

Marsh Mailing

Madrona Marsh Preserve and Nature Center

Marsh Mailing is also available in full color at www.friendsofmadronamarsh.com

Madrona Marsh's Marvelous Mural

Bill Arrowsmith, Past President



Estelle DeRidder describes her technique to tour group.

If you haven't visited the Nature Center classroom for a meeting or class lately, you have a major surprise in store for you—actually two. First, as reported earlier, Torrance

an artist reception, let me attempt to introduce you. Estelle is a respected member of the Botanical Artists Guild of America. Her artwork is not only beautiful, it is scientifically accurate, whether it's a Fairy Duster plant or a Pygmy Blue butterfly. After moving to Torrance from Denver to be with her grandchildren, Estelle discovered the flora and fauna at Madrona Marsh and she has been an active contributor ever since. She helped us apply for, and receive, a generous grant from the American Society of Botanical Artists. Under this grant Estelle is drawing accurate and attractive illustrations of the flora of Madrona Marsh,

received a grant from Proposition 84 which allowed us to pursue several improvements; one of those was to install windows in the east wall of the classroom, to allow wildlife viewing and also to make the room feel more a part of the native plant garden just outside. We also added a beautiful infinity fountain bird bath just outside one of the new windows.

After the windows had been installed, Glenda Chiang, who acted as project manager for the Prop 84 modifications, discussed an additional idea with artist Estelle DeRidder. After the construction, the walls definitely needed repainting. Glenda's suggestion was to paint a wall mural of the very native plants that were now visible through the windows; in effect making the whole east wall one continuum for our visitors. Estelle embraced the idea at once, and offered to paint the mural. After some careful planning, she began work on the mural in late June. The rest of the story is history in the making.

If you haven't been fortunate enough to meet Estelle at one of her classes on making (strikingly beautiful) ornaments or at

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Thank you to Celestron for providing special Glasses for watching the Solar Eclipse. Cindy Reid, Lore Schmidgall and Bobbie Snyder are shown here with their Friday Fun class, practicing safe watching after learning about what was going to happen during the eclipse. Photo courtesy of Suzan Hubert.

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which will be used as educational material for all ages of Marsh visitors.



An agave cactus sits between an Indian Mallow and a milkweed plant in Estelle's mural, still under construction

It is fascinating to stop by the Nature Center and check the latest progress of her mural. Although Estelle and her family no longer live in Torrance, she now drives 35 miles each way from La Crescenta to work on it; and if she can't borrow a car, she takes three buses to get to Torrance. What dedication!

Estelle carefully plans each section of the mural, each plant that will be in that section and its proper perspective and sketches it in a planning notebook. Then she blocks it in roughly on the classroom wall, sometimes taping up a photo or just a tag with the scientific plant name written on it. She continues blocking in more and more detail until most of us would consider it done; ah, but not to her satisfaction. In fact, only a few small areas of the mural, which now covers most of the east wall and a portion of the south wall, are 'complete', including one prickly pear cactus leaf, complete with needles, and at least one tiny Acmon Blue butterfly, accurate down to the number of spots on her wing.

If you have access to a computer, Google or search for 'Estelle DeRidder'. Then click on a few of the first ten or so sites; for example, one labeled <https://bagsblog.com/tag/estelle-deridder/>, which describes Estelle's work on the Madrona Marsh Mural, with better photos than we can provide here. But any way you look at it, Estelle's latest artistic contribution to Madrona Marsh is already poised to be a classic, and will attract visitors to our Preserve on its own. Be sure to stop by soon, so you can have the fun of tracking the progress of her marvelous mural through its final stages.

—Bill Arrowsmith

Alternatives to Plastic Water Bottles

Reprinted from the *Arlington Elementary School Area Newsletter*

You've likely heard that bottled water has major environmental consequences, but how bad is the problem? Here are a few facts from thewaterproject.org that illustrate the severity of the situation:

- Approximately 8 percent of single-use water bottles in the U.S. become litter, and moreover, one bottle takes more than 1,000 years to bio-degrade.
- U.S. landfills have two million tons of discarded water bottles in them.
- It takes three liters of water to package one liter of bottled water.
- In response to the bottled water problem, some cities and businesses have banned them, but what can we do?
 - Skip the single-use water bottle and invest in a reusable water bottle. If you frequently forget it, buy multiples to keep in vehicles, the office and your gym bag.
 - Drink tap water. Several studies have been done to show municipal tap water is usually just as safe as bottled water.
 - Refrigerate water. Cooling tap water helps remove the chlorine taste many people feel is in tap water. Inexpensive filters, like the Brita filter also help.

Every little bit we do to avoid single-use plastic helps the environment.

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 Editorial Advisor, Bill Arrowsmith, FrاندBill@att.net or Editor, Diane Gonsalves at gonwild2@yahoo.com or may be dropped off or mailed to the Nature Center, P.O. Box 5078, Torrance, CA 90510.

Good Squirrel, Bad Squirrel

by Vincent Lloyd

You either love them or you hate them. Children love the squirrels in the park, but adults tend to feel differently if they start eating the avocados in the back yard. At El Camino College where I teach, they seem to exist in some parallel universe: they pay no attention to people and people pay no attention to them, although they may be only a few feet apart.

What you may not realize is that not all squirrels are alike. Of the 285 species of squirrels in the world, three are found on the southern California coast: the Western Gray Squirrel, the Fox Squirrel, and the California Ground Squirrel. (In scattered locations you may also encounter the Eastern Gray Squirrel, introduced from eastern North America.)



Western Gray Squirrel

The Western Gray Squirrel and the California Ground Squirrel range along the Pacific coast from northern Baja California to the Columbia River and into Washington. The native range of the Fox Squirrel is similar to that of the Eastern Gray Squirrel—North America east of the Great Plains. The Fox Squirrel, even more so than the Eastern Gray Squirrel, has been widely introduced throughout the West. Legend has it that the Fox Squirrel was brought to Los Angeles in 1904 at what is now the Veteran's Hospital in west Los Angeles in order to entertain veterans of the Spanish-American War who remembered the squirrels from their home in Louisiana. Whatever the precise truth of this story, the Fox Squirrel has probably been introduced many times in many places and has become prevalent in the cities.

The Western Gray Squirrel is a tree squirrel. As advertised, it is gray above; its underside is white, and it has a big bushy tail. The Fox Squirrel is also a tree squirrel with a big bushy tail, but is reddish brown in color. Tree squirrels can come down to the ground, but are at home in the trees where they make large nests out of twigs.

If you see a squirrel in a tree, it's probably not the California Ground Squirrel; they nest in burrows they dig themselves. Their fur is mottled in color; you may notice a dark band going down the nape and spreading out onto the back. Their tail is smaller and not so bushy.



California Ground Squirrel

Western Gray Squirrels eat mainly nuts, especially acorns, so they love oak woods. Fox Squirrels are said to eat almost anything: nuts, buds, insects, bird eggs, fruit and corn. This very morning I saw a Fox Squirrel in my yard chomping merrily on a Mockingbird tail. I can only imagine what happened to the rest of the Mockingbird. California Ground Squirrels eat seeds, insects, and fruit. In the north, they will hibernate during the winter, but locally they are active year-round. They probably once lived at the Marsh; now they can be seen in Harbor Park and in Palos Verdes.

Squirrels are rodents of the family Sciuridae. The word "squirrel" can be traced back through French and Latin to the Greek word *skiaouros*, meaning "shadow tail." Unlike most rodents, members of the squirrel family

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“Squirrels” continued from page 3.

(which includes tree squirrels, ground squirrels, chipmunks, marmots, woodchucks, flying squirrels, and prairie dogs) are active during the day, making them easier to observe—or complain about—than most rodents.



Fox Squirrel

Over the last century, a war has been going on between the two tree squirrels, the native Western Gray Squirrel and the Fox Squirrel. The Fox Squirrel is winning. Its native habitat is open woodland with little understory. It seems to view cities as open woodlands. The Western Gray Squirrel has been forced to retreat from the lowlands and is now mainly found in the hills and mountains. It's hard to say what makes the Fox Squirrel so successful. Some say it's because its diet is so adaptable. Others say it's because it reproduces more quickly.

Based on the two Fox Squirrels I saw this morning tussling over a peanut, I'm guessing they are simply more aggressive. (The Eastern Gray Squirrel, by the way, is holding its own against the Fox Squirrel. On the contrary, its range is expanding—it has been introduced into many places worldwide, including Britain, where it has largely displaced the native Red Squirrel.) I suppose you could say in defense of the Fox Squirrel that, although it is not native to California,

it's still an American species, unlike so many other invaders. But it's hard to not feel a pang of regret for the elegant and beautiful Western Gray Squirrel. I hope they hold their ground in the hills.

If you want to support the Western Gray Squirrel, consider participating in the Southern California Squirrel survey, sponsored by the Los Angeles Natural History Museum. They are collecting squirrel sightings to monitor the Western Grays. All you have to do is to take a photograph and submit it on-line. More information can be found on the Natural History Museum website (nhm.org). Click on "Citizen Science" under the "Activities and Programs" menu; then select "Southern California Squirrel Survey".

Who knew there was so much to squirrels?—Vincent Lloyd

Photo credits: Fox squirrel: By Davefoc - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6988981>

**Donations of \$100 or more
Fall 2017**

July	Ted Kotzin	\$100.00
July	Barbara and James Whiteman	\$100.00
July	Dale Lincoln	\$500.00
July	Al & Barbara	\$100.00
August	Bill & Virginia Hilker	\$100.00
August	Clark Mitchell	171.50
August	Launch Preschool Torrance Unified	\$100.00
August	Ruth Vogel	\$100.00

Artist's Corner

Tuesday, October 24 - Friday, December 1 - Torrance Artists Guild presents Various Mediums. Artists Reception - Saturday, October 28 from 1 - 3 p.m.

Tuesday, December 5 - Friday, January 12.
An Exhibit of Paintings by Suzanne Gibson. Artist's reception - Saturday, December 16 from 1 - 3 p.m.

The Art of Herding Cats

Suzan Hubert, President

Have you ever tried to organize three cats into a family photograph? I have, and it's all a blur. Cats have their own agendas, not unlike a two-year-old child. Can very young children—two-year-olds, infants, toddlers, or preschoolers—benefit from a walk on the Preserve? We think that's the very best time to begin an appreciation for nature; and perhaps awaken a lifelong interest in science or ecology.

This is why we offer our monthly Tyke Hikes. These are docent led tours specifically designed for very young children. On the first Thursday of the month, Bobbie Snyder leads tours for infants, toddlers and preschoolers. Some say, "That must be like herding cats!" Actually, anyone who has cared for several young children—or tried to get a few cats to sit for a photo—might well agree with that thought. But I interviewed Bobbie and she would beg to differ.

She has led tours for all different sized groups of little ones through the Preserve, and she shared some excellent tips, if you're up to the unique challenge of bringing your own young children or grandchildren to the Preserve for a walk. "First and foremost," said Bobbie, "is following the child's interest and abilities. You might think a one-hour walk is fine but they have short legs and many are even new to walking. So twenty minutes might be a good time to stop and, umm, inspect insects or leaves.

"Second, follow and guide the child's interest. Stop and just watch the Harvester Ants. Children learn early to stomp on anything that moves. Teach them differently; teach them to observe, and encourage them to verbalize what they see. The ants you observe around a hole spent a lot of time building a nest or home underground. They are also protecting that home.

"The child also has a home; it's a bit different from an ant nest, but a home is a home. Ask the child, 'You wouldn't want anyone stomping on you, or your home, would you?' This is a very early learning opportunity about respecting nature and accepting differences."

Bobbie also teaches vocabulary development. Nothing fancy, just some new words. Take leaves, for example; not a particularly interesting word for adults but it may

be new to a child. And there are many different types of leaves. Some are big and fuzzy underneath like the Sycamore leaves, others are tiny and smooth. All those words; big, small, smooth, fuzzy may also be new and may help the child learn comparisons and descriptions.

Research demonstrated that the larger a child's vocabulary, the greater their success in school. At the very least a good vocabulary helps them communicate with the kindergarten teacher. Children are small and they are close to the ground, so stop with them and look at the tracks along the paths. What made those tracks? A shoe? Or a different kind of foot? If not a shoe, what could have made them? Maybe the foot of an opossum, or a raccoon; or perhaps a skunk? Where are those animals now? They are all sleeping. Some animals sleep all day and stay awake at night. Therein lies a new word opportunity: these animals are nocturnal; most people are diurnal, sleeping at night and staying awake during the day. *(Editor's note: at least after we've had that first cup of coffee.)*

When Bobbie leads a Tyke Hike she doesn't worry about walking the entire Preserve. She watches for interest levels. When children start to complain or fuss she lets the parent know it's fine to leave the tour, at least for a short time. It can be best to come and walk the Preserve more often for shorter periods of time, rather than one long walk.

Bobbie said ducklings are always a high point for spring tours. The ducklings are children, after all, and just like human children, they follow their Mom to learn about living.

Bobbie can be found on the Preserve the first Thursday of the month at 10 a.m., 'herding cats' or beginning the education of our next Einstein. We have faith in the latter, and research in early childhood development is backing us up.

See you on the Preserve, perhaps herding a toddler or two!



Madrona Marsh Preserve and Nature Center*

Schedule of Events for October 2017 through January 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u> CLOSED	<u>3</u> 8:30 am-Tour d'Torrance	<u>4</u> Babcock, Drake "Cat & Crows" Exhibit continues***	<u>5</u> 10 am-Tyke Hike-donation 10:30 Prop.Soc.	<u>6</u> 10 am--12 n-Friday Fun-donation**	<u>7</u> 8:45 am-12 n-Hab.Restor.& Student.Service 10am-Turtle/Tortoise Day Dr. Vadheim-no class
<u>8</u>	<u>9</u> CLOSED	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u> 8 am-Bird Walk/ Bob Shanman 6:30-8:30 pm-FOMM Board Meeting	<u>12</u> 10:30 Prop.Soc. 1pm- Naturalist Dr.Vadheim-no class	<u>13</u> 10 am--12 n-Friday Fun-donation**	<u>14</u> 8:45 am-12 n-Hab.Restor.& Student.Service 7-9 pm-Night Hike4
<u>15</u>	<u>16</u> CLOSED	<u>17</u> 8:30 am-Tour d'Torrance 7 pm-Audubon Mtg.	<u>18</u>	<u>19</u> 10:30-12:30-Prop. Society	<u>20</u> 10 am--12n-Friday Fun-donation** Babcock/Drake Exhibit Ends***	<u>21</u> 8:45 am-12 n-Hab. 9am-H.B.Nature Walk 1-pm-SpectacularSpiders\$ 1:30-pm-Nature's Origami
<u>22</u>	<u>23</u> CLOSED	<u>24</u> 10am-Home School Nature Class/Reid-\$ Art Guild Exhibit begins***	<u>25</u> 10am-Home School Nature Class/Reid-\$	<u>26</u> 8:45 am- NatureJournal 10:30-12:30-Prop. Society	<u>27</u> 10 am-Friday Fun-donation**	<u>28</u> 8:30 am-Bird Walk 8:30am-Make a Difference 8:45 am-12 n-Hab.Restor. 10 am - Nature Walk 1pm-Art Guild Recept*** 7-9pm-Star Party
<u>29</u> 10-NatureWalk	<u>30</u> CLOSED	<u>31</u> 8:30 am-Tour d'Torrance				

OCTOBER

All activities and classes meet at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center, located at 3201 Plaza del Amo (between Maple and Madrona) on the north side of the street. **Reservations are required for Friday Fun. *See Artists Corner, page 4. For latest event information, see our newly upgraded website, www.friendsofmadronamarsh.com.*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			<u>1</u>	<u>2</u> 10 am-Tyke Hike- 10:30-Prop. Soc.	<u>3</u> 10 am--12 n-Friday Fun-donation**	<u>4</u> 8:45 am-12 n-Hab.Restor. 10am-"Crawly Critters" Dr.Vadheim 6:30pm-Night Hike
<u>5</u>	<u>6</u> CLOSED	<u>7</u> 8:30 am-Tour d'Torrance	<u>8</u> 8 am-Bird Walk/ Bob Shanman 6:30-8:30 pm-FOMM Board Meeting	<u>9</u> 10:30 a.m.- Prop.Society 1pm- Naturalist 6:30pm-Dr.Vadheim	<u>10</u> 10 am--12 n-Friday Fun-donation**	<u>11</u> 8:45am-12 n-Hab.Restor. Student.Service 1-3 pm-Local Rocks & Mineral Show
<u>12</u> 1-3pm-Music at Madrona-free	<u>13</u> CLOSED	<u>14</u> 7 pm-Audubon Mtg.	<u>15</u>	<u>16</u> 10:30-12:30-Propagation Society	<u>17</u> 10 am--12n-Friday Fun-donation**	<u>18</u> 8:45 am-12 n-Hab.Res... 9 am-H.B.Nature Walk
<u>19</u>	<u>20</u> CLOSED	<u>21</u> 8:30 am-Tour d'Torrance	<u>22</u>	<u>23</u> 10:30-12:30-Prop. Society	<u>24</u> 10 am--12 n-Friday Fun-donation**	<u>25</u> 8:30 am-Bird Walk 8:45 am-Hab.Restor. Student.Service 10 am-Nature Walk 7pm-Star Party
<u>26</u> 10 am-Nature Walk	<u>27</u> CLOSED	<u>28</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>30</u>		

NOVEMBER

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					10 am--12 n- ¹ Friday Fun- donation** Art Guild Exhibit Ends***	8:45 am-12 n-Hab.Restor. ² & Student.Service 10am-Dr.Vadheim-Larry Abrams
³	⁴ CLOSED	⁵ 8:30 am-Tour d' Torrance Gibson Exhibit Begins***	⁶ 10-10:30am- Senior Stroll	⁷ 10 am-Tyke Hike- donation 10:30 Prop.Soc. 6:30-Dr.Vadheim	⁸ 10 am--12 n- Friday Fun- donation**	⁹ 8:45 am-12 n-Hab.Restor. & Student.Service 2-4pm-Holiday Vinegars-\$
¹⁰	¹¹ CLOSED	¹²	¹³ 8 am-Bird Walk/ Bob Shanman 6:30-8:30 pm-FOMM Board Meeting	¹⁴ 1pm- Naturalists 10:30-12:30- Prop. Society	¹⁵ 10 am--12n- Friday Fun- donation**	¹⁶ 8:45 am-12 n-Hab.Restor. & Student.Service 9 am-H.B.Nature Walk 10am-WreathMaking\$ 1 pm-Gibson Recept.*** 1-Nat. Origami
¹⁷	¹⁸ CLOSED	¹⁹ 8:30 am-Tour d' Torrance 7 pm-Audubon Mtg	²⁰	²¹ 10:30-12:30- Propagation Society	²² 10 am--12 n- Friday Fun- donation**	²³ 8:30 am-Bird Walk 8:45 am-12 n-Hab.Restor. 10 am-Nature Walk
10 am- ²⁴ Nature Walk	²⁵ CLOSED	²⁶ 10 am-Home School Nature Class/Reid-\$	²⁷ 10 am-Home School Nature Class/Reid-\$	²⁸ 9am- NatureJournal. 10:30-12:30- Prop.Soc.	²⁹ 10 am--12 n- Friday Fun- donation**	³⁰ 8:45 am-12 n-Hab. Re- stor. & Student Service
³¹						

DECEMBER

All activities and classes meet at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center, located at 3201 Plaza del Amo (between Maple and Madrona) on the north side of the street. **Reservations are required for Friday Fun. *See Artists Corner, page 4. For latest event information, see our newly upgraded website, www.friendsofmadronamarsh.com.*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	¹ CLOSED	² 8:30 am-Tour d'Torrance	³	⁴ 10 am-Tyke Hike -donation 10:30 Prop.Soc.	⁵ 10 am--12 n- Friday Fun- donation**	⁶ 8:45 am-12 n-Hab.Restor. & Student.Service Dr. Vadheim-TBA
⁷	⁸ CLOSED	⁹	¹⁰ 8 am-Bird Walk/ Bob Shanman 6:30-8:30 pm-FOMM Board Meeting	¹¹ 10:30 Prop.Soc. 1pm- Naturalist 6:30Dr.Vadheim -TBA	¹² 10 am--12 n- Friday Fun- donation** Gibson Exhibit Ends***	¹³ 8:45 am-12 n-Hab.Restor. & Student.Service 6:30 pm-Night Hike
¹⁴	¹⁵ CLOSED	¹⁶ 8:30 am-Tour d'Torrance 7 pm-Audubon Mtg.	¹⁷	¹⁸ 10:30-12:30- Prop. Society	¹⁹ 10 am--12n- Friday Fun- donation**	²⁰ 8:45 am-12 n-Hab. 9am-H.B.Nature Walk 7pm-Star Party
²¹	²² CLOSED	²³ 10am-Home School Nature Class/Reid-\$	²⁴ 10am-Home School Nature Class/Reid-\$	²⁵ 9am- NatureJournal 10:30-12:30- Prop. Society	²⁶ 10 am-Friday Fun- donation**	²⁷ 8:30 am-Bird Walk 8:45 am-12 n-Hab.Restor. 10 am - Nature Walk 2-4pm-Native Bees
²⁸ 10-NatureWalk	²⁹ CLOSED	³⁰ 8:30 am-Tour d'Torrance				

JANUARY

Sightings at Madrona Marsh

Birds:			
Canada Goose	Downy Woodpecker	<i>Phainopepla</i>	California Towhee
Mallard	American Kestrel	<i>Ovenbird</i>	<i>Western Tanager</i>
Double-crested Cormoran	<i>Rose-ringed Parakeet</i>	<i>Black-and-white Warbler</i>	Black-headed Grosbeak
Great Egret	Olive-sided Flycatcher	Orange-crowned Warbler	<i>Blue Grosbeak</i>
Snowy Egret	Western Wood-Pewee	<i>MacGillivray's Warbler</i>	Lazuli Bunting
Green Heron	<i>Willow Flycatcher</i>	Common Yellowthroat	Yellow-headed Blackbird
Cooper's Hawk	Pacific-Slope Flycatcher	<i>American Redstart</i>	Western Meadowlark
Red-shouldered Hawk	Black Phoebe	<i>Magnolia Warbler</i>	Hooded Oriole
Red-tailed Hawk	Say's Phoebe	Yellow Warbler	Red-winged Blackbird
Sora	Cassin's Kingbird	Yellow-rumped Warbler	Brown-headed Cowbird
American Coot	Western Kingbird	Black-throated Gray Warbler	House Finch
Ring-billed Gull	Hutton's Vireo	Townsend's Warbler	European Goldfinch
Western Gull	Warbling Vireo	Wilson's Warbler	Lesser Goldfinch
California Gull	California Scrub-jay	Chipping Sparrow	American Godfinch
Caspian Tern	American Crow	<i>Clay-colored Sparrow</i>	House Sparrow
Rock Pigeon	Common Raven	<i>Brewer's Sparrow</i>	Northern Red Bishop
Eurasian Collared-Dove	Barn Swallow	Fox Sparrow	Scaly-breasted Munia
<i>White-winged Dove</i>	Bushtit	Dark-eyed Junco	
Mourning Dove	House Wren	White-crowned Sparrow	Bold = bred this year
<i>Vaux's Swift</i>	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	<i>Vesper Sparrow</i>	during breeding season -
Anna's Hummingbird	Western Bluebird	Savannah Sparrow	Spring, Summer, Fall
Allen's Hummingbird	Northern Mockingbird	Song Sparrow	
Belted Kingfisher	European Starling	Lincoln's Sparrow	<i>Italics = Rare sighting for this time of year</i>
Butterflies:			
Monarch	Giant Swallowtail	Marine Blue	Sandhill Skipper
Gulf Fritillary	Cabbage White	Acmon Blue	Funereal Duskywing
Painted Lady	Cloudless Sulphur	Umber Skipper	Common Checkered Skipper
American Lady	Gray Hairstreak*	Eufala Skipper	
West Coast Lady	Western Pygmy Blue	Fiery Skipper	* = Abundant in September
Dragonflies:			
Common Green Darner	Flame Skimmer	<i>Red Saddlebags</i>	Blue Dasher
Blue-eyed Darner	Wandering Glider	Black Saddlebags	

The species listed above were collected by our bird survey crew, through generous donations of their time. These include Mark Rubke, Tracy Drake, Dinuk Magamma, Tommye Hite, Manuel and Alejandra Duran, Jeanne Bellemin, Vince Lloyd, Tony Strangarity, and David Moody. Of special note this September, migrating wood warblers have been unusually abundant locally.

Ten Year Old Display Gets New Life

Bill Arrowsmith, Past President

It's a bit hard to believe, but as of this October, 2017, the "new" taxidermy display cases in the Nature Center Exhibit Hall are TEN YEARS OLD!

To review what happened, starting in 2006: The Friends had started a fairly nice collection of taxidermy representing the birds and a few other animals that are found on the Preserve. As we tell our young visitors, we don't kill animals to get the specimens in our displays, but all animals die sooner or later, and if a bird or skunk or opossum is found soon after it dies, it can be wrapped in plastic and placed in a freezer like the one in our curation lab, then later given to a taxidermist—a person expert at carefully removing the skin from the animal, then treating it with chemicals to keep the skin and feathers or fur preserved, so they look and feel just as they did when the animal was alive.

Then these bird or animal pelts can either be kept as is, for study skins, or they can be placed by the taxidermist on an animal or bird mannequin, so that they now also attain the same shape as when they covered a live animal. A good taxidermist also becomes familiar with each of his or her animal subjects, studying its habits so he knows exactly what it looks like when it perches, or sits, or flies or paddles.

We were extremely fortunate to have an award-winning taxidermist doing our work: Igor Caragodin, who at that time lived in Long Beach, had done many of our critters up to that point. Igor has entered taxidermy competitions at the national and even international level, and has won many accolades. The Great Horned Owl in Case 5 of our Exhibit Hall, for example, won first prize one year at the national level.

But in 2006, the only cases we had in which to display our taxidermy were boringly plain: metal frames with glass fronts and sides and white backs and shelves. The cases were placed against walls facing the atrium. And the birds were simply placed on the shelves beside each other. At best we might have all the raptors in one case and smaller birds in another. Larger animals, like foxes and raccoons, were placed on high shelves in the classroom. Some of our 'flying' mallards were simply suspended from the ceiling by a string.

The newer taxidermy we were having Igor make for us was strikingly good. It deserved better display; why not have several cases made to look authentically like the different habitat areas of the Preserve? Then we could show each of our birds and animals realistically—in its native environment. It would

be expensive, but we had a fairly good amount in our treasury, and what better use could be found for it?



This Snowy Egret pair has been hunting for crayfish and frogs in

So we contacted companies who performed this type of work, and selected two as candidates to design and build five

display cases, representing habitat areas from the deep vernal marsh to the upland areas. The winner of that competition was Split Rock Studios, in St. Paul Minnesota. They had better designs and their price was competitive or better than the other company, which was located in Oregon.

Then we began the process of coming up with a specific design for each display case, deciding which birds and animals we would use, how it would be displayed and how much room that would take. Increasingly Igor had to be included in these sessions, so that we could provide the proper perch or setting for each of his birds. I'm proud to say that Fran Arrowsmith spearheaded this effort, and served as our primary interface with both SRS and Igor.

But Fran was not alone in supporting the project; Connie Vadheim, for example, provided beautiful photographs of the Preserve that were successfully enlarged to provide the backdrops for Cases 2, 3, 4, and 5. Local artist Ron

"Display..." continued on page 10

“Display” continued from page 9.

Libbrecht, who with two associates had painted the wonderful mural on the west wall when the Nature Center opened, extended the ‘wet vernal marsh’ portion of that painting (i.e., the left side) around the corner to provide a perfect backdrop for Display Case 1.

And Ron’s print shop, now called APC Fine Arts and Graphics, later helped us update the scene keys beside any displays we updated, such as when we added a Western Bluebird in Case 4. And the FOMM Board has a special affinity for the opossum hanging by his tail in Case 5.

Sarah Noddings had just left for home after a board meeting in 2006. I was still at the Nature Center when she called to tell me there was a freshly-killed opossum on Plaza del Amo, and she thought it would make a great specimen for our yet-to-be-built display cases. So I drove down to a spot near Crenshaw, loaded the opossum in my car and drove back to the center, where I tightly wrapped our latest acquisition in (a lot of) Saran Wrap, and managed to find room in the freezer for him. We called Igor the next day and made arrangements for the opossum’s immortality.

Split Rock Studios, and in particular the female artist who built all the trees and water features in our displays, did an outstanding job designing, building and installing our display cases. And Igor Caragodin did a marvelous job creating and mounting all of the taxidermy found



Two Mallards and a Northern Shoveler Duck along with a Black-crowned Night Heron patiently await installation of ‘water’ and a perching log in Case 2 in 2007.

in the cases. Last but in no way least, were the Friends themselves, starting with our generous membership, whose years of contributions had built up our treasury so we could afford the \$100,000 price tag of the display cases, as well as the additional cost of the taxidermy. Finally, the Friends Board, with Fran’s help, did a great job of identifying a need and bringing together the resources required to turn a mild deficiency into a premier showcase.

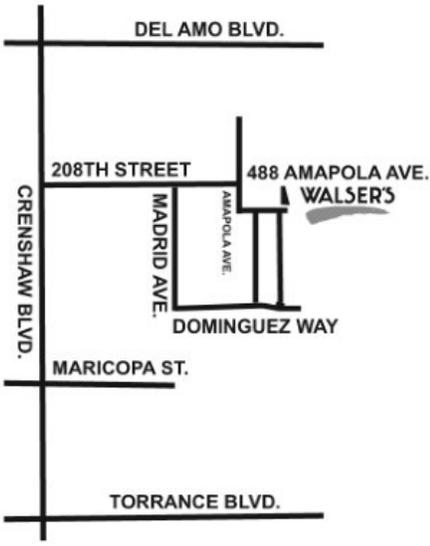
So pat yourself on the back the next time you visit the displays in the Exhibit Hall; you deserve it. –Bill Arrowsmith; photos by Fran Arrowsmith

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South Bay Native Plant Corner

Dr. Connie Vadheim, CSU, Dominguez Hills



Water Smartweed

Polygonum (Persicaria) hydropiperoides

Fall color is largely dominated by the sunflowers and buckwheats. But the gradual drying of our seasonal marshes ushers in an interesting group of plants that complete their flowering and fruiting during the fall. You may have noticed an attractive example growing near the Tules in the south end of the Preserve.

Water Smartweed is an herbaceous perennial that grows in moist places throughout California and much of the United States. It spreads via underground stems (rhizomes) and rooting stems. Smartweed can be a problem in some parts of the country, where it grows into lakes. The seasonality of local wetlands keeps this plant in check at the Preserve. You can also grow it safely in pots or around garden pools.

Water Smartweed sends up a number of upright or leaning stems during the warm months of late spring and summer and dies back in fall/winter. Its alternate leaves can be lance-like (see photos) or more linear. The leaves are bright green in summer and early fall; by mid-fall they provide one of the nicest sources of fall red color on the Preserve. They start out a brilliant crimson red and end up a

nice russet brown. Nothing else provides such an interesting accent in fall. This is a plant that's noticed by many visitors.

The flowers are what many people notice about this plant. Smartweeds bloom anytime from June to October, depending on the season's precipitation. The small, pink and white flowers usually grow elongated clusters at the ends of branches. Before opening they look like a cluster of small, pastel bubbles along the stalk. The seeds, eaten by seed-eating birds, are small, dark and shiny.



The name *hydropiperoides* means 'water pepper'. Water Smartweed is an important source of tangy summer greens. Native Californians use this plant raw or cooked as a vegetable. As with most edible greens, the young foliage is most palatable. The seeds are also edible. Water Smartweed was traditionally used as a medicinal plant as well as an antiseptic for skin infections and as a cure for poisoning. This genus also produces a blue pigment—like indigo—but in small amounts.

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.

Friends of Madrona Marsh

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