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

President's Message

by L. Tim Wallace

This will be the Conservancy's tenth year anniversary, and we want to celebrate it with you—not only on November 6th at our Annual Meeting (mark your calendars), but throughout the year. At each of our nature walks, at each of our stewardship days where ever they may be in Claremont Canyon, at each of our special events, we all hope you join us and become part of the discussion about the local treasure that is Claremont Canyon. Our website is our main communication device for us to talk to each other—and our newsletter, which comes out twice a year, is our way of trying to keep you posted on our accomplishments and seasonal activities.

First, I would like to thank Past President Barry Pilger for his leadership, stout-heartedness and insights in his guidance of the Conservancy over the last two years. These have been tumultuous times, filled with many policy decisions, feet on the ground input, and listening to advice from many corners and points of view. Barry not only survived, but persevered so that the Conservancy is now on a higher level of understanding, teaching and community influ-

ence than ever before. There is no "filling Barry's shoes" but, as the new president, I will try to maintain the course he set and will work closely with him in his current role as the Conservancy's treasurer.

The Conservancy has done much over the last ten years—it has been your community based organization. We've established solid working relationships with the agencies who actually own and are responsible for the land management within the Canyon: principally with the University of California (with Tom Klatt), the East Bay Regional Park District people (too many to name, all of them important), the City of Oakland (with many Department people from Fire to Parks), and EBMUD working with the

advice and cooperation of Scott Hill. Cooperation is the key so that the agencies, the public and the special interests can all be heard. Together we are creating a safer, more friendly Claremont Canyon for local residents, hikers or people just interested in taking a look at our unique wedge of wildland projecting into the urban edges of Oakland and Berkeley. Our citizen-based Conservancy has much more planned for the future —helping facilitate trail work and general stewardship projects as well as offering our enjoyable and educational nature walks. Please do come join us for a couple of hours.

We want to make the next ten years as productive and inspiring as the first ten. We need you and want you to become more involved in the work of the Conservancy. If you are not yet a member, please sign up. You can do this through our website or you can drop us a note in the mail. Call or email one of the officers if you have any questions or if you want to volunteer for a specific project. New ideas are always welcome so please tell us what you'd like to do or work on in the Canyon.

Looking forward to meeting all of you at one time or another.



A family enjoys spectacular views from the highest point along Panoramic Ridge, which divides Claremont and Strawberry canyons.

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Birds and Birding in Claremont Canyon

by Kay Loughman

Invite your buddles to go birding with you in Claremont Canyon and you may be met with excuses. Most serious birders don't spend time in Claremont Canyon, believing the effort to find birds unlikely to pay off.

But birds are around! And sometimes there are delightful surprises, as on December's bird walk with Dave Quady, when we were thrilled to hear northern saw-whet and western screech-owls in addition to the expected great horned owls.



Dave, an experienced birder and field trip leader with an affinity for owls, has led Conservancy bird walks for several years. And for decades he has also led the team that covers Claremont Canyon for the Oakland Christmas Bird Count. Dave would probably agree that with wind,

traffic noise, and steep or narrow trails, bird finding in Claremont Canyon can be a challenge ... yet, he is remarkably good at locating whatever is around, and teaching us something about birds in the process.

Well over 100 bird species have been recorded in the canyon and on surrounding hillsides. Of these, about one third (e.g. red-tailed hawk, American robin, house finch, chestnut-backed chickadee, doves, jays, juncos, towhees) are resident, and findable year-round. Another third of the species are regular visitors for part of the year, either the breeding season (e.g. Wilson's and orange-crowned warblers, Pacific-slope flycatcher, black-headed grosbeak) or the fall and winter (e.g. most sparrows, Townsend's and yellow-rumped warblers, ruby-crowned kinglet).

The final third are neither year-round nor seasonal residents. These include 'flyovers' – species like American white pelican, seen in transit from one body of water to another; 'migrating stopovers' – like rufous humming-bird, which visit for a week or so enroute between their wintering and breeding grounds; and the very exciting 'vagrants' – species like indigo bunting or rose-breasted grosbeak whose normal range and migration route do not include northern California. Some vagrants show up in the Bay Area every year, and a few are discovered in Claremont Canyon.

Knowing where to look enhances the likelihood of seeing birds. Along the Panoramic Ridge Trail watch (and listen!) for red-shouldered hawk and pygmy nuthatch. Check the grasslands and low shrubs at Four Corners for western bluebirds and song sparrows; walk part way up Gelston (see photo above, right) to find residents and seasonal visitors. After the sun hits the oak trees, try Garber Park for American robin and oak titmouse. Gwin Canyon is usually good for California quail and wrentit.

The restoration area, in transition for several years, can be filled with birds—or totally devoid of them. The willows to the south of the new steps have been good for chest-nut-backed chickadee and orange-crowned warbler, while across the trail we've found lazuli bunting. Our intermittent Harwood/Claremont Creek is worth checking wherever it can be found.

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Birders along Gelston Street on last December's birdwalk follow the call of a song sparrow into a nearby live oak. Conservancy members interested in learning more about birding in the canyon are invited to join Dave and Kay on our next birdwalk, May 7.

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, Martin Holden, Jon Kaufman, Jerry Kent, Tamia Marg, and Dick White, Members at Large.

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

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

PLEASE JOIN US FOR OUR SPRING SERIES of nature walks and work parties in Claremont Canyon. Work parties occur twice a month in Garber Park (first Tuesday and third Saturday) in collaboration with Oakland's Garber Park Stewards, and once a month elsewhere in the canyon (second Saturday) led by Jon Kaufman in collaboration with Tom Klatt of UC and Jeff Manley of the Park District. Be sure to check our website for updates and additions, or contact us to get on our emailing list.

Work dates for Garber Park are **April 5 & 16, May 3 & 14** and **June 6 & 18.** Meet at the Evergreen entrance, 10 AM-noon. Work dates for elsewhere in the canyon are **April 9, May 14 and June 11**. Unless otherwise specified, meet at UC signpost 29 on the north side of Claremont Avenue, about one-half mile uphill from the Alvarado Road intersection, 10 AM-noon.

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. Please RSVP to GarberParkStewards@gmail.com for Garber Park events and to info@ClaremontCanyon.org for all other events.

April 14—Berkeley Path Wanderers Meeting, 7 p.m.

Conservancy members will be the guest speakers at the spring meeting of Berkeley Path Wanders held at St. John's Church, 2727 College Avenue. The meeting is free and open to the public. Presentations will highlight the history and ecology of Claremont Canyon as well as the goals and accomplishments of the Conservancy. In conjunction with this program, Conservancy members will lead a special walk along the Panoramic Ridge on the following Sunday, April 17.

April 16—Garber Park Stewards Earth Day Event, 9 a.m.-noon

The Garber Park Stewards are once again joining together with the Conservancy for this Earth Day Event. Meet at the Evergreen Lane entrance to Garber Park at 9 a.m. for coffee, tea, juice and snacks, then head out to your favorite spot. Our restoration planting complete, we will do our first weeding of the site and clean up the area around Fireplace Plaza. Along the Loop Trail we will focus on removing Cape ivy and Himalayan blackberry, and perform trail maintenance. Wear long sleeves and pants, and good sturdy boots or shoes with treads. Directions: From Alvarado Road take Slater Lane, then turn right on Evergreen Lane. The entrance is at the end of the street. This is easy walking distance from Alvarado Road. Questions? Contact Shelagh, GarberParkStewards@gmail.com or visit our blog: www.garberparkstewards.blogspot.com.

April 17—Path Wanderers Hike led by Martin Holden, 10 a.m.-noon.

Continue to honor Earth Day with a leisurely hike along the high ridge that separates Strawberry and Claremont canyons.

Coming upon Fremont's star lily (Zigadenus fremontii) during our March exploration of the canyon's southfacing slope was a special treat. The wild lily blooms in the spring and dies back during the summer.



Learn about the great treasure of the Claremont Canyon Regional Preserve. Meet at the top of Dwight Way at the end of Panoramic Way near the water tower.

May 7—Bird Walk with Dave Quady and Kay Loughman

Meet at 7 a.m. at Four Corners (intersection of Grizzly Peak Blvd. with Claremont Ave./Fish Ranch Rd.) 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 as well as the Neotropical migrant birds that have returned to breed. Bring binoculars if you have a pair (Dave will have a few pairs to share) and a field guide if you have one.

For something different, meet Kay and Dave at 5 a.m. at the foot of Gelston Street to enjoy the 'dawn chorus,' as breeding birds break into song before the sun rises. We will stand quietly and try to identify birds by their songs until about 6:30, leaving enough time to get a quick breakfast snack before our 7 a.m. meeting at the top of the canyon.

If it's raining on Saturday morning, we'll try again Sunday morning, May 8, same times, same places. Please check the website for last minute updates.

June 4—Yoga Walk with Domonick Wegesin, 2-3:30 p.m.

Meet at the Side Hill Trail along Grizzly Peak Blvd., .8 miles to the north of the intersection with Claremont Avenue/Fish Ranch Road. The trail is unmarked so look for parked cars. Domonick (www. theopener.com) incorporates standard yoga poses with more dynamic poses as we move through the landscape. Beginners as well as regular yoga practitioners are welcome.

November 6—Tenth Annual Meeting, 4-6 p.m. At the Claremont Hotel. Save the date!

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Tom Klatt and Cal students from The Berkeley Project get ready for a day of community service.



Down the slope they go with lumber for steps and gully crossings.



There is something for everyone to do as steps and crossings are assembled.



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Exploring Claremont Canyon

by Jon Kaufman

During the Past several months Conservancy volunteers have made it easier to explore and enjoy Claremont Canyon. The mid-to-upper canyon now has an easily hike-able loop trail and Garber Park restoration is moving forward.

Drive up Claremont Avenue a mile and a half from Ashby and you'll see a big blue sign on the right. Park your car at the gate on the right across from the rock wall chert. The chert is evidence of how ancient earthquakes caused old rock layers from the seafloor to be thrust upward and become part of the continental landmass. Hike in a few yards past the gate and on the right you'll see some newly built steps, evidence of our Twenty-first Century volunteers at work. Take the steps down the trail and you'll soon come to a couple of wooden gully crossings and more steps, which our volunteers under the leadership of Tom Klatt have built to ease access to the land and protect the slopes from erosion. In addition to aiding work crews, the trail improvements also make it easier for those less sure-footed walkers among us to enjoy the canyon.

Along the trail you'll see coyote brush, oaks, bays and an occasional redwood planted in 2005 by Conservancy volunteers, the boy scouts, a UC class, and the UC Forestry Club. As you climb, the newly improved trail meets a fire road. Turn left and walk past a beautiful redwood grove planted in the 1970s. Turn left again to follow the fire road back to the chert, or turn right and hike up the hill toward Four Corners.

It is interesting to compare this part of the canyon with the dense, debris-filled eucalyptus forest on the other side of Claremont Avenue. That forest consists almost exclusively of blue gum eucalyptus, *Eucalyptus globulus*, a fast-growing import from Australia, which professional foresters consider a serious fire hazard. Individual eucs can burn like torches once ignited. In addition, they drop two to three times as much fuel (leaves, branches, seed cones, and shreds of bark) as a native forest of bays and live oaks.

Further down the canyon, volunteers have been busy removing Himalayan blackberry and Cape ivy in Garber Park, a City of Oakland park located behind the Claremont Hotel between the ends of Evergreen Lane and Rispin Drive. The 14-acre park has been adopted by the Garber Park Stewards, led by Conservancy board member Shelagh Brodersen.

Recently, following the removal of three eucalyptus trees near the Evergreen Lane entrance, the Stewards worked through the rains to plant about 140 carefully selected native grasses, reeds, and shrubs. Lech Naumovich, a native plant specialist and conservation/restoration consultant, developed the restoration plan and provided hands-on leadership to the volunteers who did the planting. The project was approved by the City of Oakland and paid for by the Claremont Canyon Conservancy using its special stewardship fund. The Stewards will watch and document the new plants throughout the year to see which ones thrive. You can follow the progress in Garber Park by visiting their blog; www.garberparkstewards.blogspot.com.

Watch our website and emails for future opportunities where you can help preserve, restore and enjoy Claremont Canyon.



Photos on this page by @ Marilyn Goldhaber 2010-11, except where noted

At the end of the day, two wooden crossings and 35 steps were installed on UC-owned land in upper Claremont Canyon, a combined effort of student and Conservancy volunteers—yielding better, safer access for work crews and researchers.





Native plant restoration takes shape in Garber Park (right). "Our goal at the entrance hillside," says Shelagh Brodersen of the Garber Park Stewards, "is to maximize the opportunity of increased sunlight to enhance the California buckeye forest which occupies that area. Buckeyes are fast becoming a rarity in California, and thoughtful conservation here in Garber Park might contribute substantially to their survival."



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Founding Sponsors (and current board members) Jon Kaufman and Shelagh Brodersen have reason to smile after a long day of removing French broom along the trail in Gwin Canyon.

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Conservancy Membership

by Marilyn Goldhaber

Honoring our Members: From our founding in 2001, we have encouraged nearby residents and community organizations to support the Conservancy by becoming Founding Sponsors with a commitment to contribute \$1,000, either all at once or over ten years. We are pleased to list on the opposite page, in approximately the order the commitments were made, our first 209

Founding Sponsors. Below, we also honor our recent members from other categories of membership, who have supported the Conservancy during our most recent membership drive in 2010-2011.

Honoring the Land: Since our founding, 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 come and experience this place we call home

Wondering where Claremont Canyon is? Claremont Avenue runs right up its center, from the Claremont Hotel



Jon Kaufman helps Lynn Yamashita disentangle French broom from the branches of a live oak tree.

at the bottom to Grizzly Peak
Boulevard at the top. Most

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of canyon is publicly owned with the largest stakeholders being the East Bay Regional Park District and the Univer-

sity of California.

It wasn't by accident that we have such a treasure within our midst. Much of the canyon was destined for development in the 1970s but for the efforts of a visionary local citizens' group, the Friends of Claremont Canyon. Some key players

in Friends later joined with other local citizens after the devastating 1991 Oakland Hills Firestorm to form the Claremont Canyon Conservancy in 2001. The goal was, and continues to be, to energize the largest landowners to be better stewards of the land.

TEN YEARS STRONG: In November the Conservancy will be ten years old. Please save-the-date for our Annual Meeting, November 6, 4-6 p.m. at the Claremont Hotel. Our tenth anniversary is an important milestone, thanks especially to our Founding Sponsors whose commitment made this possible. We promise to have a sparkling event to celebrate. Closer to the date, please check our website and fall newsletter for details.

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THE CLAREMONT CANYON CONSERVANCY

SUPPORTING THE LONG-TERM STEWARDSHIP OF CLAREMONT CANYON



Our March nature walk leader Lech Naumovich, a native plant expert, reaches for a specimen of horehound (non-native) to show fellow hikers on a two-mile trek up and across the south-facing slope of Claremont Canyon.