



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

President's Message

by Jon Kaufman

THE STAY-IN-PLACE ORDER has limited some Conservancy activities but we continue to move forward—as the publication of this newsletter attests. Our board meets electronically to advance our advocacy activities, as reported on page 4. We continue to press for more and better vegetation management to mitigate the effects of future wildfires. In this regard, we are following the progress the City of Oakland and the University of California as they hammer out their city- and state-funded wildland vegetation plans and EIRs. Both agencies are scheduled to release the next phase of their work to the public later this summer.

The upper canyon trails that Conservancy and student volunteers have built and maintained over the years continue to be used by people seeking recreational activity during the corona virus lockdown. We ask that everyone pay careful attention to the six-foot rule (more on page 5). We know that people going in opposite directions must pass each other, but danger is minimal as long as you do not stop to talk and engage with others. The risk of infection from the virus comes from droplets spread by infected persons coughing, sneezing, talking, and breathing close to you. We also ask that you take out with you whatever you bring in. There is no one to clean up after you. This last point applies at all times in Claremont Canyon, not just during the current stay-in-place order.

Finally, I would like to remember and honor Joe Engbeck who passed away in March. A co-founder of the Conservancy, Joe began – and set the standard for – this newsletter. For many years he served as the Conservancy's vice president and more recently as a member of our Advisory Board. He was a personal inspiration to me when I joined the Conservancy board; and I will think of him especially when I



Joe Engbeck leading a nature walk in Claremont Canyon with the Berkeley Path Wanderers in 2013.

walk along the Willow and Summit House trails and encounter the redwood trees he planted there.

Joe wrote extensively about the history of California and the American West, most recently in his incredible, 600-page tome, “Saving the Redwoods, The Movement to Rescue a Wonder of the Natural World,” released in 2019.

Joe was a natural leader. He was actively involved in many environmental movements since the 1960s, including Save the Redwoods League, Save the Bay, the California Historical Society, and People for Open Space. He was editor of the State Park System's publications program and co-founder of the Claremont-Elmwood Neighborhood Association. Along with Afton Crooks, Joe organized the Friends of Claremont Canyon, a grassroots organization formed in 1972 to halt development in the canyon and create a permanent open space preserve. The Friends of Claremont Canyon later merged with the Claremont Canyon Conservancy in 2001. Rest in peace, Joe.

A link to Joe's biography prepared by the Claremont-Elmwood Neighborhood Association can be found in the blog section of our website.



A bobcat dines on a deer carcass in the Goldhabers' backyard on Stonewall Road. To see a video of the encounter, go to the blog section of our website.

Rare sighting of a bobcat in Claremont Canyon by Marilyn Goldhaber

ONE MORNING LAST DECEMBER I awoke to witness a bobcat scavenging a deer carcass right outside my upstairs window. At first glance, I noticed just the carcass, then, doing a double-take, saw a large bobcat slinking up from our agapanthus bed toward it's meal. With my smart phone nearby, I giddily began filming as the scene unfolded.

Three days in a row the cat returned to the spot and my husband and I watched fascinated. On day three we managed to get some help and carted the carcass down to the street for pick up (that's another story). It was then that we realized the deer was probably a juvenile and the cat was not so terribly big after all. We don't know whether our bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) or some other animal (a coyote or cougar) made the kill. We kept our dog inside for a while.

Sightings of bobcats are rare, however, these shy animals are common in the Bay Area. Our bobcat appears to be a resident of Claremont Canyon. Other neighbors along Stonewall Road where we live likely saw the same animal. Two years earlier, my next-door neighbor filmed a bobcat sunning itself on top of a log, contentedly licking

its paws. We were very excited at the time. Stonewall Road borders the Claremont Canyon Regional Preserve and many of us, especially on the uphill side, witness wildlife in our yards. No need to go on Safari.

UC Professor finds gene for Monkey flower by Marilyn Goldhaber

MONKEY FLOWER IS BLOOMING in coastal scrub areas all over the Claremont Canyon. Look for a low-lying bush with an abundance of small gold-orange, trumpet-shaped flowers and reflect upon the neat synergy this native plant has with our native bees. UC Assistant Professor Benjamin Blackman studied two forms of monkey flower found in California, *Mimulus guttatus* and *Mimulus lewisii* (note, other names also apply). In a paper released in March, he reported discovering the gene that allows pigmented spots to act as 'bee landing pads' attracting nearby pollinators. Our local sticky monkey flower, *Mimulus aurantiacus*, more common in Claremont Canyon, is less likely to display spots but nevertheless is well-known to attract bees and hummingbirds for pollination.

Return of the Tanager

by Kay Loughman

IN OUR SPRING 2019 ISSUE, John Colbert wrote about a male summer tanager observed intermittently by birders in Claremont Canyon over the previous six months. This handsome all-red bird drew admirers partly for its color, and partly for its being here at all, as this species generally spends the winter months in Mexico and points south.

Apparently the fellow liked it here. The (presumed) same bird was seen several times in Claremont Canyon during February and March this year, frequenting the same trees where he was seen last year. The photo to the right was taken by Steven Hunter on February 27, 2020.

One bird with wanderlust or a cluster of displaced birds? Unique event or the start of a trend? Summer Tanager is considered a *Bird Species of Special Concern*, so we would not expect to see even one individual in our area during the winter. But, as reported a year ago, a male summer tanager was seen in March 2019 in Walnut Creek; and in January 2020



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Summer Tanager on a eucalyptus branch near the entrance to the Claremont Canyon Regional Preserve.

a male summer tanager was reported in Oakland at the Morcom Rose Garden, just a few miles south of Claremont Canyon.

Even more recently, the tanager (likely our bird) spent a week or more in April feasting on bees in a backyard west of College Avenue. We wish him *bon appetit* as he prepares for a migration that will reunite him with others of the species for the breeding season.



Sticky monkey flower, Mimulus aurantiacus in north coastal scrub of Claremont Canyon's south-facing slope.

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.

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The Board of Directors: Jon Kaufman, President; Marilyn Goldhaber, Vice President; Nancy Mueller, Secretary; Members at Large: Josh Borkowski, Jerry Kent, Elizabeth Stage, Bob Strayer, L. Tim Wallace.

Toward an East Bay Wildfire Prevention Vegetation Management Agency

by Jon Kaufman

LAST YEAR THE CONSERVANCY WORKED CLOSELY with California State Assemblyman Jim Wood drafting legislation for the wildfire bill AB 38. Early drafts of the bill included the creation of regional wildfire prevention agencies for areas of the state prone to wildfire. The purpose of the proposed agencies was to provide leadership and expertise for vegetation management and other wildfire concerns that need to be coordinated at the regional level. While AB 38 became law and provided important home-hardening retrofit funds for homeowners, as well as disclosure protection for new home buyers, it unfortunately left out the regional agency provision we hoped would be included.

As a result, wildfire prevention remains in the hands of local fire departments in areas of the state, like ours, that are under municipal control. (Calfire manages large swaths of government-owned and other wildlands defined geographically—mostly omitting the wildland-urban interface.) We believe that cities, like Oakland and Berkeley, and agencies, like EBMUD, UC Berkeley, and the East Bay Regional Park District, do not have the funds, coordinating powers, and, often, the expertise to properly manage vegetation in public parks and open spaces. Further, with many competing responsibilities, few agencies have the focus or the will to do what is necessary to prepare for wildfire. Vegetation management remains mostly undone.

One consequence is that many homeowners are finding insurance premiums increasing and policies canceled.

There may be other avenues available for us to set up a regional agency in our area without going through state legislation. Under current state law, local governments can band together to form a joint powers authority. Such authorities already exist for water quality, air quality and, here in the East Bay, for police emergency communications. We need a similarly effective regional authority for wildfire prevention to provide consistent, expert-driven leadership in how wildland vegetation is managed.

Wildfires move at hurricane speeds and force, with winds from 60 to 100 mph, fast enough to jump huge freeways. Wildfires do not stop at city or county lines. The 1991 Berkeley/Oakland Tunnel Fire took only one hour to move from the Claremont Hills neighborhood of Berkeley across Highway 24 to destroy homes in the Upper Rockridge area of Oak-

land. Similarly, the Tubbs Fire in 2017 moved from Napa Valley to Santa Rosa in only four hours—with evacuation times measured in minutes.

Because wildfires are all but impossible to extinguish once they get going, prevention is of paramount importance. In Alameda County alone, there are 14 separate municipalities. In Contra Costa County there are 30. Coordination among multiple jurisdictions on vegetation management presents many challenges. In order to be effective against wildfire, the necessary expertise, workforce and financial resources must be assembled over broad enough areas.

The Conservancy is working with other community organizations and with our public officials to build support for a joint powers authority to help protect us from future wildfires. The organizations below have joined the effort. Other local organizations are most welcome to participate.

Claremont Canyon Conservancy
Kensington Neighbors for Wildfire Safety
Make El Cerrito Fire Safe
Montclair Neighborhood Council
North Hills Community Association
Oakland Firesafe Council
Piedmont Pines Neighborhood Association.

An East Bay Wildfire Prevention and Vegetation Management Agency for Alameda and Contra Costa counties would do the following:

- (1) Develop a region-wide plan to remove the most flammable wildlands vegetation in the East Bay Hills and replace it with fire resistant vegetation. The plan should include:
 - protections for sensitive wildlife habitats and native plant landscapes,
 - defensible space guidelines and assistance for private property owners to manage vegetation on their properties,
 - home hardening programs for homeowners, schools, and commercial property owners to assure that structures are best protected from wildfires.
- (2) Retain sufficient staff and equipment, or contracting abilities, to run the programs and remove the most flammable vegetation in wildland areas.
- (3) Raise funds from state and federal grants, develop tax measures for voter approval, and explore other means permitted by law for raising funds.



In the days before lockdown, a lone hiker takes to the scenic, seldom crowded, Side Hill Trail. Below, signs at Lake Temescal Regional Park, now closed, say: Do not congregate. Stay six feet away from each other. Keep dogs on leash. Take trash and pet waste with you. For extra precaution, carry a mask. Stay safe!

Outdoors during COVID-19

by Marilyn Goldhaber

IF YOU’VE BEEN OUT in the canyon during the last few weeks you’ve surely noticed a steady increase in numbers of people enjoying nature during this time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many Claremont Canyon neighbors are walking out their door to hike the steep, sunny trails of the Claremont Canyon Regional Preserve on the canyon’s northern slope or are finding their way to the shaded walks on the canyon’s southern slope, including the Loop Trail in Garber Park and the Willow and Summit House trails near Signpost 29. (See the “trails” tab on our website for trail descriptions.) With stay-at-home orders, it’s allowed to enter Claremont Canyon to exercise and enjoy but strict social distancing rules must be obeyed.

Currently, however, many regional parks have closed due to the inability of park goers to stay six feet away from each other. Activities such as walking, hiking, dog walking, and running are allowed along streets and, for the time being, in parks in Oakland and Berkeley. This could change. County rules call for face coverings in public places, though not necessarily while engaged in outdoor exercise. If you do venture outside, enjoy breathing in the spring air, but do not congregate and stay far away from others. Carry a mask in case you need it.

Park managers are finding that Bay Area parks are intimately intertwined. Not only are some parks physically connected, but when one park closes, other parks are impacted.

A new organization has recently emerged whose mission is to conceive Bay Area land use as a whole. TOGETHER Bay Area (formerly called the Bay Area Open Space Council) is a

region-wide coalition of nonprofits, public agencies, and indigenous tribes “working for lands, people and communities.” TOGETHER Bay Area has 55 member organizations (the Claremont Canyon Conservancy is one) in 10 counties serving 7.5 million residents. As the pandemic unfolds, TBA promotes resource sharing to develop solutions to numerous problems. Beyond issues related to the pandemic and overcrowding of parks, TBA covers the gamut of land use concerns from societal fairness to climate change to wildfire preparedness.

TBA reminds its member organizations that risk-reduction work to promote wildfire safety is an essential activity and needs to be kept in motion and funded now, even as new problems emerge.

As this newsletter goes to press, some East Bay regional parks remain open for foot traffic but many are closed or restricted in some way. Check ebparks.org/coronavirus. City sports facilities are closed but city parks generally are open. Oakland has launched a “slow streets” initiative setting aside up to 10% of the city’s streets for recreation. As of now, Oakland’s Garber Park at the base of Claremont Canyon is open as is UC land in Claremont and Strawberry canyons.





A Tenth Anniversary workshop last January, with Lech Naumovich, the picture's photographer.

Celebrating Ten Years in Garber Park by Shelagh Brodersen

As most readers know, Garber is a City of Oakland wildland park, a hidden gem at the west end of Claremont Canyon. With no easy access and no amenities, it drew little attention and less maintenance from the City. That changed in 2010 with the formation of the Garber Park Stewards, headed by Shelagh Brodersen. The Stewards have been working to restore the park ever since.

JANUARY 18, 2020 WAS A SPECIAL DAY for the Garber Park Stewards. We gathered for our first winter workshop to celebrate ten years of restoration in Garber Park. The workshop, more of a leisurely walk along the trails, was led by Lech Naumovich, founder of the Golden Hour Restoration Institute. Lech has guided our restoration activities and led workshops since our founding. Who better to discuss the successes, the failures (yes, there were a few), and offer direction on moving forward! The walk was both fun and educational. We enjoyed reminiscing about our restoration projects and how they transformed the overgrown, invasive weed-infested park to a beautiful native oak woodland park for all to enjoy!

Removing invasive weeds has been at the core of our work and winter is "easy pulling" time. Energized by the previous day's walk, many of us returned the following day to launch our next ten years of restoration. We concentrated on removing unwanted vegetation from Fern Glade so that the abundant ferns, trilliums, and other native plants there can continue to thrive. The following week, volunteers from the Claremont Club and Spa held

their own work day in Garber, cleaning the stairs on Evergreen Path and pulling enough ivy from Fern Glade and to fill a pickup truck!

In February the Garber Park Stewards hosted a second winter workshop, *Invasives: Best Management Practices for your Worst Problems*. Thanks to Jutta Burger of the California Invasive Plant Council, Angela Pai of Golden Hour, and the Stewards' Mark Seaborn for excellent presentations. Most everyone stayed long after the workshop to discuss ongoing projects and new ideas for further reducing some of our major non-native invasive weeds.

By mid-March, with the spread of the coronavirus, the World as we knew it was upended. For our little City of Oakland park, that meant all official stewardship days were canceled until further notice and Golden Hour's third winter workshop, *Fascinating Fascines and Creek Restoration*, had to be canceled. We hope to host this workshop later in the year.

A Tenth Anniversary is a time to honor the work and dedication of all those who have helped in restoring and preserving Garber Park. We could not do it without you; and you can be proud of your achievements. I'm pleased to recognize a few individuals who were especially active and productive this year and past years: Matt Plunkett, an early Founding Sponsor of the Claremont Canyon Conservancy, has cleared the trails; Ricardo Marroquin worked on the Evergreen entrance hillside attacking fire prone invasive weeds; and Mark Seaborn, a long time Garber Park volunteer, spearheaded the eradication of Cape ivy in the park.

Fire Season is coming upon us quickly. The City of Oakland will be clearing roadsides along Claremont Avenue, as usual, but Garber Park relies on volunteers to remove weeds and keep the trails open. We need your help now more than ever. If you can volunteer for a couple of hours during this time of crisis, please contact Shelagh at garberparkstewards@gmail.com. I can leave gloves and tools, and suggest places to work. The Garber Park Stewards have a dedicated stewardship fund held by the Conservancy which will gladly receive donations. Contact the Conservancy at info@claremontcanyon.org.

Stay Safe and Healthy. I hope to see you in Garber Park.

Thank you to members who have donated this past year

Roger Abraham and
Maureen Crogrove
Gerald Abrams
Susan and James Acquistapace
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THE CLAREMONT CANYON CONSERVANCY

SUPPORTING THE LONG-TERM STEWARDSHIP OF CLAREMONT CANYON



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A family enjoys the vista from a knoll above the East-West Trail, a continuation of the Stonewall Panoramic Ridge Trail in the Claremont Canyon Regional Preserve.