

CLAREMONT CANYON CONSERVANCY

SPRING 2024 *News*

A COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATION SUPPORTING THE LONG-TERM STEWARDSHIP OF CLAREMONT CANYON



President's message *by Jon Kaufman*

THE RAINS WE EXPERIENCED over the past several months have been most welcome. Our yards and open space look healthy, our reservoirs are filling, and the sunny days in between give us a chance to enjoy the out-

of-doors. And the potential for wildfires through spring and early summer is lessened. Longer term, however, more rain means more growth and more fuel for wildfire accumulates.

The big issue for homeowners now is insurance. The companies are risk averse, increasing rates and even exiting the market, leaving many of us dependent on the State Fair Plan with both high rates and reduced coverage. Adding fuel to this fire are new, detailed maps from the Park District and CalFire that show wildfire risk at the level of individual neighborhoods. These maps will enable everyone to better understand their local risk environment and take steps to improve their defensible space and harden their homes. We plan to post these maps on our website.

United Policy Holders (<https://uphelp.org>) works to assist homeowners in finding coverage and our local FireSafe Councils (<https://oaklandfiresafecouncil.org> and <https://www.berkeleyfiresafecouncil.org>) are providing information to help homeowners reduce the risk of fire reaching their yards and houses.

Cal student volunteers showed up on Berkeley Day ready to tackle a wide range of stewardship activities from trail improvements and rerouting, to invasive broom removal. Take a look at our volunteer events and opportunities on page 2.

The Conservancy has been leading an effort to build a regional wildfire prevention coordinating group among elected officials from local jurisdictions in the East Bay Hills. As of late March, the agencies that have signed the memorandum of understanding creating the coordinating group include Alameda and Contra Costa counties and their fire departments; the cities of Berkeley, El Cerrito, Oakland and Richmond; and the Rodeo-Hercules Fire District. Others may join as well. The coordinating group's initial organizational meeting is planned for April 29th.

While it will take time, we hope that if the insurance industry sees that we are working to prevent wildfires and reduce their potential damage, they will be more willing to write policies and make rates more reasonable.

On other fronts, our stewardship program continues to attract volunteers including UC undergrads, scout troops, and high school students from as far away as Fremont. Thanks so much to all our volunteers. And, thank you to those who stepped up during last fall's membership drive. See pages 6-7 for a list of donors, including our Visionaries whose generosity ensures the continuation of our work.



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A male Hooded Oriole (Icterus cucullatus) singing atop a palm frond last spring on Gravatt Drive.

Bird Migration

by Ruby J. Soto Cardona

APRIL AND MAY ARE BIG MONTHS for spring bird migration with an influx of birds arriving in California in April. Fun fact: birds usually begin their long journey 30 to 45 minutes after sunset, with the greatest number of birds in flight two to three hours later (<https://birdcast.info/>)—hence why we hear bird calls at nighttime. It’s important to note that bird migration can be affected by weather conditions such as rainy days or light pollution—which can often lead to bird collisions with windows. Try turning off lights in your home between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. to help bird species in their migration.

A great tool to explore if you’re looking for a place to go birdwatching is BirdCast (<https://birdcast.info/>). This handy online resource shows live bird migration data in different areas of the United States. Check for species arriving in your county this spring or migrating away through the fall.

Some of the species arriving in Claremont Canyon this spring are Warbling Vireo, Black-headed Grosbeak, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Swainson’s Thrush, and Hooded Oriole—all of which will breed while here. Listen for the spiraling ethereal song of the Swainson’s Thrush (visit audubon.org to hear songs and calls) and watch for the bright yellow-orange plumage of the Oriole (above photo). Among the species leaving for their own breeding grounds are Fox Sparrow, Hermit Thrush, Varied Thrush, Townsend’s Warbler, and Yellow-rumped Warbler. We’ll miss the Sparrows scratching in the leaf litter; but will welcome them back in the fall.

Visit Kay Loughman’s wildlife website (nhwildlife.net) to see photos of wildlife in and around Claremont Canyon; and join us on our upcoming spring bird walk (see next column).

Stewardship in the Canyon

PLEASE JOIN US FOR STEWARDSHIP AND NATURE EVENTS in Claremont Canyon throughout the spring and summer months. All levels of fitness are welcome.

We meet in Garber Park twice a month (first and third Saturdays) usually at the Fireplace below the Evergreen Lane entrance to the park and are led by Wyllie Clayson and Ruby J. Soto Cardona of the Garber Park Stewards, 9 a.m. till noon. We meet in the Upper Canyon once a month (fourth Saturday) at Signpost 29 and are led by Wyllie Clayson, 10 a.m. till noon. Please contact gpstewards@gmail.com for inquiries about Garber Park events and info@claremontcanyon.org for all other events.

When volunteering, please bring a bottle of water and wear long sleeves, long pants, sturdy shoes, and a hat. If you have gloves, please bring those too but we’ll have extras. Watch for our monthly emails or check the Conservancy website claremontcanyon.org for added events and to verify where to meet.

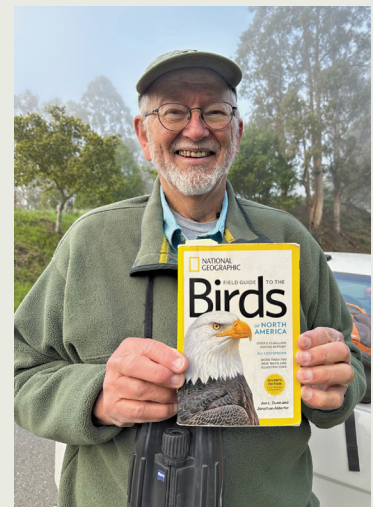
Sunday, April 28—The Birds of Claremont Canyon, 7 a.m.-11 a.m., led

by Dave Quady, Christmas Bird Count leader for Claremont Canyon.

MEET DAVE AND YOUR CONSERVANCY HOST Nancy Mueller at 7 a.m. as we look for birds that breed in the Canyon. We’ll search for year-round resident and Neotropical migrant birds that have returned to breed.

This event is limited to eight participants. Please contact us at info@claremontcanyon.org to sign up for this walk. Location details will be shared with participants several days prior to the event. Bring binoculars and a field guide if you have one. Rain cancels.

Dave Quady on our bird walk last spring.



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From left to right: Elizabeth Stage, Mark Seaborn, Nancy Mueller, Harold Duffy (Director of Public Works), Wyllie Clayson, Ruby J. Soto Cardona, Justice Bolden (Recreation Supervisor, Parks and Recreation), Janani Ramachandran (District 4 Councilmember).

Oakland Honors Park Volunteers

by Nancy Mueller and Elizabeth Stage

ON FEBRUARY 3RD, District 4 Councilmember Janani Ramachandran held an event at the Joaquin Miller Community Center to honor organizations and volunteers from thirteen parks in her district. The parks ranged in size from very large—the Sausal Creek watershed, a 2,656-acres area which includes Dimond Park—to very small—the Laurel Art Garden near the 580 underpass heading west on Delaware Street, where discarded hubcaps are painted and mounted as part of a small garden with benches, planters, and additional sculptures.

Janani presented commendations she signed along with Harold Duffy, Director of Public Works, and Harith Aleem, Interim Assistant Director of Oakland Parks, Recreation, and Youth Development. Director Duffy acknowledged the important role of volunteers in supporting his department’s mission. Justice Bolden, a recreation supervisor, talked about the importance of the time he spent at a nearby park when he was growing up in Oakland.

The Conservancy board was represented by Nancy Mueller and Elizabeth Stage; they were joined by Wyllie Clayson, Mark Seaborn, and Ruby J. Soto Cardona representing the Garber Park Stewards. Ruby accepted the commendation and gave a shout-out to Shelagh Brodersen who founded the Garber Park Stewards with her neighbors on Evergreen Lane, including her late husband Bob.

Our friends from the North Hills Community Association were commended for their work at the Gateway Demonstration Garden and the Firestorm Memorial Garden. NHCA board members and volunteers in these gardens accepted on behalf of Vicki Olivera, Garden Chair who was unable to attend due to family obligations.

It was a joyful celebration and inspiring to hear the stories of a few people who decided that they would make their corner of “the town” a little greener and prettier by bringing their neighbors into the effort and enjoying a collective experience.



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Claremont Canyon is the largest relatively undeveloped canyon on the western slope of the Oakland/Berkeley Hills. Most of the canyon’s watershed is owned by the East Bay Regional Park District, the University of California, the East Bay Municipal Utility District, and the City of Oakland, with about one-fifth in private hands.

The Claremont Canyon Conservancy promotes the long term stewardship of the entire watershed, coordinated among the stakeholders to preserve or restore a healthy native ecosystem, reduce wildfire hazards, and foster education and research.

Join the Conservancy:

Student: \$50
 Family: \$100 per year
 Patron: \$250
 Sponsor: \$500
 Visionary: \$1,000 +

Contact Us:

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 Email: info@ClaremontCanyon.org
 Website: www.ClaremontCanyon.org

The Board of Directors: Jon Kaufman, President; Marilyn Goldhaber, Vice President; Nancy Mueller, Secretary; Richard Marcus, Treasurer; Members at Large: John Brochu, Josh Borkowski, Jerry Kent, and Elizabeth Stage.

The Claremont Canyon Conservancy News is edited by Ruby J. Soto Cardona, with assistance from Kay Loughman and Marilyn Goldhaber.



A selfie (taken by Ruby) to celebrate a great workday with employee volunteers from the Claremont Club and Spa.

Spring Cleaning on Evergreen Lane

by Nancy Mueller and Ruby J. Soto Cardona

ON MARCH 14TH, on a very windy, crystal clear day, ten hearty souls from the Claremont Club and Spa joined our Conservancy community to clean up parts of Garber Park and the public paths leading to its Evergreen entrance. By the end of the day, we had gathered over 15 bags of debris—mostly those long strands of eucalyptus bark that constantly peel off trees and litter the forest floor.

One person noted, as a large strand of bark sailed overhead, that she wished she could have filmed the windy scene to demonstrate how far eucalyptus debris can fly. At one point we all had to duck as eucalyptus pods pummeled us from above. We enjoyed our good, clean work, however, and numerous hikers smiled and thanked us as they passed by.

In Garber Park we collected, broke down, and bagged eucalyptus branches from main paths and off-trail areas. We were able to clear most of the debris from the Alvarado entrance and from a section we call *Oak Grove*, making both areas more walkable and fire safe for all to enjoy.

For some volunteers, this was their first time working in a woodland setting. As the day progressed, our efforts turned into a relaxing activity far from technology—so much so that, unbeknown to us, the city was experiencing power outages.

Our workday was followed by a delicious and plentiful lunch under the “big top” back at the hotel grounds. Thank you Claremont Club and Spa for your employees’ volunteerism and for supplying the lunch. Appreciation also goes to neighbors who support our work by taking some of our green waste bags. If you would like to join those neighbors in agreeing to take some of our green waste bags after a volunteer day, please reach out to us at info@claremontcanyon.org.

The Garber Park Stewards

by Wyllie Clayson

WE’RE HAVING A VERY GOOD YEAR so far in Garber Park—even with a few canceled rainy Saturdays. In addition to our regular volunteer days, we’ve held additional stewardship events, including celebrating Martin Luther King, Jr., Day of Service in January and other events in partnership with the CAL Habitat Club from UC Berkeley (*photo below*).

The Habitat Club has also adopted *Fern Glade* as a long-term Adopt-a-Spot project within Garber Park. We are excited for this new program to help increase the number of volunteers out in the park. The Club is doing great work while learning about oak woodland habitat restoration and its diverse inhabitants.

With the extra help from these workers, plus our amazing regular volunteers, we have been able to mend trails, mulch a few trouble spots, cage oak saplings, and pull invasive weeds.

Last year we benefited from over 700 volunteer hours, resulting in over 150 bags of debris removed from the park and two large green waste dumpsters filled to the top. We have already reached over 350 volunteer hours for the year 2024 and have at least a few more big events lined up over the next few months.

With all of this great effort from our volunteers we are seeing an expansion of existing native plant populations such as miner’s lettuce, horsetails, ferns, trilliums, and baby oaks. Our trails are more comfortable and Garber Park is becoming a more fire-safe park.

We hope you are all enjoying the trails and all the plants in bloom. Garber Park is full of small surprises everywhere you look, so please keep an eye out for our cute newts and banana slugs. You never know when one might be crossing your path!



Cal Habitat Club members after a rainy day of climbing the muddy, steep slopes in Fern Glade



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The hotel hillside in 2022 before the planting project.

A Restored Hillside Blooms

by Naomi Vinbury

BEHIND THE CLAREMONT HOTEL there is a hillside where a unique community of people have come together to assist in restoring the ecosystem. The hillside faces southwest and for many years has been covered by introduced exotic species (100-year old eucalyptus, Italian thistles, oat grass, and oxalis/ Bermuda buttercup); a desolate landscape compared to the native ecosystem thriving not-so-far-away in Garber Park.

A few years ago, the Claremont Canyon Conservancy approached Berkeley naturalist Glen Schneider, facilitator of the Skyline Gardens restoration project, to help connect the hotel owners to native plant expert advice. Glen recommended me, as an East Bay urban ecorestoration gardener and fellow volunteer at Skyline Gardens, and I was hired for the job.

Discussion started in November 2021 and by January 2022 giant piles of freshly chipped and steaming mulch were being delivered by local arborists, such as Limb King, Ponderosa, and Expert Tree Care, as well as yards of compost by Bee Green Landscape Supply. A team of local gardeners, Jon Backus (West Coast Wild), Rachelle Cardona, Adder Schlosser, Kiah Dennerstein (Liminal Grounds), Kevin Frederick and Curtis Hicks, joined together over two seasons to haul mulch and compost by wheelbarrow uphill to suppress the introduced exotic species.

* silver bush lupine, sagebrush, sticky monkeyflower, California aster, mugwort, soap plant, buckwheat, California fuchsia, yorkia, tidy tips, cobweb thistle, bee plant, grindelia, phacelia, western lace plant, pink flowering currant, coffeeberry, Douglas iris, yarrow, California honeysuckle



© 2023 Nancy Mueller

A display this spring of California poppies and yorkia in the foreground, sagebrush and coffeeberry in the background.

A community of plants known as coastal scrub, which may have once inhabited the southwest hillside, were

grown by Native Here, Oaktown and The Watershed nurseries, and introduced to the hillside. The plants* were clustered together with space in between for the native perennial and annual plants. As these plants grow, the magic of the specialized relationships between plants and creatures become more apparent.

The community supports a high level of biodiversity throughout the seasons from the wet season (October-February) to flower season (March-June) to the dry season (July-September). In time, the coastal scrub community of plants will set the stage for a coast live oak and California buckeye canopy to develop, sustaining an understory community of associated plants that form a shaded fire break on the hillside.

The process of assisting the recovery of the ecosystem from one that is damaged, degraded or destroyed, continues on the hillside and we, along with the hummingbirds, bees, and all the other creatures, look forward to a beautiful flower season this year being kicked off by the dainty clusters of pink flowering currant blossoms.

The Legacy of Bob Brodersen

by Lech Naumovich

BOB BRODERSEN lived a spectacularly rich life, which included excelling as a researcher and teacher, entrepreneur, startup consultant, and much more.

Bob served on the faculty at UC Berkeley from 1978 to 2006 in the department of electrical engineering and computer

science, receiving many notable awards for his accomplishments. Never one to ignore new ideas, he continued to mentor students after his retirement through the Berkeley Wireless Research Center, which he helped found in 1998.

Bob was an avid adventurer. I remember him telling many incredible stories of remote and unique bike packing journeys throughout the world. His adventures with his wife, Shelagh, were absolutely legendary, filled with many turns, detours and surprises.

The Conservancy was fortunate to have Bob as a volunteer ecological steward of some of Claremont Canyon's finest habitats. Garber Park, a stone's



Bob Brodersen celebrated at a birthday party organized by his past students.

© 2018 Brian Pflus

throw from Bob and Shelagh's home, was, and is, a veritable backyard preserve of coast live oak where sinuous old growth trees reach towards the sky above rich meadows of native plants such as ferns. This is where Bob loved to work.

The steep slopes of the park had always restricted access to the park and outdoor access was something Bob always championed. I can still hear him saying, with a friendly disarming chuckle, "Boy it sure would be nice to be able to hike around safely and enjoy this area without worrying about sliding down a steep hill." Bob's interest in access soon turned to restoration once he realized the impact non-native species had on the park. Bob took on the seemingly impossible task of liberating Garber Park's creek from invasive plants—especially overgrown Himalayan blackberry—from a riparian area that we now call "Bob's Place."

Beyond Bob's Place, Bob volunteered thousands of hours for the benefit of Garber Park and Claremont Canyon—from opening up his cozy home hosting restoration courses and workshops, to supporting budding restoration professionals, to providing tools, snacks, and shelter to those eager to learn about Garber Park.

Bob passed away in February 2024 after a decade of battling cancer. He is sorely missed. He was a compassionate, kind, and thoughtful voice speaking for the woods and elevating the voices of those who love Claremont Canyon, the Oakland Hills, and the Bay for the enrichment it provides to so many people. Rest in peace.

Conservancy Membership

HONORING OUR MEMBERS: From our founding in 2001, we have encouraged nearby residents and community organizations to support the Conservancy. We are pleased to list below and on the opposite page people who have supported the Conservancy during our most recent membership drive in 2023-2024.

MAXIMIZE YOUR IMPACT! Don't forget to inquire with your employer about donation matching programs to double the impact of your generosity. Email us to find out how.

Thank you to members and friends who donated this past year

Because of you, we continue to have goals and dreams. A special thanks to our Visionaries who donate \$1,000 or more (noted with * in the list below).

Roger Abraham and
Maureen Crosgrove
Susan and James Acquistapace
Marie and Ray Alberti
Jeffrey and Joan King-Angell
Gay and Alan Auerbach
Linda and Mike Baker

Nancy Bartell
Gibor Basri and Jessica Broitman
Karl Batten-Bowman and
Yuli Toyozumi
*Charles Baxter and Jinee Tao
David and Mariana Beatty
Christie Beeman and Peter Weber

Bernadette Bell and
Kenneth Wachter
Beverly Bense and Alan Dimen
Steven Berger and
Paula Hughmanick
Ronald Berman and Sybil Marcus
Dorothy Berndt and John Riddle

Ed Blumenstock and Belle Huang
Stephen Bomse and Edie Silber
Katherine Bond
Theodore Booth and
Charlotte Biern
Roland Brandel
Martha Breed

Thank you to members and friends (continued)

Sandra Brod and
Dennis DeDomenico
*Shelagh and Bob Brodersen
Shannon and Judith Brown
Lisa Bruce
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Carolyn Burgess
Lorna and Warren Byrne
*Greg Call and
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THE CLAREMONT CANYON CONSERVANCY

SUPPORTING THE LONG-TERM STEWARDSHIP OF CLAREMONT CANYON



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Bob and Shelagh Brodersen sitting underneath an old growth tree in Garber Park in 2016. Their impact continues through the Garber Park Stewards (story inside).