



Friends of Sausal Creek

Promoting Watershed Protection

www.sausalcreek.org
(510) 501-FOSC (3672)

December '03-January '04

UPDATE • NO monthly meeting in December; workday/party on December 13 instead.

Solstice Workday BBQ—December 13

Instead of the usual meeting in December, the Friends are hosting a Solstice Workday BBQ on December 13. Please join us for the kick-off of our winter planting in the Redwood Grove on Monterey Blvd. We will be clearing, delineating our adopted spot, and planting the preliminary redwood understory. Meet at 9 am at the Monterey Blvd. trailhead. Monterey Blvd. is the frontage road that runs along Hwy 13 on the west side. The trailhead is between Lincoln (Joaquin Miller) and Park Blvd. on the west side of the road. (For better directions, call 501-FOSC.)

We will set up a barbecue and serve lunch after the morning's work. Rain cancels. Our meetings will resume on the third Wednesday of the month on January 21, 2004 at 7 p.m. at the Dimond Library.

But Who's Counting?

With the help of notes and information from Martha Lowe's fieldwork, the FOSC seed-collecting crew started locating many of the less common plant species in the watershed. We also started finding additional species, and added them to the list of species that Martha reported in her thesis. Just in 2003, we've made 25 additions: (We've been out a lot this year.) Kristen Hopper's a great plant spotter, and this is her first spring and summer season exploring the parks, so she found many of them. And other plant crew members have been developing keener plant-spotting eyes as well.

Let's make it official: we've found over 200 species in the watershed. We're not quite ready to say "identified 200 species" as there are two Lomatiums not yet keyed out, and three "Mystery Carexes" and a few other species that we're not quite sure about.

While this increasing species count sounds lush and splendid, we find one thing rather worrisome: many of these species are known from just a few plants at a single location in the watershed. So one of our goals has been to collect seed, and grow plants to establish in other compatible spots, hopefully increasing the chance of the species' survival in the watershed.

As we started to inventory the seeds before seed-starting season, the inventory also grew. We had about 100 different species in the seed box (including the three mystery Carexes—we sow 'em, even if we don't know 'em!) The last sentence is in the past tense, because we've sowed many of these new finds in the last few weeks.

What's been the most exciting find? The California Pinks' lipstick-red flowers? The small patch of Shooting Stars? Our own small stand of California Fescue? A lovely purple Aster? The latest find is always the best one! And the next find is hopefully as close as the next hike!

If you are interested in joining the Friends of Sausal Creek for seed collecting, please call Robin North at (510) 336-1861 for meeting times and locations.

—Karen Paulsell

A Fungus Among Us

The wait is over. A cleansing drizzle finally settled the dust and soaked the earth. (The drought brown was wearing thin, now the creek swells and land grows green.) It's fungus time too in a sprouting world. Water fuels the reincarnation of fungus from spore to sprout. In the death of the year, a renewal of hope, the promise of the future and a chance to get it right. Anyway, add another ring of growth and pray for rain. —Mark J. Rauzon

Preventing Wildfires and Preserving the Watershed

Many Sausal Creek watershed residents have received information from the City of Oakland about the proposed Wildfire Prevention Assessment District (WPAD). Property owners will be asked to vote by January 6, 2004 on whether to pay for fire prevention activities. Representatives from the FOSC Board, staff, and volunteers have been discussing the fire abatement program with Councilmember Quan, the Oakland Fire Department, other City departments, and concerned organizations. FOSC supports the need for the WPAD and funding for fire abatement, as long as there is a commitment by the City Council and all other responsible regional and city agencies to adopt best management practices endorsed by fire abatement experts that reduce wildfires while protecting the ecosystems throughout the proposed district. We encourage you to learn about the WPAD and urge Oakland to adopt wise vegetation management practices under this program.

—Linda Morse

FOSC Receives "Partners in Preservation" Award

November 20—The historic Sweets Ballroom on Broadway was the setting for the Annual Partners in Preservation Awards given by the Oakland Heritage Alliance, Oakland's non-profit preservation advocacy organization. A dozen cultural, historic, environmental, and architectural projects that celebrate Oakland's varied and dynamic culture and settings received recognition. For the restoration of the Sausal Creek watershed, the reengineered meander in Dimond Park, and the Joaquin Miller Native Plant Nursery, FOSC and its local government partners received an award recognizing these projects' significant contributions to the Oakland community. FOSC Board members, Sally Kilburg, Michael Thilgen, and Linda Morse, Field Coordinator, Kristen Hopper, and long-time volunteer Karen Paulsell joined representatives from Alameda County and the City of Oakland's Public Works Agency and Parks and Recreation Department to receive recognition for this unique and important partnership.

—Linda Morse

Volunteers Sought for Natural Garden Tour

A Natural Garden Tour will take place on Sunday, May, 2, 2004, and features 36 Alameda County gardens that:

- Prevent pollution by avoiding the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers
- Reduce waste by composting, mulching, grasscycling and selecting appropriate plants, and
- Provide habitat for wildlife.

Two hundred volunteers with basic gardening knowledge are sought to help support the tour. Volunteers must enjoy public interaction and able to commit to a four-hour shift to greet tour participants and to help answer questions, and a pre-tour meeting with the owner and private tour of the garden they will be staffing. Volunteers get a guaranteed tour reservation for the half day they are free, and a Natural Garden Tour T-shirt.

For more information, please e-mail Kathy Kramer at Kathy@KathyKramerConsulting.net, or call (510) 236-9558 between 9am and 9pm. The Tour is sponsored by the Alameda County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, Alameda County Waste Management Authority & Recycling Board, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Coastal Program.

—Kathy Kramer

Friends of Sausal Creek

P.O. Box 2737
Oakland, CA 94602
(510) 501-FOSC
www.sausalcreek.org



NON PROFIT
US POSTAGE
PAID
OAKLAND, CA
PERMIT NO.
2486

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Don't miss our next monthly meeting, January 21, 2004, 7-9pm at the Dimond Library. Newsletter printed on recycled paper. Thanks for recycling!

Mystery Nests Unveiled!

Some months ago, while bushwhacking through the poison oak chaparral not far from the headwaters of Sausal Creek, I found a four-foot high stack of small sticks. It reminded me of the lyrebird nests I would find while tramping through the woods in Australia as a kid—only neater, and the sticks were all covered with beautiful lichens. I had no idea what created this huge stick nest. Before long, I found an even larger one, close to six-feet high and just as neat and orderly as a pile of sticks could get! To my amazement, around the next knoll, one of these huge nests was hanging from a low branch in a coast live oak over five feet off the ground. It looked to be almost seven feet high and four feet wide.

By the end of my hike, I had found nine such nests along this quiet ridge. Having found another patch of the rare and beautiful pallid manzanita (*arctostaphylos pallida*), I was feeling pretty good. After stuffing myself with huckleberries, I scrambled out of there just before dark. I was anxious to get home to search the internet for the mysterious stick nest-builder.

I 'googled' for "large stick nests on the ground or in oaks" and learned that the nest builder was a dusky-footed woodrat (*neotoma fuscipes*). There are eleven subspecies that range from Oregon through California. They live in loosely cooperative, matrilineal societies, and although most live in moist woods and riparian settings, some live in dry chaparral where live oaks are present. They live for generations in these large stick houses, and protect them aggressively.

Although the common dusky-footed woodrat is not endangered, the Fish and Wildlife Service lists one of the subspecies, the riparian woodrat, as an Endangered and California Species of Concern. It might have lived at one time along Sausal Creek, but according to Hooper's Taxonomic Analysis, by 1938 no suitable habitat remained for the woodrat in the San Francisco East Bay region.

There are many unusual and sometimes rare native plants, birds, and other animals living amongst us here in the East Bay. But, thousands of species are going extinct worldwide each year. We who live in the Bay Area are so blessed with natural beauty all around—and even within—our neighborhoods. If you can, take the time to get to know the diversity that remains in the Sausal Creek Watershed.

—Pete Veilleux

FOSC ACTIVITY CALENDAR

Unless otherwise noted, call 501-FOSC or email coordinator@sausalcreek.org to get information about all activities. Also, for details about ongoing projects, check the Volunteer section of the Friends' website at www.sausalcreek.org.

Monthly Meetings

~3rd Wednesday of the month~

No meeting in December; party instead!

- Wednesday 1/21, 2/18, 3/17, etc.
7pm-9pm; Dimond Library,
3565 Fruitvale Ave.

Board of Directors Meetings

~2nd Wednesday of the month~

- Wednesday 12/10, 1/14, 2/10,
etc. 7pm-9pm at the Chabot Space
& Science Center. All welcome!

Saturday Workdays

~many, but not all, Saturdays~

- **9am-noon:**
Restoration Activities
- **1:30-4:00pm:**
Nursery Activities
Info, Kristen Hopper, 387-9744
or field@sausalcreek.org or go to
[www.sausalcreek.org/volunteer/
calendar.html](http://www.sausalcreek.org/volunteer/calendar.html).

Special Solstice Workday ☼ BBQ

December 15 from 9am-noon
(see reverse).

Seed Gathering

~times and locations vary~

Help gather native seeds for propagation efforts. Call Kristen Hopper, 387-9744, for schedule or go to www.sausalcreek.org/volunteer/nursery.html#seed.

Aquatic Insect Sampling

~3rd Sunday of the month~

- Sunday 12/21, 1/18, 2/15, etc.
9:30am-noon; info: Emma Brown,
527-2507.

Water Quality Monitoring

~1st Saturday of the month; please call first to confirm ☼ for location~

- Saturday 1/4, 2/1, 3/7, etc.
9am-noon; info: Mark Lane,
219-8036.

Bird Monitoring

~Quarterly outings in 2004~

Saturdays, 1/10, 4/10, and 10/9, early in the morning. Call for more info and check www.sausalcreek.org/volunteer/teams.html.

Outdoor Education Docents Needed

~Final program of the year~

- Wednesday 12/10. Work with students in Dimond Canyon or the Joaquin Miller Park Nursery. Preschedule with Sue Morgan at jmpnpnenviroed@yahoo.com, or call 501-FOSC.

December '03-January '04 newsletter contributors:

Kathy Kramer, Linda Morse, Karen Paulsell, Mark Rauzon, Jennifer Stanley, Pete Veilleux

The Friends are sponsored by the Alameda County Flood Control and Water Conservation District and the City of Oakland, with additional support from CH2M Hill.