



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

President’s Message by L. Tim Wallace

IT IS MY PLEASURE TO ANNOUNCE that Jon Keeley has agreed to be the featured speaker at our annual meeting on Sunday, November 4. Dr. Keeley last spoke to the Conservancy in the autumn of 2007—five years ago—so we’re pleased to have him back again to discuss the most important new findings in the field of wildfire behavior, climate, and local conditions.

Jon Keeley is one of the nation’s leading experts on wildfire and natural landscape management. He is the head of station for the USGS Western Regional Ecological Research Center and adjunct professor at the University of California at Los Angeles. After visiting the Bay Area in 2004 and touring Claremont Canyon with Conservancy members and others, he produced a carefully documented research paper, “Fire History of the San Francisco East Bay Region and Implications for Landscape Patterns,” which was published by the *International Journal of Wildland Fire*. I encourage any of you who are interested to have a look at this important work, which is downloadable from our website.

The threat of wildfire looms large this time of year as we recall several major conflagrations that have swept

through Claremont Canyon—with devastating consequences—during our windy, dry fall weather. We pause for a moment to remember friends and neighbors who have lost lives and property.

At the Conservancy we realize that fire safety and preservation of the environment are everybody’s responsibility, public landowners and private citizens alike. I am heartened to know that our public agencies are working hard toward these twin goals. Education is key. As you will read inside this newsletter, many private citizens learn about local ecosystems while volunteering their time weeding around native plants and clearing unwanted debris in public parks. Good citizens take wildfire preparedness seriously. They also follow local ordinances that call for defensible space around their homes, and they use recommended materials and designs. I thank you kindly if you are one of these good citizens.

If you have not yet become active in the Conservancy you have much to look forward to. If you are not yet a member, I warmly invite you to consider joining. Your donation is greatly appreciated, as well as your active participation. I look forward to seeing you at our annual meeting.

JON KEELEY (center, in green USGS vest) listens intently to past president, Martin Holden (right) during a 2007 tour of Claremont Canyon with other Conservancy members (l. to r., Tamia Marg, Bill McClung, Jerry Kent, and Joe Engbeck; with Ed Leong of the East Bay Regional Park District in background).

The group is seen here at the upper ridge of the canyon just off of Grizzly Peak Boulevard near Marlborough Terrace discussing hazards of grassland versus shrubland versus forests. According to Keeley, fire fronts move fastest through grassland but hottest with longer flame lengths through shrubland and forests. When fire ignites eucalyptus forests and reaches the canopy, burning embers tend to be sent aloft and travel far ahead of the fire front.



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Creek-to-Bay Day in Garber Park

by Shelagh Brodersen

AS I WRITE THIS ARTICLE, it is early fall and the Garber Park Stewards have just had another successful Creek-to-Bay Day. We really enjoy this event, sponsored by the City of Oakland, as it gives us an opportunity to highlight Garber Park's unique wetlands and riparian corridor along Harwood Creek. Our goal this year was to remove the invasive weeds that were threatening to encroach on last January's Measure DD-funded creek stabilization project, in which indigenous willows, ash, ferns, and horsetails were planted, and preparations were made for this year's winter planting. Our efforts, as they are each year, were guided by Lech Naumovich, Director of the Golden Hour Restoration Institute.

Harwood Creek has seen many changes since we formed the Garber Park Stewards three years ago. At our first Creek-to-Bay Day in 2010, our hardy group of volunteers attacked with gusto a 10-foot high wall of Himalayan blackberries, and managed to free part of the creek of this highly invasive plant. Two years later, thanks to our ongoing "blackberry bashing group," the blackberries are gone.

Other changes to the creek area include last August's fire safety work funded by the City of Oakland Wildfire Prevention Assessment District in which flash fuels and ladder fuels were removed from the park, revealing large stands of native snowberry, thimbleberry, gooseberry, and ferns.

We ended Creek-to-Bay Day this year with a tremendous feeling of satisfaction and look forward to our winter restoration planting. While we have made great progress, we still have much work to do to prepare our next restoration sites.

Cape ivy continues to blanket much of Garber Park, and there are still more stands of Himalayan blackberry and French broom to remove. To that end, fall stewardship will continue. We plan to work along the riparian corridor of Harwood Creek, removing invasive weeds so that native riparian plants that provide important habitat and help stabilize the banks can thrive. We will also work on the hillside at the Evergreen Lane entrance and hope to expand this restoration site to "fireplace plaza" and beyond.

Thanks to all of the many volunteers who have spent countless hours in helping to roll back the years of neglect and the invasions of Himalayan blackberries, Cape ivy, and French broom. Because of your efforts the unique and fascinating native habitat—snowberry, thimbleberry, willows, ferns—is returning. Each workday in Garber Park brings a new surprise that inspires us to return time after time. Won't you join us? Our stewardship days are the first Tuesday and the third Saturday of the month, 10 AM-noon. During our regular Saturday stewardship session in December, we will have a special third-year anniversary celebration to mark the completion of two years of restoration planting under the leadership of Lech Naumovich, who has worked with the Garber Park Stewards and the City of Oakland to develop our restoration plans. His knowledge, energy, and enthusiasm are primary reasons for our success and make for a fun and informative morning.

For more information on the Garber Park Stewards and their active restoration efforts please visit our blog garberparkstewards.blogspot.com or email us at garberparkstewards@gmail.com. We look forward to seeing you soon in Garber Park.



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Many people turned out for Creek-to-Bay Day, including fire fighters from Oakland's Fire Station 7.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

PLEASE JOIN US FOR OUR FALL/WINTER SERIES in Claremont Canyon. Stewardship outings include twice monthly (first Tuesday and third Saturday) restoration work in Garber Park in the lower canyon, in collaboration with the Garber Park Stewards, led by Shelagh Brodersen; and once a month (usually the second Saturday, Nov 10 canceled) for weed management and trail maintenance elsewhere in Claremont Canyon led by Jon Kaufman.

Dates for Garber Park are **Nov 6 & 17, Dec 4 & 15**. Meet at the Evergreen entrance, 10 AM-noon. Dates for the stewardship work sessions elsewhere in the canyon are **Nov 3 & Dec 8**. Meet at UC signpost 29 on the south side of Claremont Avenue, .4 miles uphill from the Alvarado Road intersection (across from the chert), 10 AM-noon.

Additional events are listed below. All are free and open to the public. Please check our website for updates and additions. RSVP to info@ClaremontCanyon.org.

When venturing into the canyon, it is good to wear long sleeves, long pants, sturdy shoes and a hat. Vegetation volunteers should also bring gloves.

November 3—The Berkeley Project, 9 AM-3 PM. Cal students join again with Conservancy volunteers for a day of trail maintenance and weed removal. Includes lunch for all volunteers. Meet at UC signpost 29 on the south side of Claremont Avenue, .4 miles uphill from the Alvarado Road intersection (across from the chert).

November 4—Annual Meeting, 4-6 PM at the Claremont Hotel (see page 8 for details).

December 9—The Birds of Claremont Canyon led by Dave Quady, Audubon Christmas Bird Count Leader, and Kay Loughman, creator of the website *Wildlife in the North Hills*.

Join us to seek the birds that reside or winter in Claremont Canyon. Dave and Kay will also lead a special owling adventure in the wee morning hours, followed by a break for breakfast. Join us for one walk or both.

Owling Walk (December 9), 4:30-6:30 AM. Meet at the trailhead on the north side of Claremont Avenue (signpost 28), about one-half mile uphill from the Alvarado Road intersection. After a brief owling lesson, we'll listen for owls at a couple of locations in the canyon. We will walk a little, but mostly stand quietly in the dark and listen. Owling is chancy: we hope to hear an owl or two; if we're really lucky we may see one. Rain or high wind cancels.

Daytime Bird Walk (December 9), 8 AM until about noon. Meet at the top of the canyon, at the Claremont Avenue/Fish Ranch Road/Grizzly Peak Boulevard intersection. We will drive to a couple of locations to sample different habitats in search of resident and migrant birds. We'll bird from roads,

and hike on trails as much as conditions permit. Rain or high wind cancels.

Call Dave at 704-9353 before 9:00 PM on Saturday, December 8 if you're unsure whether the walks will run in light of the next day's weather forecast. Dress warmly and bring binoculars, field guide and flashlight (for owling).



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Conservancy volunteers are needed! Please join with Cal students on Berkeley Project Day, November 3. Come for an hour or two or the whole day. You are sure to enjoy these energetic young people.

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:

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

Family Membership: \$50 per year.

Student or Limited Income: \$25 per year.

Contact Us:

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

Email: info@ClaremontCanyon.org

Website: www.ClaremontCanyon.org

The Board of Directors: L. Tim Wallace, President; Joe Engbeck, Vice President; Barry Pilger, Treasurer; Marilyn Goldhaber, Secretary; Shelagh Brodersen, Joan Collignon, Steve Holtzman, Jon Kaufman, Jerry Kent, and Dick White, Members at Large.

The **Claremont Canyon Conservancy News** is edited by Marilyn Goldhaber and Joe Engbeck.

Invasive Tree Removal Expected To Go Forward in Upper Claremont Canyon

by Jon Kaufman

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA'S PROGRAM of invasive tree removal from its land in upper Claremont Canyon has been on hold for the past three years while a federal environmental study assesses the environmental impacts of fire mitigation projects planned for the East Bay hills. Over 9,000 trees, mostly hazardous eucalyptus, have already been removed through UC's program in Claremont Canyon. If all goes well, the program is expected to resume in 2013 or 2014.

In the meantime, UC's treated lands are recovering on their own as the more desirable native trees and shrubs respond to their newly increased share of air, light and water. To facilitate the recovery, Conservancy volunteers worked with UC land manager Tom Klatt to build and maintain trails and remove invasive weeds. The Conservancy also helped install a large redwood log that Tom carved into a rustic redwood bench. That bench now sits near signpost 29 along Claremont Avenue directly across from the canyon's dramatic geological feature, the radiolarian chert wall (pictured on page 7). The redwood bench, which we featured in our last newsletter, invites hikers, birders, and others to sit down, rest, relax, and enjoy a vista of willows by the creek and native woodlands of oak, bay and buckeye on the canyon's north-facing slope. Phase One of UC's program and its charming vista, previously hidden by towering eucalyptus, are now easily visible on the south side of Claremont

Avenue, looking right as you drive uphill about a half a mile beyond the Alvarado intersection.

The dense eucalyptus grove on the north side of Claremont Avenue (outlined below) is soon expected to undergo the same restoration treatment. FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency that has been conducting the review of projects, will ensure that all relevant issues have been addressed. Once that review is complete and the resulting environmental impact statement approved, FEMA will release the funds that were earmarked years ago for use by UC in removing non-native eucalyptus, pine, and acacia trees to make the vegetation in this part of the Canyon more fire-safe.

Today, native vegetation struggles to grow in the deep shade of the much larger and fast-growing blue-gum eucalyptus. When UC's large tree removal resumes, most likely in 2013 and 2014, care will be taken, according to Tom Klatt, to protect struggling natives and encourage them to recolonize the landscape. We anticipate that the landscape north of the road on south-facing slopes will look raw for a while. The ground will have been disturbed by tractors and other heavy-duty logging equipment, freshly-cut stumps will be visible, and whole scene will look disturbed, perhaps for a few years.

But once the eucalyptus are gone, along with their deep shade and tons of flammable debris, the area's oaks, bay laurels, buckeyes, big leaf maples, elderberries, and other native trees and shrubs are expected to grow rapidly, as has occurred on the south side of Claremont Avenue. Moreover,



© 2005 Tom Klatt

Eucalyptus and other trees slated for removal under a FEMA grant are outlined above. The trees, remnants of a century-old plantation, are just north of Claremont Avenue in upper Claremont Canyon below Grizzly Peak Boulevard.



RETURNING BOARD MEMBER JOAN COLLIGNON surveys a restored north coastal grassland in the Claremont Canyon Regional Preserve behind homes. The Park District cut and burned brush here in 2010 and Conservancy volunteers have since been maintaining the site by aggressive removal of French broom, thistle, and other invasive weeds. This hillside site behind Stonewall Road, with its native grasses, low-lying shrubs and occasional live oaks, can be viewed as a model grassland that provides a relatively fire-safe wildland environment. Both the Conservancy, in its Advocate Plan, and the Park District, in its Master Plan, call for this type of grassland in the wildland-urban interface. Grasslands require maintenance, however, in the absence of fire or other land disturbances. The Park District plans to hand mow this area yearly and to reduce/limb-up shrubs and trees periodically, as needed.

Claremont Canyon Conservancy volunteers will go to work, helping the hillside recover. As the native trees and shrubs reestablish themselves, the area will become as attractive as the earlier UC project areas on the south side of Claremont Avenue.

We will be trading a dense, debris-filled, fire-prone eucalyptus grove for a more beautiful, more natural, and far safer Upper Claremont Canyon.

Claremont Canyon's Many Landowners Take Responsibility *by Marilyn Goldhaber*

DO YOU KNOW THAT CLAREMONT CANYON has many landowners? The two major landowners are the University of California, which owns the upper 150 acres of our mostly wildland canyon (see article on opposite page) and the East Bay Regional Park District, which owns the lower 208-acres (including Gwin Canyon) best known for the dramatic Stonewall-Claremont hiking trail. Both agencies have their hands full with the responsibility of protecting natural values of these lands while assuring a reasonably fire-safe environment.

Other public landowners in Claremont Canyon share in this responsibility, including the City of Oakland, which

owns the 13-acre John Garber Park at the bottom of the canyon (as described by Shelagh Brodersen on page 2) and EBMUD, which owns three water tanks in Claremont Canyon and several acres of tree-covered ridgelines (pictured in background on the opposite page) that are contiguous to hundreds of additional acres of open space in EBMUD's Siesta Valley watershed.

There are also many private landowners in Claremont Canyon, including AT&T and the Pacifica Foundation, both of which own radio towers on the east side of Grizzly Peak Boulevard, and several hundred private homeowners.

All landowners, both public and private, share in the responsibilities of understanding our Mediterranean-style ecosystem in which we live and doing what we can to prepare for the inevitable next wildfire.

To this end, the Conservancy applied to the California Fire Alliance once again for a federal grant to work in concert with our neighbors in the canyon. Our stated goals are to enhance cooperation among all landowners, both public and private, and to work together towards a wildland-urban interface that is reasonably fire-safe. Fire Alliance grants are highly competitive and we will not know for several more months whether we will be funded. Our application last year was not funded but we were encouraged to try again.

Jon Keeley to Present at Annual Meeting

by Joe Engbeck

MEMBERS, FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS are invited to attend the Conservancy's eleventh annual meeting at the Claremont Hotel, November 4 (see back page for



Jon Keeley, PhD

details). After light refreshments and brief presentations from board members, we will have a 45-minute presentation from our keynote speaker, Jon Keeley, who will be visiting from southern California.

Dr. Keeley is a research ecologist and head of station for the U.S. Geological Survey office in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park

in Three Rivers, California. He is also an adjunct professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at UCLA. He holds a PhD in botany and ecology from the University of Georgia and a masters degree in biology from San Diego State University.

During the course of his career he has published more than 175 articles in books and in national and international scientific journals. His research has focused on the ecological impact of wildfire and other aspects of plant ecology, including rare plants, rare habitats (vernal pools), and plant physiology. In 1985 he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship and became a Fellow of the Southern California Academy of Sciences and an honorary lifetime member of the California Botanical Society.

After visiting the Bay Area, touring Claremont Canyon, and serving as the Regional Parks Association's guest speaker in 2004, he wrote a research paper, "Fire History of the San Francisco East Bay Region and Implications for Landscape Patterns," which was published in 2005 by the *International Journal of Wildland Fire*.

His most recent book, *Fire in Mediterranean Ecosystems, Ecology, Evolution and Management*, was published in 2012 by Cambridge University Press.

We are pleased to announce that Dr. Keeley has agreed to serve once again as the guest speaker at the Conservancy's annual meeting in 2012.

Interview with Wildfire Expert Jon Keeley

by Jon Kaufman

JON KEELEY IS A RESEARCH SCIENTIST with the US Geological Survey and an adjunct professor at UCLA. He will be the featured speaker at the Claremont Canyon Conservancy's annual meeting on November 4th. He was interviewed by the Conservancy in preparation for his visit.

CCC: *Dr. Keeley, you have written a lot about fire-prone ecosystems. What makes certain ecosystems more fire-prone than others?*

Jon Keeley: Climate. Mediterranean climates produce the most predictable fire climate because of the winter rains and summer drought coupled with the west coast location. Winter temperatures are moderate and conducive to high productivity that generates substantial fuel loads that are contiguous on the landscape. Drought occurs under high temperatures and lasts 3-6 months so fuels are highly combustible. Then, throw in the Diablo or Santa Ana winds that are ferocious and occur at the end of the dry season when fuel moisture is at an all time low. Of course many other landscapes are fire-prone, for example, the Rocky Mountains, but they often have summer rains and thus fires are restricted to anomalous years when these rains don't occur, perhaps once or twice a decade. By contrast, Mediterranean climate landscapes are fire-prone every year.

CCC: *Mediterranean-type ecosystems have been a particular subject of your research. What are the characteristics of a Mediterranean ecosystem and why is Claremont Canyon in this category?*

Jon Keeley: Bay Area landscapes comprise a mosaic of vegetation types including chaparral, scrub, grasslands, woodlands and forests, and these generate very different fuel types. The distribution of these types is controlled by climate, soils and past disturbance. Prior to human occupation the landscape was likely dominated by closed canopy woodlands and forests. Humans have enhanced the spread of grasslands and non-native species such as eucalyptus... the former greatly increases the length of the fire season and the latter increases the fire hazard.

CCC: *What are the fire hazards that characterize a Mediterranean ecosystem?*

Jon Keeley: Carl Wilson, who I believe was a Berkeley resident and just died a year or so ago captured the problem better than anyone with this quote I use in my new book: "The hazardous Mediterranean climate, highly flammable vegetation, and rugged terrain, all important elements of fire behavior, become problems only in the presence of people. People recreate and build homes in the Mediterranean wildlands and will continue to do so as long as space is available because of the delightful climate. People start most fires, and their mere presence tends to warp fire suppression strategies because fire agencies must protect lives and property threatened by fires rather than 'back off' and build fire lines around fire perimeters." - *Carl C. Wilson (1979) Chief of Division of Forest and Fire Research, USFS/Pacific Southwest Forest and Range Experiment Station.*

CCC: *Given that we live in homes already built at the urban-wildland interface, what should we be doing to minimize the fire danger?*

Jon Keeley: Historically, urban fire danger has been viewed as a problem to be solved in the wildlands by preventing fires from reaching the urban setting. However, we have 100 years of experience in California to show that we cannot control all fires and there will always be some that endanger urban environments. Therefore, the focus has turned to managing this fire risk. Our recent research is focused on trying understand what we can do in the future to minimize housing losses due to fires. We have broken this into three components:

- 1) Changes in wildland fire suppression activities that will further reduce uncontrollable fires.
- 2) Changes in land planning. For example, research on flood hazards has shown clearly that some sites are more vulnerable than others and so regulations prevent development on those sites. A similar focus may be productive with fire hazards. That is, some watersheds are much more fire-prone than others and some topographic features, for example, ridgelines, are more vulnerable than others.
- 3) There is abundant evidence that how we build homes and, in particular, how we landscape around homes has a profound impact on vulnerability. This involves not just clearance around homes, since clearance is effective in stopping the fire

front from advancing into the urban environment, but most uncontrollable fires occur under high winds and these winds carry a substantial load of embers into the urban environment that ignite homes (probably far more often than the fire front does). We have found one of the most common characteristics of homes that burn is that they have a tree over-hanging the house that drops litter on the roof, which ignites the house. Perhaps just clearing litter off roofs could greatly diminish fire losses.

CCC: *Finally Jon, talk about native and non-native vegetation and what makes non-native species more of a fire hazard.*

Jon Keeley: In the Bay Area, introduction of non-native species has for the most part greatly increased fire hazards as they have occurred with the loss of less flammable woodlands. Grasslands, most of which are dominated by non-native annuals, increase the length of the fire season substantially. Shrubs such as brooms come from the Mediterranean basin and they are thought to have evolved characteristics such as retention of dead biomass as a means of increasing fires. Trees such as eucalyptus have volatile oils that greatly increase combustion. Plus, because of their height, eucalyptus act as ember spreaders and can generate burning embers capable of spreading fires great distances in the urban environment.

CCC: *Thank you Jon. We look forward to your talk.*



The rocky soil beneath the “chert wall” gets a thorough weeding from Conservancy member Marilyn Goldhaber, who adopted the spot during our adopt-a-spot program in 2008. The “wall” is just across Claremont Avenue from UC’s Phase One restoration site, described on page 4. Phase One has had a decade now to recover after eucalyptus removal and native shrubs and trees, including oak, bay, elderberry, redwood, maple and madrone, are all prospering today. Many redwood seedlings that were planted by volunteers are also doing well. Nevertheless, French broom and other invasive weeds remain a challenge here and along Claremont Avenue. Fortunately, UC is diligent in its efforts to keep weedy invasions under control.



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THE CLAREMONT CANYON CONSERVANCY

SUPPORTING THE LONG-TERM STEWARDSHIP OF CLAREMONT CANYON

Dear FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

Please join us on

Sunday, November 4, 2012, 4-6 PM

The Claremont Hotel

Annual Meeting

Reception	4:00 PM
Presentations	4:30 PM
Open Forum	5:30 PM

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Jon Keeley, USGS Research Ecologist
"Fire in Mediterranean Ecosystems"

Complimentary wine bar and refreshments. Bring a friend or neighbor.

RSVP: info@ClaremontCanyon.org or call 510-843-2226