



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

President's Message

by Jon Kaufman



AS THE CONSERVANCY MOVES into its second 20 years, our Board of Directors has been reaching out to members to hear their thoughts about our future priorities. Current activities range from maintaining trails, to promoting native plants, to pressing public landowners to remove fire-prone eucalyptus and pine from sensitive areas of the canyon, to offering nature walks and other

educational programs to our members and the public. Should we be doing more? What are the best uses of our time and efforts?

With those questions in mind, we recently posted a survey, available to all our members, to collect their ideas objectively and systematically. Our first emailing of the survey was on September 21. If you haven't had a chance to respond, please check your inbox at 12:50 PM on September 21. You can also find the survey at our website. Look for the green "take the survey" button on our home page or visit the blog section.

It's been a busy summer and fall for the Conservancy. In addition to our regular stewardship activities, we expect to plant live oak seedlings to replace the dead trees behind the wooden fence at Signpost 29 on Claremont Avenue. The Conservancy erected that fence a few years ago to deter illegal dumping at that location.

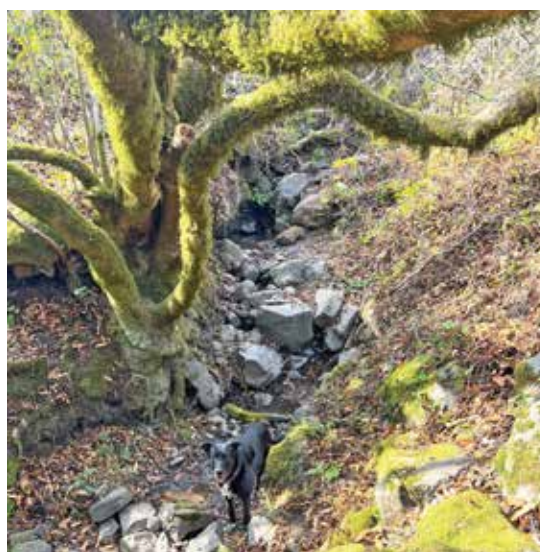
We watched with interest as the crews contracted by the East Bay Regional Park District removed a large number of eucalyptus trees and debris from the Claremont Canyon Regional Preserve. We are especially grateful to our long-time member Ron Berman for his work encouraging Park District officials to accomplish that task (page 6).

Some of us on the board are helping to lead an effort to develop a Memorandum of Understanding among the

cities and two counties in the East Bay Hills to work together on projects to reduce the danger of wildfire. Articles about these efforts are contained in this newsletter on page 6 and also on our website and in our monthly emails.

If you don't already receive our emails, please go to our website and give us your contact information or email us at info@claremontcanyon.org.

I thank all who volunteer their time on the board, in the community, and in the field. The activities reported in this newsletter, as well as the newsletter itself, are completely supported by membership. Please consider becoming a member. Details are on page 5.



Daniel Johnston © 2022

This small spring along the intermittent Telegraph Creek just above its junction with Claremont Creek started flowing again mid summer. "As the late summer fog increased, so did the meager flow of this spring," according to photographer Daniel Johnston. "I call it Buckeye Spring, due to the copse of drought-stressed buckeyes just below it."



Deer trail in Claremont Canyon, watercolor by Cheri Pies

Vision 2042!

by Nancy Mueller

DID YOU KNOW that until this year, essentially all the work to make the Conservancy a vital presence in Claremont Canyon was provided by volunteers? Founders, Founding Sponsors, and field volunteers put in countless hours to further the Conservancy’s goals.

This year, our board of directors is evaluating new approaches that may require more financial support than we currently receive from our members. In particular, we want to improve our communications, provide better educational programs, and strengthen our stewardship efforts by cultivating the next generation of environmental stewards.

Last year we took the important step of hiring new part-time staff including Ruby Soto Cardona and Wyllie Clayson, who, together with our administrative assistant Sonya Moore and our volunteer stewardship leader John Brochu, are sharing their immense talent in taking charge of our office technology and field efforts. We want to ensure the success of our organization for the next 20 years. We call this Vision 2042!

We’ve had the moral and financial support of so many people in the past. A special thanks goes to the hundreds who became Founding Sponsors of the Conservancy during the last two decades, those far-sighted individuals and families who committed to a donation of \$1,000 over 10-20 years.

We look toward Vision 2042 to set goals for the next twenty years. We invite your input and encourage you to share your ideas and take the member survey on our website’s home page. Go to www.claremontcanyon.org and click on the green radio button. Along with your thoughts, we are looking for help in grant writing and major donor development. If you have expertise in these areas, we would love to hear from you.

At our Annual Meeting, we will have thank you gifts for our past Founding Sponsors—custom watercolor note cards by local artists of some of our favorite Claremont Canyon scenes. See either Nancy or Sonya at the sign-in table to get your gift.

Because of you, we have accomplished much! Let’s continue!

Annual Meeting November 13

by Jon Kaufman

MEMBERS, THEIR GUESTS, AND OTHER interested parties are cordially invited to attend the Claremont Canyon Conservancy’s Annual Meeting (see back page for details). Meet the Conservancy’s Board of Directors and other members of the Conservancy and hear about our plans for the next 20 years. This year’s keynote speaker is Berkeley Mayor, the Honorable Jesse Arreguin. His topic will be “Building Wildfire Resilience.” Berkeley Fire Chief David Sprague will be present to answer questions.

In 2020, voters in Berkeley approved Measure FF, which established a wildland-urban interface division within the city’s fire department. The \$8.5 million annual property tax measure enabled the city to hire inspectors to assess wildfire risks on private properties—to be addressed year round—and institute neighborhood Firewise programs. The mayor will report on the city’s efforts to implement Measure FF.

Mayor Arreguin is the son and grandson of farm workers and was raised in a working-class household. He attended UC Berkeley and was the first in his family to graduate from college. He was elected to the Berkeley City Council in 2008 and then as mayor in 2016 and re-elected in 2020.



Mayor Jesse Arreguin

Prior to his election to the City Council, he served on a number of city agencies dealing with housing among other issues.

The meeting will be in the Skyline Room of the Claremont Resort and Spa. Join us at 4:00 for hors d’oeuvres and wine. The program will begin at 4:30.



On Creek-to-Bay Day, the Garber Park Stewards remove Cape ivy and weedy grasses along the path in Horsetail Meadow, opening it up for safer foot traffic.



Wyllie Clayson © 2022

Stewardship in the Canyon

PLEASE JOIN US FOR STEWARDSHIP EVENTS in Claremont Canyon throughout the fall and winter months. All levels of fitness are welcome. Watch for the monthly emails or check the Conservancy website for added events and to see where to meet.

Garber Park: We usually meet at Fireplace Plaza in *Garber Park* twice a month (first and third Saturdays). Our work is led by Wyllie Clayson and Ruby Soto Cardona of the Garber Park Stewards. Inquiries or volunteering contact gpstewards@gmail.com.

Upper Canyon: We meet once a month (fourth Saturday) in the upper canyon at *Signpost 29* and are led by John Brochu, 10 a.m. till noon. Inquiries, volunteering, other events, contact info@Claremont-Canyon.org.

When volunteering, please wear long sleeves, long pants, sturdy shoes and a hat. If you have gloves, please bring those too but we'll have extras.

Summer into fall in Garber Park

by Ruby Soto Cardona and Wyllie Clayson

GARBER PARK, A SMALL CITY OF OAKLAND PROPERTY situated on the south side of Claremont Canyon, is home to diverse and abundant ecosystems, spanning from native woodlands to riparian zones.

As the seasons change from summer to fall, our woodland's dominant tree, the coast live oak, may appear to change little. Not so for the bigleaf maple, the park's other major canopy tree. Soon it will be losing its leaves and depositing a nice leaf carpet on

the park's trails. In the park's riparian zone, giant horsetails that cover the area in summer will be falling back under native blackberry plants, awaiting to reemerge again next spring (see page 4).

Fall and winter are crucial times when weather patterns of wind and rain set the foundation for regrowth and expansion of our native plants and fungi. In Garber Park, native species are helped along by the countless hours our volunteers dedicate towards maintaining and restoring the park!

All through last summer, our volunteers worked to maintain the Loop Trail and remove invasive Himalayan blackberry from Harwood Creek. Other invasive plants were weeded from Fern Glade to create new bare areas where the ferns could expand just in time for the upcoming rains.

In July, we continued our tradition of partnering with Claremont Resort and Spa employee volunteers to clean up eucalyptus debris behind the hotel on Evergreen Path and to continue habitat restoration farther up the hill in Garber Park.

In September, on Oakland's Creek-to-Bay-Day, our volunteers removed and disposed of some of the more fire-prone debris found in the park—large piles of invasive Algerian ivy from previous workdays and accumulations of fallen tree branches. The city provided a large bin for us and the County's Waste Management hauled it all away free of charge.

As the Garber Park Stewards, we invite you to walk the trails and volunteer with us every first and third Saturday of the month from 9 a.m.-12 p.m. and experience the magic of fall! If you have questions or want to volunteer, please email us at gpstewards@gmail.com.



The area at Signpost 29 is on UC Berkeley's Hill Campus, which includes parts of Claremont and Strawberry canyons. Our upper canyon stewards maintain trails and monitor oaks and redwoods there. Pictured in the photo to the left is the Summit House Trail, which is wide enough in places for a vehicle.

Upper canyon stewardship at Signpost 29

by John Brochu

IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE that we're already gearing up for fall here in Claremont Canyon. For many of us, summer months have come and gone much too fast. We have spent the past couple workdays clearing summer growth to maintain trail accessibility throughout the canyon, and there is plenty more to do!

As part of this work, we have begun to identify young late-successional plants (oaks, redwoods) that could benefit from some upper canopy clearing for improved sunlight and lower canopy removal for resiliency against fire and animal browsing. Other items needing attention include accumulation of trash, mostly along Claremont Avenue, as well as wear and tear on trail features such as steps and bridges

With all that said, there is an abundance of fun and rewarding work ahead of us for this fall and winter. Keep us in mind for a dose of exercise and fresh air as we meet every fourth Saturday 10 a.m. till noon, with additional dates as announced. To get on our email list, go to our website and click on "Contact Us."

A Sea of Horsetails

by Wyllie Clayson

HIKING ALONG THE LOOP TRAIL in Garber Park at this time of year, you will soon arrive at a clearing that seems to be dominated by native California blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*). Taking a closer look, you will find remnants of a large stand of giant horsetails (*Equisetum telmateia* ssp. *braunii*).

These annual-to-perennial ferns (yes, horsetails are considered ferns) start shrinking back by the end

of summer. But once the following spring begins to work its warm magic, the ferns will start sprouting and filling in the open spaces of the clearing we call Horsetail Meadow.

Garber Park's seep provides a perfect riparian habitat as it emulates a wetland environment. Two types of horsetail stems are displayed in the spring—sterile stems with a traditional scouring brush appearance, and fertile stems with cone-like structures that carry spores (see photo below).

Under a microscope, horsetail spores appear to walk and jump—up to a distance of 200 times their body length! This allows for very efficient dispersal. You can watch a video on this process and read more about it by searching for "Horsetail spores don't need legs to jump" at sciencenews.org.

As you revisit and plan your walks along Garber Park's 1.5-mile Loop Trail, be on the lookout for horsetails and other native plants and notice the transformation over the coming months. For now, you'll see a few sparse horsetails around the area, but as spring arrives, there will be a field of giant horsetails once again!

To the right is a close-up of a fertile Giant horsetail stem photographed last May by Wyllie Clayson.



The Claremont Canyon Conservancy was formed in 2001 and incorporated under federal law as a non-profit, public benefit 501c3 corporation. Pictured, left to right, are some of the original board members Klaus Burmeister, Marilyn Goldhaber, Tim Wallace, Tamia Marg, Bill McClung, Joan Collignon, Barry Miller, and Joe Engbeck.



© 2002 Nancy Mueller

Preparing for wildfire in Claremont Canyon

by Jerry Kent, retired Assistant General Manager of Operations for the East Bay Regional Park District

HISTORY TELLS US THAT IN THE FUTURE Claremont Canyon and its adjacent residential areas will not be untouched by fire. During the past century, five of the largest fires in the East Bay Hills, and numerous smaller fires, either started near or spread into Claremont Canyon. Three of the most damaging wildfires in 1923, 1970 and 1991 destroyed homes, resulted in death and injury, and caused significant financial losses. Following the most devastating, the 1991 Oakland Tunnel Fire, public agencies and local residents began the process of mitigating their collective and individual exposure to wildfire.

Wildfire mitigation and home protection strategies could not have been made clearer than what was stated in fire hazard reduction plans adopted by public agencies in earlier years:

- 1982 Report of the Blue Ribbon Urban Interface Fire Prevention Committee
- 1995 East Bay Hills Vegetation Management Consortium Fire Hazard Mitigation Program and Fuel Management Plan for the East Bay Hills.

Unfortunately effective joint planning stalled around the year 2000 when the various agencies felt that a multi-agency plan, with required environmental documentation, was simply not possible. Thus the Claremont Canyon Conservancy, a citizen-based organization, came into being. The Conservancy would advocate for renewed, coordinated fire hazard mitigation implementation by each of the public agencies managing public parks and open spaces in the East Bay Hills. The intention of the founders was to reduce the risk of wildfire, in particular in

and around Claremont Canyon, while protecting, maintaining and restoring the natural beauty of the landscape. An additional goal was to improve public access by way of a limited, safe system of walking trails.

The hazard mitigation plans drawn up by the agencies all recommended that homeowners create and maintain defensible space around structures on

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:

Family Membership: \$100 per year
Vision Sponsor: \$1,000

Contact Us:

PO Box 5551, Berkeley CA 94705, 510-843-2226
Email: info@ClaremontCanyon.org
Website: www.ClaremontCanyon.org

The Board of Directors: Jon Kaufman, President; Marilyn Goldhaber, Vice President; Nancy Mueller, Secretary; Members at Large: Josh Borkowski, Jerry Kent, Melina Linder, Richard Marcus, Dan Robbins, Elizabeth Stage, and Jason Wu.

Treasurer: Kay Loughman

The Claremont Canyon Conservancy News is edited by Marilyn Goldhaber and Kay Loughman.

their side of the wildland-urban interface and retrofit vulnerable homes to resist wind driven firebrands. On the public lands side, the plans called for a system of fuel breaks at ridge tops and along residential edges to assist in firefighting at strategic locations. Importantly, all plans recommended that removal or management of high risk eucalyptus and pine groves must be assured to reduce the potential for crown fire and ember spotting into residential areas.

When wind-driven wildfires occur, residents will necessarily flee, leaving fire crews stretched thin and homes unguarded. While there are no guarantees a home can be made completely fire resistant, those that are vulnerable to firebrands, flames, and radiant heat, will be defenseless with little chance to outlast the fire.

People residing in Claremont Canyon and surrounding areas know that they live in a spectacular location. We are fortunate to be in this natural setting so close to open spaces but with all of the urban conveniences nearby. Fortunately, there are reasonable steps that can be taken to be safe and to protect one's property with good family emergency planning, appropriate home and property preparation, and defensible space landscape maintenance.

To help coordinate public wildfire prevention projects in the East Bay Hills, the Claremont Canyon Conservancy is leading an effort to develop a Memorandum of Understanding among the public agencies. More on this effort can be found in an October 12, 2022 post by Conservancy Board President Jon Kaufman in the blog section of the Conservancy's website. Look under the "more information" tab and choose "blogs." Residents can get help in home retrofitting and evacuation planning by contacting the Oakland Firesafe Council or go to easy-to-follow "Wildfire Guides" on [Berkeleyside.com](https://www.berkeleyside.com)

Resource management for wildfire safety

by Ron Berman

and [Oaklandside.com](https://www.oaklandside.com).

LAST YEAR WAS THE SECOND LARGEST destructive fire season in California history, second only to 2020, with about two million acres of forest burned. Many of the fires are believed to be related to delayed maintenance of forest vegetation. Far be it from me to criticize the people who manage our forests. With forest land in California totaling some 33 million acres, it would require a Herculean effort to make all of our forests fire-



Marilyn Goldhaber © 2022

Ron Berman (in the middle with white hat), leads Conservancy board members on a tour last July of the eucalyptus grove near the Stonewall Road entry to the Claremont Canyon Regional Preserve.

safe. Nevertheless, we have to start somewhere. With multiple fire hazard factors in mind, the Claremont Canyon Conservancy decided to do what it can to protect residents by making the environment safer in our own backyard.

The area of greatest concern to my neighborhood on the south-facing slope of Claremont Canyon is the Claremont Canyon Regional Preserve. The Preserve, one of 73 parks of the East Bay Regional Park District, holds an enormous amount of fuel, including a dense grove of eucalyptus trees, widespread scrubland, and significant deposits of ground fuel. Representing neighbors on Stonewall Road, and gaining the help of the Claremont Canyon Conservancy, I contacted the Park District about the high risk of unmanaged, dry, and decadent fuel and the occasional cooking fires I had witnessed in the Preserve. I found Park District officials to be most receptive and cooperative in recognizing our concerns and initiating measures to reduce fire hazard in the Preserve.

By early summer of 2022, work began in the previously unmanaged portion of the eucalyptus grove near the Stonewall entrance to the Preserve. The project, now completed, created a fuel break around the perimeter of the eucalyptus grove, removing some of the trees, thinning others, and reducing the abundant scrub and ground litter. These measures help protect us from any fire that might arise within the Preserve. We can all sleep better now.

I would like to recognize several Park District officials who helped bring this project to completion. Much of the hard labor fell onto the shoulders of District Fire Chief Aileen Theile and her team. I



Ron Berman © 2022

Above is an example of eucalyptus management this past summer in the Preserve: before, during and after treatment. Where possible, workers attempted to retain live oak trees (seen in the background) in the understory.

had no idea, until Chief Theile educated me, of the mountains of rules and regulations which must be obeyed before any fuel reduction can begin. These include completing surveys, obtaining permits, prescriptions, work plans, dealing with the steepness of the slope and limited access, and protecting wildlife, such as the Alameda striped whipsnake, which is a threatened species. Chief Theile and the District's General Manager Sabrina Landreth, who coordinated all the various park agencies involved, made the critical decision to designate the Claremont Canyon Regional Preserve a high priority site for fuels reduction.

I'm sure that the huge fuel load so close to our neighborhood helped them make this designation. Whatever the reasons, we owe all involved a world of thanks. Without a high priority designation, we could still be waiting for landscape remediation.

Others to thank include Lieutenant Gretchen Rose, the Park District's Patrol Watch Commander, and her team, who did a masterful and difficult job of relocating unhoused people who were camping within the park boundaries before the fuels reduction could go forward. Colin Gallagher, the Fuels Reduction Coordinator, was on-site while the work was being done and did a truly great job of seeing the project through. The teams of Professional Tree Care, the company contracted to do the actual physical work, are to be praised for accomplishing such heavy work in a difficult terrain of steep hills and deep canyons. Special thanks goes to Park Supervisor Jim Rutledge, who oversees the Claremont Canyon Regional Preserve, without whose continuing advice and support this project would never have been realized. There are likely other individuals whom I have unintentionally omitted, for whom thanks is given.

As you can see, protecting our homes, and our lives, has been a cooperative venture between the Claremont Canyon Conservancy and officials of the East Bay Regional Park District. My neighbors and I are most grateful.

Nap time

by Sara Fleisig

THIS GRAY FOX (pictured below) appeared on our deck one day in early October. We first noticed it curled up in a flower pot and thought it was a cat. Throughout the day we were treated to various behaviors, including grooming and changes of sleeping locations.

We saw the fox again the following two days. Once it looked out over the edge of the deck, headed down several stairs, and came back up with something small in its mouth.

We were fascinated by the close-up view through our windows and sent photos to Kay Loughman for her informative wildlife website, nhwildlife.net, and her monthly report of species observed in our neighborhood.



© 2022 Sara Fleisig

Conservancy members Sara and David Fleisig watched a gray fox who visited their deck. It prowled, groomed, and napped over the course of several days.



CLAREMONT CANYON
CONSERVANCY

P.O. Box 5551
Berkeley, CA 94705
www.ClaremontCanyon.org

THE CLAREMONT CANYON CONSERVANCY

Dear Friends and Neighbors

Please join us on

Sunday, November 13, 2022, 4-6 PM
Claremont Resort and Spa

Upstairs in the Skyline Room

Reception 4:00 PM

Presentations 4:30 PM

Open Forum 5:30 PM

Keynote Address by Berkeley Mayor
The Honorable Jesse Arreguin

“Building Wildfire Resilience”

Refreshments and wine bar

RSVP: info@ClaremontCanyon.org ***Bring:** masks and vax cards