

# Marsh Mailing

**Madrona Marsh Preserve and Nature Center**

## **Chevron Donates Corner**

### **The Last Piece—At Last!**

The southwest corner of the Madrona Marsh Preserve, an area of about three-fourths of an acre, has been high on our "Wish List" for over twenty years. It is the area known by Marshans as "the Chevron corner", as it was once the site of a Chevron filling station and it is still owned by the Chevron Oil Company. But that is about to change.

For a long time this area was also the location annually of the Cottone family's Halloween Pumpkin Patch and their Christmas tree lot. It has also been the subject of a recurring dream of the Friends: A dream that perhaps some day the giant Chevron Oil Company that hosts all those beautiful ads explaining how environmentally sensitive they are, could find it in their corporate heart to donate that property to the City of Torrance, to be part of the Madrona Marsh Preserve. Of course, that would be asking quite a lot, as this property is quite precious, commercially. Still, it has been a nice dream.

For years, when Venora Lee was President, the subject of a donation would arise, a unilateral consensus would be reached (by the FOMM Board) that this was a great idea, and President Lee would pen another eloquent plea begging Chevron to consider donation of this extremely valuable property that just happens to be adjacent to our fine preserve. Many considered this a "pipe dream", but we continued to suggest it to Chevron and they never dismissed our requests outright. But neither did they acquiesce, although in the last two years

we have received increasingly favorable signals from Chevron.

During this entire time Chevron was very generous in granting us access to the property and allowing us to trespass over it as we led tours around the Preserve.

The site provides an excellent view north into the deepest part of the vernal marsh and is a superb spot for observing waterfowl! For several years the Chevron Corner was also the launching point for Canoe Day. So this corner is already rich in Marsh lore and history.



*The Chevron Corner affords great views of visiting ducks. Photo by Tracy Drake*

has now been performed, and a Transfer Ceremony is planned for Saturday, July 19th, at 10 a.m. at the property. The City will provide shuttle service from the Nature Center to the Chevron Corner starting at 9:30 a.m. for those who want it, and light refreshments will be served.

We are all very appreciative of this enormous gift from Chevron. And we appreciate also their permitting us access to and through the property for decades. It has proven to all of us that Chevron is, indeed, sensitive to environmental issues and it is our great pleasure to have Chevron as a neighbor in the South Bay. I hope to see you all at the ceremony on July 19th!

—Bill Arrowsmith

# Ask Us

Visitors to Madrona Marsh ask many interesting questions and we'd like to share some of the better ones and their answers with the readers of **Marsh Mailing**.

If you have questions about the Preserve or the Nature Center, please sent it tu us at: P.O. Box 5978, Torrance, CA. 90510, or drop it off at the Nature Center.

## **Question from S.N.:**

***I look at the remaining water on the Marsh and it's covered with a green or reddish plant. I saw a heron and an egret walking around in it and eating something under it. What is it?***

## **Answer:**

Excellent question! The tiny green plant that covers the Marsh by May each year is one of the most important biological organisms on the Marsh! It is actually more than just a plant, too. When two organisms live together and each benefits from the other, we say they have a "symbiotic" association, such as the lichen on rocks which is a combination of algae and fungi.

The green plant you see on the Marsh, which turns reddish by late spring after it has been exposed to sunlight, has several common names: duckweed fern (different from duckweed!), water fern, or fairy moss. It is also called mosquito fern, from the myth that it grows so thick that it keeps mosquito larvae from reaching the surface to get air.

The scientific name for this duckweed fern is *Azolla* (ours is either *A. filiculoides* or *A. mexicana*), and it forms a very interesting symbiotic relationship with a blue-green alga (*Anabaena azollae*). The blue-green algae can obtain, or fix, nitrogen right from the air and make that essential nutrient directly available

*The Marsh Mailing* is a quarterly newsletter designed to provide information about activities and upcoming events at or relating to the Madrona Marsh Preserve. Contributions are welcome and may be e-mailed to Diane Gonsalves at [gonwild2@yahoo.com](mailto:gonwild2@yahoo.com) or Bill Arrowsmith, [TheArrowsmiths@sbcglobal.net](mailto:TheArrowsmiths@sbcglobal.net) or dropped off or mailed to the Nature Center.

to the duckweed fern, something most plants cannot do by themselves. This essentially turns the duckweed fern into a "super-plant", capable of doubling in biomass in less than a week!

This super-fast growth rate, combined with the shrinking water surface of the Marsh by late spring, results in a surface that appears solid (at least until you try to step on it!) and the ducks seem to be swimming right through solid land.

But why is the duckweed fern and algae combination so important? In addition to providing food directly to many of our waterfowl, the fern also provides food and habitat for many tiny insects, worms, and crustaceans. That is, it directly supports the lower layers of our food chain in the Marsh. (How many science projects could find a start here?)

Because of its ability to fix nitrogen and grow so efficiently, a duckweed fern and blue-green algae combination finds use as fertilizer and also as livestock feed. Some Arctic climatologists believe that *azolla* may even have played a significant role in reversing a greenhouse effect at the north pole 55 million years ago.

For more details about this interesting plant, see "Marriage Between a Fern and Cyanobacterium" at [waynesword.palomar.edu/plnov98.htm](http://waynesword.palomar.edu/plnov98.htm)

— Bill Arrowsmith

## **A Special Thanks**

A special thanks to Barbara Burgett and her fellow employees for volunteering 70 hours on the Preserve. Barbara then took the extra time to apply for a Volunteer Grant from her company, ExxonMobil, based on the 70 volunteer hours.

ExxonMobil Foundation Volunteer Involvement Program sent us a check for \$1,500.00. Thank you Barbara and ExxonMobil!

I also want to thank those of you who donate money to FOMM and then take the time to apply for a Matching Gift from their employers. This year we received \$120 from ITG matching the donation from Sharon Angelos.

Thank you Sharon and ITG!

—Ellen Peterson  
Treasurer

# from the president

## Marsh Receives Record Donation

The Board of Directors was thrilled recently to learn that the Friends had received an extremely generous donation—the largest single donation ever given to us.

This donation came from two sources, in a way. Ms. Virginia Davis is a long-time supporter of FOMM who happens to live in the neighboring city of Gardena. She had shared her appreciation for our Marsh with a very good friend of hers named Al Martin who lived in another neighboring city, Manhattan Beach. Al did quite well selling real estate in that city and, as Virginia says, “Al was always a very thrifty man.” As a result he ended up quite wealthy.

Unfortunately, Al had several health problems in recent years and finally died of leukemia a year ago. But he had given Virginia permission to distribute a portion of his estate. And that is how the Friends received a check for \$50,000 from the Claude A. Martin Trust. We are very, very grateful to Mr. Martin and to Virginia Davis for her many years of interest in, and support of, Madrona Marsh; and for “introducing us” to Al Martin. We only wish we could have met this generous man and taken him on a tour of the fine regional resource that his donation will support and show him the many programs that can be continued and expanded thanks to his help.

This superb donation from the Claude A. Martin Trust could not have come at a better time. As you know, we have a wonderfully full schedule of programs and classes and science projects that have evolved since the opening of the Nature Center seven years ago—primarily under the expert guidance of our current Manager and Naturalist, Tracy Drake. Much of the funding for these programs and the additional staffing and equipment required for them came from Proposition A Funds from 1972 and 1976 park bonds—some of which was used to build the Nature Center in 2001. But that funding, which also supports the Sports Center in Wilson Park, is limited and the latest estimates are that we may have only two or three years left at our current rate of use.

Community Services Director John Jones has assured us that the City will continue to pay the primary operating expenses of the Preserve, including the salaries of the Manager and Groundskeeper. But nobody can predict how tight funding will become for the additional “bells and whistles” we have come to expect and appreciate.

That is, in fact, the primary reason for the formation of our new sister organization, the Madrona Marsh Foundation, with Dr. Jack Ludwick as its President. Their heroic task is to build an endowment large enough to allow the programs of Madrona Marsh to continue and even expand. They are taking the initial steps toward that goal and deserve support from all of us. By concentrating on financial issues, the Foundation frees the Friends’ Board to focus on restoration and educational programming and maintenance of the Preserve—in other words, to spend the money they secure.

We are quite fortunate to have received extremely generous donations from Al Martin of Manhattan Beach and Virginia Davis of Gardena and Mrs. Eloise Barnett of Rancho Palos Verdes; and from many, many more of you from Torrance, Redondo Beach and all over the Southland. This underscores the fact that Madrona Marsh is, indeed, a regional resource, one of the few remaining vestiges of the seasonal and permanent wetlands that once dotted the Los Angeles Basin and Orange County, from Ballona Wetlands in Marina del Rey to The Willows in Gardena to Bolsa Chica in Huntington Beach.

As the local caretakers of this regional treasure we welcome you all and we are pleased to include many of you in our membership. We hope that our organization has enriched your life by helping the City of Torrance obtain and maintain this interesting slice of native habitat smack dab in the middle of the city.

Madrona Marsh is for all of us to enjoy, and we must ask all of you to help us support it. The Martin gift will keep the “wolf” away from our door for a few extra months and give the Foundation a little extra breathing room. And it will give us all time to consider what extra steps we can take, or with whom we can share our love for Madrona Marsh.

—Bill Arrowsmith

### The FOMM Board of Directors

- Bill Arrowsmith, President
- Connie Vadheim, Vice President
- Ellen Peterson, Treasurer
- Carol Roelen, Recording Secretary
- Jeanne Bellemin
- Bill Forrest
- Bobbie Snyder
- Sarah Noddings
- Archie Phillips
- Mary Garrity
- Pam Ryan
- (one open position)

#### Ex-officio:

- Jack Knapp
- Maxine Trevethen
- Shirley Turner

# Marsh Ownership: A Brief Timeline

With the Ceremony on July 19 marking the generous transfer of ownership from Chevron Oil Company to the City of Torrance of the final parcel of our now 45-acre preserve, we thought this might be an appropriate time to review the ownership of this property.

**Prior to 1542:** Natives of the area who called themselves Tongva lived nearby and probably hunted and gathered tule plants here. Most native American tribes had territorial claims but did not embrace the concept of property ownership.

**1542-1543:** Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo sailed north from Mexico and claimed vast portions of present-day California for Spain. Spain pretty much ignored this area for almost 200 years until Spanish authorities in New Spain (Mexico) decided, in the middle of the eighteenth century, to expand their empire northwards. Working with the Catholic Church, the Spanish moved past Baja California into Alta California. A network of Government military posts (Presidios) was established with associated religious missions.

**1743:** The first land grant given in California, the Rancho San Pedro, was granted to Juan Jose Dominguez by the Spanish crown in 1784 for his service in the Spanish Colonial Army. The original land grant comprised seventy five thousand acres of land, including all of present-day Torrance.

**Early 1900s:** Real estate developer Jared Sidney Torrance and other investors purchased part of Rancho San Pedro Land Grant for a new, planned community. Torrance was founded in October 1912 and formally incorporated in May 1921. With the discovery of oil in the 1920s Torrance was dotted with oil wells, including many on and near what is now Madrona Marsh. Many different oil companies successively owned this property, including Santa Fe Energy Corporation in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

**1972:** Madrona Wildlife Park Project proposal undertaken by City of Torrance at encouragement of State Senator Stevens.

**September 1973:** Friends of Madrona Marsh formed after meeting called by City to discuss community involvement in saving the wildlife area. In the next eight years over \$1.4 million was raised for the preservation of the Marsh; \$400,000 from a

State wetlands act and \$1.1 million from an environmental license plate grant.

**1981:** Torrance Investment Company (including owner Santa Fe Energy) announces plans to develop 182 acres, including 54 acres considered Madrona Marsh by FOMM (plan calls for only a 10-acre wetland area).

**February 1982:** City Council approves TIC development, Park Del Amo (with 10-acre marsh).

**May 1982:** Community-based coalition, including FOMM, files petition for referendum against Park Del Amo with 10,987 signatures (only 6,355 needed).

**June 1982:** City Council reverses itself and denies Park Del Amo project, stopping referendum action. Developer and community embark upon long period of negotiation and compromise.

**August 1983:** City Council approves revised plan saving 43 acres for preserve: 34.5 acres dedicated by TIC as part of development agreement and 8.5 acres purchased by City for \$1.4 million. Additional wrangling over wording of deed delays transfer two years.

**October 1986:** City of Torrance receives title to 43 acres!

**May 2003:** City receives additional 1.5 acres after oil recovery operations complete.

**July 19, 2008:** Chevron Oil donates 0.71 acre southwest corner for total of over 45 acres!

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## Did You Know?

The Friends of Madrona Marsh sponsor the Gift Shop at the Nature Center and all profits from the Center help to fund the Preserve and Nature Center.

The Center has many interesting and unusual gift items including jewelry, books, games, artwork, garden collector Tee-shirts, toys, etc.

Hours: Wednesday, Thursday and Friday: Open 12 noon – 4 p.m.; Saturdays and Sundays: Open 10 am – 2 p.m.

Do you need to visit the Gift Shop when it's closed? Call 310-320-8255 to make an appointment.

# Shirley's Turn

## In Memoriam

**John Hoffman** was Park Services Supervisor of the Preserve who worked with Walt Wright in restoring the Preserve beginning in 1989.

Marilyn Ryan, who was instrumental in the 1973 incorporation of Rancho Palos Verdes and became the city's first mayor, was also responsible for helping to obtain funds for the support of the Marsh.

As a State Assemblywoman, she was also instrumental in saving \$400,000 (which had been earmarked for Madrona Marsh) from being axed during a state budget crunch in the late 1970s.

This was immensely important seed money and served as a sign of project viability. This money was later combined with \$1.1 M from an environmental license plate grant and was used to purchase 8.5 acres of the Preserve (including the site where the Nature Center now stands).

**Richard Wolverton** was one, early on, who always responded for setting up tables for annual meeting events.

**Susie Jakosh** was an on-time dedicated Wednesday Weeder for years for whom two Elderberry trees were planted by weeders Ruth McConnell and Libby Helms.

Susie's brother Bob of Laguna and other brothers and sisters from Pennsylvania happened to be in town so they came to help with the planting. The ground was hard, even though there has been a lot of rain. Ron Melin helped, bringing shovels, pick, hose for water and directions.

Recently Ruth and Libby cleared around the trees, and they are looking good enough for a picture. Ask Ron which birds are especially fond of the berries. You can see these trees walking East on the trail along Plaza Del Amo with others that Ruth planted and waters.

The first ever Elderberries planted at the Preserve were from nine successful Fuel Depot cuttings. They were drowned out during a very wet year when water covered most of the land south and east of the oil wells. I am so grateful for all who have replaced this species over the years.

## California Native Plant Society Book Recommendation

'Tis the season for seeing dragonflies so I was hooked. I purchased a new book, *Dragonflies of North America: A Color and Learn Book with Activities* by Kathy Biggs and Tim Manolis, Azalea Creek Publishers. There are 43 species pictured in color. It has full-page, large-line drawings for the reader to color with descriptions of dragonflies' flying capabilities.

The details of their life cycle phases is especially informative. I wonder which ones can be seen at my granddaughter's school parking lot vernal pool. This pool is one location used by [www.kestreleucation.org](http://www.kestreleucation.org) in the Boston area. Her Second Grade Class were excited by this activity. One father arranged a trip for them to a water treatment plant where he works as microbiologist.

—Shirley Turner

## Eagle Scout Projects



On May 17th Jason Mendez of **Troop 55** installed a beautiful split-rail fence in the Water-wise Garden. The fence helps deter people (and pets) from cutting through the garden and stepping on plants. Jason and his crew from Troop 55 also constructed wood trellises to lend support for our native grapes and morning glories.

On June 8th Conner Gervais constructed two tables for the nursery and extended the irrigation to the tables on the south side of the nursery.

We are very grateful to the wonderful support we receive from the Scouts and their parents and friends. Preserve staff member Ron Melin has done a fine job of directing and coordinating these Eagle Scout projects.

**Madrona Marsh Preserve and Nature Center**  
**Schedule of Events**  
**July-October 2008**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		8:30 a.m.- Tour de'Torrance 10 am-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	10am-12 n-Habitat Restoration-Weeders 10 am-12 n- Junior Naturalist	10 a.m.- Tyke Hike		9 am- 2 noon Habitat Restoration 10 am-12 noon- "Butterfly Gardens"/Dr. Connie Vadheim/ Tracy Drake (Repeats Tuesday)
<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> <b>CLOSED</b>	9-11 am-Mornings on the Marsh 10 am-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders 6:30-8:30 pm -Butter- fly. . .Vadheim/Drake	8 a.m. Bird Walk /Bob Shanman 10 am-12 n-Habitat-Weeders 10 am-12 noon Junior Naturalist 7:15-9 pm-FOMM Board Meeting			9 am - 12 noon Habitat Restoration 10 am-12 noon-Annual Butterfly Count Class
<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> <b>CLOSED</b>	8:30 a.m.- Tour de'Torrance 10 am-12 n-Habitat Restoration-Weeders 7 p.m. Audubon Get-together	10-12 noon-Habitat Restoration-Weeders 10 am-12 noon Junior Naturalist 5:30-6:30 pm- MMF Meeting			9 am - 12 noon Habitat Restoration 10 am - Transfer Ceremony
<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> <b>CLOSED</b>	10 am-12 n-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	10-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders 10 am-12 noon Junior Naturalist		6:30- 8:30-pm- Reception- Emile Fiesler, Photography	All Day-Butterfly Count 9 am-12 n -Hab.Restoration 10 am-12 n- Nature Walk
10 am-12 noon- Nature Walk	<b>28</b> <b>CLOSED</b>	8:30 am- Tour de'Torrance 10am-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	10-12 n-Habitat Restoration-Weeders 10 am-12 noon- Junior Naturalist			

**JULY**

(For the very latest on events visit [www.friendsofmadronamarsh.com](http://www.friendsofmadronamarsh.com);  
 Also, see *Artists' Corner*, page 11.)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					<b>1</b>	8:45am-12n-Service.Learn. 8:45 am-12n-Hab. Restor. 8:45 am-12 n-Planning With a Wild Heart/Vadheim/Drake 10 am-12n-Local Native American Traditions . . . 6:30-8:30 pm- Night Hike
<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> <b>CLOSED</b>	8:30 am- Tour de'Torrance 10 am-12 n-Habitat Restoration-Weeders 6:30-8:30 pm- Planning With a Wild Heart/ Vadheim/Drake	10 am-12 n-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	10 am-Tyke Hike	<b>8</b>	8:45 am-12 n-High School Service Learning 8:45 am-12 n- Habitat Restoration 10 am-12 n-Bugs Kids Love
10 am-3 pm- Outdoor Painting /Ron Libbrecht 2 -4 pm- Second Sunday Science- Raptors	<b>11</b> <b>CLOSED</b>	9 am- Mornings on the Marsh 10 am-12 n-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	8 am- Bird Walk /Bob Shanman 10 am-12 n-Habitat Restoration-Weeders 7:15-9 pm- FOMM Board. Meeting		<b>15</b>	8:45 am-12 n-High School Service Learning 8:45 am-12 n- Habitat Restoration
<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> <b>CLOSED</b>	8:30 a.m.- Tour de'Torrance 10 am-12 n-Habitat Restoration-Weeders 2-4 pm-Einstein for Kids 7 pm- Audubon Mtg.	10 am-12 n-Habitat Restoration-Weeders 2-4 pm-Einstein for Kids 5:30-6:30 p.m.- MMF Board Meeting	2-4 pm- Einstein for Kids	<b>22</b>	8:45 am-12 n-High School Service Learning 8:45 am- 12 noon- Habitat Restoration 9 am-12 n-Nature Walk
10 am-12 n- Nature Walk	<b>25</b> <b>CLOSED</b>	10 am-12 n-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	10 am-12 n-Habitat Restoration-Weeders		<b>29</b>	8:45 am-12 n-High School Service Learning 8:45 am-12 noon- Habitat Restoration

**AUGUST**

Nature Center (310) 782-3989  
 Gift Shop (310) 320-8255

Brought to you by  
 Friends of Madrona Marsh

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<b>1</b> CLOSED	<b>2</b> 8:30 am- Tour de' Torrance 10 am-12 n -Habitat Restoration-Weeders	<b>3</b> 10 am-12 n-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	<b>4</b> 10 am- Tyke Hike	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> 8:45 am- 12 n-Hab. Restor. 8:45 am-12 n-H.S.Service Learn 10 am-12 n-The Children's Garden-Vadheim/Drake 7:30-9:30 pm-Star Party
<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> CLOSED	<b>9</b> 10 am-12 n -Habitat Restoration-Weeders 9 am-Mornings on the Marsh 6:30-7:30 pm-Children's Garden-Dr. Connie Vadheim/Tracy Drake	<b>10</b> 8 am- Bird Walk/Bob Shanman 10 am-12 n-Habitat Restoration-Weeders 7:15 - 9 pm- FOMM Board Meeting	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b> 6:30-8:30 pm- Reception- Ivett Garray, Drawings	<b>13</b> 8:45 am-12 n-High School Service Learning 8:45 am-12 noon- Habitat Restoration
<b>14</b> 2 -4 pm-Second Sunday Science- Spiders!	<b>15</b> CLOSED	<b>16</b> 8:30 am- Tour de' Torrance 10 am-12 n -Habitat Restoration-Weeders 7 pm- Audubon Get-together	<b>17</b> 10 am-12 n -Habitat Restoration-Weeders 5:30-6:30 pm- MMF- Board Mtg.	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> 8:45 am-12 n-High School Service Learning 8:45 am-12 noon Hab.Rest. 6:30-8:30 pm-Reception- Donna & Jess Morton & Alan Harper Photography
<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> CLOSED	<b>23</b> 10 am-12 n-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	<b>24</b> 10 am-12 n.-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> 8:45 am-12 n-High School Service Learning 8:45 am- 12 noon- Habitat Restoration 10 a.m.- Nature Walk
<b>28</b> 10 am- Nature Walk	<b>29</b> CLOSED	<b>30</b> 8:30 am- Tour de' Torrance 10 am-12 n-Hab.Restor.				

**SEPTEMBER**

(For the very latest on events visit [www.friendsofmadronamarsh.com](http://www.friendsofmadronamarsh.com)  
 Also, see Artists' Corner, page 11.)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			<b>1</b> 10 am-12 n-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	<b>2</b> 10 am- Tyke Hike	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> 8:45 am-12 n-High School Service Learning 8:45 am- 12 n-Habitat Restoration 6:30-8:30 pm-Night Hike
<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> CLOSED	<b>7</b> 8:30 am- Tour de' Torrance 10 am-12 n-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	<b>8</b> 8 am- Bird Walk/Bob Shanman 10 am-12 n-Habitat Restoration-Weeders 7:15-9 pm- FOMM Board Meeting	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> 8:45 am-12 noon- Habitat Restoration 8:45 am-12 n-High School Service Learning 2-4 pm-Exploring Universe/ Bob Carr 2-2:45 pm-Children's Stories
<b>12</b> 2-4 pm- Second Sunday Science- Fall Migra- tion/Ron Melin	<b>13</b> CLOSED	<b>14</b> 9 am-Mornings on the Marsh 10 am-12 n-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	<b>15</b> 10 am-12 n-Habitat Restoration-Weeders 5:30-6:30 p.m.- MMF Board Meeting	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> 8:45 am-12 noon- Habitat Restoration 9 am-3 pm-Flying Wild-A Celebration of Local Birds
<b>19</b> 12 n-3 pm-Writing Workshop/Beth Shibata	<b>20</b> CLOSED	<b>21</b> 8:30 am- Tour de' Torrance 10 am-12 n-Habitat Restoration-Weeders 7 p.m.-Audubon Mtg.	<b>22</b> 10 am-12 n-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> 6:30-8:30 pm- Reception- Joannie Spring, Photography	<b>25</b> 8:45 am- 12 noon- Habitat Restoration 10 am-12 n-Festival of Crafts 10 am- Nature Walk
<b>26</b> 10 a.m- Nature Walk	<b>27</b> CLOSED	<b>28</b> 10 am-12 n-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	<b>29</b> 10 am-12 n-Habitat Restoration-Weeders	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	

**OCTOBER**

# The Old House is Gone

*Note: If you didn't grow up in the South Bay you may enjoy this reminiscence by well-known local birder Dave Roelen, which first appeared in the **Daily Breeze**. If you did, you will definitely enjoy reliving it.*

The Leuzinger farm house rested on a slight rise with an unobstructed view to the south. Alongside the unpainted house sat a cab-less flatbed truck with large wooden spoke wheels that Old Man Leuzinger (as we called him) steered along neighboring streets.

We peddled our Schwinn west of the house early in the day for the marshy areas the house watched over. Less than a quarter-mile to the southwest was the corner of Aviation and El Segundo boulevards. The farm was behind us now as we pushed our way toward our destination, "Okefenokee," just beyond that intersection.

Okefenokee Swamp stretched seasonally south from El Segundo to almost Rosecrans Avenue and west from Aviation towards distant Sepulveda Boulevard. It was dry at different times of the year and we could walk throughout, but water and mud were more appealing.

Mucking beyond the reeds and nesting birds we chanted, "we've been walking for days, hours, years!" We didn't care that it made no sense, we were just walking in gooey, clingy mud and being kids. We had freedom! Freedom to experience unguided, unsupervised fun.

It really rained, torrential rain, in the late 1940s and early 1950s (and froze, too). The vernal marshes (swamps to us) filled and spread wide following the contours of the dark adobe soil. And with the water came teeming spring life as frogs and toads propagated and millions of tadpoles, black and green, settled in every large puddle. Life sprang out all around filling our curious and excited eyes. The fresh water marsh was full of reeds with nesting red-winged blackbirds, their sound forever imprinted in my brain.

Slogging knee deep through the marsh, pushing aside tall reeds while peering into cup-shaped nests, some holding bluish eggs and others gape-mouthed pinkish babies, we became childhood explorers. Birds were plentiful and we learned the names for the marsh hawk with its tilting flight, sparrow hawks, burrowing owls, horned larks and killdeer. Frogs, toads, lizards, snakes, jack rabbits and cottontails were common and just the thing for expanding our knowledge of our Okefenokee.

The muddy conditions were perfect for explor-

ers and wanderers like us. Perfect also for rafting! We would pole ourselves along the variably deep waters on pieced together rafts of collected wood, which barely floated.

We'd paddle into concrete tunnels under the east-west railroad tracks and when a train rolled by it was exciting and dangerous to us. The rumble of the huge diesel engine and trailing cars reverberating in the circular enclosure was what we anticipated, but only rarely timed precisely.

The 1950s dawned on a good life for carefree kids out for adventure. This was when kids could be Huck Finn for a day, and we had many days like that.

Across from Wiseburn School (where I went to kindergarten) the Okefenokee changed as the months moved past. During dry periods other mysteries awaited our childhood explorations. Lifting prickly tumbleweeds would cause a mad scurrying of field mice as they tried to hide from sunlight and us. We learned the narrow bars of a cage were not narrow enough and the handfuls of mice we put inside, would pause, and then quickly make their easy escape.

Overturning abandoned planks or refuse heaps in search of king and gopher snakes might uncover a bumble bee hive, resulting in a frantic scurry of kids. Those days were filled with fun and excitement and were long but went amazingly fast.

At day's end we'd leisurely cross the bean fields, sometimes stopping for a refreshing drink from the gushing well pipe at the Japanese farmer's reservoir. The fresh water out of the earth cooled us on many a day. Refreshed, but hungry, dirty and tired, we unconcerned scruffy kids meandered home.

The lateness of day was not a thought as safety just wasn't an issue. We could be gone all day, as we commonly were, and no one worried. Sunrise to sunset we'd spend walking or on bicycle adventures. Gone all day and our parents had no fear or need for concern.

The old Leuzinger farm house is gone now and the curtained windows no longer look out over the scrubby fields and lush marsh. Those unfenced playgrounds now rest under tons of unforgiving concrete and time.

Gone are the hawks, owls, gophers, horned toads and wildflowers. Gone, too, are the carefree days and freedoms of youth, past and present. No longer can unsupervised kids joyfully explore their own Okefenokee and imagine. Those days are gone. Just gone.

—Dave Roelen

# Birds, Butterflies and Dragonflies of the Preserve

June 2008

This list was compiled by David Moody, Tracy Drake, and Ron Melin.

## Birds

<b>Mallard</b>	<b>Mourning Dove</b>	Warbling Vireo	Wilson's Warbler
Blue-winged Teal	Mitred Parakeet	Western Scrub-Jay	California Towhee
Pied-billed Grebe	Chimney Swift	American Crow	Blue Grosbeak
Great Egret	White-throated Swift	<b>Common Raven</b>	Red-winged Blackbird
Great Blue Heron	Black-chinned Hummingbird	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	Brown-headed Cowbird
Snowy Egret	<b>Anna's Hummingbird</b>	Cliff Swallow	Hooded Oriole
Black-crowned Night Heron	Allen's Hummingbird	Barn Swallow	Bullock's Oriole
Cooper's Hawk	Downy Woodpecker	<b>Bushtit</b>	House Finch
Red-shouldered Hawk	Western Wood Peewee	Marsh Wren	Lesser Goldfinch
Red-tailed Hawk	Pacific-slope Flycatcher	Northern Mockingbird	<b>American Goldfinch</b>
American Coot	Black Phoebe	European Starling	House Sparrow
California Gull	<b>Say's Phoebe</b>	Orange-crowned Warbler	Orange Bishop
Western Gull	Ash-throated Flycatcher	Yellow Warbler	Rock Pigeon
Cassin's Kingbird	Common Yellowthroat		

**BOLD = Breeding**  
*Italics = rare species at Madrona*

## Butterflies

Monarch	Common Buckeye	Checkered White	Umber Skipper
Gulf Fritillary	Western Tiger Swallowtail	Gray Hairstreak	Sandhill Skipper
Mourning Cloak	Giant Swallowtail	Western Pygmy Blue	Eufala Skipper
Painted Lady	Dainty Sulfur	Marine Blue	Fiery Skipper
West Coast Lady	Orange Sulfur	Acmon Blue	Funereal Duskywing

## Dragonflies

Familiar Bluet	Variegated Meadowhawk
Pacific Forktail	Mexican Amberwing (first ever female!)
Black-fronted Forktail	Blue Dasher
Common Green-eyed Darner	Flame Skimmer
Blue-eyed Darner	Wandering Glider

# South Bay Native Plant Corner

—Dr. Connie Vadheim, CSUDH



Narrow-leaf Willow  
*Salix exigua*

Summertime means warm days and butterflies. Butterfly habitats can be as large as the Preserve and as small as your own yard. Butterflies need a source of water, perching places, and food for adult butterflies and for larva (caterpillars). Include larval food plants in your garden and the butterflies will come! Some of the best plants for attracting larger butterflies, including Swallowtails, are our native willows.

Narrow-leaf Willow (*Salix exigua*) is our smallest native willow. At 6-15 feet tall, it is a shrub-like willow with long, narrow leaves and gray-green color. Like bamboos (for which this willow is a good substitute) Narrow-leaf Willow spreads via underground stems, so it is best planted in a contained area and even does well in large pots and planters. Like all willows, it is a good larval food source for Lorquin's Admiral, Mourning Cloak and Western Tiger Swallowtail butterflies. Other butterflies and birds will use it as a perching, shelter and nesting site.

Like all willows, *Salix exigua* blooms in the spring. The species is dioecious (separate male & female plants). The flowers are small, borne on long flowering branches (catkins). The flowers attract native pollinators.

Narrow-leaf Willow requires full sun to part shade. It grows in any soil type, from clays to sandy soils and does fine with an organic mulch to keep roots cool.

Narrow-leaf Willow is quite adaptable in terms of its water needs. You should water it regularly until it's established; it then does fine with regular to occasional water. If grown in a pot, water regularly during warm weather. Plant away from water/sewage pipes as roots will invade.



To maintain a healthy plant, cut back old stems to near the ground every 3-4 years after the leaves drop in fall. Alternatively, you can cut back just the oldest stems (about 1/4 of stems) each year. Other than that, this is an easy, fairly pest-free plant. Just plant it in a contained place and you'll have a lovely addition to your habitat garden. You can even use young stems for basket-making.

*Learn more about local native plants at our "Out of the Wilds and into Your Garden" series on the first Saturday of each month.*

*Plant Information Sheets and Plant Lists are also available at the Nature Center.*

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## 2008 Donations—\$100 or more

The Friends of Madrona Marsh would like to say a special 'Thank You' to the donors below, all of whom gave us \$100 or more.

April 1	Irma Ruiz	\$100
April 1	Dorothy Vinter	\$100
April 20	Cheryl Martin	\$110
May 15	San Pedro Garden Club	\$100
June 16	Betty-Jo Ravitz	\$100
June 15	David Moody	\$200

—Ellen Peterson, Treasurer

# 'Out of the Wilds' Native Plant Gardening Class

If you like gardening and native plants you won't want to miss these up-coming classes. All classes are held in the Nature Center from 10 a.m. to noon on the first Saturday of the month. The classes repeat the following Tuesday from 6:30-8 p.m.



## Introduction to Environmental Restoration Class

Interested in learning more about environmental restoration? Considering a career in restoration? Or do you just want to learn how to provide native habitat in your own yard? Consider attending the college-level 'Introduction to Environmental Restoration' class given at the Nature Center.

Classes are held on Tuesdays from 4-6 p.m. The course begins on September 9 and runs through December 9. You can take the class for credit (at either El Camino College or CSU Dominguez Hills) or just attend class sessions for free. Auditors who complete all course requirements will receive a certificate of course completion.

Classes are taught by local experts and focus on the unique aspects of South Bay natural history. The course includes lectures and hands-on experiences as well as informative readings.

Call or drop by the Nature Center for a flyer with more details about how you can participate in this class.

## That's Nature!



The red willow along Sepulveda near Madrona Avenue suffered breakage of a major trunk recently. But Manager and Naturalist Tracy Drake says there is nothing wrong with the tree, and it will recover; "that's what willows do". Observant visitors to Madrona Marsh have seen that willows have the ability to grow new trees directly from portions of broken limbs and trunks.

## Artists' Corner

Works of local artists and photographers inspired by the beauty of the Madrona Marsh are regularly on display at the Nature Center. Everyone is invited to attend each artist's reception where the artist talks about his/her work or gives a demonstration. Snacks and beverages are included.

Running Through August 23 - Emile Fiesler, Photography Exhibit: *An intimate look at the Madrona Marsh Preserve*. Artists' Reception: July 25, 6-8 p.m.

August 26-October 11 - Ivett Garray, An Exhibit of Drawings: *Winged Whimsey: Avian Visitor's of Madrona Marsh*. Artists' Reception: September 12- 6:30-8:30 p.m.

September 20, 6-8 p.m. - Special Artists' Reception: *Photographs Showing Relationship of Baja California to Local Vernal Pools*. Coordinated by **Donna Morton**; photographs also by **Jess Morton** and **Alan Harper**

October 14-November 29 - Joannie Spring, A Photography Exhibit: *Reflections*. Artists' Reception: October 24, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

# Friends of Madrona Marsh

a non-profit organization est. 1972

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