

Edgewood

EXPLORER

FRIENDS OF EDGEWOOD • SUMMER 2020

President's Message: Our Community is Strong

by Peter Ingram

As I reflect on the events that have unfolded since the closure of all San Mateo County parks on March 27, I am struck by the effects on the full spectrum of Edgewood volunteers, supporters, and visitors – including the dedicated professionals who work for the San Mateo County Parks Department and provide important services in these challenging times. Even with the first phase of re-opening that went into effect on May 4, the closure has been hard on us all, and it has been particularly disappointing to our many volunteers. By working closely with the Parks staff we have found ways to maintain important activities – like weeding, bluebird monitoring, tending the native garden, checkerspotting, and nurturing Edgewood Farms – deploying limited teams following strict safety protocols, and in an abundance of caution. So we have kept some continuity going in our habitat preservation and restoration work.

The flipside of these efforts is symbolized by the shuttered Bill and Jean Lane Education Center, which normally has an outsized footprint of human activity in constant and joyous motion. It hurts to realize how many connections and learning opportunities have been lost due to the closure. As I write this, it remains unclear when we may be able to reopen the Center safely and resume some level of programming. I know that the Parks Department and the Friends board will strive to ensure visitor and volunteer health and safety above all else. Our collaboration provides a sound foundation for making good decisions and carrying out yet-to-be determined operational plans.

Through these past weeks the public has shown how much they love and appreciate Edgewood, and that reinforces the importance of what the Friends do when we see and hear so many people expressing how they view access to local open space as an essential activity that they deeply value.

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The Friends community has adapted rapidly and are supporting each other virtually with Zoom meetings, get-togethers, and sharing of photos and ideas. We remain connected and fully engaged in the work at hand even if we are not in the preserve together as much as we would wish.

As we move into the summer season, we are looking for new ways we can provide opportunities for volunteers during the COVID-19 recovery period. We would love to hear your ideas.

So what could happen next? The answers will emerge out of the County's systemwide parks re-opening plan which lays out a four-phase reopening strategy that is unique to each park.

We are currently in Phase One. The County will move into Phase Two sometime in early June if public health data combined with observed safe behaviors by visitors meets the Health Officer's requirements. For Edgewood, the difference we will see in Phase Two is the re-opening of restrooms. For the Parks staff, the challenge will be to maintain a rigorous cleaning and disinfection schedule and a large supply of hand sanitizer. If there are setbacks or unforeseen problems, the Parks Director may simply hold in Phase One.

Check our website (foew.org) and the County Parks website (Eparks.net) for the most current information. We will keep our volunteers apprised, our fingers crossed, and our hearts open. Please be safe and stay healthy as you enjoy the preserve's trails!



Photo ©2020 Barrie Moore

2020 Docent Class Interrupted, New Strategies Developing

by Sandy Bernhard

This year's docent class has a unique place in the story of Edgewood. We were more than halfway through the four-month training, which starts in January of each year, when the shelter-in-place order came.

The class had studied the history, geology, and wildlife of Edgewood in evening presentations and in long walks in the preserve. They'd done homework and practiced talking about 64 key Edgewood plants, with 45 more to go. They'd just begun the more in-depth study of plant life, with sessions on flower morphology and the ecology of woodlands, and were looking forward to exploring the chaparral and grassland communities as flowers increased. Each student had been matched with a mentor, an experienced docent, with whom they could practice their skills. The final sessions of the program cover strategies for leading hikes, but this spring there would be no public docent hikes for students to shadow or participate in.

Usually the training concludes with a late April graduation party, just as the tidy tips and goldfields reach their peak. This year, the class is following the pattern of the California manroot – a tremendous commitment to growth and flowering in early spring, then a hunkering down until next year's rains bring an awakening.

Here's to the Docent Class of 2020, which will (we hope!) now be the truly exceptional and undaunted Class of 2020-2021: Sabra Abraham, Deborah Anthonyson, Jim Bertram, Bruce Homer-Smith, Lindsay Joye, Evelyne Lang, Sue Lindner, Lorraine MacSwain, Carol Mathews, Barrie Moore, Doug Ward, and Shanti Zinzi. Our plan is to not recruit a new set of students in the fall, except perhaps to

fill any open seats, and to repeat the entire training starting in January. Training will be adapted to keep us all as safe as possible. The evening sessions may well be teleconferences; perhaps we will break the group into smaller sets for the field hikes. It is impossible to be certain what the program will look like, but the docent-training team remains committed to the preserve and to the educational mission of the Friends of Edgewood.

Heartfelt thanks go out to our dedicated team of instructors: History (Kathy Korbholz), Geology (Paul Heiple), Wildlife (Kenny Hickman), Leaf and Floral Morphology (Trevlyn Williams), Oak Woodlands (Howie Smith), Chaparral and Coastal Scrub (Ken Himes), Grasslands (Alf Fengler), and Walks with Children (Junior Explorer team led by Laurie Alexander). An extra thank you, as well, to Trevlyn Williams and Deanna Schiel, who can be relied upon to help with everything from bouncing around ideas to schlepping chairs.



Many California native plants and animals have developed strategies for surviving tough times – whether our hot, dry summers or periodic droughts and wildfires – waiting for the reviving

rains to spring back. The Bay checkerspot regularly checks out during diapause, geophytes like Fremont's star lily can lie dormant underground for years, and even annuals like miniature lupine can wait years to germinate until conditions are just right. We are not sure what our public hikes will look like next spring, but we know that docents will continue to play an important role in connecting people with the preserve, and more largely, with all the wonders of nature. *Photo ©2019 Kathy Korbholz*



In April, while working as the designated checkerspotter at Edgewood, I came across a rather tame jackrabbit ready to take a nap in the shade in the chaparral off the Upper Clarkia Trail. Perhaps the absence of the horde of weekend visitors at the park made it so much calmer than normal. *-Alf Fengler, photo ©2020*

A group of Weed Warriors found a native plant new to the Edgewood list. *Ancistrocarphus filagineus*, woolly fishhooks, had not been reported from San Mateo County until April 9. *Calflora photo ©2020 Alice Cummings [CC BY-NC 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)*



Showcase the Park You Love

Story and photos by Bill Korbholz

Many of you are familiar with our Green Grass project, one of the four components of Project 467 – Protecting Every Acre (the others being Weed Warriors, Bay checkerspot butterfly restoration, and Thornmint and Pentachaeta preservation).

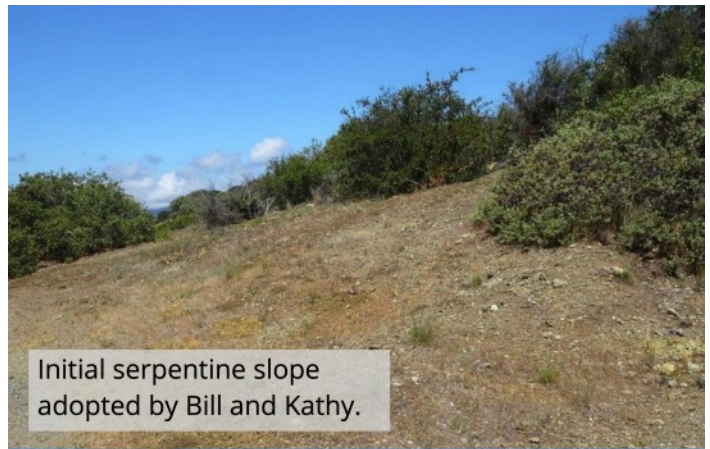
As a reminder, Green Grass aims to restore Edgewood's non-native grasslands to their former floral beauty and species diversity by reducing or eliminating weeds and promoting greater cover of native plants. Approximately 40% of Edgewood consists of grassland, and almost all of Edgewood's grasslands have been significantly degraded due to the invasion of weeds, especially non-native grasses. While the Weed Warriors can effectively remove thistles and other forbs (non-grasses), it's very difficult to treat grasses by hand. By employing the best practices of grassland management, including mowing, de-thatching, selective chemical treatments, and promising new technologies, the Green Grass initiative will significantly increase native cover in our grasslands.

A part of the Green Grass initiative is to establish Showcase Sites. These are areas, typically under one acre, that are adopted by an individual or small team that takes responsibility for restoring and maintaining the site.

We used to call these areas Adopt-A-Sites, and we have current and past examples. Our first site adopter was former docent Roger Myers. In 1999, he adopted a grassy slope now dubbed Roger's Knoll off of the Edgewood Trail that had become infested with yellow starthistle (YST). I still remember Roger dutifully removing YST one-by-one, and counting all 27,666 of them that year, effectively clearing the site of YST before he moved out of the area.

Carolyn Dorsch decided to target a cousin of YST, tocalote, that occurred in a population off of the Clarkia Trail. Like YST, tocalote can be very persistent, but she made considerable progress before she stepped aside for personal reasons.

My wife Kathy and I adopted a high-quality serpentine slope off of the Sunset Trail near the Sunset Gate in 2001. Our initial goal was to preserve that slope from invasion of YST and other weeds. As time went on, we gradually expanded our site to include an adjacent knoll that had been abused by off-trail funseekers. And this year, we further extended our area to include the site that PG&E cleared of brush in 2019, a former chaparral ecosystem that had now become mostly bare ground, and a true weed



Initial serpentine slope adopted by Bill and Kathy.



Bare ground resulting from removal of dense weeds.



PG&E's brush clearing in 2019 exposed bare ground.

magnet. So now our site extends all the way to Hillcrest Way. We have dubbed our site Korby Korner's. After removing most of the weeds, we plan to distribute native plant seeds collected from Edgewood throughout the site to discourage new weed infestations.

Would you like to adopt your own piece of heaven at Edgewood? We will guide you on site selection and train you on techniques for identifying and removing weeds, promoting native plant growth, and maintaining your site year over year. If you're interested in pursuing this, drop Bill a note at info@friendsofedgewood.org.

Summer Blooms at Edgewood

by Bruce Homer-Smith

Chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*)

Chamise fills California hillsides in the summer with thousands of tiny, fragrant white blooms.



The flowers form sprays at the ends of branches. Each one has five separate, cream-colored petals and about a dozen stamens.



Chamise has short, needle-like, evergreen leaves with a higher-than-average concentration of lignins, molecules that fill the spaces between cell walls. The lignins prevent water loss and make the leaves stiff. The leaves are also filled with pungent, volatile oils which deter browsing.



Chamise does well after periodic fires. Their oils make the fire burn hotter, burning their neighbors but not affecting their starch-filled burls just below ground level. After the fire, chamise grows vigorously from these burls and can completely dominate an area before other plants get a chance to colonize.

Chamise can grow more than 12 feet tall and can live more than 100 years. Its deep shade and leaf toxins deter undergrowth.

As a dominant plant in the chaparral, chamise can sometimes exclude most other plant life. (Chaparral is a habitat unique to California, a collection of plants that do well in nutrient-poor soil with wet winters and dry summers. These plants have adapted to summer droughts and regenerate quickly after wildfire.)

Chamise's adaptations are perfect for California chaparral but its benefits are limited to that habitat. This abundant shrub is not native outside the California Floristic Province.

At Edgewood, chamise is particularly dense on the Clarkia Trail, but it can also be found in other chaparral locations in the preserve.

To learn more, check out <http://PlantID.net/?Taxon=Adenostoma+fasciculatum>

Do you have a favorite Edgewood wildflower or plant? Please tell me about it at bruce@plantid.net.

About the Author – Bruce Homer-Smith is the author of PlantID.net, Edgewood's plant identification website. Find the full Edgewood Plant List at <http://plantid.net/?PlantList=Edgewood+Preserve>.

Junior Explorer Program Honors Mission, Considers Challenges

by Laurie Alexander

“It is so kind of you guys to offer up your own time to serve our community,” Michael Healey told Junior Explorer (JE) docents Barb Erny, Laurie Alexander, and Jer Jager following a hike with five youth along Edgewood trails in February. Healey is leader of the Bulldog Riders of Siena Youth Center, an after-school program in Redwood City. Healey commented that Jer “did a great job giving our youth a hike full of informative parts along the way. I know my program will come and visit again in the future.”

In early March, three teachers and “Patel’s Special Scholars” (eight children in grades 3-5) set out on a quest to experience “our local beauty and wonders of nature, and the plants and animals that call it home.” Special Day Teacher Sandip Patel learned about the Junior Explorer program from a chance encounter with JE docent Pam Fletcher. San Mateo County Parks Foundation (support.parks.org) funded the transportation from Sylvia Cassell Elementary School in San Jose as part of the Foundation’s Youth Environmental Education Field Trips program for low income youth. Patel wrote, “I wanted to reach out and let you know how great the trip was yesterday! The students really enjoyed the experience. Thank you for all your help organizing and making this possible. Our three docents for the trip (Jan [Rusnak], Linda [Franklyn], and Carol [Hankermeyer]) were awesome! The three ladies were patient, kind, and worked well with the students.”

Many more Junior Explorer field trips with local groups of children and youth were scheduled in Edgewood for the

spring, but these were the only two field trips completed before the field trip season was closed down due to concerns about the new coronavirus.

For the last few years, all second grade children from Foster City Elementary have experienced field trips to Edgewood in May. This year, all 164 second graders experienced a “virtual field trip” to Edgewood. Teacher Lisa Garrity and Junior Explorer docent Susan Gross (Lisa’s mom!) put together an online packet for students to learn about banana slugs and dusky-footed woodrats, how seeds travel, and what we can learn from a tree. Activities included using a simple key of trees at Edgewood (foew.org/explore-edgewood), practicing some math skills (measurement and symmetry), writing poetry, and listening to a reading of *The Acorn and the Oak Tree*. Students honed their observation and questioning skills in nature by practicing “I notice. I wonder. It reminds me of,” developed by the BEETLES Project at Lawrence Hall of Science. Kudos to Lisa and Susan for quickly developing this fun distance learning!

In this new age of social distancing and disinfection, it can be difficult to imagine the role that an essentially hands-on program like Friends of Edgewood’s Junior Explorers will have. This summer, we are exploring the challenges and opportunities for carrying out the Junior Explorer mission: to inspire wonder and attitudes of caring for nature. Got ideas, skills or resources to help? Share them with us by emailing JuniorExplorers-Coordinator@FriendsofEdgewood.org.



At the end of April, Edgewood Farms, Friends of Edgewood’s onsite seed amplification project for the Green Grass initiative, was invaded by deer that dined on a salad bar of *Clarkia rubicunda* and

California poppy. Howie Smith noticed and Bill Korbholz and Perry McCarty put up deer netting. Due to disruptions caused by the coronavirus, the deer netting above the wall at the back of the farm had not been installed yet. The seed beds at Edgewood Farms were planted with 17 species of native plants in February. Photo ©2020 Barrie Moore



Edgewood's Centenarian

by Kathy Korbholz, with thanks to Trish Taylor



George Taylor, longest private resident on the Edgewood property, passed away from complications of COVID-19 on April 18, 2020. Born June 6, 1919, he was nearly 101!

For more than 40 years, three generations of Taylors lived at what would become Edgewood Park and Natural Preserve.

Benjamin Grant Taylor was one of two benefactors named in Henry Finkler's 1930 handwritten will. Taylor bought out the other heir and Baywood Glen, as it was officially named by the State, became a weekend getaway for Taylor, his wife and four children. The youngest child was George.

During World War II, George, his aging parents and his sister Betty Lou (Trish Taylor's mom) lived in the large old Victorian house which was situated where the day camp restroom is now. Betty Lou's husband, Butch, (who ironically also had the surname Taylor) joined them there after returning from the war. The Taylor family was forced off the property by the state's exercise of eminent domain in 1967. George Taylor rented the property back from the state and lived there until November of 1980.

Trish Taylor remembers her uncle fondly. "George was the family pragmatist, handling all tasks requiring a handyman, a dog trainer, a trail builder, a horse trainer, and an executioner of chickens, and as noted, a peerless tender of tools ... as well as a cool-headed savior to us kids from the consequences of mischief gone bad."

Trish and her brother Mike recount many charming happy stories of Uncle George, such as the time George was waist deep in the muddy cement reservoir trying to push that "dumb calf" out of the water while the kids pulled her halter from above. The calf was saved.

George was a graduate of UC Berkeley and Hastings College of Law. George's father (Trish's grandpa) was Clerk of the California State Supreme Court and hoped to practice law with George. According to Trish, George and Grandpa handled a probate case as one of their first



collaborations. In his disgust over the greed of people not included in the will in that case, George abandoned the practice of law, saying "to be a successful attorney, I'd have to compromise my personal code of ethics."

Trish says, "He truly was one of the most decent people I ever knew. For the rest of his working career, George drove school buses for the Sequoia Union High School District. He was a disciplinarian who ran a tight ship, but he was well liked by the kids — I continue to meet people who tell me, 'George was my bus driver.' Many would be astonished to think that an attorney chose bus driving over law practice!"

Garth Harwood of Hidden Villa wrote to the family: "George was an inspiration to me during his many years of volunteer service at Hidden Villa, working the trails. Beyond that, he also 'got' the fun factor. Although, ... he could be a bit gruff, he understood that kids thrive on having some surprises and oddities to discover and wonder about ... I found him engaging and

absolutely passionate about his tools."

George Taylor at Hidden Villa using his well-kept tools – his pride and joy.

All photos courtesy Trish Taylor.



George Taylor truly was unique, and left this world a far better place. The Friends of Edgewood will continue to remember George through the picture display at the Ed Center, and as we retell the rich history of the Taylors at Edgewood. 🦋



Prototype for a new Edgewood Preserve Social Distancing Tool (EPSDT)? The EPSDT is also known as a one-meter quadrat frame used to estimate the number of nectar and larval food plants in selected 1x1 meter plots. *Right photo* ©2020 Alf Fengler; *top and bottom photos* ©2020 Barrie Moore



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Bill and Jean Lane Education Center at Edgewood Park and Natural Preserve

Closed until further notice.


Please check the website for the latest information.

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DO YOUR PART 6 FEET APART

- Edgewood Park and Natural Preserve is now open for hiking and equestrian use.
- Many trails will be one-way to help visitors practice safe social distancing.
- Please review maps at the trailheads and obey posted signs.
- The Bill and Jean Lane Education Center, park restrooms, and picnic areas remain closed for now.
- Restrictions may change throughout the summer.
- For updates, please check www.friendsofedgeswood.org.

The Edgewood EXPLORER is published quarterly by Friends of Edgewood Natural Preserve, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and restoring Edgewood and educating the public about its treasures. Friends of Edgewood Board of Directors: Laurie Alexander, Sandra Bernhard, Lara Fox, Kathy Goforth, Peter Ingram (president), Bill Korbholz, Kathy Korbholz, Linda Leong, Angela Mallett, Perry McCarty, Barrie Moore, Todd Reimche. The newsletter is edited by Michele W. Conway and supported by contributions from many Friends.