

# Sedgwick Field Notes

Occasional Ramblings for Volunteers and Friends of the Sedgwick Reserve

July 2007

## Happenings at the Ranch

By Kate McCurdy

**Tipton House:** The design, floor and site plan is in the final review stage. It's a gorgeous building that has already reached a gold Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design rating and is striving for platinum. It could undoubtedly win architectural design awards. By our next newsletter I will be able to publish design drawings and layout.

**Barn restoration:** The 2,700 square-foot wood barn at UCSB's Sedgwick Reserve served as the operational heart of La Laguna San Francisco cattle ranch for nearly eighty years. Built in 1907, the barn was used to stable horses and store farm equipment, hay, and riding tack. It also housed tractors and a blacksmith shop. As it has aged, use of the barn changed from functional to aesthetic. The barn is an important historic icon and, without restoration, will continue to deteriorate. Our goal for the Sedgwick barn project is to make it safe and useful, and to retain its original character.



Two local philanthropists and barn enthusiasts, Paul Flum and Linda Duttonhaver, have recently granted the University the opportunity to restore the barn. Our goal for the Sedgwick barn project is to make it safe and useful, and retain its original character. This can be done by reinforcing

the structure, adding a metal roof, and carrying out some reconstruction in the interior. Whether we also need to fix the foundation, and the barn's attachment to it, remains to be seen.

The first step in this project is to have an engineer evaluate the barn. The University is currently preparing the scope of work, and it will go out to bid to a local engineering firm. We hope to have an engineering report by the end of the old girl's hundredth year in existence. (Hopefully no one has told her she now belongs to the university!).

**The Las Cumbres Observatory (LCO):** The site was surveyed in late June, and an appropriate sized "story board" (ladder and pole) now marks the site. No word on when the



observatory will be installed, but LCO is still on track to have astronomy training and an up-and-running telescope this fall.

**Adventure-Risk-Challenge:** The ARC kids arrived on July 2nd after taking an eight day backpacking expedition in Sequoia. They are now enjoying busy days on and off the reserve. They are a great group of kids, and it's been a pleasure to have them here. If you've been to the reserve in the past week you've met them and seen their accommoda-



tions – two tent cabins, new picnic tables, an air conditioned studio, new kitchen appliances, and a shaded eating area on the studio patio.

Two ARC events that would be worth attending are a Public Reading, on Wednesday, August 1st, from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Wildling Museum in Los Olivos and the graduation ceremony at the Los Olivos Elementary School on Thursday, August 2nd, from 6 to 8 p.m.

**New main gate:** Thanks again to Mark & Suzi Trubitz for making a contribution of a new electric gate to the reserve's main entrance. We are still working out some bugs to the system so bear with us while we fine tune the electronic sensor that automatically opens the gate as cars leave the reserve. In fact, if anyone discovers the magic position of recognition, please pass it along so we can paint a big red X on the spot!

part of the reserve. In World War II the chains were hung over the sides of Navy ships for soldiers to use as ladders during beach landings. The gate will soon be garnished with several iron works a la Suzi Trubitz – the original Rancho La Laguna cattle brand, and the silhouettes of a golden eagle and an oak.

**Sale of the neighboring Bar-Go Ranch:** I'm sorry to inform you of this bad news, but the 3100-acre ranch South-East of the reserve has been bought by developers and changes are in store for the Brinkerhoff neighborhood. By fall expect 2 of the 18 parcels to be resold, with development



The gate was designed to pay historical homage to the ranch. The metal framed gates were once part of the corral system behind the old barn. We covered the frames with chain material that was once part of a corral on the upper



starting on other lots in upcoming years. If there is any good news in this, it's that the lot sizes are 100-acres plus, and each parcel comes with an agricultural easement so the character of the land will not change too radically. Terrain will largely shield Sedgwick of views of new houses.

**Water trough repair project:** The reserve is pleased to have a new volunteer in our ranks, Criag Leden. Many of you know Craig only through his remote camera work on the reserve. I am including only two of a binder full of photos Craig has accumulated since his first motion-sensor camera went up in May. Please stop by the office to marvel at the whole collection. It will make you realize what a wealth of

natural resources Sedgwick supports, many of which we never see.

What you may not know is that Craig has been working countless hours to maintain his camera line on watering spots on the reserve, and to repair water lines and troughs to make water available to wildlife during this tough dry season. Many water lines and valves froze and broke during



*A Mountain Lion and two Golden Eagles caught by Craig's camera trap.*

last January's cold snap, and we really appreciate Craig for finding problems in the lines and fixing them.

**Director's Note:** As the Zaca fire burns just seemingly a ridge away, we are reminded that 2007 is an incredibly dry year. The fire situation on the reserve is extreme. Although we have done quite a bit of road clearing, mowing, weed whacking and reviewing our emergency operations plan, we remain worried about the potential for fire on the reserve. In light of this the University has instituted the following restrictions until we make it through this extraordinary fire season.

## GENERAL FIRE SEASON RULES

- For anyone entering the reserve, please remember that as always, smoking is prohibited.
- Fires in the BBQ pit must be fully extinguished following use. On windy days only the propane BBQ will be lit.
- Vehicle travel within the reserve has been significantly restricted until the 2007 fire season ends. As much as possible, vehicle traffic is now limited to the entry road into and around the reserve headquarters.
- Anyone needing or requesting access into Lisque Creek Road or Figueroa Creek Road drainages must contact the Reserve Director to arrange for a fire ready chaperone equipped with fire extinguisher, shovel, cell phone, etc.
- Exceptions include reserve staff, scientists with valid research permits, and those working on reserve-sanctioned projects. For them, the following rules apply:
  - Off-road vehicle travel is strictly prohibited.
  - Park only where grass has been mowed.
  - The gator or ATV will be used instead of low clearance vehicles.
  - Finally, please notify 911 and the Sedgwick Office immediately to report trespassers, poachers, vandals, arsonists, pipe grinders or other suspicious characters.

I know this seems draconian, but, even with mowing, vegetation on all unpaved reserve roads in the reserve is tinder dry and highly flammable. It's important that the reserve not burn down during my first year at the helm.

Thanks,  
Kate

# Bird Walks

by Fred Machetanz

## "The Golden Weaver of Sedgwick"?

### The Bullock's Oriole

Chattering in the checkered shade of the oak canopy, the Bullock's Oriole is one of the most conspicuous and colorful birds of the Sedgwick landscape. A summer resident, this towhee-sized oriole arrives here just after mid-March. Later, by mid-August most individuals have left for their wintering grounds in Mexico. A few hearty individuals remain on the coast throughout the winter in lush coastal parks, especially if they contain flowering Eucalyptus.

Adult male Bullock's Orioles (in year two) have a black crown, eye line and chin stripe and bright orange faces, under-parts and rumps. They also flash a large white wing patch and orange-yellow tail with a black center and tip. Females have gray backs, grayish belly and yellow-orange head and breast. Immature males are similar to females but with black eye lines and chin stripes. When compared with the similar Hooded Oriole, the Bullock's is shorter and stockier and its bill is shorter and straighter. Note that the hood of the Hooded Oriole is orange not black.

In behavior not typical of many species, female Bullock's Orioles, like female Black-headed Grosbeaks, sing, often early in the nesting season.

The Bullock's Oriole is found in open woodlands, perhaps near a riparian habitat with oaks, sycamores, cottonwoods and willows. During the breeding season this oriole forages for insects and spiders within the foliage of the oaks and sycamores and takes nectar from flowers. According to the monograph collection, "Birds of North America", orioles eat honeybees, though first extracting and dropping the stinger. In areas where fruit is available, the Bullock's Oriole uses a gaping technique whereby the bill is inserted into the fruit and then opened, allowing the brush-like tongue to sop up juice. Starlings and meadowlarks, in their foraging in the grass, use a similar gaping method for locating insects.

At Sedgwick, the female Bullock's Oriole builds a well-camouflaged, hanging nest fastened to the end of drooping branches on the outer edge of the oak canopy. This pendant nest is constructed of vegetable matter, horsehair or any other string-like material. The three to six unique eggs are incubated for two weeks with the young fledging in two additional weeks.

William Dawson, world-class egg-collector and important individual in the development of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, waxed eloquent when describing the eggs of this bird. "And what marvels in all nature shall exceed that offered in the delicate, fantastic tracteries of a Bullock's Oriole egg. On a background of palest bluish



*Bullock's Oriole, male; Portal, AZ. From Birds of North America, Cornell University, (<http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/BNA/>)*

gray, the calligrapher, having dipped his pen in the well of purplish black, proceeds to scrawl and shade, to zigzag and flourish and vibrate---all this while the obedient oval turns (a dozen times) round and round."

Few will be able to see and appreciate the spectacular eggs of this oriole, but many will enjoy its beautiful plumage as it flies busily among the oaks. The patient observer may be rewarded with a glimpse of its uniquely crafted pendant nest. What a pleasure it is to have this striking summer visitor at Sedgwick.



*Bullock's Oriole, female; Kern Co., CA. From Birds of North America, Cornell University, (<http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/BNA/>)*

# Cuttings from the Nursery

By Nancy Stearns

Botanic Name: *Mimulus guttatus*

Pronunciation: MIM-yoo-lus guh-TAY-tus

Common Name: Common, Creek, Yellow, or Seep Monkey Flower

Family: Scrophulariaceae (Figwort Family)

Common in wetish places, freshwater seeps and other wetland or riparian areas throughout California and the West. A seep is a wetland that forms in areas where groundwater discharges to the land surface. The name “seep” comes from the plant being found in the understory of riparian (of or related to the bank of a stream, river or lake) plant communities, where soil is often moist. This plant can be found blooming from March to October.

*Mimulus* is from the Latin *mimus* “little mime or comic actor” for the face-like corolla, or from the Greek *mimo* “an ape” referring to the monkey face-like corolla; *guttatus*, from the Latin meaning “a drop-like spot”, describes the red dots on both petals and sepals.

This native forb/herb is an annual or perennial, 4-36 inches with yellowish-orange, tubular flowers with red dots. The red dots differentiate it from Sticky Monkey Flower. It has smooth to hairy leaves on long stems with clusters of smaller leaves that are sticky with a resin that protects against desiccation. Hummingbirds love it, deer hate it.

Native Americans used it as a substitute for lettuce and boiled the leaves for food. They also used it for treating skin sores or as a steambath for chest and back soreness.

*Mimulus guttatus* has been a model organism for studies of evolution and ecology. There may be as many as 1,000 scientific papers focused on this species. The Joint Genome Project will release the whole genome sequence in 2007.



© Br. Alfred Brousseau, Saint Mary's College



Image of *Mimulus guttatus* (Scrophulariaceae)

From:

Prof. Dr. Otto Wilhelm Thomé

*Flora von Deutschland Österreich und der Schweiz*. 1885,  
Gera, German

## Outreach

by Sue Eisaguirre

Many thanks to all who have made my first three months at Sedgwick so welcoming. I feel very fortunate to be the Sedgwick Outreach Coordinator and to have the freedom to embellish the K-12 program. My hope is that by year-end, we will not only see many returning schools visit Sedgwick, but that we have opened the eyes of many Santa Ynez Valley students and teachers to what they have in their backyard. *...A reserve that offers a vast opportunity to learn from, appreciate and help restore.*

I plan to stay in tune with current legislation and be ready to act on any programs that may provide funding, thus allowing more students the opportunity to study outdoors. Fund raising and grant writing will remain potential avenues for the dollars needed for new programs at Sedgwick. Probably the most difficult part of my job so far is not being able to do all that could be done and having so little time for such an accomplishment. The funding avenues will, as is true in many parts of education, require a constant effort and patience. The very best part of this job is meeting and working with such wonderful people. A close second is the chance to learn something new about the Reserve on a daily basis. What a treat it is to drive to work and have the beautiful view from Anderson's overlook greet me each day!

My family—Lew, Joseph (14) and Jake (11)—join in my enthusiasm for the outdoors and look forward to exploring the Reserve together with you. Again, thank you for making 90 enjoyable days fly by! I look forward to many more.

## Docent Calendar

July	20	4-7 p.m. Docent Hike - Sedgwick Reserve
July	20	5-7 p.m. Nature's Wonders – Lompoc Olde Towne Market
Aug.	1	6-8 p.m. ARC Public Reading– Wildling Museum
Aug.	2	6-8 p.m. ARC Graduation. – Los Olivos Elementary School
Aug.	28	4-7 p.m. Docent Hike – Full Moon Hike
Sept.	14	4-7 p.m. Docent Hike
Sept.	28	Open House for Docent Recruiting [Tentative]
Oct.	19	Docent Training Program begins
Oct.	20	Day in the Country – Los Olivos
Nov.	2	9 a.m.–12 p.m. Observatory Training

For more information on any of these contact:  
Sue Eisaguirre, Outreach Coordinator  
Phone: 805.686.1941  
Email: eisaguirre@lifesci.ucsb.edu

### Trail Work

*Bruce Straights, Sam Babcock, Rick Fellows, Fred Emerson and I have been doing some work on the Blue Schist Trail. We have cleaned and trimmed the first part of the trail and with the help of Rick and members of the Chumash fire crew cleared three trees. Anyone interested in helping out can contact me at alentz@mac.com or 968-6011.*

Andy

## Calling on all Docents!

Be on the lookout for potential docents. I have flyers you can post or hand out. Let me know how many you want. Or, if you know of someone who is interested in the docent program, email me their name, address and/or email address. I'll get them information right away. Docent training begins on October 19 and runs through February 22, 2008.

Sue Eisaguirre

## What is It???



This is a male catkin from a Valley Oak.