Sedgwick Field Notes

Occasional Ramblings for Volunteers and Friends of the Sedgwick Reserve

March 2007

Volunteer Class of 2007

by Laura Baldwin

Volunteer Class of 2007, L to R: Dennis Beebe, Kay Quigley, Suzanne Rivera, Frank Heath, Ron Huber, Sam Babcock, Mary Hennessy, Dennis Nord, Bruce Straits, Reserve Director Kate McCurdy, Pam Rochell, Tina Collins, Doug Binkley. Not pictured: Rick Fellows

On February 9 we celebrated the certification of 13 new volunteers at the reserve. Continuing volunteers and staff are really happy to welcome these folks into the ranks, as they bring with them a rich store of experience, skills and talents. After completing a rigorous 16-week training program, the new volunteers aced their final exams, impressing examiners Nick DiCroce, Andy Lentz and Fred Machetanz with their mastery of Sedgwick lore. So we broke out the champagne and feasted. Director Kate McCurdy generously shared the warm ambience of her newly refurbished ranch house digs for the after-party. Thanks to Kate and Barb for a great party, and welcome to a wonderful new group of volunteers who have already shown their generosity and persistence.

K.I.N.

by Susan Brooks

The KIN students have had a busy winter with December field trips to Sedgwick, January trips to West Storke Wetland, and February visits to the Arroyo Hondo Preserve (AHP). Sedgwick KIN docents also participated in a stream ecology workshop with Scott Cooper, sponsored by AHP.

During their December visits, students planted their KIN plots with purple needle grass, grey pines, buckwheat, and chaparral mallow. The Native Plant Nursery had all the plants ready to go, as well as acorns collected for each group. Working together in their KIN groups, students helped each other with digging, planting, and measuring. After all the work was done, there was still time to explore the creek for rocks and tracks.

KIN visited the West Storke Wetlands in Goleta for the January 2007 field trips. Lisa Stratton, Ecosystem Director at CCBER, had obtained funding for the KIN students to learn about the importance of wetlands and to participate in a restoration project.

February field trips to AHP were a great success. Volunteer Coordinator Jane Murray and the AHP docents worked hard to plan for the trip and to design activities that would tie into the KIN program. Each KIN student group was led by an AHP docent who had volunteered specifically for the program. Sedgwick docents also participated, helping to integrate the students' experiences with Sedgwick and Goleta. The students learned about watersheds, riparian habitats, and fresh water stream ecology. They explored the flowing creek, measuring water chemistries and looking for trout and aquatic insects. The toe biter carrying babies on its back took the award for best find.

In March, the students will return to Sedgwick. They will be surprised to see the transformation that "their ranch" has undergone since their December visit.

Thank you to all who are making the KIN program a success for the kids.

"Getting to know home is the most human and necessary of occupations. To give that power of observation to students is to give them something of infinite value and importance – something to do for the rest of their lives."

From the introduction – *Into The Field, a guide to locally focused teaching.* By Ann Zwinger

Bird Walks

by Fred Machetanz

The Black Phoebe---A Good Neighbor

This small, sprightly flycatcher, distinctively colored black above and white below, can be seen sallying out from low perches or wires for insects almost any time of the year at Sedgwick Reserve. In addition to the black and white pattern of adults, juveniles have cinnamon-edged wing bars and rumps.

In 1927, Ralph Hoffman noted that the Black Phoebe was one of the first birds on the coast to adapt itself to the presence of humans. At Sedgwick, these phoebes' nests can often be found under the eaves of the studio, the main house and some of the outbuildings. The nest, usually made by the female, is a semicircular cup of mud, weeds and grass cemented, without horizontal support below, to a vertical surface two to three inches from a ceiling or eave. This overhang protects the nest from the weather and affords concealment from larger bird predators. The same nest site is often used year after year.

In the spring the male performs a song-flight courtship display, rising, fluttering and singing and then returning to its perch. After pairing, the male tends to forage more in open areas while the female feeds around and within tree canopies.

The female lays 3-6 white eggs (usually four) with the last laid speckled with chestnut. The eggs are incubated by the female for 15-17 days. After hatching, the young are fed by both parents. For the first five days the young are fed by regurgitation, and then, after continuing parental care, are ready to leave the nest in two to three weeks. A pair may have two broods per year.

This phoebe's diet is almost entirely insects though an occasional pepper berry or Elderberry is taken. It is also reported that some Black Phoebes will take minnows or small goldfish from a pond. This bird is typically found near water ---certainly for mud for the nest and perhaps for the insects that water attracts. The Black Phoebe usually hawks for insects from a perch, and after a chase a sharp snap of its bill signals a catch. Small prey is eaten in flight while larger prey is returned to the perch, beaten and then eaten whole. (BONA) When flying insects are scarce, it may hover to glean insects from a bush, the surface of a pond or the ground. Like many other birds, the phoebe coughs up indigestible parts of its food as pellets.

It never shares its feeding area with other Black Phoebes except in the breeding season but is sometimes seen feeding in the same area as its close relative, the Say's Phoebe. On such occasions it may even alternate perches with the Say's. Though feeding in the same area, however, comparative analyses of stomach contents show the Black Phoebe to be eating relatively smaller prey like flies and wasps while the Say's Phoebe is eating a greater proportion of grasshoppers, crickets and larger flying prey. The Say's Phoebe usually forages in more open areas. Flight comparisons of the Black and Say's Phoebes show the Black Phoebe to be a more direct flyer while the Say's Phoebe is more buoyant and moth-like in its flight.

The two primary vocalizations of the Black Phoebe are its basic call, a sharp "chip" or "tsip" and its Spring song of four syllables, "Fee-bee, Fee-beer, the first two with upward inflection , the second two with downward inflection. A common behavioral characteristic is the dipping and fanning of its tail accompanied often by the "chip" call. This behavior is also noted in the Say's Phoebe, its relative in the same genus.

William Dawson, in 1923, called the Black Phoebe "The Prince of Flycatchers". We are fortunate, today, to have this cheerful and helpful bird for our neighbor.

Images and map are from the Cornell University Birds of North America website: http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/BNA/

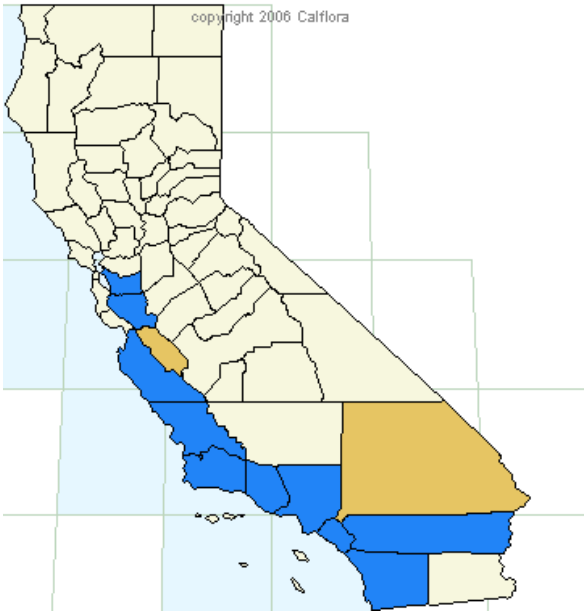
Cuttings from the Nursery

By Steve Schulz

Botanic Name: Ribes speciosum
Common Name: Fuchsia-flowering gooseberry
Family: Grossulariaceae

The various species of Ribes, commonly known as gooseberries and currants, are widely distributed in temperate regions of the northern hemisphere in both North America and Eurasia. They belong to the family Grossulariaceae. The group known as gooseberries have spiny branches and were formerly placed in the genus Grossularia. Currants, on the other hand, lack spines. Both groups contain species grown for their fruit as well as ones grown for their ornamental features, whether flowers, fruit, or leaves (often lobed or toothed).

Ribes speciosum , our featured plant, is known as the fuchsia-flowering gooseberry due to its bright-red pendant flowers, which are somewhat reminiscent of slender Fuchsia flowers. It comes from coastal regions of the southern half of California and down into Baja California. In nature, plants are summer-deciduous, in keeping with the dry-summer climate of its native area.



Distribution in California based on 104 Observations contributed to the Calflora Plant Observation Library

Blue indicates that there is a specimen from this county in an herbarium.

Mustard Yellow indicates the county falls within the described species range published in botanical literature.

Map and distribution information came from www.calflora.org/

Happenings at the Ranch

By Kate McCurdy

•Potable water is on its way to Sedgwick! Hanley Construction is currently working on the reserve between Lisque and the old barn welding together and burying a water line. The end of the line will be our very own hydrant next to the historic hay barn. By the end of February we'll have a water source for fire fighting, and eventually we'll be able to purchase potable water from Woodstock. The hydrant may not look like much, but trust me, it's a milestone for the reserve, as well as a symbol of seven years of contractual wrangling that our very own Joe Byrne did on behalf of Sedgwick and the Woodstock Homeowners Association. Thank you Joe!!

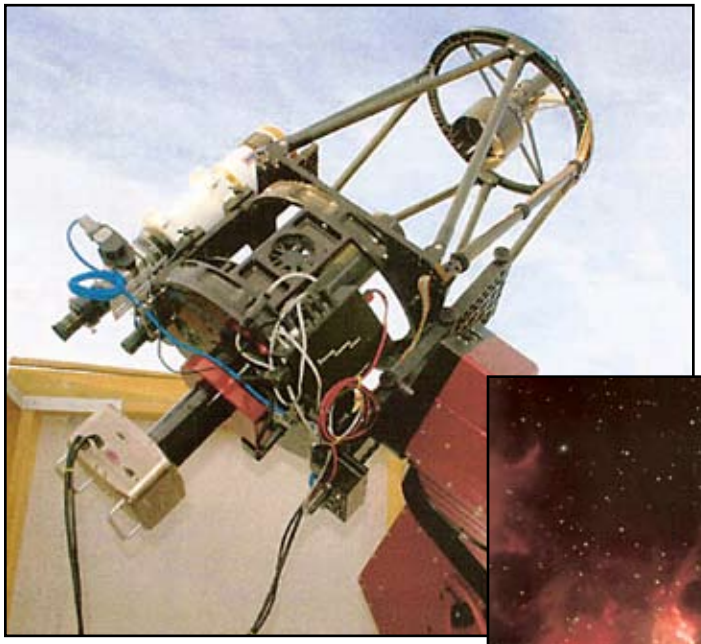
The new water hydrant next to the barn.

•Tipton Meeting House: The J.E. and Lillian Tipton Foundation hosted a planning workshop on January 29th to discuss design concepts for the upcoming Tipton Meeting House. An impressive group of architects, LEED consultants, engineers and green building contractors spent the day at the reserve and an amazing building is now emerging that melds function, environmental responsibility and an aesthetic form that will grace the property. The Foundation and the university will be finalizing the design in the next several weeks.

•Sewer system: The planned upgrade to the septic system was postponed last December when bids exceeded the grant money UCSB received from the NSF for the project. Instead of scaling back on the project, we are now pursuing Prop 84 matching funds that will be available in July of 2007. If our stars align (see next topic) we'll be able to move forward with this project before next winter's rain causes another postponement.

•Solar Array: After months of shuffling, all the necessary paperwork has been completed and signed, and we are closer than we've ever been to having solar-generator electricity on the reserve. The final step – getting REC Solar to work with PG&E to get the array connected – is underway!

•The Las Cumbres Observatory (LCO) is planning to break ground on its Sedgwick Site this summer: This project has been the result of an exciting collaboration between the LCO, Sedgwick Reserve, the UCSB Physics Department and the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History (SBMNH). LCO is footing the bill for all planning and construction costs, building the telescope and training partner groups on use of the telescope and how to incorporate astronomy into our K-12 and outreach curriculums. Upon its completion, we'll be able to use the telescope and the worldwide LCO network for K-12 education and outreach in astronomy here at the reserve. It will be our responsibility to provide computer access with internet connections (to be included in the Tipton House), a clear, dark sky for the telescope to operate under, and interested parties to ponder distant galaxies such as the one pictured.



The LCO telescope. Photo at right taken from an identical observatory in French Camp, Mississippi.

•Camping improvements: Rick, Sue, Brian and I will soon be tackling four facility upgrade projects to accommodate this years' LACC and ARC camping groups – upgrading the shower house, converting the pool house to a kitchen, building tent cabin platforms, and covering the pool with a shaded deck where there will be picnic tables and a campfire pit. Ambitious? Perhaps, but greatly needed and possible thanks to private donations and the fi-

nancial support of the Natural Reserve System's main office in Oakland – and to the assistance of those already involved with the Reserve. Carpenters of any skill level are encouraged to join us; we'll be working 2-3 days a week on these projects throughout the spring months. We are also looking for a new(er) refrigerator to replace the small, rusted one behind the studio that is in failing health.

•**Director's Note**: Many thanks to everyone for making my first winter at Sedgwick an enjoyable one. I am still reeling from the loss of my sweet boy Logan on New Year's Eve, but I am settling in and staying busy with work and house projects. I really love it here – not just the land itself (though, come on, who wouldn't love this property?!) but working in the office with Barb, tinkering on projects with Rick and Brian, learning native plants with Steve and Nancy, negotiating my way through the university system under Sue's guidance, envisioning Sedgwick's future with Bill, understanding research needs with Josh's council, and perhaps most importantly, feeling my own pride, enthusiasm and passion for the reserve growing inside me after getting to spend time with each of you, the reserve's volunteer staff. You are a wonderful bunch, both collectively and individually and I feel truly fortunate that we've captured your hearts, skills and talents here on the reserve. Let's do great things in 2007!

Where on the Reserve???

Most of the new docents class should recognize this place even if the photo was taken in the spring.

This photo was taken from the "Blue Schist Trail" at the over look above the Canyon and looking back towards "Grass Mountain."

Docent Calendar

Mar. 10	8:30 a.m. Public Hike
Mar. 10	9:30 a.m. La Colina Jr High 7th grade
Mar. 11	9 a.m. Santa Barbara County Master Gardeners
Mar. 14	KIN-Olga Reed
Mar. 17	10 a.m. Special Hiking Field trip
Mar. 18	8:30 a.m. Astronomy Training
Mar. 21	KIN-Arellanes
Mar. 22	KIN-Santa Ynez
Mar. 23	Los Angeles Conservation Corps
Mar. 23	9 a.m. Continuing Education
Mar. 24	Los Angeles Conservation Corps
Mar. 29	KIN-Ontiveros
Mar. 30	9 a.m. Continuing Education
Apr. 1	April Fool's Bird Count
Apr. 6	Los Angeles Conservation Corps
Apr. 7	Los Angeles Conservation Corps
Apr. 14	8:30 a.m. Public Hike
Apr. 17	9:30 a.m. Summerland School Field Trip
Apr. 19	KIN-Ontiveros
Apr. 20	KIN-Olga Reed
Apr. 23	9:30 a.m. May Grisham School Field Trip
Apr. 25	KIN-Arellanes
Apr. 26	KIN-Santa Ynez.
Apr. 26	9 a.m. Continuing Education
Apr. 27	Adventure--Risk--Challenge
Apr. 28	Adventure--Risk--Challenge

What is It???