

THE CLAREMONT CANYON CONSERVANCY

FALL 2007 *News*

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



© 2007 Marilyn Goldhaber

A new vista opened up last spring along Claremont Avenue after UC's wildfire mitigation crew removed a stand of eucalyptus trees that concealed the bridge and bay. UC's fire safety work was funded by a grant from the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Message from the President

by Martin Holden

It's Fall again in the East Bay Hills. The curled fists of the bigleaf maple leaves are collecting in drifts along Claremont Avenue, swept down the canyon by a warm wind. This is a time of waiting and hoping; waiting for the rain clouds to roll in from the Pacific and relieve the parched landscape, hoping that the sirens you hear don't announce another wildfire. When the first rains do come, the land itself seems to breath a sigh of relief, and then explodes again in green.

Walking or driving through this verdant landscape, it's easy to forget that there have been at least seven serious wildfires in the Canyon since 1946. Fortunately for all of us, the landholders who are responsible for the health and safety of this landscape are taking their responsibilities seriously. That's why the City of Oakland, the University of California, and the East Bay Regional Park District fought hard last year to win a FEMA Pre-disaster Mitigation Grant to manage potential wildfire fuels in Claremont Canyon and adjacent areas in the East Bay Hills. The competition was fierce, with 130 different agencies competing for the three grants ultimately awarded in California. Work funded at the regional level by Measure CC (see page 6) is already underway by the Park District and more projects will be added upon the completion of an Environmental Impact Report due out in 2009. Fuel reduction and habitat restoration work sponsored by the FEMA and Measure CC programs will make the hills neighborhood safer for residents, and more hospitable to our wild neighbors as well.

Your Conservancy has been doing its part to help guide these projects, as well as to sponsor our own small-scale stewardship programs (see page 2). Along with the Park District and the University, we are studying various restoration techniques in both eucalyptus removal and fuel-management areas, from goat-grazing to careful hand-work. There is good news from the Side Hill Trail area, where our past yellow star thistle eradication measures appear to have been successful and our work with several groups of UC students have slowed the spread of French Broom (see picture on back cover). We have also been working with the City of Oakland on creek restoration in Garber Park and along Claremont Avenue, and have sponsored various restoration and nature study projects for students and adults alike.

With this newsletter, I am pleased to announce a new Stewardship Fund, building on the success of last year's ad hoc fundraising from neighbors, which helped support fuel reduction work in the Stonewall Road area. The next special project welcoming your support is an effort to remove weedy fuels near the critical ridgeline area around Marlborough Terrace and Grizzly Peak Boulevard. If you live in this area or are interested in helping out or making a donation, please contact us (or use our donor envelope). Our contact information is listed on page 3.

Future stewardship projects include trail work, creek restoration, youth outreach, and more. We would love to have your support, financial or otherwise. Suggestions are encouraged! And as always, everyone is welcome to join the regular nature walks and stewardship sessions in the canyon (see next page). Working together, we can help the canyon realize its potential as a beautiful, ecologically-diverse, fire-safe place of refuge and recreation.

© 2007 Bill McClung



Barbara Deutsch takes a closer look at Pale Swallowtail caterpillars on a coffeeberry plant brought to our August butterfly walk .

© 2007 Martin Holden



It's a Dragonfly! Amateur entomologist Doug Vaughan shows off a Common Green Darner then sets her free on our September dragon-and-damselfly walk.

© 2007 Matt Morse



Yoga happens (spontaneously!) as our volunteers break during September's stewardship work party in Garber Park.

Nature Walks and Stewardship Sessions

by Matt Morse and Bill McClung

The Nature Walk and Stewardship Committee

It is good to look at Claremont Canyon from the road side, or the ridge, or from a neighboring house, but spending time in the Canyon with knowledgeable people—or doing stewardship work alongside your neighbor—is especially rewarding and provides a deepening basis for the positions the Conservancy will take on a variety of important issues in the Canyon.

Nature walks are free to members and friends and occur when we can arrange them with leaders. Stewardship sessions occur every third Saturday morning of the month from 10 to 12. Everyone is invited.

This season, we will meet in Claremont Canyon for the Nature Walks and Stewardship Sessions listed below. We will also have two living room informational meetings for upper and lower canyon neighbors. For the additional Redwood Project programs organized by Joe Engbeck please see page 7.

Typically from 10 to 30 people join us on our Canyon events. Our nature walks tend to be leisurely and for most fitness levels. For questions and suggestions, contact Bill McClung, 510-841-8447 or wmcclung@rcn.com. To receive email announcements and updates on events in the canyon or to RSVP to any of the events below, please email claremontcanyon@hotmail.com or call 510-843-2226.

Schedule of Events

October 20 – Stewardship at University Ecological Study Area 28 Turnout. 10:00 a.m. – noon.

October 28 – Upper Claremont Canyon Neighborhood Informational Meeting at the home of Barry Pilger and Catherine Moss, 6943 Buckingham Blvd, Berkeley, 94705. Starts at 5:30 p.m.

November 4 – Lower Claremont Canyon Neighborhood Informational Meeting at the home of Martin and Karen Holden, 70 Stonewall Road, Berkeley, 94705. Starts at 5 p.m.

November 17 – Stewardship at the Pacifica site, above Gwin Canyon. 10:00 a.m. – noon

November 18 – Walk Along the Wildland-Urban Interface, with Jon Keeley. 1:00 – 2:30 p.m.

November 18 – Annual Meeting (see pages 7 and 8). 4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

November 23 – Geology Walk, with Doris Sloan. 10:00 a.m. – noon.

December 15 – Stewardship at Creek Place in Redwood Grove in the Upper Canyon. 10:00 a.m. – noon



Wild Life in the North Hills – the Website

by Kay Loughman

A year or two ago I was greatly influenced by a couple of books (“Bowling Alone” and “Better Together”) by a Harvard scholar named Robert D. Putnam. He makes the case that decreasing involvement in community life is bad for individuals and ultimately bad for the world—a

gross oversimplification on my part. But, as one who tends to sit at the computer by myself rather than do anything in the community, I knew Putnam’s message was aimed at people like me.

Building on an interest in birding along with an appreciation of Claremont Canyon, and bending to some friendly suggestions from Anne Seasons and Bill McClung, I started a website featuring illustrations of wildlife found in my neighborhood. Soon the website also contained recommendations for field guides and lists of bird species seen, and this year I expanded the website to include photo galleries.

A leap of faith inasmuch as I hadn’t willingly held a camera since I was about twelve years old! Time to re-think just what I wanted to accomplish with this website.

One of the things important to me is that the galleries be a cooperative venture. I want pictures taken by lots of different people. Pictures showing the unique perspective of the individual photographer enhance appreciation of the canyon for all of us. And while I admire great photographic skill, I don’t have it, and I don’t want any potential contributor to hold back for a lack of talent. So if we have pictures of Anna’s Hummingbirds from eight different people, some will be better than others; but we’ll know there are at least eight people in the neighborhood who have enjoyed watching a hummingbird, and then taken a picture to share.

The galleries have grown. At the beginning of October, the Wildlife Gallery has photos of 62 bird species, 31 butterfly and moth species, and lesser numbers of other invertebrates, mammals, and reptiles. The Plant Gallery, added in the early summer, has pictures of more than 90 plant species. More pictures are being added to each gallery every month. Later this fall, I’ll open a gallery for mosses, lichens, fungi, and perhaps another for other parts of the natural scene. Enhancements have been suggested, first among them being an index so that people who know a species name can use it to find the appropriate picture. The index will come soon. In time we may also include some descriptive text to accompany each photo. Meanwhile, I welcome more photographs.

A few nuts and bolts: Digital photos should be as they come from the camera – no adjusting without prior consultation. Physical prints and slides can be scanned, and the originals returned to the owner. All photos remain the property of



Kay discovered her first Monarch butterfly of the season on her neighbor’s Cape Honeysuckle on Gravatt Drive.

the photographer. (For more information and to make photo contributions, go to <http://www.geocities.com/kayloughman/WLITNH.htm> or email kayloughman@earthlink.net.)

This website will be as useful and attractive as we—cooperating—can make it.

Claremont Canyon is the largest relatively undeveloped canyon on the western slope of the Oakland/Berkeley Hills. Much 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 reduce wildfire hazards, preserve or restore a healthy native ecosystem, and promote education and research.

Join the Conservancy

Founding Sponsor: \$1,000 over 10 years.

Family Membership: \$50 per year.

Student or Senior: \$25 per year.

Contact Us

PO Box 5551, Berkeley CA 94705, 510-843-2226

Email: ClaremontCanyon@hotmail.com

Website: www.claremontcanyon.org

The Board of Directors: Martin Holden, President; Joe Engbeck, Vice President; Marilyn Goldhaber, Secretary; Barry Pilger, Treasurer; Bill McClung and Matt Morse, Stewardship and Nature Walks; and Dick White, Business and Finance. Board members at large are Tamia Marg, Donald Pierce and Tim Wallace.

The Claremont Canyon Conservancy News is edited by Marilyn Goldhaber, Martin Holden, and Joe Engbeck

A BUFFER ZONE IN CLAREMONT CANYON AS A CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

A Personal Perspective by Bill McClung

For many years I have believed we need a substantial fuel-reduction zone—similar in scale to the Tilden Fuelbreak at the edge of North Berkeley—in the complex two miles of wildland-urban intermix in Claremont Canyon. This idea runs up against practical, aesthetic, jurisdictional, and inertial challenges that may be overcome if we can begin to think of such a buffer zone as a *cultural landscape*.

In August, the Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association hosted a series of walks and talks concentrating on Strawberry Canyon as a *cultural landscape*. Walks—or rambles as they called them—occurred on Panoramic Hill, at the Botanical Garden, and along the Upper Jordan Trail, which connects to the Ridge Trail above Claremont and Strawberry Canyons.

Their keynote speaker was Charles Birnbaum, president and founder of The Cultural Landscape Foundation in Washington, D.C., an organization that celebrates and supports landscape preservation work in great gardens in the East and South, rescuing Mount Vernon, the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg, and similar projects. On the TCLF website he writes:

“A *cultural landscape* is a geographic area that includes cultural and natural resources associated with an historic event, activity, person, or group of people. *Cultural landscapes* can range from thousands of acres of rural land to homesteads with small front yards. They can be man-made expressions of visual and spatial relationships that include grand estates, farmlands, public gardens and parks, college campuses, cemeteries, scenic highways, and industrial sites. *Cultural landscapes* are works of art, texts and narratives of cultures, and expressions of regional identity. They also exist in relationship to their ecological contexts.”

To think of Strawberry Canyon or Claremont Canyon as a *cultural landscape* in this way may be helpful. These great canyons in our midst are certainly dramatic landscapes and they are complexly cultural. People live here and have done things to this landscape for centuries. Claremont Canyon is

not either just a natural area for preservation or a cultural area for human uses. It is both. Whether we are driving along Claremont Avenue, walking with friends along a trail, or simply looking at the two-mile wildland-urban interface in Claremont Canyon, we are in a *cultural landscape*.

Conservancy member Mary Millman, whose article on Measure CC appears on page 6, is quoted on The Cultural Landscape Foundation’s website www.tclf.org/stewardship with this interesting definition of *cultural landscapes*: “A *cultural landscape* is a physical construct, produced by people, the design, materials, and function of which express or define the historic, social and political character of a geographic area in a certain period of time. This panorama captures the essence and textures that made the time and place unique.”



Conservancy members watch as Paul McGee explains how to identify Blue Wildrye on our June nature walk, lead by watershed assessment specialist Laurel Marcus (at center, holding clipboard). Photo by Martin Holden © 2007.

Is this not suggestive of a way to think about Claremont Canyon? Old pictures at the Claremont Hotel show the Canyon as ranch land, with grasslands as the predominant vegetation. In the last 70 years the Canyon has succeeded to shrubland and forest after the removal of grazing and where fires have been suppressed.

The continuous growth toward woody, dominant vegetation is a natural process in the Canyon, as is fire to restart the successional processes, which occurred in Gwin Canyon in 1946, 1970 and 1991.

The management of such vegetation—for wildfire safety or access or to promote native vegetation as the Conservancy advocates—is a cultural process.

Houses, of course, are cultural artifacts, but so is nature—managed or otherwise—close to the houses. We can think of buffer zones or fuelbreaks as *cultural landscapes*, natural places where humans do purposeful and historical things. Great *cultural landscapes* deserve to be thought about, preserved, worked on, and maintained. Precious little work on the urban-wildland interface in Claremont Canyon has been done since the great 1970 and 1991 Fires.

Given the importance of this zone between where we live and the nature we like to look at, it is somewhat surprising that we are so tolerant of not taking care of it.

Some say it would cost too much. I believe that an effective, 75-acre fuel break along the wildland-urban interface in



© 1991 unknown photographer

The 1991 Firestorm is seen overtaking a home on Drury Court in Claremont Canyon. The main fire line is from the scrubland to the east (left, out of the frame). This and other pictures in the series show several small fires starting by airborne embers in the fine, dry material under the eucalyptus and pines near the house. This phenomenon, called “spotting,” allows wildfires to leapfrog ahead of firefighters and creates multiple fire fronts. This same landscape burned in 1946 (before the house was there), then again in the 1970 and 1991 wildfires. The house has since been rebuilt and the owner takes great care to manage the property for defensible space. Last year, the Conservancy and Park District removed most of the exotic pines in the small side canyon, called Gwin Canyon, to the east of this house, under a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Claremont Canyon could be managed for under \$250,000 a year. Is that too much to expect the landowners to spend to greatly increase the chance that a future wildland fire can be fought successfully at the urban edge?

Some say the work is too hard: steep slopes, large difficult-to-access areas, poison oak, etc. It is true that this work is challenging, but the large-scale University eucalyptus work in the upper Canyon in the last five years shows that a dedicated agency with strong leadership can take on the largest challenges in large areas of the Canyon.

Some say vegetation management is too destructive of habitat and scenic values. Indeed, it sometimes is, but from my professional experience working on fuel reduction in Claremont Canyon, Tilden Park, and Vicente Canyon, I have seen and learned that fuelbreaks can be beautiful places, managed to support native biodiversity, and made into important social spaces.

A managed buffer zone extending from Marlborough Terrace to Panoramic Hill along the urban wildland edge in Claremont Canyon, with an adequately constructed and maintained fire road/trail system for work and fire-fighting access, would be an important cultural feature of our Canyon.

It would in short be a *cultural landscape*, with all the

density of values that that phrase has come to suggest. We have very practical wildfire-safety reasons to want that in Claremont Canyon, but it also carries the potential of strong aesthetic and social values. Again, the University’s enormous eucalyptus project in the upper Canyon—with its emerging trails, scenic enhancements, access for Conservancy nature walks and stewardship—is showing that work on this scale is possible.

In my view, it is essential for the Park District, City of Oakland, and the Conservancy to support and implement an urban-wildland interface buffer zone that is likely to be successful in Claremont Canyon.

We will be in the right frame of mind if we think of it as a *cultural landscape*: a defined place of both natural and social values.

Bill McClung is a Conservancy Board member and volunteers on the Stewardship and Nature Walk Committees. Formerly a book editor, he has worked for the last ten years for Shelterbelt Builders, a Berkeley Open Land and Restoration Company. From 2002 to 2004 he managed 20 acres of the Tilden Fuelbreak Weed Management Area Project along the North Berkeley interface with the Regional Park District.



Conservancy Secretary-turned-videographer Marilyn Goldhaber captures a conversation between Richard Nichols, consultant on the Park District's EIR team, and Martin Holden, Conservancy President, during a grassland nature walk in the Claremont Canyon Preserve led by David Amme, Manager of the Park District's Vegetation and Range Land Program (behind Marilyn speaking with Park Superintendent Ed Leong). To see clips from this and other events, please visit our website.

REVISITING MEASURE CC Three Years and Counting

by Mary Millman

This Fall we revisit Measure CC and its impact on Claremont Canyon. For our members and friends who may not recall, in November 2004 Measure CC garnered approval from a little over the required two thirds of voters in the East Bay Regional Park District's Zone 1 (western Alameda and Contra Costa counties). The Measure imposed a \$12.00 annual parcel tax on single-family units (\$8.28 on multi-family units) in order to produce—at about \$3 million per year—a \$46 million supplemental fund for “park access, wildfire protection, public safety, and environmental maintenance” within 21 parks and recreation areas, specifically including Claremont Canyon.

To administer the fund over its 15-year life, the Park District adopted a line item budget format with 79 specific projects. Topping the list of projects is the overarching management plan and environmental impact report that will set guidelines for the other 78 projects. The Plan and EIR, called the *East Bay Hills Wildfire Hazard Reduction and Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Report*, was contracted out in 2005 to a team of consultants headed by LSA Associates Inc. and Amphion Environmental, Inc. The team is employing state-of-the-art analytic mapping tools to model and assess wildfire hazards in the target parks. They then will recommend environmentally sound methods of mitigation. “The recommendations will be very specific and tied to types of hazards—eucalyptus removal, for example,” said Cheryl Miller of Amphion. “After the approval of the Plan and EIR in 2009, the recommendations will be incorporated into all the projects so that the environment will be protected.”

In the meantime, some Measure CC monies are already going toward projects associated with previously approved programs. In the Claremont Canyon Preserve, for example, Measure CC funds are earmarked for further reduction of the eucalyptus grove at the Stonewall Road trailhead, a program that has been underway for several years. According to Dave Collins of the Park District, this work will continue in each of the 15 years of Measure CC with the goal of creating “a stable, low maintenance landscape that promotes native plant communities.”

Allocations of funds for Claremont Canyon are listed in three line items of the Measure CC budget: \$418,060 for completion of the trail system; \$120,000 for research for Whipsnake habitat enhancement; and for Sibley and Claremont Canyon combined, \$1,175,000 for vegetation management and fuels reduction. The precise allocation of these sums has yet to be determined.

Completion of the trail system in Claremont Canyon is tentatively scheduled for 2010 so that Whipsnake habitat and the EIR policies can be accommodated. Interestingly, the Alameda Whipsnake, a rare and endangered species, is now hard or even impossible to find in Claremont Canyon but is known to exist in neighboring Tilden in numbers sufficient to justify study of its habitat. When the studies are concluded, the Claremont Canyon appropriation will likely be applied to better manage Canyon vegetation for Whipsnake habitat, according to Mr. Collins.

The Park District and its consultants have held two public meetings in 2006 and 2007 detailing the analysis and progress on the Plan and EIR and requesting public input and comment. Their next meeting will be sometime in 2008, but the team is eager to hear from individuals and groups before then. “This is the time to get involved,” said

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Redwood Reforestation Progress Report

by Joe Engbeck

Over the last five years, a small army of Conservancy volunteers has planted some 3,500 redwood seedlings in upper Claremont Canyon and on Chaparral Hill. Of course, some of those seedlings will not survive, but it now seems likely that enough will survive to significantly augment the redwood planting that was done thirty years ago by the Piedmont Rotary Club. The hope is that these redwoods will add a beautiful and highly enjoyable element to the natural landscape in our part of the Oakland/Berkeley Hills.

The Conservancy's redwood seedlings were planted in areas where some 8,000 eucalyptus trees were recently removed by the University of California. Those eucalyptus trees constituted an invasive, non-native forest that was generally considered a serious fire hazard. The University will also be removing more eucalyptus trees on the upper slopes of the upper canyon, though the Conservancy has elected not to plant redwoods in those areas, but will simply encourage the establishment of a native oak/laurel forest—a forest that tends to include buckeyes, elderberries, maples, madrones, and other native trees and shrubs.

We've had a little rain already this autumn, thanks to a couple of rogue storms, but dry weather could return before the rainy season really sets in. Once rainfall has saturated the soil of the upper canyon, however, there will be one more chance to plant redwood seedlings—probably in late November or December. The Conservancy—working closely with the University—has set up a little nursery and is tending some 200 genetically appropriate redwood seedlings and waiting for the right opportunity to replace those seedlings that failed to survive the summer drought.

If you would like to plant one or more of these last 200 redwood seedlings, please contact Joe Engbeck at jhengbeck@aol.com.



Even kids like to plant redwood trees. Chuck Goldhaber was among the first group of students to help with our redwood restoration project in 2003.

Wildfire Expert Jon Keeley to Speak at Annual Meeting on November 18

by Joe Engbeck

The Claremont Canyon Conservancy is fortunate to have one of the nation's leading experts on wildfire and natural landscape management as its featured speaker for this year's Annual Meeting (see back page for details). Jon E. Keeley is a research ecologist with the U. S. Geological Survey's Western Ecological Research Center. He is also an adjunct professor with the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at U.C.L.A. His research has focused on the ecological impacts of wildfire and other aspects of plant physiology and plant ecology, as well as on rare plants and habitats. He has contributed nearly 200 articles to national and international scientific journals and books.



Some of you will remember Dr. Keeley's highly informative presentation to the Regional Parks Association in March 2003. That presentation, entitled "Fire and the Wildland-Urban Interface: Lessons from the 2003 Fire Season," led to a ground-breaking article entitled "Fire History of the San Francisco East Bay Region and Implications for Landscape Patterns," which was published in 2005 in the *International Journal of Wildland Fire*.

The title of his talk this year is: "Balancing Fire Hazard Reduction and Resource Protection in California's Fire-Prone Ecosystems."

Dr Keeley is an excellent speaker who has had the courage to take controversial stands on various events and policies—provided reliable data are available to justify his conclusions. We are fortunate to have him as our guest at our November 18 Annual Meeting and Canyon Walk earlier in the day (page 2).

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Amphion's Cheryl Miller, "as the plan is being generated—especially between now and next summer when they are finishing the scoping of how fuel management will be done."

At this point Conservancy members have a rare opportunity to participate directly in the wedded issues of native environmental protection and wildfire hazard reduction. Measure CC requires at least 10% per year be held back for future unforeseen needs. The 2008 budget retains almost half of the annual \$3 million allotment—until the Plan and EIR are adopted. When the Plan and EIR are adopted as a blueprint for policy, the funds for implementation will be available. The Conservancy looks forward to a period of "Canyon advocacy" this fall and winter with the hope and belief that next year at this time we will have not only a plan and a policy to address the wildfire hazard, but also the means at hand to carry it out.



CLAREMONT CANYON CONSERVANCY
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www.ClaremontCanyon.org



© 2007 Martin Holden

Flinging French Broom: UC students from Bill Berry's Environmental Studies class get hands-on experience in restoration work along Claremont Canyon's Ridge Trail.

THE CLAREMONT CANYON CONSERVANCY

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

MEMBERS, FRIENDS, AND NEIGHBORS, *Please join us ...*

Annual Meeting

Sunday, November 18, 2007, 4-6 p.m.

The Claremont Hotel

Reception 4:00 p.m.

Presentations 4:30 p.m.

Open Forum 5:30 p.m.

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Jon E. Keeley, "Balancing Fire Hazard Reduction and Resource Protection in California's Fire-Prone Ecosystems."

No-host wine bar with complimentary refreshments. Bring a friend or neighbor.

RSVP: ClaremontCanyon@hotmail.com or call 510-843-2226