

Friends of Pinole Creek Watershed

A Publication of Friends of Pinole Creek Watershed

July 2006



ACORN WOODPECKER: PHOTO COURTESY JOE OLIVER

Did you know?

To learn more about birding data and information about species breeding on watershed land, visit: flyingemu.com/ccosta/.

For additional information about volunteering for data collection for birds species, visit goldengate.audobon.org.

To report spills in the creek: call (510) 724-9010 or (800) NO DUMPING.

These surveys are for the birds!

The Orinda Fisheries and Wildlife office at the EBMUD headquarters maintains scientific information necessary to manage their watershed lands. East Bay flora and fauna is regularly monitored to maintain a database which is used to assess and avoid impacts to wildlife. Surveying birds provides a ready source of information about the environment.

Why Survey Birds? Birds are surveyed for a number of practical reasons. They fly, have bright colors, sing, and are generally active during the day—and are far more obvious than most reptiles, amphibians, or mammals. Birds are surveyed by sight, sound, or sign (nests, feathers, evidence of foraging—such as by woodpeckers), and a soaring turkey vulture or singing purple finch is more easily counted than most frogs, snakes, or cryptic mammals. Birds have longer life spans than aquatic insects, for example, so the same individuals can be banded and followed over many years.

The study of birds has a long history in the United States (the Audubon Society has been doing Christmas Bird Counts for over a century). Survey protocols are well tested, and there are extensive databases that describe trends, geographical distribution, and specific habitat needs. As a result, bird ecology is often well understood, and bird species presence may suggest information about the integrity of the vegetation, community, and the stability of the environment. Finally, there are many experienced volunteers available to generate reliable data.

Some Cautions Despite these positive points, there are a few pitfalls. Most birds are highly mobile, and individuals, even in ideal habitats, may be elsewhere when you arrive to count them. Conversely, their presence in an area does not mean they breed there. Also, because observers prefer certain birds to other organisms, and because some birds are “flashy,” or noisier than others, a non-systematic bias in species-detection may occur. Some volunteers tend to count what they love or can easily identify.

Being Proactive EBMUD currently surveys birds to evaluate habitats for projects such as the District’s Range Resource Management Plan and Fire and Fuels Management Plan. A species survey may suggest how to avoid or minimize potential impacts to a species’ habitat. Often these avoidance measures require a project be scheduled during a non-nesting period, or for the project to be moved to a less sensitive habitat. Avoiding or minimizing such impacts on birds carries over to other classes of animals including amphibians, reptiles, and mammals. Thus the protection afforded the bird benefits other species using the same areas.

Bird surveys are a quick and frugal way to determine the condition of watershed habitats. While giving volunteers first hand exposure of bird communities, EBMUD Natural Resources is gaining scientific data that will help avoid adverse impacts to flora, fauna, and water quality. Comparison of recent information with historical data provides a look into trends in the area. The benefits of these efforts suggest that the avian surveys will continue to be an important component in interpreting the health of the East Bay ecosystems.

Meetings, News & Events

JULY 24 9 a.m.–NOON

Demonstration Garden Work Party

The Friends of Pinole Creek Watershed's Demonstration Garden behind the Pinole Library will be the setting for our July 24 work party. Bring your enthusiasm and energy; we'll provide gloves, bags, and an assortment of tools—plus, drinks and snacks. Help restore this once thriving little corner of Pinole. For questions about the workday, or if you are under 18 years old and need a parental permission form, please contact Tim at tmc945@yahoo.com.

AUGUST 7 FOPCW MEETING

SFEI's Sarah Pearce is Guest Speaker

At the August 7 FOPCW meeting, we are excited to have once again, Sarah Pearce from the San Francisco Estuary Institute, presenting information on the most recent study she did last winter on Pavon Creeks for the Resource Conservation District.

PLEASE NOTE: Our August meeting will be held in the Hercules by the Bay clubhouse, located on Santa Fe, off of Hercules Avenue in Hercules.

DRIVING DIRECTIONS: From San Pablo Avenue turn onto Hercules Avenue in Hercules, going towards the bay. Turn right on Santa Fe Avenue. Continue for about 1/4 mile and you'll see a swimming pool on the right. Just past the pool and

“Triangle Park” is a drive way. Park in the lot; the club house is the building adjacent to the pool. The meeting starts at 6:30 p.m. and runs until 8:30 p.m. Light refreshments will be served. Hope to see you all there!

MEETING NOTES

Fernandez Ranch Celebration

Thanks to an invitation from our June meeting speaker, Beth Pardiek, several of our members attended the Muir Heritage Land Trust's Fernandez Ranch Celebration on June 10. We had the chance to get a sneak peak at this 702 acre parcel near the Franklin Canyon Golf Course. Speakers included Rep. George Miller, who was instrumental in securing federal funds for the purchase, Gary Bogue who rallied his readers to make donations, and a representative of the Fernandez family who shared what this land has meant to his family for generations (a small piece of the Fernandez Ranch is in the upper Pinole Creek Watershed). There were guided hikes and horse drawn carriage rides, offering a feel for what this great space will be like when it opens to the public in the next few years.

VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH

Tim McDonough

The Friends of Pinole Creek Watershed wouldn't be anything without the continued support of its volunteers. And no one seems



Tim McDonough (right) and Melissa Lawton, at the June FOPCW upper watershed clean-up—with just a few of the many bags of trash they and fellow volunteers had collected that morning.

to step up to the plate more than member Tim McDonough. Tim has managed the once-a-month maintenance of the demonstration native plant garden behind the Pinole library—since its inception! He also has volunteered to organize and lead many of the creek activities, including the upper watershed clean up on June 24. Thanks for all your hard work, knowledge, and enthusiasm, Tim. You're the BEST!

UPCOMING EVENTS

July 18, 6:30–8 p.m. Friends of Rodeo, Refugio & Carquinez Watersheds Meeting & Potluck!

The meeting will include an overview of upcoming events, potluck, tour of CREEC's Horticultural Center, and a guest speaker from the Lindsay Wildlife Museum. Everyone is welcome. For further information, contact Watershed Coordinator Karin Korda at (415) 847-6035 or frcw@earthlink.net or visit us online at: www.muirheritagelandtrust.org.



The Watershed Project
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**Coming on August 19:
Creek/GPS Survey
Details at the next FOPCW
meeting on August 7**

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To learn more about Friends of Pinole Creek Watershed, please visit our website at www.PinoleCreek.org.