

Sedgwick Field Notes

Occasional Ramblings for Volunteers and Friends of Sedgwick Reserve

December 2009

Director's Notes

by Kate McCurdy

In late October we had the privilege of addressing the UCSB Foundation Board of Trustees at their fall meeting. A group of Sedgwick Reserve representatives had spent weeks preparing a presentation about Sedgwick's past, present and future: we nailed it, and enjoyed the very positive feedback at the luncheon that followed. Our presentation highlighted how far Sedgwick supporters have taken the Reserve in the past ten years. This season of thanksgiving is the perfect time to pay tribute to the individuals, families, and foundations that have brought Sedgwick a step closer, with each generous act, to realizing its great potential.

Sedgwick Reserve donors have contributed over \$5 million in the past decade in support of the Sedgwick master plan. In recounting the important and generous gifts of the following, I hope that you will join me in recognizing and honoring these families, couples and individuals whose great love of Sedgwick inspires us all to envision what is possible.

Leading the way, the **Byrne Family**, through their **J.E. and Lillian Tipton Foundation**, facilitated the planning process that allowed the most significant project undertaken at the Reserve in some time to move forward: the Tipton Meeting House. The Foundation's gifts enabled many other projects including the photo voltaic system and the main road engineering and improvements, and provided much needed equipment such as the field station truck and electric cart. In recognition of the Byrne family's contributions and inspiration for a greener, more useful Sedgwick Reserve, the newly completed Las Cumbres Observatory was christened The Laurie Nelle Byrne Observatory in memory of the Tipton Foundation Treasurer, Sedgwick Reserve docent



The Laurie Nelle Byrne Observatory.

and long-time supporter Nelle Byrne, who passed away on October 24.

A wonderful group of Sedgwick-loving long-time supporters continue to take the Reserve forward and elevate its place in the Santa Ynez Valley. Sedgwick neighbors **Paul and Sally Flum**, whose generosity reaches back to the original Land Trust for Santa Barbara County acquisition in 1997, contributed to the paving of the main road and have enabled several large maintenance undertakings such as reroofing the main house in 2006 and replacing dilapidated fence lines in 2008. **Jack and Judy Stapelmann**, in addition to establishing a legacy endowment for the Reserve, recently contributed a new 1100 square foot residence for the Reserve Director and improved the road to the new house, which should be ready for occupancy

by the end of the year. **Alice Gilaroo, Susan Jorgensen** and the **Ove Jorgensen Family Foundation** are advocates of Sedgwick's outdoor education efforts for many years, with financial contributions as well as much needed supplies and enthusiasm for getting students outdoors. Alice and Susan most recently established the Outdoor Classroom and have provided its support since its inception in 2007.

The addition of a new batch of Sedgwick supporters has lead the Reserve into the new decade: an anonymous donor is currently financing the renovation of the century old hay barn, a generous gift from the Marvin V. Clarke estate will finish the Tipton Meeting House, and the Las Cumbres Observatory Global Telescope Network, that built and donated the Nelle Byrne Observatory at Sedgwick in 2008, continues to align the telescope, and a new addition to the Sedgwick telescope is being planned.

These gifts represent the tip of the iceberg: we are very grateful to the hundreds of people who reach deeply and generously to support Sedgwick operations every year. Many more provide enormous volunteer investment that enriches the Reserve and everything that goes on here. From building repairs to botanical discovery, scores of volunteers elevate the Reserve with their time and expertise.

To name just a few: Sedgwick Docent **Sam Babcock** has contributed hundreds of hours tackling some of Sedgwick's more arduous volunteer tasks and always with a smile. He oversaw the installation of much-needed trail junction markers throughout the Reserve. In both 2008 and 2009, he bravely tackled reeds in the pond, cutting them off at the base and hauling them out of the murky depths. Sam is also an excellent Outdoor Classroom docent and leads popular "strenuous" hikes on second Saturdays at the Reserve.

UCSB Campus Police officer **Dan Massey** has taken on the onerous task of making repairs to the Reserve's aging water lines that feed the water troughs for wildlife over the past two years. His most recent project is getting the windmill in the Heir's Pasture to work again after decades of inattention so that water can be supplied to troughs in Windmill Canyon.

Laura Baldwin, who never says 'no' to taking on an assignment, whether it's leading a K-12 class or mapping a new trail on the Reserve, teamed up with local botanist Larry Ballard in 2008 to add seven new species of plants to the Reserve's botanical list. Two of these species, Round-Leaved Filaree (*California macrophylla*) and Velvet Ash (*Fraxinus*

velutina), are considered rare in Santa Barbara County and were considered to be important discoveries.

Andy Lentz has achieved the status of "Super Docent" by virtue of his breadth of abilities. In addition to being an Outdoor Classroom leader, he is a volunteer research assistant for UCLA oak specialist Victoria Sork. Andy helps with computer tasks crucial to the office management and publishes the Reserve's newsletter. He is also a masterful hike leader from whom many other docents have learned interpretive, safety and naturalist skills.

The "Freds"—**Fred Emerson** and **Fred Machetanz**,—continue their weekly bird censuses around the field station, enthusiastically reporting new arrivals and unusual sightings with their typical zest for the natural world. Even when it's blazing hot or bitterly cold during their mid-morning birding strolls, the Freds continue to document trends in avian activity during the year, with a typical count between 40 and 75 species of birds depending on the season.

In the time of thanks giving, all of us who are passionate about Sedgwick and are committed to its continued development thank all of you, those whom I've mentioned above and all of you unsung heroes, for your continued support and care for this amazing Reserve and all that it encompasses. Thank you and all good wishes for a peaceful and happy holiday season.

Warmly,




From top left, clockwise: Laura Baldwin, Sam Babcock, Nelle and Nancy Byrne, Dan Massey on windmill, Judy and Jack Stapelmann, Fred Machetanz, Susie Bartz, Andy Lentz.

Restoration:

The action of returning something to a former owner, place, or condition.

by Dennis Nord

That seems like social justice; returning the habitat to the planet the way it belongs. We work to restore things to a natural state. But natural when? The land grant of 1845, the early 1900's when the worst exotic grasses entered California, before the Spanish explorers came in the 1540's, or maybe the 1770's establishment of the missions?

In truth, we're not too specific about the era, but rigorous in increasing the native plant community and eliminating invasive exotics where we can. With over 200 years of head start, invasive species and earlier ranch-related decisions about crops and grazing make restoration projects challenging.

Rigorous restoration rules mean nothing new comes into the botanical library from off the reserve except under its own power. All the plants that go in the ground are from local seed stock and locally propagated. The same thing goes for soil resources; all local, all natural. This helps researchers trust that what they find was not introduced, intentionally, by humans since Sedgwick became a Reserve.

We collect the seeds, make the compost, mix with local soil and start new plants in the nursery. We give them to school children to plant with our supervision, or we do it ourselves. We mulch the plants, pull the weeds, and water until established and then do it all over again with another project.

This is the kind of volunteer job that will make you want to believe it's better to keep it natural than to restore; it's that challenging. You can join us and learn what is native and what is not and where it came from. Learn how seasonal changes effect plants. You'll learn when it's best to gather seeds, when to plant, and when to transplant. Water needs and habitat qualities for restoration success are also in the curriculum. Chumash use of the plants often comes into the conversation.

The best restoration outcome? You won't be able to tell you were ever there! That's right! It should look as though it was always that way when you finish. I planted several thousand trees in 1963-5 in the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. After I missed visiting for a few years, I found I couldn't even find the tree colony, let alone "my" trees. I was distressed I couldn't find my green buddies until

it was clear the job was finally done. Those trees blended into the forest as intended.

Our recent projects included directing local elementary students while they planted native species in the yard of the Ranch House. The majority of the plants made it through a year and will take over that landscape soon. At the intersection coming into the station, a triangle of land now sports a cluster of native grasses and plants. Near the nursery, the demonstration garden continues to grow so we can harvest seeds close at hand and show visitors many of the local natives before they head to the field. Year-round the compost is stirred and turned into potting soil with local dirt, and the nursery plants require at least a little attention to make sure they're ready for the next restoration project when needed.

Get involved and learn more about where you live!



Nancy Stearns and Carol Nord.



Carol and Nancy and the mulch pile.



Plants in the nursery wait for your help to restore the Reserve.

Velvet Ash located on Sedgwick Reserve

by Larry Ballard

In October, Laura Baldwin and I happened on two ash trees that were growing on a former oxbow along lower Figueroa Creek. The foliage blended in with the nearby Red and Arroyo Willows that dominate the area, but the leaves were distinctly those of an ash. Since there were some large non-native Palo Verdes growing at the site, which is near a former ranch dumping area, I dismissed them as some unidentified non-native species. Specimens were collected and later identified as Velvet Ash (*Fraxinus velutina*), a native species, by Bob Muller of the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden.

Velvet Ash, sometimes called Arizona Ash, is the common tree ash across the American southwest, extending in widely scattered locations from west Texas across New Mexico and Arizona to southern Utah, Nevada and California, as well as northern Mexico. It is found along canyons and stream banks or adjacent woodland. In Santa Barbara County, Velvet Ash is reported as individual trees from only a very few widely scattered locations: one is in Romero Canyon, another is along Kinevan Road, and a third is in the town of Sisquoc. These were all fairly large trees when they were noted more than 50 years ago. Smaller trees reported from Romero Canyon have not been seen recently.

There is a cultivated variety of Velvet Ash called Modesto Ash, so named because it was selected from a tree growing in a Modesto park. Two large specimens of Modesto Ash grow nearby along Brinkerhoff Avenue at the intersection with Roblar. Pubescence (hairyness) is a highly variable characteristic within the species, but the leaves of those trees are glossier green and lack the pubescence on the twigs, petioles and leaves that are characteristic of the Sedgwick trees.

It can't be said with certainty that the Sedgwick trees represent a natural occurrence. It's unlikely that they were planted at that location, but did the winged fruit from which these trees grew get blown in from a naturally occurring tree? Or from a cultivated tree? Or were they brought in accidentally with cattle, forage, or farm equipment? Or is showing up in unexpected locations just something that ash trees do?



Sedgwick's own Velvet Ash (Fraxinus velutina).
Photo by Kate McCurdy



Velvet Ash (Fraxinus velutina) from Calflora.org
© Br. Alfred Brousseau, Saint Mary's College



Velvet Ash (Fraxinus velutina) from Calflora.org
© Br. Alfred Brousseau, Saint Mary's College

Bird Walks

by Fred Machetanz

The Sedgwick Reserve Bird Survey

I am enthusiastic about birding. I am also most interested in the Sedgwick Bird Survey. This survey monitors the presence of bird species at Sedgwick throughout the year. The abundance and health of bird populations would seem important in these times of changing climate and land forms, pesticides and other environmental hazards. Like the sensitive canary carried by miners to alert them to decreased oxygen and noxious gasses in the mines, the vanishing populations of Brown Pelicans on the West Coast and robins on the lawns of Beverly Hills and Westwood alerted us to the dangers of DDT and other toxins. In addition to giving me great pleasure, I believe our survey provides useful information.

The Sedgwick Bird Survey was started in about 2007. With the computer expertise of Marvin Johnson at the Solvang Senior Center we developed a monthly spreadsheet on which we could show the presence of species throughout the month. Director Kate McCurdy was most supportive of the idea of a Sedgwick Bird Survey and we were in business. At the conclusion of each month, I summarized the number of birds spotted in each species, and this information was expertly transmitted on a monthly basis by Barbara Huebel and later Sue Eisaguirre to the docents. In addition to the important assistance of Barbara and Sue, I am indebted to several people for the continuance of this project. My colleague, Fred Emerson, provided his well-known birding expertise on Mondays and often other days of the week. His vision, hearing and enthusiastic participation made large parts of the reports possible. Also, Andy and Susan Lentz have always provided expert help with gracious enthusiasm. Many other folks contributed valuable information. Kate, Laura Baldwin, Beverly McCurdy, Sam Babcock, Nancy and Brett Stearns and Dennis and Carole Nord were among those supporting our early efforts.

Though many species of birds occurring on Sedgwick Reserve are difficult to see, increased numbers will be seen and reported if more folks are involved in reporting. If you are able to identify a bird or see an unusual one that you can describe, I encourage you to record it in the green folder hanging in the office. If you are in doubt, note this with a question mark and your initials. Let us attempt to get as complete a picture of Sedgwick birds as possible. Even if an occasional bird is misidentified, I believe that the increased information will be helpful.

We started with a basic list of birds that had been reported at Sedgwick through the years. Since then we have added several birds to the list which now numbers about 155 depending on new taxonomic definitions.

Laura Baldwin discovered and photographed the first



Black-throated Sparrow
Amphispiza bilineata
Birds of North America bna.birds.cornell.edu

Black-throated Sparrow high in the area burned by the 2007 Sedgwick fire. She also added the Hermit Warbler. Fred Emerson found the first Solitary Sandpiper at the pond and later reported four White Pelicans flying high over the reserve. Hooded Mergansers were an early addition to the original list.

As the seasons roll, we are getting interesting information about our birds. According to Mark Holmgren, Sedgwick Reserve is one of the few locations in the Santa Ynez Valley where Tricolored Blackbirds nest, and additionally, it is one of the best places to see Sapsuckers. Also, now that we know where to look for them, the unusual Lewis's Woodpeckers seem to be coming on a yearly basis. We noted a scarcity of Golden-crowned Sparrows on one Christmas Bird Count. Shortly thereafter, our observations were supported by an Audubon Report that suggested that some species, including Golden Crowns, were moving north, perhaps in response to warming trends. As more folks are involved in our Bird Survey we will get better and better information about the bird populations at Sedgwick. Thanks for helping in this important endeavor.



Hermit Warbler
Dendroica occidentalis
Birds of North America bna.birds.cornell.edu

Outdoor Classroom Update

by Sue Eisaguirre

The second season of the Outdoor Classroom is off to a great start. At the end of October, 23 4th grade students from Los Olivos Elementary School and 33 4th grade students from Ontiveros Elementary School arrived at Sedgwick for their first Outdoor Classroom day-long visit. After locating their docent by using a scent clue; the students met their docent; learned their group name (Bears, Eagles, etc.); received their Outdoor Classroom journals and special leather name tags; and gathered up the other supplies they would use for the day. They then headed out to hike!

All the students spent a good portion of their day hiking with their fellow group members and at least one docent learning about various ecosystems at Sedgwick while also reviewing their science vocabulary. The docents have come up with some very creative ways to help the students master their science vocabulary. Having the natural world at their finger tips surely helps with so many of the words the 4th graders are expected to know. Sedgwick is truly a wonderful outdoor classroom!

When students were not hiking, they participated in three activities close to the Field Station. All groups set up a decomposition/leaf litter experiment which they will observe and record data on their next two visits; students also embellished the demonstration garden with several plants, primarily those used by the Chumash; and they all learned about composting and seed dispersal and had a chance to play the food web game.

This month both 4th and 5th graders from Los Olivos and Ontiveros will visit Sedgwick for an Outdoor Classroom field trip! This will be the second visit for the 4th graders and the first visit for the 5th graders who participated in the Outdoor Classroom as 4th graders. I don't know who is more excited to see each other, the students or the docents!



2009-2010 Docent Classes Begin

A record number of enthusiastic and talented people joined this year's docent class: twenty-four total plus two high school students who will receive community service and class credit for their training and contribution to the Reserve. Class members have already put in volunteer time in the nursery as well as assisting with the public hikes. More about the Docent Class in the next issue. Stay tuned!



Researchers present their project to the Docent Class.

Public Hikes Program

by Nick DiCroce

The Public Hikes program began again in October. Both the October and November hikes were enjoyable and the fall weather made them a real pleasure.

Those docents interested in helping with the Public Hikes Program attended a meeting to review hiking safety guidelines. Comments and suggestions were made on how we might improve the guidelines as well as the overall program. Safety precautions and emergency procedures were reviewed, and suggestions on reorienting the Program to themed hikes was enthusiastically discussed.

It was decided to orient the hikes toward themes rather than easy, moderate and strenuous hikes as we have in the past. Themes discussed were Geology, Wildflowers, Oaks, Grasses, Critters and a Sedgwick Introduction. New suggestions are always welcome. The hikes will be approximately three hours in length and will have varying degrees of elevation changes. Elevation changes and level of effort required for each hike will be provided so guests can determine their choice of hike based on their preference and ability.

In our effort to continually improve the Public Hiking program, a class on "Leading Interpretative Hikes" was presented in November by Andy Lentz, Laura Baldwin, Nancy Stearns and Sam Babcock, four very experienced Sedgwick Docents. It was well attended by many docents, volunteers and the new 2009-2010 Docent Class members.

Join us for a hike on the 2nd Saturday of each month from now until May or June. Remember, reservations are required: Please email Sedgwick@lifesci.ucsb.edu, or call (805) 686-1941 ext. 6. Hope to see you out on the trail!



Sedgwick Reserve Event Schedule

December

- 4 Docent Class: History of the Santa Ynez Valley and Sedgwick; Plus Nursery Tour & Work day
- 9 Outdoor Classroom: Los Olivos 4th & 5th grades
- 11 Docent Class: Astronomy (Night Class);
- 11 K-12 Field Trip: Dunn Middle School
- 12 Public Hikes
- 17 Outdoor Classroom: Ontiveros 4th & 5th grades
- 18 Docent Training: CPR
- 25 No class – Holiday Break
- 29 Cachuma Bird Count

January

- 1 No class – Holiday Break
- 8 Docent Training: Birds of Sedgwick,
- 9 Public Hikes
- 15 Docent Training: Chumash
- 22 Docent Training: Techniques for Leading Hikes & Working with K-12 students
- 29 Docent Training: Coal Oil Point Field Trip



Getting Involved

There are myriad ways you can support Sedgwick Reserve. Although the Docent Program is full and underway for this year, be sure to let us know if you're interested and get on the list for 2010-11. Volunteer help is always appreciated, from office tasks to watering restoration sites to assisting with public events. Contact Sue Eisaguirre for more information (686-1941 ext. 4 or eisaguirre@lifesci.ucsb.edu).

Our annual appeal is in the mail, and we hope you'll consider making a gift. Your ongoing generosity is important and always appreciated.

You can now make a gift online, easily and securely, at <http://nrs.ucsb.edu> and click on Make a Donation Online.

Thank you for your interest in Sedgwick Reserve and we look forward to your next visit!