

Edgewood



Explorer

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EDGEWOOD'S GRASSHOPPERS

By Paul Heiple

Grasshoppers are easy to find in Edgewood this time of year. Also known as short-horned grasshoppers because of their short antennae, these insects are in the order Orthoptera (straight wing, referring to the forewing of many that are held straight along the back). Within the short-horned grasshopper family Acididae, we find spur-throated, slant-faced, and banded-winged grasshoppers.

Spur-throated grasshoppers are named for the spur in their throats just behind their mouths. These are the most common grasshoppers and the ones that cause the most damage.

Populations of these insects can explode into vast numbers that eat everything in their path. Clouds of these grasshoppers can number in the trillions. Some species can have more than one generation a year. Fortunately in Edgewood, these grasshoppers do not reach such numbers; they are just the common grasshoppers in the grasses and weeds. They are often seen supplying food for the large spiders, a task I doubt they wish to perform.

I have not seen any slant-faced grasshoppers in Edgewood. They can be identified by their face, which slants down and backward, giving the head a cone-shaped, pointy look. They are much less common than the spur-throats.

Banded-winged grasshoppers are often found in areas with little vegetation like roads and paths. Their behavior gives them away. Instead of just hopping out of the way, these insects fly up, make noise and flash their back wings, which are often brightly colored. They then land some distance up the path or road and seem to disappear, their color now blending with the soil

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PARKS FOR THE FUTURE

We are including a flyer in this Explorer describing the Parks for the Future campaign. Last year San Mateo County voters cast a majority of YES votes for this initiative when it appeared as Measure A. Unfortunately, the measure failed to gain the required 2/3 majority.

We are now hoping to bring Parks for the Future to the voters again in 2008. We hope you will take a moment to review the flyer. That's our own docent and weeder John Allen leading a group through Edgewood in the middle picture.

You can help spread the word about this very important effort to secure dedicating funding for our county parks. ♻️

BIOCONTROL REPORT VIII

By Paul Heiple

There's not much to report in the world of yellow star-thistle biocontrol this year. It was a good year for the weevils and flies but they are still not enough to take out YST in Edgewood. They once again gave us extra time to remove the plants before they went to seed, a major plus for control that the weeders have enjoyed for several years now.

New biocontrol species may be on the way to Edgewood in the next few years, and I will report their arrival when it occurs.

Meanwhile, much progress is being made with mowing and hand pulling and if the bugs do not show up soon, there may not be any YST in Edgewood for them to infest. ♻️

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OAK TITMOUSE

By Lee Franks

The weety, weety, weety song and the husky tsick-a-dee-dee call (much like the chickadee sound) of the Oak Titmouse is a sound of our oak woodlands. These little birds (5.5") are ordinary looking, but an oak woodland would seem empty without their subtle presence.

The name "titmouse" comes from European sources: tit is Scandinavian for little, and mouse is a corruption of mase, the Old English word for bird.

Appearance



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The Oak Titmouse (*Baeolophus inornatus*) is a drably colored bird with a small pointed crest. Their upper parts are gray, and their underparts are grayish white. The coloration of the crest and face is similar to the remaining upper parts. They have black eyes in an almost blank face. Legs and feet are also black.

Sexes are alike in color, but males are slightly larger than females.

Behavior

Oak Titmice actively move from branch to branch and tree to tree. They prefer to stay close to cover, flying between trees in shallow undulating motions. They are very rarely seen on or near the ground. Seeds and insects are the main food taken.

Their primary method of capturing insects is gleaning on bark and, to a lesser extent, foliage.

Their bills are used in a variety of ways to expose arthropods: pecking and probing into crevices, chipping away bark, and pulling apart leaf galls, flowers, curled dead leaves, and lichens. They sometimes eat grubs out of acorns.

Whereas Edgewood's chickadees gather in winter flocks, the Oak Titmouse, which is in the same bird family (Paridae), is usually found alone, in pairs, or mixed in with a flock of chickadees.

The titmouse eats with its feet. They are one of the few perching birds that can use their feet to hold seeds while they break them open.

Sounds

The Oak Titmouse is highly vocal, and individuals are most commonly recognized by their chatter-like calls which males and females utter throughout the year. Males may sing infrequently during the non-breeding season, with singing intensity increasing toward spring.

The song is a series of repeated whistled notes of 3 to 7 syllables, each comprised of one low and one high note. Females apparently have the capacity to sing, but do so only rarely.

No ventriloquist's dummy, the Oak Titmouse has a remarkable alarm call which is a loud scold that fades off as if the bird is moving into the distance. This may fool predators into chasing the phantom bird while the titmouse stays safely hidden.

Breeding

The Oak Titmouse nests in natural cavities and

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(GRASSHOPPERS, Continued from page 1)
 or rocks. This is surely a way to confuse and startle any predator and then hide from them. There are several species in Edgewood, judging by the wing colors I have seen. These grasshoppers are common but do not become so numerous as to be destructive. I suggest you go out and look for these animals in the next few weeks along the service road. With pictures and some detective work, we could identify some of them down to the species level. ☼

(OAK TITMOUSE, Continued from page 2)
 old woodpecker holes, some of which are visible in a large oak near Edgewood's restrooms.

They also use the nest boxes installed throughout the park. Females build their nests with grass, moss, feathers, and shredded bark, mostly from March through April.

Titmice frequently pair up with the same mate throughout their short life, which seldom

exceeds five years. Life expectancy in birds is closely correlated with size; the larger the species, the longer it is likely to live. Few birds die of old age; they just run the same gamut of risks year in and year out until they are killed.

Most titmice find a mate in their first fall. Those that do not are excluded from territories and must live in marginal habitats until they find a vacancy.

The female lays 3 to 9 eggs and is the primary incubator. The young are tended by both parents for 16 to 21 days. Parents continue to tend to young for another three to four weeks after the young leave the nest.

The overall population of Oak Titmice is exhibiting significant long-term decline.

Reference

The Birds of North America, No. 485, 2000: Carla Cicero. ☼

MEMBERSHIP DUES

New or renewing members may clip and complete this section to pay **tax-deductible** annual membership dues. Please send your check payable to **Friends of Edgewood Natural Preserve** to the return address on the back of this panel. Renewing members can determine their membership expiration date by checking the six-digit code to the right of their name on their mailing label. For example, if the code is 06/2006, membership runs through June 2006. Questions, call (866) GO-EDGEWOOD or contact membership-coordinator@friendsofedgewood.org.

 Name

 Address

 City State Zip

 Day Telephone Eve Telephone

 Email

- \$10 Student/Retired** (includes quarterly newsletter)
- \$25 Friend** (newsletter)
- \$50 Advocate** (newsletter, set of 6 Edgewood photo greeting cards)
- \$75 Supporter** (newsletter plus choose one):
 - Set of 6 Edgewood photo greeting cards and 1-year subscription to BAY NATURE magazine
 - Toni Corelli's Flowering Plants of Edgewood
- \$100 Steward** or **\$250 Guardian** (newsletter, set of 6 Edgewood photo greeting cards, plus choose one):
 - 1-year subscription to BAY NATURE magazine
 - Toni Corelli's Flowering Plants of Edgewood
- Please do not send any premiums.**
- I am enclosing a gift of _____.**

Please send ___ copies of *Common Native Wildflowers of Edgewood* (\$2.50), ___ copies of the *Edgewood Vascular Plant List* (\$3.00), ___ copies of the Apr-Jun 2004 BAY NATURE magazine (\$6.00), ___ copies of Flowering Plants of Edgewood Natural Preserve (\$25.00). Includes tax, S&H. All items subject to availability.

I would like to participate in the following:

- Docent program
- GIS/GPS mapping
- Newsletter/web
- Public relations
- Weed management
- Schools outreach
- Habitat restoration
- Adopt-A-Highway



UPCOMING EVENTS

- ❑ *Sunday, October 21, FRIENDS OF EDGEWOOD GENERAL MEETING.* Save the date for a fun afternoon at Edgewood with your fellow Friends.
- ❑ *Monthly, BIRD WALKS.* Audubon Society docent Lee Franks leads monthly bird walks starting at 8 am at the Day Camp kiosk. Upcoming walks are on 9/30, 10/28, and 11/18. For more information contact Lee at birdwalks@friendsofedgewood.org.
- ❑ *Monthly, ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY.* The next sessions are scheduled for 10/6, 11/4, and 12/1. Contact Ken Seydel to volunteer or for more information. ♻️

PASSING OF BOB HESS

We are very sad to report the passing of our dear and long-time friend, Bob Hess. We have known Bob as a cheerful and willing volunteer and supporter of the Friends and other environmental organizations.

Our best wishes go to his wife Elly, also a very special volunteer and Friend of Edgewood, and to all those who knew and loved him.

You can learn more about Bob's life and how you can honor his memory by reading his obituary in the San Francisco Chronicle, <http://www.legacy.com/SFGate/Deathnotices.asp?Page=LifeStory&PersonID=93992323>.

And thank you, Elly, for your generosity to the Friends of Edgewood in Bob's name. ♻️

The Edgewood Explorer is published quarterly by the Friends of Edgewood Natural Preserve, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving Edgewood for the human, plant, and animal generations to come. The newsletter is produced by Bill Korbholz with assistance from Laverne Rabinowitz and contributions from many Friends. For more information about the Friends of Edgewood, visit our web site at www.friendsofedgewood.org, mail us at PO Box 3422, Redwood City, CA 94064-3422, call or fax toll-free at (866) GO-EDGEWOOD (866-463-3439), or email info@friendsofedgewood.org.

Friends of Edgewood Natural Preserve
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*Don't miss the fun, food, and festivities
at our annual meeting Sun. Oct. 21.
Watch your mailbox for details.*

