

Sedgwick Field Notes

Occasional Ramblings for Volunteers and Friends of the Sedgwick Reserve

June 2008

10th Anniversary



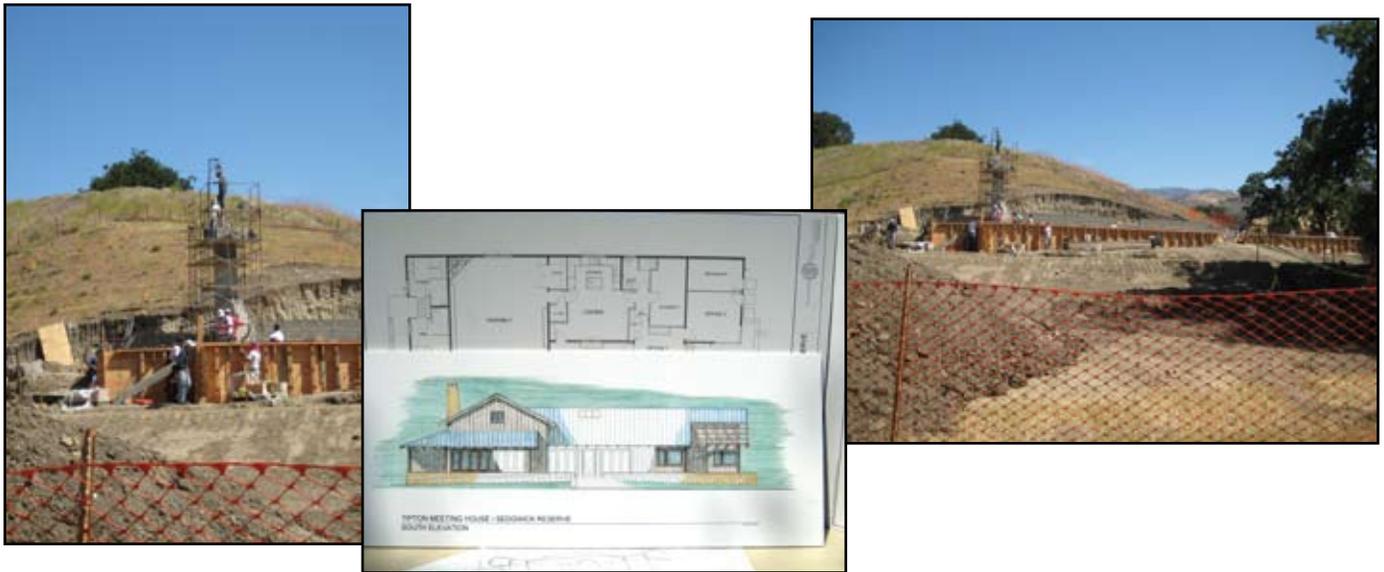
On April 5th more than 250 people gathered to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Sedgwick Reserve. Supporters, educators, docents and friends took nature hikes, road rough trails on mountain bikes and listened to lectures on topics such as pollen movement in California Valley Oaks and the diversity of plant communities on serpentine soils. A BBQ was the hit of the day and, for nostalgia sake, ice cream bars were handed out as dessert. Music was supplied by the T-Bone Ramblers for the enjoyment of all.

Our thanks to all that made the day such a success especially to coordinator Sue Eisaguirre for all her ideas and energy.

Photos by Terry Leden

Construction Begins!!

The Tipton Meeting House



Construction has begun on the Tipton Meeting House, which is being built to “Platinum Rating,” standards of the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Green Building Rating System, the highest possible level for a “green” home, said Dennis Thompson and Jeff King, of Thompson Naylor Architects, Inc.

Among the elements that make the Tipton Meeting House a green building include the use of two onsite water cisterns that will be used to heat and cool the building; the installation of photovoltaic panels to supply about 75 percent of the electricity for the building; natural cross ventilation and ceiling fans for cooling; the use of high efficiency spray foam building insulation; native plant landscaping; shielded exterior lights; waterless urinals and dual flush toilets and a roof rain water catch basin for flushing toilets. Countertops are made from recycled newsprint and the bathroom countertops are constructed from recycled plastics. The floors are polished concrete for easy maintenance and the roof is steel, which will last 100 years or so.

It should be finished in about a year.



Las Cumbres Observatory Global Telescope Network

On the Airport Mesa construction has begun on the base for the Las Cumbres Observatory Global Telescope . Las Cumbres Observatory Global Telescope Network (LCOGTN) is a privately funded, nonprofit organization that is creating a cutting edge science program paired with an innovative education program.

LCOGTN is building a network of completely robotic telescopes worldwide that will all be linked through the internet. The education network will consist of an estimated 24 x 0.4m telescopes. The Sedgwick site will house 4 of the telescopes. In addition, LCOGTN

will have two 2.0m telescopes for scientific follow-up. The telescopes within the network will be able to hand off observations from one site to the next, acting as an unblinking eye on the sky ... all night every night!

The telescope network will be the first of its kind, able to take long term observations of transients (extrasolar planets, supernovae, variable stars, GRBs, and so on). Most objects in the universe vary on some time scale, ranging from fractions of a second, to several days, to several months, years, millennia, all the way back to the beginnings of the universe.

The project is a collaboration between the Las Cumbres Observatory Global Telescope network, Sedgwick Reserve, UCSB’s Physics department and the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History.

Bird Walks

by Fred Machetanz

Greater Roadrunner

Photo and map from Cornell University Birds of North America — <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/>

The Sedgwick Greater Roadrunner is a large, ground-dwelling cuckoo. It is shaggy-crested, long-necked and long-tailed. Its body is brown above and white below with dark, vertical streaks on its breast. The cuckoo's long black bill is decurved near the end and its outer tail feathers are white-tipped. A postocular patch of bare skin, colored pale blue, bordered by white and ending in a red spot, gives the bird a reptilian aspect.



Greater Roadrunner *Geococcyx californianus*

This roadrunner's short, rounded wings, which show a white crescent in flight, limit its flying abilities primarily to extended wing gliding. However, its long, pale, blue legs are adapted for running. Its running speed, which can exceed 15 miles per hour, allows it to catch a wide variety of bugs and insects, small mammals, small reptiles and young birds. Because the roadrunner occasionally caught and ate a young bird, it was unfairly persecuted in the early twentieth century because it was believed that it ate the young and eggs of large numbers of game birds, especially quail.

Oberholser has said of the roadrunner, "This big cuckoo inhabits bare ground with more or less scattered trees and shrubs where it can walk around feeding; it is not much interested in Botany." The roadrunner's body and behavior have made numerous adaptations to temperature change in arid regions. When hot, it features evaporative cooling, gular fluttering, panting and, in addition, extends its wings. Like many birds it lowers its body temperature as much as 6 degrees centigrade at night to conserve energy. In the morning, its temperature is raised by sunbathing. This process is facilitated by the bird turning its back to the sun and baring a black patch of skin and feathers---a true solar collector.

Roadrunners are monogamous and maintain long term pair bonds. Both members of the pair participate in nest building with the male bringing nesting materials and the female actually constructing the nest, a platform of twigs and grasses in a bush or small tree. Three to six white eggs are laid, both parents incubate for 19-20 days, and the young leave the nest in 14-25 days.

The roadrunner's call, given in early spring is a dove-like cooing, descending in pitch, "coo coo coo ooh ooh ooh". Throughout the year the bird also makes a rattling sound, by clicking its mandibles together rapidly.

Celebrated in cartoons and endlessly crafted in Southwestern art, the roadrunner is one of the most popular birds in this area. Named because of its habit of running down the road ahead

of horse-drawn vehicles, it has become a part of the history and romance of early California. During this early period it received the nicknames of Paisano, correo del camino, Chaparral Cock, Chaparral, Ground Cuckoo, Snake Killer and Medicine Bird. With a bit of luck you can see this exciting bird on the road just after the Anderson overlook as you enter Sedgwick Reserve.

The subject of myth and folklore, the roadrunner was believed by native people to symbolize courage, strength and endurance. It was even eaten by them to acquire these qualities. The roadrunner's toe arrangement, termed zygodactyl is common to the cuckoo and woodpecker families. It was believed by some tribes that the symbol "X", characteristic of the bird's footprint, could be used to ward off evil spirits that could not follow the roadrunner because its direction of travel was unknown. Also, in some tales the roadrunner took the place of the stork in bringing babies and early frontier folk believed that the Greater Roadrunner would always lead a lost person to a trail.

The most popular tale was that a roadrunner was capable of trapping a sleeping rattlesnake by surrounding it with joints of Cholla cactus. When the snake awakened and tried to escape it would be fatally wounded by the spines of the cactus and the roadrunner would eat it.

In a final note of trivia, the Greek word for cuckoo is kokkyks from which the word coccyx is derived. Our tailbone or coccyx was named because of the similarity of its shape to that of a cuckoo's bill.

I look forward to your seeing your next roadrunner.



Range map.

Cuttings from the Nursery

By Nancy Stearns

Photos by Mary Jane Delgado

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By Nancy Stearns

Botanic Name: *Calochortus catalinae* S.Watson

Pronunciation: kal-oh-KORT-us kat-a-LEE-nee

Common Name: Catalina mariposa lily

Family: *Liliaceae* (Lily)



Habitat: Heavy soils on open, grassy slopes and openings in brush to 2000', valley grassland, chaparral, foothill woodland, coastal sage scrub. Abundant after fires.

Distribution: California endemic. S. central coast, south coast, especially the Channel Islands.

Description: Monocot, perennial herb (bulb). Arguably one of the most beautiful flowers, quite miraculous to see in a burn area against charcoal black ground. Mariposa is Spanish for butterfly and perhaps describes the way the flowers from a distance appear to be suspended, dancing, or flying off the ground. The flowers are 20-30 mm across, white, tinged lilac with purple, reddish spots near the base; bottom nearly glabrous (without hairs), perianth (calyx and corolla) bulb shaped. Three petals and three sepals up to 3cm long that look like petals. Anthers are light in color, usually pink. Stems are up to 60 cm high, branched above; base bulblet bearing. Leaves are long and basal (found at or near base of plant). Fruit 2-5cm, netted and yellow, stacked in capsules.

Name derivation: *Calochortus* is derived from Greek words kallos, for "beautiful" and

chortus, for "grass", referring to the grassy leaves. *Catalinae* is named for Catalina Island referring to the first specimen collected and described.

Status: Uncommon. Threatened by development. *Calochortus catalinae* is one of 43 species of *Calochortus* described in the Jepson Manual Higher Plants of California and on its cover is *Calochortus pulchellus*, a yellow "fairy lantern". Some members of this genus are quite rare.

Historical Use of Plants: Native Americans used a stout stick to extract bulbs from the ground which were roasted in hot ash pits or steamed before eating.

Propagation and cultivation: By seed, broadcast where the plants will be growing. Takes 4-5 years for a plant to flower from seed. Requires sandy, freely draining soil. Do not like their roots disturbed and so, ideally, should not be moved from pot to pot. Water sparingly during the spring growing and flowering season. Summers dry, winters wet.

NOTE—Please do not dig up wild bulbs to cultivate this plant. It is one way this species can be driven to extinction.

Interesting quote: Larry Ballard, botanist extraordinaire, points out the bees like to "nap" in the open flowers. To quote Mia Molvray: "This type of behavior is observed in some bees and orchids, when the flower is mimicking insect pheromones or is otherwise providing what amounts to a drug for the insect. The pheromone is easier for the plant to produce than "real" nectar containing sugar, so it gets pollinated while the bee wastes its time, although pleasantly so. Whether this is what is happening in *C. catalinae*, I don't know, but the behavior of the bees is most interesting."



THE HIKING PROGRAM

By Nick Di Croce

OUR PUBLIC HIKES

Between the spring rains and the surprisingly cool weather this spring, the Public Hikes have been a real pleasure for both our guests and our docents. The turnout has been averaging 30 to 40 hikers each month, with some of the most interested hikers and entertaining folks that we have had in years.

It's really nice to meet the knowledgeable people we get on our hikes who can provide interpretation that we have never dreamed of. One of the recent participants was a biology professor from the University of Wisconsin who gave us the real scoop on why Wisconsin teams are called "badgers." It has nothing to do with the badgers we see at Sedgwick; it is a derivative from the Welsh miners who would mine in Wisconsin on their tummies and throw out the dirt just like badgers do when they are digging a hole. Think about that the next time you see the Wisconsin Badgers on Saturday afternoon football.

Sam Babcock and Laura Baldwin and their trails committee have done a wonderful job of hiking and marking out trails for us in the northeast section of the Reserve. Thanks to them we now have a real "strenuous" hike for Public Hikes with a number of variations on the same trail theme. And the new markers that they have built, along with new trail maps that show the markers numbers and different trails, are making a great addition to our program and giving us some real flexibility for our "strenuous" hikes.



One of the new trail sign posts

As part of our "continuing education," the hikes that we docents have taken in the burn area since the October fire have been revealing. Who could ever imagine how well the chaparral shrubs adapt to fire and how well the burls on most chaparral plants protect them from being killed? We could easily see how well these resprouters began to grow almost as soon as the fire went through, and how beautiful the burned areas looked in the spring once the fire-following plants began to bloom. The Lotus – a prolific fire-follower – covered the hillsides with a carpet of gold that could be seen from quite a distance. The interaction of chaparral with fire was truly on display at Sedgwick this spring.



A true resprouter – just three weeks after the fire

The June Public Hike will probably be the last hike of the season and we will pick up again in the fall when the weather and fire risk permits. Meantime, we will schedule a few late afternoon hikes for docents during the summer in order to keep our skills honed and to do a little "continuing education." We will also probably check out some new trails as well as some new wines at the end of the hikes.

Happy Trails!

KIN

By Sue Eisaguirre
Photos: Andy Lentz



The KIN program came to a close this year with a final field trip to the UCSB Cheadle Center followed by a catered celebration lunch. The students were treated to a special day that began with a Blenders in the Grass smoothie and granola bar snack upon arrival. Each group then gave a five minute presentation on their KIN experiences. After rotating through four stations (seed dispersal, plant structure, pollination, and herpetology) students had a chance to make bookmarks with their favorite native plant before it was time for lunch.

After lunch the docents honored and presented each student with their certificate and a UCSB goodie bag! It was a great day for all. Many thanks to the docents who made this program special for the students.



Sedgwick Reserve Event Schedule

June

- 13 Friday, ARC Instructors arrive
- 14 Saturday, Public Hike
- 20 Friday,
 - ARC Meeting for interested Volunteers– 2:00 p.m.
 - Transplanting Party in Nursery – 4:00 p.m. – BBQ to follow [check emails for details]
- 28 Saturday, Figueroa Canyon Ranch Rodeo – Contact Sue if interested in volunteering or to attend.

July

- 5 Saturday, ARC Students at Sedgwick
- 11 – 13 & 18-20 Friday – Sunday,
 - Hank Pitcher's & Bruce Tiffney's
 - "Landscape Painting with an Artist and a Naturalist"
- 25 Docent Communication Meeting (9:00 – 10:30 a.m.) (Docent only hikes TBA*)

August

- 3 Sunday, ARC Poetry Reading – Sedgwick Reserve Patio (6:00 – 8:00 p.m.)
- 5 Tuesday, ARC Graduation Los Olivos School – (6:00 – 8:00 p.m.) (Docent only hikes TBA*)

*The Docent hikes will be one or two per month during the July through September period, will rotate between Thursday and Fridays, and will start at 4pm and go until 7pm. We will try to orient them toward training hikes and use some of the trails that are not frequently used for the Public Hikes in order to branch out in our trail knowledge.

Volunteers needed

Sedgwick Reserve welcomes volunteers throughout the year. Please pass on names of prospective volunteers/docents to Sue or have them contact her direct. We need volunteers who are particularly interested in working with kids and leading K-12 field trips!