

# Edgewood

# EXPLORER

FRIENDS OF EDGEWOOD • SUMMER 2022

## Family Hikes in Edgewood Nurture Nature Connections

Kid-friendly family hikes have been a popular addition to the annual spring hikes at Edgewood Preserve. From March through May, we have offered nine kid-friendly hikes to about 60 participants. These shorter hikes cover up to 1.5 miles and take about 1.5 hours—half as long as adult wildflower hikes in both distance and time.

Friends of Edgewood docents help children and their grown-up companions discover some of the many plants and animals that call Edgewood home. The hikes inspire families to form lasting connections to nature and create shared family memories on the trail.

Hiking with the support of a family group and under the guidance of a knowledgeable docent allows children to feel safe in what may be a novel environment for them. Frequent stops allow young visitors to explore what they encounter in the preserve and ask questions. Docents model methods of observation (seeing, smelling, listening), nurture curiosity, and promote informal science skills. Later, parents or older siblings can use these same activities to enjoy nature at home or in another open space.

Docents who have led hikes with families reported that children had a million questions, were interested in smelling all sorts of things (bay leaves, coyote mint, buckbrush flowers, yarrow leaves), and used their bright eyes to spot flowers, woodrat nests, manroot fruits, and tons of other things.



DeeDee Stovel noted the four-year-old on her hike quickly identified that it was an ant crawling around on the miners' lettuce "plate" looking for some breakfast. Carol Hankermeyer said she was "blown away" when a four-year-old came up with the term *nocturnal* independently, referring to the charismatic dusky-footed woodrat.

Beto Bracho, Todd Reimche, DeeDee Stovel, Carol Hankermeyer, and Laurie Alexander led family hikes this spring. Future kid-friendly family hikes will be announced on Eventbrite ([friendsofedgewood.eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com/foew)) and on our website at [foew.org/events](https://foew.org/events). We also invite you to visit the Ed Center for advice about easy hikes and enrichment activities for children. ❖



Docent Carol Hankermeyer welcomes a family to Edgewood (left). Visitors of all ages enjoy smelling yerba buena (center). Young visitors learn stewardship as they move a California manroot stem from a well-trodden path to a safer fence (right). Taking a close look at a molted exoskeleton of a cicada (top right). *Photos by Laurie Alexander*

# Summer Parks Project Will Reduce Wildfire Fuel in Edgewood

Provided by San Mateo County Parks Dept.

President's note: *Since early 2021, Friends of Edgewood has been in conversation with San Mateo County Parks staff about the county-wide wildfire fuel reduction initiative and the county's priority to lessen the threat of fire along Edgewood's eastern boundary, between the Day Camp and the Sunset Gate. Led by the county parks' Natural Resource Management team, there have been several meetings and a site hike with FoE volunteers, who have provided significant information on the locations of special plants and animal habitat in the 100 foot-wide work zone. We are apprehensive about the potential impacts to the preserve, but we understand the need to reduce the risk of wildfire. And we appreciate the generous amount of time and attention Parks has provided for us to have a voice in how the project has been planned.*

San Mateo County Parks will reduce wildfire fuel hazards over 19 acres in Edgewood County Park and Natural Preserve to reduce the threat of wildfire spread and improve community safety. This wildfire fuel reduction project began in May and will continue into July 2022. The project is one of the parks department's 32 Wildfire Fuel Management Program projects.

[parks.smcgov.org/forest-health-community-safety-initiative](https://parks.smcgov.org/forest-health-community-safety-initiative)

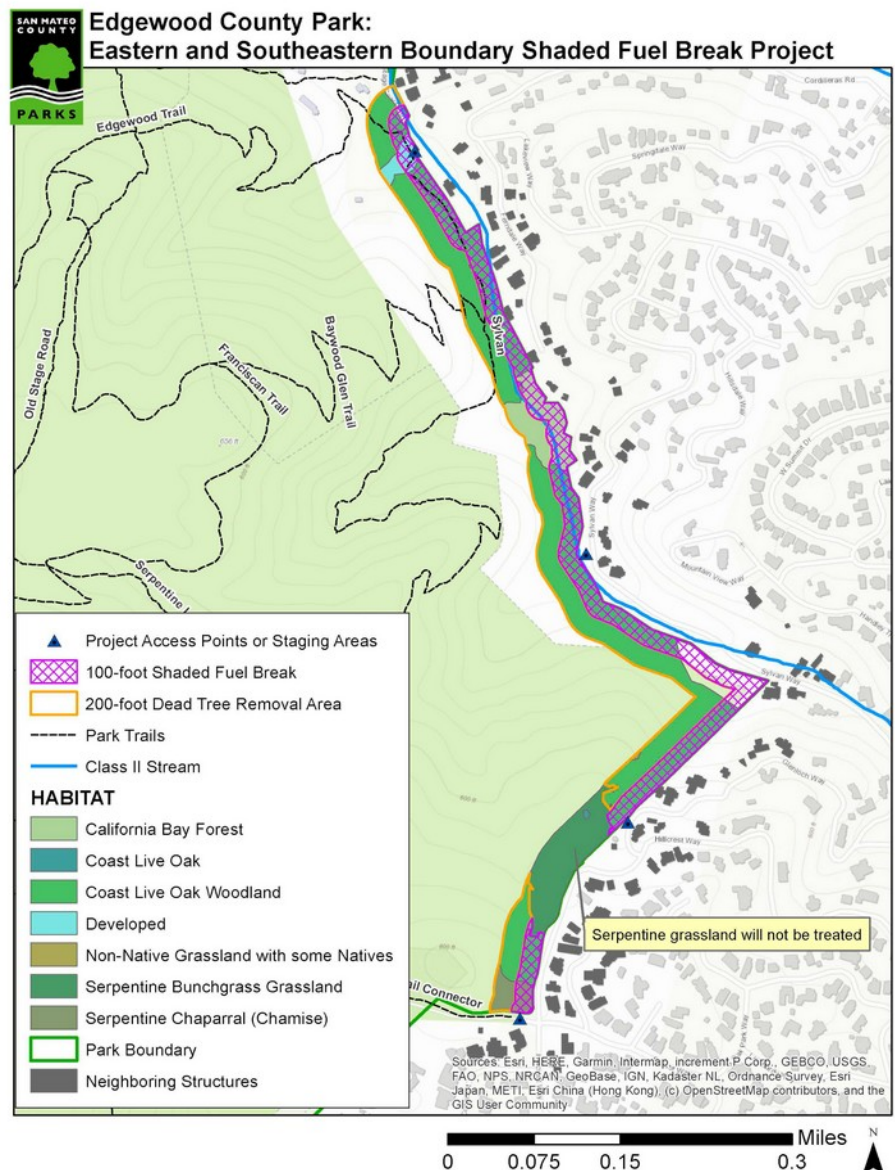
A shaded fuel break will be created along the eastern and southeastern park boundaries to:

- ✓ Reduce the amount of dense vegetation in the project area and lower the threat of wildfire spread to residences nearby.
- ✓ Improve community evacuation routes and enhance access routes for emergency crews.
- ✓ Improve health of parklands by promoting habitat diversity and resiliency against disease.

This work includes thinning dense understory vegetation and removing small trees six inches in diameter and trees that are dead and dying, including those impacted by sudden oak death. This work will also include downed woody debris management. Most of the work will be

accomplished using hand tools and chain saws. Trucks and small chippers will be on site. Cut material will be chipped and dispersed as mulch in the work location. The work is anticipated to take 45 working days to complete, taking the project end date to mid-July, but no trail closures are anticipated to be needed beyond May.

Biological monitoring and protection measures will be in place to protect the park's animal and plant species, including nesting birds, dusky-footed woodrats, bats, butterflies, and rare plant species. A qualified biologist will conduct pre-project surveys and train project staff on environmental impact avoidance measures. Flagging will be used in the project area to clearly mark sensitive areas. Regular project updates will be posted at [parks.smcgov.org/edgewood-park-fuel-reduction](https://parks.smcgov.org/edgewood-park-fuel-reduction). ❖



## 2022 Docent Class Graduates!

by Sandy Bernhard

Every docent graduation party is a special event, but this year's celebration was especially joyous. The 2020 class had been stopped in its tracks mid-way through that first COVID spring. Two years later, six members of the 2020 class gamely began the 16-week course again, along with three new classmates.

Evening classes were held via Zoom. The Education Center just seemed a bit too snug this year. The online model proved to have some advantages—no navigating dark roads and parking lots, as well as easy set-up and recording of the presentations. The slightly smaller than usual class also gave the Saturday morning hikes in the preserve a little more breathing room.

Should you meet them on the trails, please echo our congratulations to the 2022 Docent Class: Sabra Abraham, Lindsay Joye, Sue Lindner, Carol Mathews, Barrie Moore, and Doug Ward, original members of the 2020 class, joined by James Higbie, Eddy Higbie, and Dee Himes. Ten-year-old Eddy, whose knowledge and love of nature inspired us all, will lead hikes with dad, James. We wish them all many happy years sharing Edgewood's beauty and stories.

Heartfelt thanks go out to our dedicated team of instructors: Kathy Korbholz (history), Paul Heiple (geology), Gina Barton (birds), Howie Smith (morphology), Rebecca Reynolds (woodlands), Ken Himes (chaparral and coastal scrub), Alf Fengler (grasslands), and Laurie Alexander (hikes with families). We truly could not run this program without them.

To find out how you can become a Wildflower Docent visit [foew.org/become-a-docent](http://foew.org/become-a-docent) or contact me, Sandy Bernhard, the training coordinator at [docent-training-coord@friendsofedgewood.org](mailto:docent-training-coord@friendsofedgewood.org). ❖



### Look Before You Sit! Story and photos by Sandy Bernhard

In Edgewood, folks stopping to sit on what looks like a barren spot could easily harm a micro-habitat. In May, the wildflower survey hikers discovered two tiny native plant species growing on a crusty bank at the north end of the Live Oak trail.

Dwarf evax (*Hesperivax acaulis*) and common bluecup (*Githopsis specularioides*) were previously unrecorded in Edgewood Preserve! Calflora records only one [now other] location for these two species in San Mateo County: Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve.



Dwarf evax



Common bluecup

That Edgewood, which has been so lovingly botanized for decades, can still surprise us with its treasures, is testament to the preserve's extraordinary diversity and to the power we all have to notice and act to protect its wealth.

# Distinguishing Barleys, Ryes, Bromes, and Fescues in Edgewood

by Bruce Homer-Smith

In this article, I'm hoping to expand your grass world to include the barleys, wild ryes, bromes, and fescues. These four genera (plant groups) all have awns (bristles) and are pretty easy to distinguish if you know what to look for.

## Barleys and Wild Ryes Have Spike-like Inflorescences

As you can see in the pictures, barleys and wild ryes have floral groups (called spikelets) that connect directly to the grass stem in an alternating pattern.

Barley's genus name, *Hordeum*, is from the Latin *to bristle*. Barleys bristle with long awns and awn-like glumes, sort of like a bottle brush.

Edgewood has two non-native species and the native meadow barley. Meadow barley is a bunch grass (stems grow from a single root crown).

In Edgewood, you can find meadow barley in the meadow where the Ridgeview and Sunset trails connect. You will often find non-native barleys in disturbed areas, for instance, along the road to the picnic area.

For more about barleys, see [classic.plantid.net/Glossary/Hordeum.htm](http://classic.plantid.net/Glossary/Hordeum.htm).



Meadow barley (*Hordeum bracyantherum*). Photo, left, by Wilde Legard [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/); Photo, right, by Zoya Akulova-Barlow [CC BY-NC 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/)

Wild rye's genus name is *Elymus*. As with barleys, wild rye's floral groups (spikelets) connect directly to the stem. However, each spikelet shows 2-9 florets, each with its own reproductive parts. The florets are flattened (not cylindrical), and each produces an awn (bristle) whose length varies between species. In general, wild rye awns spread across a flat plane as opposed to the more three-dimensional look of barley awns.

Edgewood has four native wild ryes. Beardless wild rye has almost no awns. (Beardless, get it?) Squirrel tail has awns up to eight inches. Notice how the spikelets indent slightly into the stem.

You can find squirrel tail in the grassland along the Edgewood trail, just south of the Serpentine trail. Just look for grasses with incredibly long awns.

For more on wild ryes, see [classic.plantid.net/Glossary/Elymus.htm](http://classic.plantid.net/Glossary/Elymus.htm).



Beardless wild rye (*Elymus triticoides*). Squirrel tail (*Elymus multisetus*). Photos by Wilde Legard [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/)

## Bromes and Fescues Have Branched Inflorescences

These grasses are different. Their floral groups (spikelets) do not connect directly to the stem but wave around in the breeze on thin branches.

Brome's genus name is *Bromus*. Bromes have floral groups (spikelets) that show 5-10 narrow, often flattened florets in a woven pattern. Each floret has a single awn (bristle). They're like wild rye spikelets, but on branches.



Edgewood has three invasive bromes: rigput (two-inch awns), red brome (reddish), and soft chess (soft from downy hair). Edgewood’s two natives are the lovely California brome and Chinook brome.

You can find California brome and Chinook brome all along the Edgewood trail.

For more on bromes, see [classic.plantid.net/Glossary/Bromus.htm](http://classic.plantid.net/Glossary/Bromus.htm).

Chinook brome (*Bromus laevipes*). >  
 Photo by Keir Morse [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/).  
 < California brome (*Bromus sitchensis*).  
 Photo by Wilde Legard [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/)



Fescue’s genus is *Festuca*, from Latin *straw*, the color they turn in the fall. They’re similar to bromes, with floral groups (spikelets) connected to a drooping branch, and show many florets per spikelet. However, the florets are leathery and cylindrical, not flattened. They connect to the branch on one or two sides, often causing a wobble in the branch between florets.

Keep an eye out for California fescue with its long, graceful, drooping leaves and inflorescence. You can find it along the Franciscan trail. It’s also prevalent in the native plant garden.

For more on fescues, see [classic.plantid.net/Glossary/Festuca.htm](http://classic.plantid.net/Glossary/Festuca.htm).

< California fescue (*Festuca californica*). >  
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To review, here’s a cheat sheet:

Genus	Common name	Awns	Inflorescence	Florets	Look for
<i>Hordeum</i>	Barley	Yes	Spike-like	Hidden	A spike bristling with awns; florets are hidden
<i>Elymus</i>	Wild rye, wheatgrass, squirrel tail	Yes	Spike-like	Flattened	A spike where each floral group (spikelet) shows flattened florets
<i>Bromus</i>	Brome	Yes	Branched	Often flattened	Branched with woven, flattened florets
<i>Festuca</i>	Fescue	Yes	Branched	Cylindrical, leathery or membranous	Branched with many leathery florets per spikelet

Keep in mind that it’s one thing to categorize things on paper and another to learn grasses in the field. I’ve found the criteria I’ve laid out here to be useful as I walk, looking for grasses I can recognize. However, I’m often puzzled to know whether a particular grass has, for instance, flat or cylindrical florets. The great thing is to know enough so you’re curious to look closer; I’m hoping this article does that for you. Once you have an idea about what to look for, you can learn more from each encounter. Have fun with it!

For many more details about Edgewood grasses, see [plantid.net/Classic/Help/LearnAboutGrasses.htm](http://plantid.net/Classic/Help/LearnAboutGrasses.htm).

# Discovering Behaviors of Breeding Birds

by Gina Barton

It's always a treat when birds are breeding. Edgewood hosts quite a few breeding birds, some of which are year-round residents, while others are migratory, returning from their wintering grounds to breed here. Because of the differences of who is here when, you can discover birds that already have nests and/or young. Dark-eyed juncos, which while migratory, are at Edgewood year-round. Other birds, like black-headed grosbeaks, have just returned to Edgewood to begin breeding. With this lovely variation, interesting behaviors and strange sounds are always available for your discovery.

Even if you don't know what species you have spotted, you can start watching behaviors and listening for strange sounds to start deciphering what is happening this time of year. Although we are used to identifying a bird and continuing on, I encourage you to take a few moments to observe what the bird is doing because you can learn a lot!

You can watch for clues to indicate where a bird is in its breeding cycle—building a nest, incubating eggs, feeding nestlings, or feeding fledglings. For example, western bluebirds have different plumages (the collective covering of feathers) based on their sex and age, which can also aid you in deciphering behaviors. Since the preserve has many western bluebird boxes, this is a bird that is easy to observe.

What clues should you watch for? If you spot a bird carrying something, try to identify what that might be.

Does it look like potential nesting material? Is it a twig, piece of grass, or other object that looks like good nesting material? Usually, you will notice a long object hanging from its beak when it's perched or trailing alongside the bird in flight. Vireos are known to use lichen as part of their nests, so if you spot a Hutton's vireo (which can present its own challenges!), see if it's grabbing a piece of lichen.

Does it look like food? Watch to see what the bird is doing. Is it collecting food for its young or foraging for itself? If a bird is carrying food around, it's likely feeding its young, which

could be nestlings (still in the nest and mostly featherless) or fledglings (mobile and mostly feathered).

Whatever the bird you observe is carrying, watch where it goes because it may not be going far. Often, the bird will give away where its nest is. You can also listen for the chirps of the young in the nest as they hear the adult approach, which is a sure sign you have found a nest. However, if you see that the bird is also watching you, retreat as you keep watching. The bird may not want you to see where it's going.

Listen for unfamiliar sounds of fledglings that don't quite sound like a "normal" adult, and watch for fledglings chasing parents while begging with wings flapping rapidly to encourage their parents to feed them!

A word of caution: if you do discover an active nest, refrain from spending too much time around it, especially for nests close to or on the ground. Birds may abandon nests and repeated visits from people can leave a path or scent trail for other predators to follow. You could unknowingly lead a predator like a California scrub-jay right to a nest! So, take your photo quickly and be content even if it's blurry, obscure any locations of the nest on iNaturalist, and refrain from taking others to see the nest. We all love to share excitement of what we've found but we can do so in a way that keeps that bird's nest safe and sound.

I hope that you'll now take more time to see what a bird is doing so you can learn more about its behavior, regardless of how much you might know about that particular species.

Find out how to know when you're too close to a bird's nest at [audubon.org/news/birdist-rule-28-know-when-birds-think-youre-too-close-their-nests](http://audubon.org/news/birdist-rule-28-know-when-birds-think-youre-too-close-their-nests).

Find out more about migration at [allaboutbirds.org/news/the-basics-how-why-and-where-of-bird-migration/](http://allaboutbirds.org/news/the-basics-how-why-and-where-of-bird-migration/). See [allaboutbirds.org/guide/](http://allaboutbirds.org/guide/) for other bird information and photos. ❖



Bewick's wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*) carrying nesting material in mid-March. Photo by Tom Grey [www.pbase.com/tgrey](http://www.pbase.com/tgrey)



At the yerba santa switchback on the upper Sylvan in March, the wildflower survey hikers met San Mateo County Parks Ranger **Joel Brownlee-Cervantes** hard at work removing three galvanized pipes that for many years have been sticking up, at varied angles and lengths, from the trailbed. He said the pipes had once provided support for a retaining wall on the steep bank. The group thanked him for removing the trip hazard. Who wants to watch their feet when there's so much else to see? —Sandy Bernhard

**Friends of Edgewood Volunteer Celebration**  
 SAVE THE DATE! July 9, 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.  
 Watch for details in your postal or email inbox.



Join the San Mateo County Parks 2022 Take a Hike Challenge. Seven hikes have been selected this year to show off the variety and beauty of the county parks. One of the hikes is in Edgewood County Park and Natural Preserve. Find details on the county parks website, [parks.smcgov.org/2022-take-hike-challenge](https://parks.smcgov.org/2022-take-hike-challenge).

## Become a Friend of Edgewood!

JOIN or RENEW your membership ONLINE or by MAIL:

**ONLINE:** [foew.org/donate](https://foew.org/donate)

**BY MAIL:** Send this completed form with your donation amount circled to Friends of Edgewood, 3 Old Stage Coach Rd., Redwood City, CA 94062-3801.

\$25 \$50 \$100\* \$150\* 250\* \$500\* \$\_\_\_\_\_

Please make me a Sustaining Member and charge my credit card \$\_\_\_\_\_ each month. (\$5 minimum)

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Thank you for supporting the Friends of Edgewood. Friends of Edgewood is a 501(c)3 nonprofit. Donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

## Switch to a Sustaining Membership Easier for you. Better for Edgewood.

Friends! A sustaining membership lets you make a monthly donation via your credit card and have a huge impact on programs like Project 467, Junior Explorers, and more. Can you spare just \$5 or more per month to support Friends of Edgewood and the park we love?

Go to [foew.org/donate](https://foew.org/donate), and follow directions to become a sustaining member, or email us at [mem@friendsofedgeswood.org](mailto:mem@friendsofedgeswood.org), and we will help you get set up.



Est. 1993

# Friends of Edgewood

PRESERVE • EDUCATE • RESTORE

Friends of Edgewood Natural Preserve  
3 Old Stage Coach Road  
Redwood City, CA 94062-3801

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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

Open Saturdays and Sundays, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.  
Please check the website for the latest information.

To learn more about Friends of Edgewood, visit our website at [foew.org](http://foew.org), call us toll-free at (1-866) GO-EDGEWOOD, or email us [info@friendsofedgeswood.org](mailto:info@friendsofedgeswood.org).



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SUMMER 2022 • VOLUME 29 NUMBER 2

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- The Bill and Jean Lane Education Center is open Saturdays and Sundays, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Masks are required indoors.
- Trail maintenance work will continue through fall. Please review trail maps, obey signs, and stay on approved trails.
- Friends of Edgewood Volunteer Celebration, July 9th, 3 to 5 p.m.
- Sign-up for upcoming hikes on Eventbrite at [friendsofedgeswood.eventbrite.com](http://friendsofedgeswood.eventbrite.com).
- Check out our website at [foew.org](http://foew.org) to learn more about volunteer opportunities.
- Help support Friends of Edgewood by visiting the Edgewood store in the Ed Center or online at [foew.org/shop](http://foew.org/shop).

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, Sandy Bernhard, Nancy Enzinger, Kathy Goforth, Peter Ingram (president), Kathy Korbholz, Linda Leong, Angela Mallett, Perry McCarty, Barrie Moore. The newsletter is edited by Michele W. Conway and supported by contributions from many Friends.