THE CLAREMONT CANYON CONSERVANCY

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

SPRING 2009 *News*

Conservancy past president Martin Holden chats with Chris Thayer and Stephen Edwards after a late afternoon "Botanizing Ramble Down into Gwin Canyon" last November. Gwin, a beautiful side canyon to Claremont Canyon, is on Park District land with excellent trails through rich native habitats. Wildfires burned most of Gwin Canyon in 1946, 1970, and 1991. The north ridge of Claremont Canyon is seen here in the distance.

Message from the President

by Barry Pilger

Those of us in who reside in Claremont Canyon and the surrounding areas know that we live in a spectacular place. Not only are we able to enjoy hundreds of acres of open space right at our doorstep, but we have the advantages of living in close proximity to many urban conveniences as well. Nothing made us appreciate these advantages and embrace our responsibilities as citizens more than the 1991 Oakland Hills fire. Because of our individual and collective experiences resulting from that disaster, we take our role as stewards of Claremont Canyon seriously, not only for the safety of our own families and homes, but to ensure the survival of the Canyon as a source of natural beauty and discovery for the broader community.

This spring, our Board of Directors made a thorough examination of the Canyon's history and the circumstances that contributed not only to the 1991 fire, but to wildfire threat in general (page 4). We also developed a comprehensive Q&A to answer key questions and present our positions regarding the nature of the threat, what we can do about it, and how we can preserve our environment. The Q&A along with a digital library of resources that we used to answer these questions are posted on our website under "resources."

We are especially proud of a new video, *A History of Fire in Claremont Canyon*, which was produced by the Conservancy and written by board member Jerry Kent. Jerry's encyclopedic knowledge of the Canyon's fire history is informed by his marvelous archival photos, which graphically illustrate the threat of fire we face in the Canyon over time and today. The video can be seen on our website under "videos."

We still await environmental reviews on two important wildfire mitigation projects in Claremont Canyon, one funded by FEMA and one by local tax dollars through Measure CC, before large scale work can resume (see pages 4-7). We strongly urge the agencies involved to end their inaction and move forward as efficiently as possible.

On the following pages you can read about the Conservancy's stewardship work, which took a leap forward last fall and winter in Claremont Canyon. You can also learn about our educational nature walk series last season and what we have in store for the coming months. Our recent partnering with KPFA/Pacifica Foundation volunteers at the radio tower site on the highest point in the watershed (see page 3) shows how diverse organizations can come together to achieve common goals.

Since our founding in 2001, more than 500 households in the Canyon and surrounding community have joined with us to preserve/restore the land, support our programs and to learn along with us how to best mitigate the threat of a devastating wildfire. We warmly invite all to join the Claremont Canyon Conservancy to experience this place we call home.

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With an armful of French broom, Oakland International High School student Anthony Urbina learns which plants are good for the environment and which can be harmful. Broom, which is invasive, squeezes out native plants such as lupin (to the left).

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Bill McClung (in purple shirt) shares a nature story last spring with fourth and fifth graders from John Muir School. Conservancy intern Casey Amberger (left of Bill) organized this outing to Garber Park with the help of John Muir parent Elena Egers.

© 2009 Mary Millman

When Marilyn Goldhaber spotted these giant mushrooms (Gymnopilus spectabilis) on our February 28, 2009 Headslope walk, she said, "Holy Cow!" To photograph them though, she had to get closer. For more photos and a video of this fun outing see our website.

Nature Walks and Stewardship Sessions

by Bill McClung

Our understanding and appreciation of Claremont Canyon is greatly enhanced by being in the Canyon with friends, enthusiasts and experts. Every season, we have good times together, scheduled and impromptu!

Below we list our expert-guided nature walks and stewardship sessions scheduled for May and June. On the third Saturday morning each month we continue our monthly stewardship sessions from 10 a.m. to 12 noon. We go to a place in the Canyon to observe the flora and fauna, manage weeds, repair trails, pick up trash, and do other work to help preserve and enhance the landscape.

On some Thursdays at noon we join the KPFA volunteers in maintaining the 2.5-acre Pacifica Foundation property, a remarkable site overlooking Gwin and Claremont Canyons. The Conservancy has joined with KPFA volunteers to study and try to restore the native flora in areas where the Foundation removed eucalyptus last summer (see photo on top of opposite page).

Schedule

May 12—BUTTERFLY WALK. Tuesday from 11 to 1. San Francisco butterfly advocates LIAM O'BRIEN and BARBARA DEUTSCH will once again visit the Canyon to share with us their knowledge and love of butterflies on a walk we expect to be able to share with a class from John Muir School, as last year. Location TBA.

May 16—REGULAR THIRD SATURDAY STEWARDSHIP. Saturday from 10 to 12. At several mid-Canyon locations where Conservancy volunteers have Adopted a Spot. We will meet at the Claremont Chert (ESA 29 turnout) and focus on the usual plant identifications, litter pickup, and weed control activities that characterize our stewardship work.

May 22—GRASSLAND WALK. Friday morning from 10 to 12. President of the California Native Grasslands Association and EBRPD Wildland Vegetation Manager DAVID AMME, will lead us on a walk from Four Corners onto the Skyline Trail on EBMUD land. We will take a moderate walk over to Isis Ridge where an annual mowing by EBMUD has resulted in a mosaic of perennial grasses. Then we will continue on a more challenging walk up the slope toward the Siesta Valley Ridge to see another rich grassland mosaic preserved by a history of moderate grazing.

June 17—NATIVE PLANTS, VEGETATION MANAGEMENT, AND (POSSIBILY) WILDLIFE NEAR DRURY COURT. Wednesday from 12 to l:30 with Bill McClung, Paul McGee, and Kay Loughman.

June 20—REGULAR THIRD SATURDAY STEWARDSHIP. Saturday from 10 to 12. Location to TBA.

July—FOREST AND FIRE DYNAMICS IN CLAREMONT CANYON. Date and location TBA . With Scott Stephens, Director of the Fire Science Laboratory at UC Berkeley.

Questions, suggestions or to RVSP, contact Bill McClung, wmcclung@rcn.com or 841-8447.

Stewardship Diary:

Headslope Wildfire Mitigation and Stewardship Sessions

by Mary Millman

Last fall, after several consultations with Tom Klatt, UC's Wildfire Mitigation Manager, I proposed a series of Claremont Canyon Headslope Wildfire Mitigation and Stewardship sessions to be conducted on the first Saturday of the winter months. As Jerry Kent's wildfire history research has shown, in our East Bay hills, the ridges and headslopes are overwhelmingly the locus of wildfire ignition. Much of the Canyon ridge lands are on University property where active, successive, eradication harvests have been conducted since 2002 to remove eucalyptus and pine.

I wanted to understand this area in detail and I wondered what the Conservancy could do to further the mitigation work of the University.

Tom recommended that we visit each of the approximately 10-acre areas where eucalyptus and pine had been removed to search out and pull or cut sprouts, seedlings, coppiced stumps, and miscellaneous invasive exotics. With Conservancy members and volunteers we began in October 2008 and progressed through five areas ending in April on the steep grade just below Grizzly Peak Boulevard that had been logged in 2001-2002 (reported in successive "blogs" archived on our website.)

Overall we noticed that the longer the time since the eradication harvest, the fewer eucalyptus sprouts, stems, or coppiced stumps. Areas where the biomass was composed of chips, there were few eucalyptus sprouts, but vigorous rebounding bay laurel and coast live oak, relatively numerous invasive exotics such as broom, and plentiful chip-disintegrating fungi. At the January session, we pulled up more than 200 sprouts from a steep headslope area logged long ago but lying below the EBMUD stand of eucalyptus on the ridge, which appear to have rained seeds into the lower area where they energetically took root.

This area would have been totally reconstituted as a dangerous eucalyptus thicket/forest if the sprouts had been allowed to remain.

Of course, we always enjoyed the vistas, the sometimes surprising acquaintance with native flora, and the weathery moods of the Canyon itself. But the mitigation lesson was clear: even eradication logging requires serious, thorough follow-up to ensure its mitigation effect. After seven to ten years, very few if any eucalyptus will remain.

To ensure this outcome in Claremont Canyon, we can repeat the Headslope sessions in winters to come. Though in some past years Tom Klatt has undertaken this work on his own, I know he could use the company. As far as I know, Tom is the only one of us who can pull eucalyptus sprouts on 100% slope. The entire project is worth it just to watch Tom do that.

View from the top: If you've noticed much less yellow above Grizzly Peak Boulevard this spring at the top of Marlborough Terrace, it's because KPFA volunteers Bob Nelson (pictured above) and Robert MacConnell have been hard at work. Bob told us "Eucalyptus is trending down... old rotting logs are being consolidated into piles, and we've been working to eradicate French broom, yellow star thistle and summer mustard. Annual grasses are being trimmed by hand and weed whacker (we discontinued goat grazing but last year the goats from next door slipped through the fence and gobbled up beneficial native plants.)" All this is to provide fire control and promote biodiversity! If you see Bob and Robert on some Thursday afternoon, stop and chat for a while!

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.

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The Board of Directors: Barry Pilger, President; Joe Engbeck, Vice President; Marilyn Goldhaber, Treasurer; Mary Millman, Secretary; Martin Holden, Jerry Kent, Tamia Marg, Bill McClung, Matt Morse, Dick White, and L.Tim Wallace.

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

Eucalyptus plantations up next for removal still stand in upper Claremont Canyon, pending completion of environmental assessments by FEMA. Trees lining the distance, also slated for removal, are on Frowning Ridge. A chip-covered restoration area where eucalyptus were removed is in the foreground of the picture, taken from Grizzly Peak Blvd. south of Four Corners.

A Brief History of Wildfire in Claremont Canyon

by Barry Pilger, Jerry Kent, Joe Engbeck, Marilyn Goldhaber and Mary Millman

IN THE BEGINNING: Throughout the latter part of the 1800s, Claremont Canyon, like much of the East Bay Hills, was utilized primarily for cattle grazing and dairy farming. The landscape was mostly grassland, a likely mixture of native bunch grasses and exotic annual grasses with a scattering of native shrubs and trees.

By the turn of the Twentieth Century, however, developers began eyeing the East Bay for its great potential as a market for housing. Local speculators, including two Oakland businessmen, Frank Havens and Borax Smith, who owned large amounts of East Bay land, embarked on an aggressive program of planting non-native trees—pine, eucalyptus and cypress—above the cities of Oakland and Berkeley, including areas of Claremont Canyon. Their intentions were to "beautify" the landscape to entice families to buy parcels, but much of Havens' efforts also went into starting eucalyptus plantations in hopes of supplying the rapidly developing area with lumber. To Havens's disappointment, eucalyptus lumber turned out to be unsuitable for its intended purposes and the plantations were soon abandoned. Until recently, many eucalyptus plantations in the Easy Bay Hills, including over 200 acres in Claremont Canyon, were left largely unattended for the next century.

Eucalyptus and its detritus have had a major impact on the East Bay Hills. While many people over the years have appreciated the fragrant and breezy giants imported from Australia, these trees, *Eucalyptus globulus*—with their copious, oily litter, hanging bark, and excessive use of ground water—have choked out native flora and the native fauna that depend on it, and added a serious threat of a highly flammable source of fuel. Eucalyptus and to a lesser degree Monterey pine increased the risk from wildfire in an already highly wildfire-prone area.

CLIMATE AND IGNITION SOURCES: Wildfire throughout California has long been a fact of life. Even before recent public concern about global climate change, the Bay Area experienced regular cycles of drought. It is during these times of drought that the danger of fast-moving and destructive wildfire is greatest, especially when combined with the hot, dry, east-to-west "Diablo" winds that spill over our hilltops and tear through our canyons every fall. The upper area of Claremont Canyon, being at one of the lowest points along the Oakland/Berkeley ridge, is a natural channel for the rush of Diablo winds that can reach 50 miles per hour or more.

Every year many small fires ignite in our hills and canyons and are quickly put out. However, during the twentieth century, three mega-fires—fires so large and complex that they overwhelmed local fire-fighting capabilities—reached parts of Claremont Canyon and destroyed many homes in the Oakland/Berkeley Hills. That fact marks our area as one of the highest risk wildfire areas in the country in terms of property damaged and lives lost.

In order for mega-wildfires—such as those of 1923, 1970 and, most recently, 1991—to swirl out of control, three conditions must be met: 1) warm, dry and windy weather, 2) an initial source of ignition, and 3) a build-up of fuel. While there is little we can do about the weather, there are things we can do about ignition and fuel. We focus in this newsletter on the fuel component, a major interest of the Conservancy since its inception while recognizing that the ignition component is also vitally important and needs to be addressed and monitored—particularly under power lines, along road edges and in places where people and cars congregate. This is an area for future work involving power companies, city officials and the public.

POPULATION GROWTH AND BUILDING CONSTRUCTION: As the overall population in the East Bay increased, many residential communities in the hills developed with little knowledge of the impact of Diablo winds and little regard for long-term wildfire safety. In addition, ingress and egress roads to many of these areas were, and remain, extremely narrow. Older homes designed with sensitivity to aesthetics of the natural environment were often landscaped with pines and constructed with flammable materials, notably wood shingle roofs and wooden decks. When conditions are right, homes themselves become fuel for the spread of wildfire.

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM THE 1991 FIRE: Among the most difficult lessons we learned from the 1991 fire was just how dangerous the situation had become and how unprepared both our community and our emergency services were to deal with a major conflagration.

The 1991 fire began as a small brush fire that was quickly put out, only to revive again the next morning with a surge of strong Diablo wind. Embers still hot from the previous day flared into flames that whipped through dry brush into pines and other dry vegetation and then to homes at the urban-wildland edge, completely overwhelming fire personnel tending the scene. With the fire out of control, flaming debris blew across the hills and canyons into many neighborhoods, igniting anything flammable, eventually destroying 3,000 homes and killing 25 people. What started out as an apparently manageable fire was combined with extreme weather—an estimated 20 mile-per-hour down slope wind that eventually gusted up to 50 miles per hour—and extraordinary amounts of flammable material, including the homes themselves. It was the 'perfect storm,' in this case, the perfect firestorm.

THE CASE FOR EUCALYPTUS AND PINE: In the fire's aftermath, follow-up studies reported that eucalyptus and Monterey pine, because their burning embers and firebrands were carried aloft for long distances, were among the major culprits for propagation of the conflagration and 'should be controlled' along with non-native shrubs like French broom, and dense, dry vegetation found in residential landscapes.

With urging from the Conservancy, public stakeholders in Claremont Canyon, including the University of California, the East Bay Regional Park District, and the East Bay Municipal Utility District, began to tackle their portion of the problem by selectively removing major offenders: large plantations of eucalyptus, especially tall eucalyptus trees alongside roads. Where possible, agency workers attempted to retain native vegetation such as oaks, bays, and native shrubs, to repopulate the area. In one area on UC property, redwood seedlings were planted by volunteer groups to enhance a previous project, begun some thirty years earlier, to create a more cool, moist, fire-safe environment in upper Claremont Canyon. Since 2002, more than 8,000 eucalyptus and other trees have come down over 115 acres of UC land, and over 4,000 redwoods have been planted. The felled trees were chipped on site to become a gradually disintegrating mulch. Trees chipped 6-7 years ago have already disintegrated completely, while those chipped 2-5 years ago now cover an estimated five acres with a depth of 6-12 inches. In 2006, another 500 trees, mostly eucalyptus, were removed from Park District land in mid-Claremont Canyon and above the Stonewall trailhead and mostly hauled away by truck.

The awkward period of newly barren vistas where there were once towering trees is giving way to the return of native plant and animal species. A native landscape is essential for certain species, such as the endangered Alameda whipsnake, that rely on grassland and low-lying shrubs. David Kessler, past president of the North Hills Phoenix Association, and a survivor of the 1991 fire, likened the tree removal to having surgery: you don't feel good the morning you wake up but after a few months or seasons you heal. As he put it 'the land will heal itself.'

CONSERVANCY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STAKEHOLDERS: At the Conservancy's March 2009 meeting the Board of Directors agreed to ask the major public agencies in Claremont Canyon to expedite their work in creating and maintaining fuel breaks in planned locations along the western boundary of the Park District and along Grizzly Peak Boulevard on city, UC, and EBMUD lands. Ridgetop fuel breaks—that is, managed vegetation zones where firefighters could attempt to stop a fire before it can race over into secondary canyons and residential areas—are particularly important.

The Board also requests that an approximately two-mile-long fuel break along the urban-wildland interface be created and maintained so that firefighters could safely work to protect homes. The Conservancy does not advocate complete removal of vegetation but a reduction of fuel in a corridor about 100 feet wide (at least 100 feet from structures, maybe more, depending on site-by-site evaluations) behind homes to create a mixture of grassland, scattered trees and low lying native shrubs. Yearly maintenance is essential to this plan. The corridor, which would be entirely on Park District land, would include the west side of Gwin Canyon and areas behind homes east of Claremont Avenue and above (north of) Stonewall Road.

COMMITMENT TO LONG-TERM MAINTENANCE: Long-term maintenance is important because opportunistic weed

This old photo taken in the early 1900's in the East Bay Hills (probably along Old Tunnel Road) shows one of the many groves of eucalyptus and Monterey pine trees that Frank Havens and Borax Smith planted.

Claremont Canyon Conservancy
Board Recommendations for Public Landholders

Improving fire safety in Claremont Canyon requires the efforts of all landholders. We recommend the following:

East Bay Municipal Utility District
- Complete the EBMUD portion of the Grizzly Peak Boulevard ridgetop fuel break.
- Address the risks created by eucalyptus trees overhanging a powerline between Grizzly Peak Boulevard and the ridgetop.

East Bay Regional Park District
- Complete and maintain the fuelbreak along the residential edge of Gwin Canyon.
- Create and maintain a fuelbreak behind residences along the north side of Claremont Avenue and in the shrubland east of the eucalyptus grove above the Clark Kerr Campus.
- Determine in its Measure CC Plan and EIR whether or not the Stonewall eucalyptus grove will aid or hinder firefighters in stopping a wildfire that might come down through the Canyon before it can ignite residential areas along the Canyon bottom.

University of California
- Continue its efforts to remove all of the eucalyptus trees on its property in Claremont Canyon.

Pacific Gas and Electric
- Consider undergrounding powerlines along the Claremont Avenue and Grizzly Peak Boulevard corridors in Claremont Canyon and on certain narrow roads in the urban wildland interface with limited ingress/egress.

All Agencies
- Eliminate the potential for eucalyptus and pine on their lands to produce dramatic flame fronts and throw embers that could quickly overcome firefighters and significantly reduce evacuation time for homeowners.
- Develop effective strategies for removing and controlling the increasingly aggressive French broom that is invading several spots in the Canyon.

infestations such as broom and thistle readily occur in disturbed areas, especially after major clearings. Also, eucalyptus, once cut, can sprout several new stems and in a matter of 2 to 3 years become a cluster of tall trees. New eucalyptus seedlings can also appear in a disturbed landscape. Because seeds remain viable for several years, they can readily germinate when conditions are right. If we do not commit to regular follow-up—that is, yearly removal of seedlings, re-sprouts and opportunistic invasions of weeds—all of our efforts will have been in vain. In that unwelcome scenario, the threat of major wildfires in the future will most assuredly increase. In order to maintain the momentum gained we call upon the public agencies that are stakeholders of in the Canyon—the Park District, UC Berkeley, EBMUD and the City of Oakland—to continue their efforts to control high-risk non-native trees and shrubs.

LENGTH OF FOLLOW-UP—NOTES FROM THE FIELD: UC project manager, Tom Klatt, reports that eucalyptus seeds in UC's restoration area either germinated or decayed within seven years of the eradication harvests: the sites cleared in 2001-2002 now showing virtually no seedling activity. Interestingly, areas in which chips were spread showed from the beginning almost ZERO eucalyptus seedling activity. The moist chip beds apparently caused the seeds to decay before they could germinate. These same chip beds, however, appear to be good for the germination of California bays and coastal live oaks, as the birds and squirrels bury these native seeds a few inches below the chip surface and the seeds then germinate in the moist and fertile chip-mulch. This effect suggests that the retention of eucalyptus biomass may be ideal for suppressing the exotic eucalyptus while favoring the native trees.

FEMA GRANTS: Financial assistance for past large scale vegetation management work in Claremont Canyon has come from federal pre-disaster mitigation grants from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the US Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS). For this we are all very grateful. Unfortunately, the next major award that was in process has been held up for more than a year pending an Environmental Assessment, forestalling $404,000 of FEMA money in neighboring Strawberry Canyon. Two related FEMA grants, one for Claremont Canyon ($418,000) and one for Frowning Ridge ($882,000) are next in line and have yet to reach the public comment stage.

We know how hard our agencies worked to win these grants in a nationally competitive arena and we urge land managers to persevere with their programs of strategic, non-native tree removal and conversion to native species—with a steadfast commitment to long-term follow-up. In order to get the grants back on track the Conservancy has been working with the stakeholders, elected officials and the Hills Emergency Forum to address Environmental Assessment concerns and help FEMA complete the process and move forward. If you want to help urge FEMA to release these funds, contact your councilmember, mayor, congresswoman, governor or FEMA Region IX headquarters and let them know you want the mitigation work to continue, to lessen the likelihood of another, catastrophic East Bay wildfire. Please email the Conservancy or check our website for further information.

MEASURE CC PLAN AND EIR: Similarly, the Park District's Measure CC-funded work is behind schedule while staff and consultants continue to hammer out their Wildfire Hazard Reduction and Resource Management Plan and Draft EIR. Nevertheless, important restoration work has gone forward in Claremont Canyon, near Stonewall Road and Gelston Road, under environmental clearances and funding from USFWS. Future funding under Measure CC for wildfire mitigation work in Claremont Canyon and Sibley regional preserves is budgeted for $1,175,000, but it is uncertain how much will be assigned to each preserve. We note that the two preserves are not really comparable: Claremont Canyon has a much larger urban-wildland interface and a much more tragic history of wildfire events. An additional $418,060 of Measure CC money is budgeted for Claremont Canyon to complete and maintain a north-to-south and east-to-west trail system consistent with the protection of rare species (red legged frogs and Alameda whipsnakes).

The Conservancy Board continues its dialogue with the Park District to help them over certain hurdles and to make sure that Claremont Canyon issues are clearly addressed. When the Plan and EIR are released, it is hoped sometime this summer, participation of the public during the public comment period will be very important.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HOMEOWNERS: It is impossible to predict the exact location, source, and timing of an ignition that high winds can transform into a raging wildfire. According to projections we made based on the events of the past hundred years, one, can expect in the next century three Diablo wind mega-fires, seven "normal" Diablo wind fires, possibly as many as 150 "normal" west wind fires, four El Nino events, four extended freezes, and four drought cycles that will all impact wildland vegetation and residential areas of the East Bay Hills. Fortunately, there are reasonable steps that can be taken to be safe and to protect one's property with good family emergency planning, appropriate home and property preparation, and defensible space landscape maintenance.

The Conservancy urges homeowners to familiarize themselves with the excellent fire codes crafted in 2006 by the State of California and implemented in 2009 for enforcement by the cities of Oakland and Berkeley and others. Studies in the aftermath of the 2007 fires in San Diego County confirmed lower burn rates in homes built to new wildfire property protection standards based on the strict requirements of new state codes.

WHERE WE GO FROM HERE—WITH YOUR HELP: Safety and preparedness is important for our entire extended community. One of the most heartening results of our mission has been the opportunity to share many of the lessons we have learned about wildfire prevention, as well as home fire safety guidelines, with our members and to exchange this information with other local organizations that share similar missions and goals, including the Friends of Sausal Creek, Friends of Temescal Creek, the North Hills Phoenix Association, Panoramic Hill Association, Vicente Canyon Neighborhood Association and others.

If you would like to become more involved in the Claremont Canyon Conservancy, we hope you will participate in one of our guided nature walks or help with our monthly stewardship events. If you simply want to learn more about fire prevention measures for your own residence, the Conservancy provides a wealth of information and resources on our website. Please join with the 500 households who have already pledged to help the Claremont Canyon Conservancy preserve our wonderful community for future generations.

What Homeowners Can Do

Creating and maintaining defensible space is one of the most important ways to protect your home from wildfire. Defensible space will improve the chance that an ember resistant house will survive on its own and greatly improve the odds that firefighters will attempt to defend your home. Defensible space can be a designed landscape of maintained native plants surrounding your home with fuel management of up to 100 feet as required by state law or by city code. For further details see www.fire.ca.gov/ and search for General Guidelines for Creating Defensible Space.

Preparing your home to resist burning embers is the next most important thing to do. New building codes are creating more fire-safe homes and communities, but all structures are vulnerable to wildfire and many older structures are especially vulnerable to fire. All of Claremont Canyon is a high fire-risk area, and some homes need to be retrofitted ASAP. Embers can travel a mile or more and ignite a home surrounded by 200 feet of green landscape. For further information see http://groups.ucanr.org/HWMG/ for a Homeowner's Wildfire Mitigation Guide prepared by the University of California.

The basic facts supporting quick evacuation during fires are simple. Staying behind in a major wildfire is serious business and must not be attempted when the order to evacuate is given. Evacuation is essential to saving lives. Homeowners insurance is essential for those who choose to live near our beautiful Canyon. For further information see the Red Cross website (www.redcross.org) and search for wildfire preparation and evacuation.

Oakland International High School students pick up and bag trash at the Ecological Study site on UC land along Claremont Avenue.

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A peek inside the bark of a eucalyptus stump finds polypores (leathery mushrooms lacking a distinct stalk) and a sleeping lizard. For more surprising winter mushroom finds, see page 2.

THE CLAREMONT CANYON CONSERVANCY

SUPPORTING THE LONG-TERM STEWARDSHIP OF CLAREMONT CANYON

The great volunteer stewards from Oakland International High School near the creek at University Ecological Study Area 28 in March. Everyone had a good time that day learning together and working on weed and trash control on the school's community service day when we "adopted" this important turnout along Claremont Avenue.