

Spring 2012

Marsh Mailing

Madrona Marsh Preserve and Nature Center

Students Aid in Restoring our Habitat

—Ron Melin

Each Saturday, weather permitting, anywhere from 25 to 125 young people 14 years and older work with us for 3 hours earning Service Learning credit by participating in our Restoration Program at Madrona Marsh.

So what do we do? We start by sorting California Redemption Value (CRV) recyclables that have been donated by people in the community. These plastic, glass and aluminum containers bring in over \$1,200 annually to the Friends. The sorting usually lasts about 15 minutes and afterwards we head over to the Preserve to begin restoration.

Restoration varies from Saturday to Saturday depending on the time of year and the need. On any one Saturday we may be pulling non-natives, annual sunflowers (Autumn) watering, weeding, planting native

grasses and plants, clearing paths through the tules, painting, or propagating seeds in the nursery.

Service learning is required by most school districts and is the main reason students volunteer on Saturday mornings. Some of their teachers may offer extra credit for Community Service which also attracts students.



Student Volunteers Tammy Takegawa, left, and Alisa Nomura.

"Habitat" continued on page 10.

About Future Scientists and Bluebirds

—Tracy Drake

I may be a bit biased but I think March is the best month of the year. It is the beginning of Spring, daylight savings time and the month when the shades of green return to the Preserve. The greens are usually triggered by rain, but this year so far there has been too little green and too much brown. And, until the end of the month, there was too little rain. But 1.39 inches fell on March 24 and 25 and by March 28 the green was abundant.

You remember all the shades of green in a Crayola Crayon box of 64 colors? There are more shades on the Preserve than there were in that box! The dormant willows, sycamores, cottonwoods, tules and cattails are all different shades of green. The frogs have returned from their Fall-to-Winter hibernation (estivation) and are singing. Many of these, too, are green. Some of you are being awakened early in the morning by the singing of mockingbirds. Yes, Spring has arrived.

With Spring, migration is just barely beginning. Birds that have spent their winter in South America are

heading north, some stopping at the Preserve before heading to their breeding ground in points north, some as far north as the north slope of Alaska!

Spring is also the culmination of Science Fair season. In all, we had about 15 students we mentored—13 were old enough to enter fairs and six of those won First, Second or Third Place awards. Three students won First Place awards, and three went to the Los Angeles County Science Fair.

One student, sixth grader Anthony Stenzel, won First Place in his environmental science category! His project, *Biochemical Oxygen on Demand—How do we get more DO? [Dissolved Oxygen]*, detailed how loss of oxygen is detrimental to the health of the water in the Marsh and how important our new biofilter is in increasing DO. For his work, Anthony also won a National Geographic Science Award and a VERY prestigious award called the Broadcam Award. Students who win this award are automatically invited to the National Science Fair.

"Scientists..." continued on page 2.

“Scientists...” continued from page 1.

When you think about our Science Fair mentoring program and the number of students we have entering science fairs, our kids are really amazing. This year they did very well. I am so proud of them and of Bob Carr, Mark Christiansen, Ron Melin and Daniel Marion, all of whom gave of their time, knowledge, experience and wisdom to our students. They care a lot about our students and it shows.

All of the Madrona Staff are also judges at the PV Science Fair but we do not judge any of our own students. At the end of the fair, after a long four hours of



Student Bryan Lee, left, and Mentor Bob Carr

judging projects, Bob and I found ourselves sitting in near silence on the bench just outside the auditorium. We were tired and had little energy to speak—even to each other. But after a little while we did talk about how weird it was that the season was over, and we agreed it was sort of sad. For seven months he and I worked, often until late in the evening, helping these kids become junior scientists. We helped them figure out what they were interested in researching, how to apply the scientific method to solve a real world, meaningful problem, how to test their hypothesis, come to conclusions and how to articulate their findings. We worked hard.

Interestingly, this year’s group of students was overall less focused than students of years past. Several literally completely failed on their first testing rounds because they did not believe that they needed to follow the scientific method or follow directions. Really, we thought only a few would actually finish their projects. But we never gave up on any of them and all of those who failed regrouped and started over. By the second test round they had adjusted their attitude and commitment and, consequently, were amazing! Three of them figured out things that were not previously known—anywhere. Even if you Googled their ideas, nothing would come up. The judges recognized this and that is why they won awards and why a couple will go on to the LA County Science Fair.

After the Fair, sitting on that bench Bob and I knew that we would not work with the seniors again. They were moving on and we would miss them—a lot. They shared with us the colleges they were going to attend

in the Fall. We are so proud of them and I am proud of how once again my staff, particularly Bob, worked their magic and mentored kids to become winners.

On the Preserve, the bluebirds have returned. Actually there are two males this year—last year there was only one—so there may be two pairs breeding this year! One of the males is particularly friendly. One evening when I was turning off the pumps, he met me at the Sump Gate and chattered at me for a while. I was not carrying my camera, so even though he was so close, I could not get a photo. But he was insistent in chatting so I went back to my car and grabbed my camera. He let me take pictures of him for a while, and as I started walking from the gate to the pump station, he flew just in front of me—alighting on the fence several times.

By the time I reached the pump station, he was silent, but on the fence watching. I opened the station door, pulled out the logbook, set my camera on top of the station and walked a few feet to the 8 inch pipe. I wanted to use it as a writing surface.

Within a minute, little blue was sitting within five feet of me chattering softly, tilting his head to see what I was up to. “Hold that thought,” I said to him without thinking that I had just talked to the bird as if he were a person. I went around the big pump station door, grabbed my camera and slowly aimed it at him. He fell silent and stood tall. “Cool pose!” I thought out loud—and took the photo below.

Finally, little blue flew over to a nearby tree and I went back to completing the log. I heard little blue’s mate calling and he did too. He flew west to greet her.



“Scientists...” continued on page 3.

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 or Bill Arrowsmith, TheArrowsmiths@sbcglobal.net, or dropped off or mailed to the Nature Center (see address on back page).

from the president

Nice Guys Finish First

—Bill Arrowsmith

You are all certainly besieged with more than enough bad news these days, from home foreclosures to our legislators' inability to agree on practically anything, least of all a national health plan. We were therefore very sorry to add to that load of misery when we reported in the Winter *Mailing* that thieves had broken into the Preserve and stolen nearly \$10,000 worth of equipment. Taken were items used by our groundskeeper, Ed, and Tracy's staff to maintain the Preserve—including a riding mower which we had just paid thousands of dollars to repair, several power weed-whackers, a rotary push mower, a chain saw and a blower.

The Torrance Police responded immediately to our call and were very thorough in their investigation, but the thieves had left them little to work with. Operating under a full moon in the middle of the night, they had very efficiently cut all necessary locks, loaded everything of value on a trailer, and disappeared quickly into the night. A very frustrating situation, as you know, if you've ever experienced a burglary or theft.

But, incredibly, this story has taken a very positive turn, thanks to some super people who read about our plight—some are members of FOMM and some are just concerned citizens of our South Bay community. And all are definitely friends of the Preserve.

In mid-December we received a special donation of \$300 from a long-time supporter, the Torrance Woman's Club, after member Maxine Trevethen relayed our story of loss. A week later, Norman and Suzanne George gave us an extra \$200 to help cover our losses. And then things got even better!

In January, John Eckles, the owner of a landscape company on the PV peninsula, donated a lightly used, commercial grade, zero-turn SCAG riding mower. This was exactly the type of mower that we have been considering buying for about a year. We had it inspected and were told that although this mower needed about \$1500 worth of work on its hydraulic system, it was otherwise in excellent condition—and worth five or six times what it would take to fix it. The Friends Board quickly approved that repair. Before the bill even came for that, we got our next surprise.

Joannie Spring, who for years has used the Marsh as a subject for her beautiful photographs and lovely poetry, presented us with a check for \$5000, in honor of her father, who had recently passed. Joannie said that she would like us to use this donation to help re-

place the equipment that we had recently lost. What a wonderful gift! And from a long-time Friend, who has already supported us financially, donating the proceeds from all her calendars sold in the Gift Shop. And her pictures and poems have introduced many to hidden treasures of the Preserve. We are sorry for your loss, Joannie, but what a wonderful way to honor your father.

The new zero-turn mower has now been repaired, and Ed and Ron Melin rave about how well it performs. Last week Dan Portway and Ed bought a rotary push mower, and they say it is much superior to the old one it replaces.

And then our luck improved even more. Kathy Benz told her neighbors, Rick Hammang and his wife Tracey, about our loss. They were in the process of selling a family home in Hesperia where they have a Sears lawn tractor, tools and a wood desk that they are now donating to the Friends. This is fantastic, as Tracy has always wanted to use a separate mower on the vernal pool areas, to keep them pristine.

Whoever said that 'nice guys finish last' just doesn't know the Friends of Madrona Marsh and the fabulous citizens of the South Bay. Thank you all!

Press-time update: Torrance Police report that fingerprints taken from the Preserve crime scene have been matched to a known felon, currently under surveillance!

"Scientists..." continued from page 2.

Walking back to my car I saw the pair flying to the tree they usually perch in. The sun was setting and the chorus of frogs was just beginning to gain a regular cadence. It was another special moment at the Madrona Marsh Preserve.—T.D.

In Memoriam Jack Knapp

We are sad to announce that long-time Friend, Jack Knapp, has died after a courageous battle against cancer. Jack served on the Friends Board of Directors, and for many years was treasurer. He was also a docent for many years, showing hundreds of school-children their first view of the Preserve. We send our condolences to his lovely wife, Betty, and family. A more complete remembrance is planned for the next newsletter.

Getting to Know the Ex-Brady Bunch

—Emile Fiesler

If you are lucky you might encounter, or have already encountered, a little colorful fuzz-ball scurrying around the Preserve. These seldom resting busybodies resemble ants wearing a flamboyant fur coat. They are called Velvet Ants, but are not ants—they are wasps; see figures 1 and 2. Wasps, ants, bees, and their kin belong to the order hymenoptera, which means “membrane wings,” as the flight-enabled forms have four membrane-like wings. The hymenoptera is one of the largest and most re-



Figure 1

cently evolved insect orders, dating back to the Triassic, about 240 million years ago (m.y.a.). The wasps, ants, and bees we are most familiar with, however, started evolving more recently during



Figure 2



Figure 3

the late Jurassic period (160 m.y.a.), when the dinosaurs were becoming the dominant vertebrates on land. The oldest Velvet Ant fossils only date from the Miocene, about 20 m.y.a.

If your fuzz-ball has wings, it is a male; see figure 3. The more common wingless counterparts are the females that lead a down-to-earth life. We mostly see orange to red females and occasionally a similarly colored, winged male. Their furriness might instill a cuteness factor, but don't handle them, as the female's sting is reputedly painful. Having wingless females indicates that Velvet Ants have been resident on the Preserve a long time, likely dating back eons before Europeans came to this area.

During the recently conducted biological survey of the Preserve, I recorded an all-black winged Velvet Ant; see figure 4. This was a male *Pseudomethoca anthracina*, where the prefix “antra-” means charcoal. Its female coun-

terpart is reddish, see figures 1 and 2, like various other local species. The Velvet Ant's sexual dimorphism, where females and males look very different, has led to many reports of “new species” which were actually just the opposite sex.



Figure 4

Also during the bio-survey, Tracy Drake and I once saw a curious looking critter crossing our path between vernal pools; see figure 5. It had its abdomen pointed up



Figure 5

into the air while walking! Our first guess was a rove beetle, which are slender beetles that usually have short wings and a long protruding abdomen, which some like to carry high. It turned out to be a diurnal female wasp *Typhoctes peculiaris peculiaris*, in the family Bradynobaenidae. The species name “*peculiaris*” seems quite apt! I saw a second one shortly after, also with her abdomen skyward, indicating that we weren't dreaming.

This relatively obscure family doesn't even have a common name. The best we can do is: “Bradynobaenid Wasps.” Adding to their obscurity is that Bradynobaenid Wasp fossils have never been found in the world. Bradynobaenid Wasps are apparently solitary and mostly found in arid habitats. Little is known about their biology. The larvae of one *Typhoctes* species are parasitoids of immature solifugids, which are arachnids that are mostly active at night.

Bradynobaenid Wasps were initially considered a special kind of velvet ant, and for a long time classified as such. After all, both families have flightless females and they superficially resemble each other. But more recent findings teach us that they are not at all related to velvet ants. Hence, we should not bunch the Velvet Ants with the Brady's.

Walking on the Wild Side

—Suzan Hubert

I lead docent tours through the Madrona Marsh Preserve, Nature Center, and Native Gardens for elementary school students. On one of my tours this year, the first grade teacher sidled up to me and whispered, "When I grow up I want to do what you do." It made me smile and it also made me recall that I had the same thought on various tours I had taken through parks and wild lands around the globe. When I was a child, I wanted to be a tour guide, park ranger, and an actress. I wanted to love a place and learn it well enough to dramatically make visitors love it too. I found my opportunity.

It's not easy, but if you want something, you work for it; and I did. I took the docent classes, I wrote reams of notes and I followed our experienced Madrona Marsh docents as they led groups. I shamelessly absorbed their technique, their style and their stories; docents share well. Before I ever led a tour I wandered the Preserve on my own, practicing. I hope anyone hearing me talk to myself on those walks thought I was on a hands-free phone and not just peculiar.

Despite all my preparation, practice and the notes in my back pocket, I was still very nervous when the first big yellow bus pulled up and I stood there smiling and waving a welcome with my fellow docents. My first tour was OK. I survived; no one got lost, and the students were happy. I knew it wasn't the best I could do but I had done my first one and was better prepared for the next. I love the Preserve, the Nature Center, and the Native Gardens so it wasn't hard to set myself to learn more, and there are lots of people at the Marsh who willingly share their knowledge. This is my third year being a docent. I moved up from, "Oh please just give me pre-school tours" to, "Sure I can take a fourth grade group!"

I get such a huge kick out of the response I get from the students (and the teachers). They are awed by the wildness of the Preserve. They are totally focused when I teach them how to speak skunk in the Exhibit Hall and why we respect the holes in the ground as front doors to a gopher's home. They are thrilled by actually catching a frog. We all say, "Thank you and fare well" to the frog when we release them back to the wilds. We crawl in the mud, hold branches for our friends and think about the Tongva people harvesting tules for their homes and acorns for food.

I have learned to lead successful tours by following the children's interests. If we see a fallen tree and the children are interested, we go over and ex-

plore the tree. If we find animal tracks, we follow them. We all talk about what we find and sometimes we wonder together about making rafts and hideouts. It's not so much about lecturing or knowing every detail. It's much more about sharing an adventure in a wonderful wild place. When you are a child and only 3-4 feet tall, the Preserve is very wild. I have heard children behind me say, "Are we lost?" and "Where in the heck are we?" and they reassure each other with, "Well, she is some kind of expert." I listen, I smile, and I lead on through the trees and high grass. In the willows you can feel lost and I tell my group, "this is a difficult area, there is mud, there are low branches and I don't know what we will find so we have to stay close and quiet. Even preschoolers respond because the land speaks for itself. It is quiet, close, and mysterious in the willows.

I went online to access the academic science standards for various grade levels and I try to align my tours, at least partly, with the standards and/or whatever science the teacher is teaching in class. Preschool science standards are particularly appropriate as they focus on a combination of observation and language development. On preschool-first grade tours, for example, we touch leaves and use descriptive words like fuzzy, prickly, sharp, and sticky. We also search the Native Plant Garden for colors; it is quite extraordinary to discover that every color is growing in the garden.

Could there be a more rewarding, more interesting, more fun way to spend my free time? Maybe. But I haven't found anything better. I am sharing love for the land, an opportunity to wonder, and a wild adventure. I conclude every tour bouncing with energy, looking forward to the next.



SAVE THE DATE!

Moonlight Magic

September 29, 2012

5-10 p.m.

On the Preserve, under a full moon.

*Join us for dinner, music, laughter,
dancing, unusual auction items and
spectacular gift baskets. \$50 per person*

Madrona Marsh Preserve and Nature Center

Schedule of Events*

April-July 2012

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2 CLOSED	3 8:30 am- Tour d' Torrance 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders	4 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders	5 10 am- Tyke Hike (fee) 10:30 am- 12:30 pm- Propagation Society	6 10-11:30-am- Friday Fun***	7 8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv.Learning 10 am-12 n- "Perfect Perennials"/Dr.Vadheim 12 n-3 pm-Garden Party & Native Plant Sale
8 CLOSED FOR EASTER	9 CLOSED	10 9 am-Mornings on the Marsh 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders 6:30-8:30 pm- "Perfect Perennials" /Dr. Vadheim	11 8 am- Bird Walk/Bob Shanman 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders 6:30-8:30 pm- FOMM Board Meeting	12 10:30 am- 12:30 pm- Propagation Society	13 10-11:30-am- Friday Fun***	14 8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv.Learning
15 2-4 pm- 2nd Sun- day Science California Indian Song & Stories (fee)	16 CLOSED	17 8:30 am- Tour d' Torrance 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders 7 pm-Audubon meets	18 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders	19 10:30 am- 12:30 pm- Propagation Society	20 10-11:30-am- Friday Fun*** Beth Shibata Exhibit Ends	21 8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv.Learning 8:45 am-12 n-Earth Day
22 9-11 am- Stories of Birds	23 CLOSED	24 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders Pacific Arts Painting Exhibit Begins**	25 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders	26 10:30 am- 12:30 pm- Propagation Society	27 10-11:30-am- Friday Fun***	28 8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Resto & Student Serv. Learning 9 am-12 n-Photographing Birds in Nature/David McCheseny 10 am-12 n-Nature Walk 7:30 pm- Star Party
29 10 a.m- Nature Walk 12 n-4 pm-Audubon Awards Ceremony	30 CLOSED					

APRIL

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. **See Artists Corner, page 9. * No fee charged for Friday Fun, but reservations are required. For the latest event information, consult website, www.friendsofmadronamarsh.com.*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 8:30 am- Tour d' Torrance 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders	2 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders	3 10 am- Tyke Hike (fee) 10:30 am- 12:30 pm- Propagation Society)	4 10-11:30 am- Friday Fun***	5 8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv.Learning 10 am-12 n-"Extraordinary Scents" / Dr.Vadheim
6 2-4 pm- 2nd Sun- day Science-Animal Lovers' Exotic Creatures	7 CLOSED	8 9 am-Mornings on the Marsh 10 am-12 n-Weeders 6:30-8:30 pm-Extraor- dinary Scents"/Dr. Vadheim	9 8 am- Bird Walk/Bob Shanman 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders 6:30-8:30 pm-FOMM Board Meeting	10 10:30 am- 12:30 pm- Propagation Society	11 10-11:30 am- Friday Fun***	12 8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv.Learning 10:30 am-12 n-Watercolor for Kids (8+)fee/Jennifer Siegal 2-4 pm-Intro. to Geology
13 Second Sunday Science moves to 1st Sunday this month due to Mothers' Day	14 CLOSED	15 8:30 am- Tour d' Torrance 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders 7 pm-Audubon meets	16 10 am-12 n- Adult Weeders	17 10:30 am- 12:30 pm- Propagation Society	18 10-11:30 am- Friday Fun*** 6:30 pm- Pacific Arts Reception**	19 8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv.Learning 8-10 pm-Night Hike
20	21 CLOSED	22 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders	23 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders	24 10:30 am- 12:30 pm- Propagation Society	25 10-11:30 am- Friday Fun***	26 8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv. Learning 10 am- Nature Walk 11-11:30 am-Storytime for Kids 11:30 am-1 pm-Nature Crafts
27 10 a.m- Nature Walk	28 CLOSED	29 8:30 am- Tour d' Torrance 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders	30 10 am-12 n- Adult Weeders	31 10:30 am- 12:30 pm- Propagation Society		

MAY

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					10-11:30-am- Friday Fun*** Pacific Arts Exhibit Ends**	8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv.Learning 10 am-12 n- "Into the Vegetable Garden"/Dr. Vadheim
1-3 pm- Watercolors for Kids (8+) fee/ Jennifer Siegal	CLOSED	8:30 am-Tour d'Torrance 10 am-Adult Weeders 6:30 pm-"Into the Vegetable Garden" Wassenberg Exhibit** 2:30-5:30 pm-Venus Transit Across Sun	10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders	10 am- Tyke Hike (fee) 10:30am-12:30pm- Propagation Society	10-11:30-am- Friday Fun***	8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv.Learning 10 am- 1 pm-Turtle/TortoiseDay 12-3:30 pm-Fok Drumming
2 - 4 pm-Second Sunday Science- Microscope Fun (fee)	CLOSED	10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders 9-11 am-Mornings on the Marsh	8 am- Bird Walk/ Bob Shanman 10-12 n-Adult Weeders 6:30-8:30 pm-FOMM Board Meeting	10:30 am-12:30 pm-Propagation Society	10-11:30-am- Friday Fun***	8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv. Learning
	CLOSED	8:30 am- Tour d'Torrance 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders 7 pm- Audubon Mtg.	10-12 n-Adult Weeders	10:30 am-12:30 pm-Propagation Society 10 am-12n-Junior Naturalist	10-11:30-am- Friday Fun***	8:45 am-12n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv.Learning 10 am-Nature Walk 8:30-10:30 pm - Star Party
10 am-Nature Walk	CLOSED	10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders	10-12 n-Adult Weeders	10:30 am-12:30 pm-Propagation Society 10-12-Junior Naturalist	10-11:30-am- FridayFun*** 6:30-Wassenberg Art.Recep**	8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv. Learning

JUNE

*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. **See Artists Corner, page 9. *** No fee charged for Friday Fun, but reservations are required. For the latest event information, consult website, www.friendsofmadronamarsh.com.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	CLOSED	8:30 am- Tour d' Torrance 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders	10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders	10 am- Tyke Hike 10:30-12:30- Propagation Society 10-12n-Junior Naturalist	10-11:30-am- Friday Fun***	8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv.Learning 10 am-12 n- "Fantastical Flies" /Dr.Vadheim
2-4 pm- 2nd Sun- day Science "What's all the Buzz?" (fee)	CLOSED	9 am-Mornings on the Marsh 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders 6:30-8:30 pm- "Fantastical Flies" /Dr. Vadheim	8 am- Bird Walk/Bob Shanman 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders 6:30-8:30 pm- FOMM Board Meeting	10:30 am- 12:30 pm- Propagation Society 10-12n-Junior Naturalist	10-11:30-am- Friday Fun*** Wassenberg Exhibit Ends**	8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv.Learning 10 am-12n-Annual Butterfly Count Prep.(10+ only)
	CLOSED	8:30 am- Tour d' Torrance 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders 1-3 pm-Einstein for Kids 7 pm-Audubon meets	10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders 1-3 pm-Einstein for Kids	10:30-12:30 pm- Propagation Society 10-12n-Junior Naturalist 1-3 pm-Einstein for Kids	10-11:30-am- Friday Fun***	8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv.Learning 10-12nAnnual Butterfly Count
	CLOSED	10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders	10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders	10:30 am- 12:30 pm- Propagation Society 10-12n-Junior Naturalist	10-11:30-am- Friday Fun***	8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv. Learning 10 am-Nature Walk 6:30 pm-Nightlife at the Marsh
10 a.m- Nature Walk	CLOSED	8:30 am- Tour d' Torrance 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders				

JULY

Torrance Reaches 100 Years!

Friends Close Behind

—Bill Arrowsmith

We want to congratulate the City of Torrance, not just upon reaching the milestone age of 100, but upon maturing to that age very successfully—staying faithful to Jared Sydney Torrance’s goals for an ideal urban environment which carefully balances Residential, Commercial, and Industrial use. Torrance continues to be one of the most desirable places in Southern California to live, work and raise a family.

And we are also proud to add that, for the last 40 years, the Friends of Madrona Marsh have been a force in contributing to that dream, by helping the City and its citizenry appreciate and ultimately preserve a unique 45-acre urban wilderness right in the heart of Torrance. Today the Madrona Marsh Preserve and Nature Center is a success story of its own, drawing thousands of visitors each year to a wide array of educational, recreational and restoration activities. The Nature Center has a museum quality exhibit hall which displays and explains the plants and animals of the preserve, as well as its geology and history. Bob Carr, a retired biology teacher, oversees a laboratory with over 50 microscopes supplied by the Friends, to allow our young (and older) visitors to explore the tiny life forms that are the start of the food chain—and of all life on the

Marsh. Each year Bob mentors many students’ science fair projects, with remarkably good results. The meeting room in the Center hosts everything from Audubon Meetings to Cindy Reed’s popular Friday Fun program for pre-schoolers to Professor Connie Vadheim’s immensely successful classes on Native Plants. We are also very proud of the Friends’ presence in the Nature Center, a first-class Gift Shop run by Bobbie Snyder, which contains artwork, books and toys for all ages. And, of course, all profits from the shop are used to support our educational programs.

Surrounding the Nature Center are beautiful native plant and water-wise gardens, showing us all how beautiful and, often, aromatic are the plants that were here long before Torrance or even the early native Americans. These plants, which require no more than our paltry annual rainfall of about 13 inches, are like time machines; showing us both the Torrance of 200 years ago, and also the Madrona Marsh Preserve of a few years from now, after it has been fully restored.

Happy (100th) Birthday, Torrance! Happy (40th) Birthday, Friends of Madrona Marsh!

Donations of \$100 or More

DATE	DONOR	AMOUNT	COMMENTS
12-1-11	Peter & Pamela Major	\$500	
12-5-11	Maryanne Brown	\$100	
12-28-11	The Bailey’s	\$100	
12-27-11	Diane Hatton	\$125	
12-28-11	Norman & Suzanne George	\$200	Donated to help cover the items stolen from the Preserve
12-15-11	The Torrance Woman’s Club	\$300	Donated to help cover the items stolen from the Preserve
1-2-12	James & Yooko Justiss	\$400	
1-3-12	Ms. Helene Alleaume	\$100	
1-22-12	Mr. & Mrs. Macdonell	\$100	
1-18-12	June Kagdis	\$100	
1-29-12	Maxine Trevethen	\$100	
1-30-12	Norman & Suzanne George	\$150	
1-30-12	Suzanne & John Gibson	\$120	
2-2-12	Joannie Spring	\$5,000	In honor of her Father
1-31-12	Ted Kotzin	\$125	
1-30-12	Rebecca Moore	\$100	
2-7-12	Georgean Griswold	\$100	
3-15-12	Dale Lincoln	\$500	SOUND Project

—Ellen Peterson, Treasurer

What's New in the Gift Shop?

—Bobby Snyder

Have you shopped the Friends of Madrona Marsh Gift Shop lately?

We have loads of tempting new wares; including desk toys, science kits, art supplies and animal hand puppets. And, all our tee shirts are selling for five dollars each, while supplies last.

You're welcome to come in and browse the goods, and say hello to our helpful and cheerful volunteer staff.

If you have a few hours that you're willing to share with us, on a regular basis, and you are cheerful and dependable you may be interested in being a volunteer clerk in the gift shop. Contact me. We'll talk.

If you are one of our local artists whose inspiration comes from the Preserve and you want us to offer your works in the gift shop; contact me. We'll talk.

Bobbie Snyder

Friends of Madrona Marsh Gift Shop manager
Contact me through the Nature Center; call 310-782-3989 and leave me a message.

Current Gift Shop Hours

Wednesdays	11:00am-3:00pm
Thursdays	12:45pm-3:00pm
Friday	11:00am-1:00pm
Saturdays 1 st 4 th & 5 th	10:00am-4:30pm
Saturdays 2 nd & 3 rd	2:00pm-4:30pm
Sundays 1 st & 4 th	10:00am-2:00pm
Sunday 3 rd	11:00am-3:00pm

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 served.

Through April 20 - **Beth Shibata**, *A photography Exhibit.*

April 24 - June 1 - Pacific Arts Group - **Al Hagen**, *Various Mediums Showing the Beauty of the Marsh.* Artist's Reception, Friday, May 18, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

June 5 - July 13 - **Bill Wassenberg**, *A Watercolor Exhibit.* Artist's Reception, Friday, June 29, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

If you would like to display your art at the Nature Center, please call for more information: 310-782-3989.

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Shirley's Turn

—Shirley Turner

World Water Day and "The Worst Hard Time"

World Water Day has been observed since 1993 when the United Nations General Assembly declared March 22 as World Day for Water.

Because it is March 22 as I write, I heard the T V business channel mention two companies dealing with water. Many of the world's water problems are listed on Google. But here in the United States we have had our own water problems, from the Dust Bowl of the 1930's to more recent shortages here in the south-west and also in the plains states, from South Dakota to Texas.

At the local level, our Torrance City Council addressed recent water shortages by placing limits on lawn watering hours. And at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center we have a water-wise garden to demonstrate how residents can landscape with lovely plants that require little or no water beyond our yearly rainfall, so that we can all be part of the solution. Another problem in beach cities is the intrusion of salt water into our local aquifer. The level of this intrusion is currently being monitored by the USGS via wells at several locations, including one in our Nature Center parking lot!

I found the book, **The Worst Hard Time, the Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl**, very interesting. Written by Timothy Egan, it was published in 2006 and is a New York Times Notable Book. I agree with Walter Cronkite who described it as can't-put-it-down history. Mr. Egan lives in Seattle and has won the Pulitzer Prize.

During a period of four years, the author researched letters, articles and took the oral histories of families and their ancestors who lived through the first homesteading of the Oklahoma panhandle up to about 1940. He found the twenties were successful, productive farming years, with rising prices for wheat after breaking up the buffalo grass sod. Buffalo grass is not at all like the native grasses planted in recent years at the Marsh in upland areas. With the soil blown away the remaining dust also was not at all like the Oakley fine sand of the Preserve, brought there by eons of daily breezes. In the thirties, dust was blown all the way to the Atlantic Ocean. Similarly, African dust is blown to the Virgin Islands from disturbed areas. On Black Sunday, April 13, 1935, double the amount of

dirt which was used to create the Panama Canal reached Washington D.C.

The New York Times book review tells of the awful, awful conditions that were endured by nesters who stayed. Can you believe eating tumbleweed for food? Some went to California; others looked for any kind of place they could find work. Wells were dug into the Ogallala aquifer, one of the largest aquifers in the world. Try Wikipedia for descriptions, rate of water in and water out and maps of the eight states covered by this aquifer.

The aquifer system provides 82 percent of the drinking water for people who live within its boundaries. In the epilogue Egan suggests that by 2010 possible total depletion of the aquifer could occur. The United States Department of Agriculture provides funds for the Ogallala Initiatives to some universities including Kansas State, Texas Tech and West Texas A&M.

Editor's Note: the controversial Keystone XL pipeline would carry oil from the oil sands of Alberta, Canada, to refineries in Houston, Texas. The proposed route crosses the eastern part of the Nebraska Sandhills, and opponents claim this poses an unacceptable risk to the Ogallala Aquifer due to the possibility of contamination from oil spills.

"Habitat" continued from page 1.

Then there are the students who are here on Saturdays because they enjoy the outdoor work and gain a sense of accomplishment. Tammy Takegawa, Alisa Nomura, and Dakota Bloom fall into this last category. All three have volunteered well over 100 hours at the Marsh. They have graduated from high school and gone on to college and we miss their hard work. But wait. It's Saturday, January 7 and Winter vacation is about to end for most students—but here the three of them are, ready to put in a good three hours work.

Tammy, Alisa, and Dakota are self-starters who have set positive examples for their peers. There are several others in the high school ranks who volunteer every Saturday simply because they enjoy working at the Marsh.

During the last 15 minutes of the Service Learning session, Daniel, Cindy, or myself usually discuss a subject related to the Preserve—be it bird migration, water conservation, the importance of recycling or a number of other topics. That's pretty much our three hours. The work our Saturday volunteers do is vital to the upkeep of the Preserve and without them the workload of the staff would be overwhelming. Hats off to our volunteers!

—R.M

South Bay Native Plant Corner

—Dr. Connie Vadheim, CSU Dominguez Hills



Coast (Small-flowered) Melic Grass
Melica imperfecta

A recent focus has been on the restoration of native grasses on the Preserve. The Coastal Prairie Plant community extended from near the coast eastward to the Torrance area. Grasses like Melic Grass played an important role in this local habitat.

Coast Melic Grass (*Melica imperfecta*), a perennial bunch-grass, is commonly found in dry, rocky-sandy places from northern California to Baja. It even grows on coastal dunes, so sandy soils are not a problem. Like all grasses, Melic Grass provides cover for ground-utilizing bird and animal species, seeds for food and leaves for nesting materials. The leaves are also food for the larva of Skipper butterflies. You can enjoy watching the number of species it attracts on the Preserve—or in your own yard!

Melica is a medium sized bunch grass, forming a mound one to two feet or more tall and wide. The leaves are dense, graceful and fine-textured, so this grass is right at home in a more manicured garden. The color is grass-green during the growing season (Fall through Spring). You can give it occasional summer water to keep it green or let it turn a natural tawny gold in late

Spring as it does on the Preserve. It will almost disappear during the summer months.

California's native bunch grasses are quite easy to garden with. They are happy in a range of local soils, from clays to sands. Melic Grass does best in filtered sunlight or with afternoon shade, so it's useful for planting under trees. It does fine with occasional summer water (even once a week in sandy soils). You don't need to fertilize it or mow it. Let Melic grass go to seed—the seed stalks are quite beautiful—to provide food for the birds. Melic will re-seed itself, but is not invasive. It is one of our easiest grasses to grow—with a little shade.



Our native bunchgrasses are attractive additions to the home landscape. They make good groundcovers, even under trees, and add texture to mixed flower/shrub beds. Melic is a neat looking grass, so it's useful for lining walkways, in narrow mixed beds or parking strips. It also does well on slopes and hillsides, where its roots stabilize the soil. You can even grow it in a container! So, enjoy Melic Grass on the Preserve and consider using this lovely native grass in your home garden.

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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