



CLAREMONT CANYON CONSERVANCY SPRING 2022 *News*

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



President's Message

by Jon Kaufman

THE CONSERVANCY IS MOVING into its 21st year of stewardship in Claremont Canyon. We have accomplished much during our first 20 years and are making plans to do even more in the future. We hope

to expand our activities—more walks, more trail work, more public education, and more advocacy. We are now consulting with our members and supporters to collect their ideas and determine the shape of our future. If you haven't already heard from one of our board members, please feel free to contact us. Email us at info@claremontcanyon.org.

As our organization has grown, we've already taken a major step forward. We have retained The Everything Company, LLC, founded by Ruby Soto Cardona and Wyllie Clayson, to help manage our programs. Ruby and Wyllie (see photo on the back page) both have skills in land stewardship and computer technology. Ruby has begun by working on our monthly emails and semi-annual printed newsletter. Welcome on board Ruby and Wyllie.

Expanded programs require more resources and our board has begun developing a new fundraising effort to succeed our Founding Sponsor program which successfully enabled us to grow through our first 20 years. You, our readers and members, are what has sustained us to date and we are counting on your ongoing support to build our future.

We have been busy on other fronts, as well. On the legal front, we were hopeful that UC would abide by a recent ruling in our favor by Alameda Superior Court Judge Roesch. The judge ruled that

UC must provide more details about its vegetation management plans. This would have provided needed clarity and enabled UC to move forward expeditiously with removal of flammable vegetation from its Hill Campus in the upper canyon (including Strawberry and Claremont canyons). Unfortunately, UC has decided to appeal the judge's ruling. This means further delays of their vegetation removal program. It also means that the Conservancy must persevere so that opponents of increased vegetation management will not pressure UC to pare back the scope of its work. The work to remove hazardous eucalyptus trees and reduce the fuel load in our hills must be allowed to proceed.

On the advocacy front, the Conservancy has been leading an effort to expand wildfire prevention activities throughout the East Bay Hills' *very high fire hazard severity zone*. Working with elected officials, fire departments, and other organizations, our efforts are bearing fruit. Together we have built a consensus that an existing informal organization of fire chiefs be formalized and expanded to include elected officials—from Pinole in the north to Union City in the south. Wildfires do not stop at city or county lines and a single umbrella organization focused on prevention programs would enable better coordination and attract state and federal funding.

Finally, in addition to our own regularly scheduled stewardship (see page 2) in both the upper canyon and Garber Park, we have been advising the Claremont Club and Spa on stewarding their own land and helping them organize employee volunteer days to contribute to upkeep of adjacent public lands (see page 3). We thank all who volunteer their time and all who contribute financially. We look forward to many successful years to come.

Stewardship in the Canyon

PLEASE JOIN US FOR STEWARDSHIP EVENTS in Claremont Canyon throughout the spring and summer months. All levels of fitness are welcome.

We meet in Garber Park twice a month (first and third Saturdays) usually at the Evergreen entrance to the park and are led by Wyllie Clayson and Ruby Soto Cardona of the Garber Park Stewards, 9 a.m. till noon.

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.

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

Please contact gpstewards@gmail.com for inquiries about Garber Park events and info@ClaremontCanyon.org for all other events. Watch for our monthly emails or check the Conservancy website ClaremontCanyon.org for added events and to verify where to meet.

Sunday, May 22—The Birds of Claremont Canyon, 7 a.m.-11 a.m., led by Dave Quady, Audubon Christmas Bird Count leader for Claremont Canyon.

Meet Dave and your Conservancy co-hosts Nancy Mueller and Melina Linder at 7 a.m. at Four Corners (intersection of Grizzly Peak Boulevard with Claremont Avenue/Fish Ranch Road) to look for some of the birds that breed in Claremont Canyon.

We'll pick an area that looks interesting and search until about 11 a.m. for year-round resident birds and for Neotropical migrant birds that have returned to breed. You must be fully vaccinated in order to participate. Bring binoculars and a field guide if you have one. Rain cancels.

Thursday, May 26—Evacuation Workshop (via Zoom), 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Join the fire safety conversation in this great workshop as part of the "Savvy & Prepared Communities," the last of a four-part virtual town hall series. During the workshop, there will be a conversation about evacuation and an introduction to Zonehaven. For session topics and schedule, and to register, go to <https://oaklandfiresafecouncil.org/events/if-you-gotta-go-town-hall/>.



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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
Summit Sponsor: \$2,500

Contact Us:

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

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



Claremont Club and Spa employees pause with Conservancy members (opposite page) after cleaning the path behind the hotel. Everyone was pleased with their work and lunch (above) was lovely—spring salads and pizza provided by the Claremont from their wood-fired ovens!

Stewardship Day with Claremont Club and Spa

by Nancy Mueller and Ruby Soto Cardona

AFTER A TWO-YEAR HIATUS, thanks to Covid, Evergreen Path got a thorough cleaning from Claremont employee volunteers joining Conservancy members on March 4 behind the hotel. Evergreen Path, a public footpath used by many to gain access to the hotel property and beyond, was strewn with eucalyptus pods, long strands of bark, and fallen branches. About seven of us filled 21 bags of green debris and hauled them over to Alvarado Place for pick up. Another ten or so employee volunteers continued uphill into Garber Park where they tackled thistles, Himalayan blackberry, and other fire-prone invasive plants. The volunteers made quite an impact on the site, clearing a large area of the prickly weeds near our veritable “Garber Oak,” and had lots of fun learning about the different native plants found in the area. We were pleased with what we accomplished and the native plants benefited with more room to spread.

Overall, we had a very successful and meaningful day along the path and in the park! The debris was later picked up by Waste Management/Oakland who does a wonderful job disposing of all the bags we leave for them.

We intend to organize more stewardship events like these, once a quarter or so, to make Evergreen Path and Garber Park safer for all! If you would like to join us in this stewardship effort, please contact Nancy via info@claremontcanyon.org

Upper Canyon Berkeley Project

by John Brochu

RELATIVELY SOFT SOILS from occasional rains, and eagerly blooming spring flowers, inspired us to continue the daunting, yet therapeutic, exercise of pulling French broom in the upper canyon. Thanks to help from students doing community service—most recently 15 hearty volunteers from San Mateo Community College—we’ve made some good progress along the Summit House Trail and will continue to remove broom and other invasive plants throughout the year as long as soils allow.

The San Mateo students joined us on April 16 for an event organized through the Berkeley Project. In addition to broom pulling, the students helped install stairs on a slope that Josh Borkowski and I had identified earlier as potentially dangerous due to erosion. A big thanks to Josh and his partner Vivian DeWoskin for purchasing and prepping construction material, transporting refreshments, and offering their shelter and tarp to protect against the morning rain.



San Mateo Community College students equipped with rain ponchos and weed wrenches extract larger French broom specimens in the upper canyon. Broom’s thin tap root can grow deep into the soil—a foot or two, even more.



Shelagh Brodersen is honored with a proclamation read by Oakland Councilmember Dan Kalb at “Fireplace Plaza.”

Celebrating Shelagh Brodersen and the Garber Park Stewards by Elizabeth K. Stage

“WHEN SHELAGH AND BOB BRODERSEN MOVED INTO their home on Evergreen Lane, adjacent to Garber Park, they found the park in a state of disrepair, overgrown and with limited access, with great potential for improvement.”

That’s the first sentence of a City of Oakland proclamation read on April 30 by Councilmember Dan Kalb to honor Shelagh for her 12 years leading restoration activities in the park. The proclamation detailed the many improvements brought about by Shelagh through the Garber Park Stewards, a group she founded in 2010 to encourage the flourishing of native plants in the park and to repair and maintain the Loop Trail and its connector segments to the once forgotten park.

For the commemoration, about 25 people, including members of Conservancy, the park’s regular volunteers, and others, gathered at “Fireplace Plaza.” The Conservancy’s president Jon Kaufman presented a brass plaque for the recently restored stone bench (photo above). Lech Naumovich, ecologist and botanist, followed-up the celebration with a workshop for volunteers.

Shelagh plans to continue her participation with the Garber Park Stewards but is passing on the reins to Wyllie Clayson and Ruby Soto Cardona of The Everything Company LLC. They will be organizing workdays, recruiting volunteers, and writing the bi-monthly newsletter. Wyllie and Ruby have assisted Shelagh since 2021 in the 13-acre park at the base of Claremont Canyon, which has truly become a native plant oasis.

The Conservancy provided funds for the restoration of the rock edifice and bench at the decommissioned fireplace and for making the bronze plaque. We thank Nancy Mueller, Kay Loughman, and Elizabeth Stage for designing the plaque and Nancy and Elizabeth for organizing the event. We are grateful to Peet’s who provided the coffee and our own volunteer bakers for scones and muffins. Great work, everyone!

A Spring of Hope and Plant Health in Garber by Ruby Soto Cardona and Wyllie Clayson

GARBER PARK IS ALWAYS CHANGING with new plants, shifting paths, and the sounds of nature. One thing that doesn’t change is the passion of the Garber Park Stewards! 2022 brought many challenges and new opportunities, from clearing fallen branches after a windstorm, to partnering with UC Berkeley student organizations, and bringing students closer to their local wildland park.

This spring we saw a surge in native plants sprouting in the park—trilliums, false Solomon’s seals, and various ferns—especially in areas where we had removed invasive weeds and cleared downed tree debris. We also found that natives seem to like the buffer zones that we created around trails in our efforts to stabilize the soil, thus fostering native growth there.

We started the year honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. by spreading our seeds of hope of showy milkweed and purple needlegrass. As the weather moved into a dry spell, we worked toward fire safety by clearing debris and mapping one of our more flammable invasive species, French broom, for later removal. This led to a seasonal invasive plant pulling spree, removing thistles and the ever-present, spiny Himalayan blackberry, as well as French broom.

Returning and new volunteers from Lambda Theta Nu Sorority, Cal Habitat, and Cal Rotaract took on the prickly challenge with zest and we were able to clear large areas, logging over 140 volunteer-hours! Our efforts to lower the presence of target species and increase the fire resilience of the park became the basis of our Earth 1,2,3! Initiative for April for our long-term goals. We ended the month with two very successful Earth appreciation workshops led by long-time steward and California Native Plant Society member Janet Gawthrop and fellow botanist and ecologist Lech Naumovich.

Thanks to everyone—we couldn’t do it without you!



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The Cal Rotaract Club and returning volunteers clear weeds and debris to uncover and free the native ferns in Garber Park's "Fern Glade" (article on opposite page).

Springing into summer

By Erica Rutherford

THE DARK-EYED JUNCO IS A COMMON BACKYARD BIRD, especially if you have bird feeders in your yard. It is also abundant in our local open spaces and can be found throughout North America. Although "common," juncos in fact are quite extraordinary in terms of diversification and rapid evolution. Their story is presented in the science project and film by Indiana University Bloomington (<https://juncoproject.org/view-download/intro/index.html>).

Easily identified, the junco is a medium-sized sparrow with a round head, a small, pinkish bill, and long tail with white outer feathers. The Oregon form, which is our local type of junco, has a dark brown hood, light brown back, buffy sides, and pale belly.

Dark-eyed Juncos are resident locally, which is to say they can be found throughout the year here. They are most often observed feeding on the ground or in low shrubs. Males will sing from high perches to defend their territory. I photographed the junco pictured to the right in Hiller Highlands in April, nearing the arrival of Easter. I then posted my photograph to Kay Loughman's local wildlife gallery (nhwildlife.net). I'm not sure why the breast plumage appears blue. It almost seems as though he (looks

male to me or a dark hooded female) is incubating a dyed Easter egg!

As you hike the neighborhood woodlands or parks in the spring, listen for the buzzy sound of young birds begging to be fed by their parents. Being resident breeders, juncos are among the first baby birds we observe every spring!



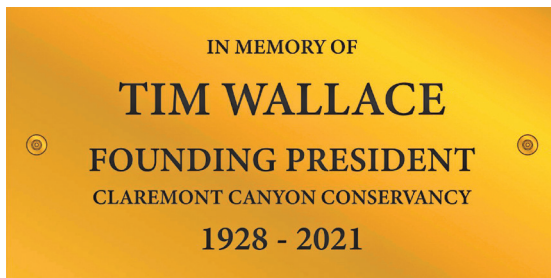
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Juncos are abundant to our local open spaces and can often be found feeding on the ground or in low shrubs.

Tribute to Tim Wallace

by Marilyn Goldhaber

THIS SPRING, THE CONSERVANCY PLACED A BENCH in upper Claremont Canyon in memory of our first board president Tim Wallace who passed away last May. Tim was 92. Tim provided tremendous leadership and guidance to the Conservancy over his 13 years as president through his diverse background and natural talent as a leader. Tim's bench, which is on UC property facing toward the south flank of the canyon, can be seen at Signpost 27 on the left as you drive up Claremont Avenue.



Tim's persistent negotiations with UC spurred UC's multi-phase program of removing thousands of overgrown eucalyptus trees from the upper canyon in the early 2000s. This resulted in a more firesafe landscape and improved egress along major arteries

in case of a disaster. UC's work in the upper canyon is slated to continue as soon as legal obstacles are overcome and Cal Fire funds can be released

Tim's bench was paid for by members of the Conservancy and Tim's many friends. We thank everyone (designated by the number 1 on the list below and on the opposite page) who made a financial tribute to Tim during our last fund drive. Friends and family gathered at the bench in mid-May for an intimate commemoration.

Other board members remembered

This year has been a time of sadness for the Conservancy with the loss of three others from our original board in just a little over one year's time. Their contributions to the success of the Conservancy cannot be overstated. Recent memorial tributes (designated by numbers 2,3,4, and 5) were also made during our last fund drive (for Dick White, Bill McClung, Joe Engbeck, and others, respectively).

Honoring our donors

At our Annual Meeting in November, we honored our 263 Founding Sponsors for a great 20-year start of the Claremont Canyon Conservancy. As we move into our third decade, we would love to hear from you, our members. Please feel free to email us your thoughts at info@claremontcanyon.org.

Thank you to members and friends who donated this past year

David Abel and Julie Steinberg	Kathryn Frank and James Blume	Nathaniel and Suzanne Cartmell	Jack and Sherry Delo
Roger Abraham and Maureen Crogrove	Stephen Bomse and Edie Silber	Joanne Casey	Robert Deutsch and Donna Terazawa
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		Mark and Janine Beth de Souza	
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(Numbers 1-5 designate tributes made to Tim Wallace, Dick White, Bill McClung, Joe Engbeck, and others, respectively)

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THE CLAREMONT CANYON CONSERVANCY

SUPPORTING THE LONG-TERM STEWARDSHIP OF CLAREMONT CANYON



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Shelagh Brodersen and Lech Naumovich (top row) pass on the reins of the Garber Park Stewards to Ruby Soto Cardona and Wyllie Clayson. Story inside.