



# Friends of Sausal Creek

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

April - May '05

## Monthly Meetings

**April 20**—Simone Whitecloud, local naturalist, will give a slide presentation on resident birds of prey that will be in their peak breeding season in April.

**May 18**—In honor of Watershed Awareness Month, Susan Schwartz, Executive Director of Friends of Five Creeks, presents "Green Thread in the Urban Fabric—Walks to Explore New and Upcoming Restoration."

## On the Trail to Becoming a Docent

Becoming a docent with the Friends of Sausal Creek fulfills a deep yearning of mine to learn more about the plants, trees, birds, and creeks in my East Oakland neighborhood, as well as to participate with my community in being a good steward of the land, and to work with the children of Oakland public schools. After participating in the program for the first time, I returned home with great enthusiasm and commitment for the Sausal Creek Explorers.

On my first outing with the program, docent Dianne Farber and I walked with six students of diverse sizes and cultures from Glenview School's fourth-fifth grade class on a loop including Big Trees and Sequoia-Bayview trails in Joaquin Miller Park. Each young explorer chose a unique tool and learned about the integral role it played. One held the compass to tell us which



direction we were going. One took responsibility for the map to make sure we were on the right trail. Another toted the magnifying glass to view up-close bugs caught in webs, while another carried

the bug book to identify which bugs we were seeing. A fifth child handled the specimen jar to carry back items to examine under the microscope in the afternoon and the sixth brought the portable first aid kit.

We compared the native California blackberry with its thorns close together and soft enough to touch, to the non-native Himalayan blackberry with its sharp intermittent thorns and invasive nature. We discussed the importance of protecting the watershed of Sausal Creek, noting that any pollutants in the streams would eventually flow into the Bay, affecting the quality of life for fish and other marine organisms. We talked about erosion as we looked at the exposed roots of giant redwoods along the trail.

We selected an area where understory plants were needed to encourage biodiversity. Each child carefully planted hedge nettle or bee plant, which had been grown in the nearby native plant nursery. Throughout the morning, students would point out

slugs, mushrooms, spiders and spores—each an opportunity to learn more about the abundant ecosystem of which we are a part.

The filtered light streaming through the giant redwood, bay laurel, and coast live oak trees is such a contrast to our daily urban environment, and yet both are part of the same city. "Where are we standing now?" Dianne asked the students. "We're in Oakland, California!" they would shout. "And proud of it," I thought.

—Jenn Biehn

*FOSC Environmental Education Program would like to thank the L.J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation, Dean Witter Foundation, Alameda Countywide Clean Water Program, Friends of Oakland Parks and Recreation, the San Francisco Foundation, and anonymous donors for their generous support.*

## Board is Strengthened by Two New Members

The Board is pleased to welcome two new members, Sue Morgan and Kristin Ohlson. Sue is the director of FOSC's successful education program, the Sausal Creek Keepers and the Sausal Creek Explorers. Through a part-time Teacher on Loan contract between FOSC and the Oakland Unified School District, Sue directs the program's educational content, and manages the hundreds of students and dozens of teachers and docents who participate. Kristin, a retired lawyer, is an avid birder and a watershed resident. She has worked with the Sierra Club on local open space issues. She currently works with the Friends' restoration committee. Kristin recently joined the fundraising committee to facilitate better grant writing for specific restoration projects. The entire Board is very happy to be strengthened by the skills and creativity these women bring. There remain open Board seats. If you are interested in, or even curious about, joining the Board, please feel free to contact me at [president@sausalcreek.org](mailto:president@sausalcreek.org).

—Sheelab Weaver

The Friends are sponsored by the Alameda County Flood Control and Water Conservation District and the City of Oakland, with additional support from private citizens . . . like you!

## SUPPORT THE WORK OF FOSC

Please help us maintain and expand our efforts in the Sausal Creek watershed by making a donation today!

Mail this form with check made payable to:  
Friends of Sausal Creek, P.O. Box 2737, Oakland, CA 94602.  
FOSC is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization and your contribution is fully tax-deductible. A receipt will be sent for your records.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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AMOUNT OF DONATION

\$100  \$50  \$25  \$12  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Don't miss our monthly meetings on April 20th and May 18th, 7-9pm at the Dimond Library. Newsletter printed on recycled paper. Thanks for recycling!

*The sixth and final article in the series about FOSC's Biodiversity Project.*

### Dimond Canyon Riparian Site

The Sausal Creek watershed is largely occupied by grassland, redwood forest, coastal scrub, and oak woodland. The plants in these communities all have evolved ways to survive in this land of seasonal drought. Most demonstrate some form of dry season dormancy. The riparian plants have developed a different approach, choosing to sidestep the drought by following the creek in a long, sinuous band. Along many stretches of the creek, conditions are moist and lush throughout the year. In other sections the creek may dry out late in the season, though water remains underground, and within the reach of roots.

The Friends of Sausal Creek's first and largest restoration project focused on the riparian area near El Centro Avenue. Since 1997 we have worked with public agencies and neighborhood volunteers to clear the slopes of invasive plants and replant them with local natives. Now, as we walk along the creek, we can see that the first plants we planted are growing up and filling in. Soon the alders and willows will arch their canopies high overhead, nudging up against the bays, oaks, and buckeyes on the slightly drier adjacent slopes. In the shade of the big trees grow shrubs such as dogwood, currant, elderberry, and rose. We find the creekbanks covered with herbs - California blackberry, elk clover, bee plant, fern, sedge,



**CALIFORNIA BUCKEYE**  
(*Aesculus californica*)

and horsetail. Right next to the water, we might discover the beautiful scarlet monkey flower, creek parsley, speedwell, or creek rush. When the rain falls, the creek rises, scouring and washing out loose soil, undermining and carrying away unprotected banks. Erosion control is a major component of our creekside work. We have planted many willows and dogwoods to grow a dense mat of roots, which help hold the banks against the unnaturally high flood flows of our urbanized watershed. Together these plants play a major role in enhancing riparian habitat by providing food and shelter for many species of insects, birds, and small mammals. They cast shade on the stream, keeping temperatures low and oxygen levels high for the trout

*continued >*

## FOSC ACTIVITY CALENDAR

Unless otherwise noted, call 501-FOSC or email [coordinator@sausalcreek.org](mailto: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](http://www.sausalcreek.org).

### Monthly Meetings

*5<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month.*

- Wednesday 4/20, 5/18, 6/15.  
7pm-9pm at the Dimond Library,  
3565 Fruitvale Ave.

### Board of Directors Meetings

*2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month.*

- Wednesday 4/13, 5/11, 6/8.  
7pm-9pm at the Chabot Space  
& Science Center. All welcome!

### Saturday Workdays

*Most, but not all Saturdays.*

*Check website or call for details.*

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

### Aquatic Insect Sampling

*5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month*

- Sunday 4/17, 5/15, 6/19.  
9:30am-noon; info: Emma  
Brown, 527-2507.

### Water Quality Monitoring

*5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month;*

*please call first to confirm &  
for location*

- Sunday 4/17, 5/15, 6/19.  
9am-noon; info: Mark Lane,  
219-8036.

### Outdoor Education Docents

*Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9am-noon*

- Work with Oakland students  
doing restoration/propagation  
in the Sausal Creek watershed.  
Preschedule with Sue Morgan at  
[jmnpnenviroed@yahoo.com](mailto:jmnpnenviroed@yahoo.com) or  
531-6293.

that live in the pools and dart behind exposed roots when people or coyotes or bears come looking for a drink and a meal. Well, probably no bears this year, but once, and maybe again some day. . .

—Michael Thilgen

## TREASURER HUNTING

FOSC is currently seeking a Treasurer to serve on the Board of Directors. I have been privileged to serve in this capacity for the past two years, but must step down for now. If you have bookkeeping, accounting, or financial management experience and are interested in learning more, please respond to [treasurer@sausalcreek.org](mailto:treasurer@sausalcreek.org).

—Diana Surber

### April-May'05 newsletter contributors:

Jenn Biehn, Diana Surber, Michael Thilgen, and Sheelah Weaver.  
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