wetlands and grasslands. Jeremy is working to educate and build support for the conservation of wildlife and wild places in the Central

Valley by working with diverse communities and interests. He is working to protect the unique and special landscapes in the Valley, including grasslands, the Delta and the San Luis National Wildlife Refuge. He is also working to create partnerships with private landowners, including farmers and ranchers, to provide habitat for

the Valley's birds, fish and wildlife.

To get in touch with Jeremy, you can go by the office or send letters to:

**4555 Pershing Ave. #33-373,
Stockton, CA. 95207,**
or call **(209) 922-8215,**
or fax **(209) 463-2594**

California's Central Valley contains most of California's last remaining vernal pools, wetlands and grasslands.

Nature Center Celebrates 27 Years—continued

Grizzly Bear, on loan from Don Giottonini, Jr. for two years.

All returned to the main room for cake, snacks, and drinks.

Following the food we were treated to presentations from the California Raptor Center and Great Valley Serpentarium and the kids of all ages made masks, cast animal tracks, and

got their faces painted with the help of Pamela and Rene Reyes.

Our thanks to all for making it a wonderful historic day.

(Report submitted by Martha Mallery and James Rexroth)

Monarch Update

The milkweed (*Asclepias* spp.) we planted last fall in the Native Plant Garden is thriving. It's ready to host Monarch butterfly eggs and be munched on by the caterpillars.

But where are the Monarchs? Are they on their way to the Valley and the mountains after wintering on the coast? Look for a full report in the fall newsletter.

Martha Mallery



Narrow-leaf Milkweed in bloom.

Dates to Remember

June 3rd, 6:30 PM—OGDC Board meeting at Nature Center. All welcome.

June 8th, 8:30 AM—Oak Grove Regional Park Monthly Bird Census. Meet at the Nature Center.

June 19th, 7:00 PM—Nature Nights. Wood Ducks—presented by Dr. James Barker, DDS

June 21st, 8:00 AM—Annual San Joaquin County Butterfly Count. Meet at the Nature Center. For more information, contact Kathy Schick at (209) 464-8304 or email her at kaschick@berkeley.edu.

June 25th, 9:30 AM—Tour at Oak Grove Nature Center. Call 953-8814 if you would like to assist with the tour.

June 26th, 7:00 PM—Nature Nights. Butterflies—presented by Kathy Schick, PhD

June 29th, 12 to 2 PM—New Docent Orientation.

July 1st, 6:30 PM—OGDC Board meet-

ing at the Nature Center. All welcome.

July 3rd, 7:00 PM—Nature Nights. Tule-boat building—presented by James Rexroth, Nature Center Coordinator

July 10th, 7:00 PM—Nature Nights. Program to be announced.

July 17th, 7:00 PM—Nature Nights. Galls, a walk and talk—by Kathy Schick, PhD

July 24th, 7:00 PM—Nature Nights. Program to be announced.

July 27th, 12 to 2 PM—New Docent Orientation.

July 31st, 7:00 PM—Nature Nights. Program to be announced.

August 5th, 6:30 PM—OGDC Board meeting at the Nature Center. All welcome.

August 7th, 7:00 PM—Nature Nights. Program to be announced.

August 13th, 5:30 PM—Oak NAAG meeting at the Boat House. All welcome.

August 14th, 7:00 PM—Nature Nights. Program to be announced.

August 21st, 7:00 PM—Nature Nights. Program to be announced.

August 31st, 12 to 2 PM—New Docent Orientation.

September 2nd, 6:30 PM—OGDC Board meeting at the Nature Center. All welcome.

Thank You REI

A big Thank You to Angel Evanger and the new Stockton REI for doing trail clean-up at Oak Grove Regional Park as part of National Trails Day and in support of the Oak Grove Nature Center. Over 25 volunteers showed up to help on Saturday, June 7th. Angel is the Outreach Specialist for the Stockton store and we look forward many more collaborative efforts with her and her team. We want to thank them also for providing space for our Volunteer Opportunity fliers and County Park System brochures.

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www.sjgov.org/oakgrove

Committed to preserving the natural environment of the Oak Grove and educating others to the values of continuing such preservation.

