



Friends of Sausal Creek

Promoting Watershed Protection

www.sausalcreek.org
(510) 501-FOSC (3672)

February-March 2003

REMINDERS

- Monthly meetings, Wednesday, February 19 (featuring a presentation from the Friends of Peralta Hacienda) & March 19, 7-9pm, Dimond Library
- Keep your calendar clear for Earth Day at Sausal Creek! April 19, 2003, one of the biggest workdays of the year. Come help clean the creek and meet your neighbors.
- Contact us to donate tools, equipment, office supplies, or anything else.

Treasured Friend of the Month—Eleanor Dunn

A big THANKS to Eleanor Dunn, who is leaving her post as FOSC Treasurer. One of the founding members of FOSC, Eleanor is (and will continue to be!) a steadfast presence in the group. Juggling a busy schedule with family and veterinary work, she has found time to serve the canyon she loves so much—and we're all the beneficiaries. As well as taking the lead on several trail design, building, and improvement projects (notably the switchback connection from the creek to the Bridgeview trail), developing and participating in our kids' ecological education program, and contributing news articles for the press, Eleanor has served for many years as Treasurer of our fledgling organization, tracking expenses for our funders, thanking our contributors, balancing the income and outflow, paying the bills, and keeping our creditors happy. Despite her demanding schedule, she stayed on as Treasurer while we searched and found a worthy replacement, Diana Surber. We extend our profound thanks to Eleanor, canyon historian and friend to animals everywhere, for nurturing our fiscal health, and for going the extra mile in helping FOSC establish strong roots. "Happy trails," Eleanor.

~Mark J. Rauzon

Blue Belly Lizard

My mom and I were working at Joaquin Miller Park at the native plant nursery. When I was watering down the soil, and when I was moving the dirt around I saw something that looked like a lizard. So, I got it in my shovel and showed it to my mom, and our friend Sue [Morgan] who is the head person "kind of." I

asked if they thought it was fake. They said, "No, it isn't fake, but it looks dead." Sue starts to move it with a little bush. Sue thought it was dead. But my mom and Carol [Kuelper] thought it was alive because it moved a little. Then it started to move a little more so we all knew that it was alive. Carol said lizards are cold blooded and once it gets warm, the lizard starts to move. Elliot [Smith] came; he was taking pictures, so he went to get his tripod. The lizard had two blue stripes on its stomach. I didn't really want to touch it, but they were going to take a picture of me holding the lizard, but then Elliot had to go get his tripod. So, I gave the lizard back to Carol, and anyway it's just a small dragon. Carol was holding the blue belly lizard in her hand so it got warm. When Elliot got back, the blue belly lizard was squirming but we got the picture.

~Edward B. Gesley (age 12, volunteer docent with FOSC's Outdoor Ed. program)

What's Up in the Canyon?

All who have wandered Dimond Canyon in the past year know that the Friends' post-reconstruction revegetation efforts have been a mixed bag. Generally speaking, the areas between the creek and the trail that were planted and mulched have supported vigorous growth, while the east slope of the canyon, hydroseeded and covered with erosion-control fabric prior to planting, seems to be lagging behind.

The newly formed Restoration Committee surmises that the primary impediment to vigorous growth on the problematic east slope is out-competition by what was supposed to be "sterile" hydroseed mix. This mix of wheat

and clover turned out to be not-so-sterile. Its offspring, together with Himalayan and thornless blackberry and the dreaded English ivy, threaten to shade out and use up the water and nutrients needed by the native plants installed by FOSC volunteers. In a renewed attempt to revegetate the area with plants appropriate to mixed hardwood forest understory, the Restoration Committee has decided on a new management strategy.

Planting groups of plants in "islands" will do two things. First, it will ease the job of future weeding crews who will have defensible plots, rather than an entire hillside, to weed. Second, it provides our newly formed monitoring group with ready-made quadrants for monitoring plant survivorship. The hope is that in a sea of weeds, these islands will produce vigorous and protected enclaves of native vegetation that will seed and creep out into adjacent areas, slowly increasing the desired type of vegetative cover. We are also considering selective mowing on the slope to favor the natives.

Canyon observers may have wondered about another small experimental project going on in the east slope area at the entrance to Dimond Canyon. In conjunction with Kids for the Bay and three fourth- and fifth-grade classes from Sequoia Elementary School, we prepared and seeded six plots using three different methods. In the spring, the Kids will return to count the plants in each plot, comparing the ratio of natives to weeds as well as the success or failure of particular seeding methods. The information gathered by these school children may be of use in future revegetation projects.

~Kristen Hopper

A Night in the Lincoln (Warbler's) Bedroom

The sparrow sat on the fat black pipe, now almost hidden by the year's new growth of willows and nine-bark. I didn't have my binos but I swore it was a Lincoln sparrow. No beard or top hat, just the typical hunched posture and secretive nature. When it hopped down into the deciduous vegetation, I felt like shouting "Eureka!" A Lincoln sparrow is proof positive that the Friends are creating bird habitat and attracting new species. I was intrigued when, late last year, a white-crowned sparrow chose to nest near here instead of migrate. Now here's a migrant who's chosen our patch of new willows for a respite on its long, solitary night journey when most birds migrate. A night in this Lincoln bedroom doesn't require a huge donation to the regime-in-residence, only a moderate donation (time, supplies, money) to the Friends. Imagine—in a few sunny years, our riparian corridor could support enough habitat for many Lincoln sparrows and that other presidential bird of the watershed—the Wilson's warbler.

~Mark J. Rauzon



Okay, it's a kingfisher not a warbler. Protecting our watershed improves habitat for many birds.

Friends of Sausal Creek

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Attend our monthly meetings! Next ones are February & March 19, 7-9pm at the Dimond Library. Printed on recycled paper. Thanks for recycling!

Soul of an Oak Nurtures the Commons

The soul of Sausal Creek resides in an ancient oak in Dimond Park. This venerable oak tree lives next to the scout hut near the pool. Perhaps the oldest and largest oak in Oakland, this battered behemoth is a survivor of another era. It saw the original residents of Sausal canyon come and go. Who knows? Maybe a grizzly bear sharpened its claws on the tree—it's old enough to have been a substantial oak even 200 years ago. With a circumference just shy of 15 feet, the tree must be 500 years old. A "sacred tree" indeed, as Gary Snyder the poet/wilderness writer suggests. Why not dedicate the life of this witness to hundreds of years of canyon life to the restoration of the wellspring that waters its roots, shelters the birds in its branches, and binds a community together?

The scout hut itself is rich with local history, the kind future generations will search for in strip malls without success. The next time you visit the FOSC Demonstration Garden, pause and read the plaque on the hut. Built in 1897, the "Dimond Cottage" was first a playhouse for area youth and was in use until 1924 when it was destroyed by fire. The adobe walls and stone arch are all that's left. The 1893 bell hangs in the headquarters of the Dimond Volunteer Fire Department serving "as a reminder of the unflinching sacrifice of volunteer firemen." The new building was dedicated in 1955. Adobe bricks reputed to be from the original Peralta homestead have been incorporated into the scout hut's north-facing walls. The old oak thrives in the dust of the past. The scout hut is central to the many FOSC projects. Our tools are stored here.

The "tragedy of the commons" (where individual users of a resource collectively but unknowingly diminish its value) has been averted here. Instead, FOSC volunteers maintain the commons for a variety of user-groups who may not even be aware of FOSC, the oak, or the power of restoration. The commons are reclaimed, and still the Dimond Oak watches in patient regard, holding together the living center of the watershed. The next time you pass her, reflect a moment on this grand living being and wonder how much water has flowed down Sausal Creek since she was an acorn. ~Mark J. Rauzon

February-March 2003 newsletter contributors:

Charlotte Bell, Edward B. Gesley, Kristen Hopper, Sally Kilburg, Mark J. Rauzon, Michael Thilgen, Jennifer Stanley, Priscilla Stuckey

A special thanks this month to the prolific Mark J. Rauzon!

To contribute to the FOSC newsletter, email
coordinator@sausalcreek.org or call 501-FOSC.

FOSC ACTIVITY CALENDAR

Unless otherwise noted, call 501-FOSC to get information about all activities. Also, for details about ongoing projects, check the Volunteer section of the Friends' website at www.sausalcreek.org.

Monthly Meetings

~3rd Wednesday of the month~

- Wednesday 2/19, 3/19, 4/16, etc.
7pm-9pm; Dimond Library,
3565 Fruitvale Ave.

Board of Directors Meetings

~2nd Wednesday of the month~

- Wednesday 2/12, 3/12, 4/9, etc.
7pm-9pm at the Chabot Space &
Science Center. All welcome!

Saturday Workdays

- **Dimond Canyon:**
9:00am-noon. Meet at the
El Centro Trailhead.
- **Plant Propagation:**
1:30-4:00pm at the Joaquin
Miller Park Nursery.
Info, Kristen Hopper, 387-9744
or field@sausalcreek.org.

Outdoor Education

Docents Wanted

~Wednesdays~

9:00am-noon at Dimond Canyon
or the Joaquin Miller Park
Nursery. Preschedule with Sue
Morgan at 531-6293 or
class@sausalcreek.org.

Earth Day, April 19, 2003

Saturday, 9:00am-noon. Details to
follow at www.sausalcreek.org
and in the April-May newsletter.
Please save the date!

Bird Monitoring

~Quarterly outings~

Saturday, April 12, early in the
morning. For more info, call or
watch [www.sausalcreek.org /
volunteer/teams.html](http://www.sausalcreek.org/volunteer/teams.html).

Seed Collecting

~occasional Friday mornings through
the winter • please call first to
confirm e² for location~
Info: Robin North, 336-1861.

Aquatic Insect Sampling

~3rd Sunday of the month~

• Sunday 2/16, 3/16, 4/20, etc.
9:30am-noon; info: Emma Brown,
527-2507 or
lightbrown@onemain.com.

Water Quality Monitoring

~1st Saturday of the month • please
call first to confirm e² for location~

• Saturday 2/8, 3/1, 4/5. etc.
9am-noon; info: Mark Lane,
219-8036.

The Friends are sponsored by the Alameda County Flood Control
and Water Conservation District and the City of Oakland,
with additional support from CH2M Hill.