

Rancho del Oso

Nature and History Center

News

January–March 2013



Volume 28/1



Hikes to Berry Creek Falls

Sundays, January 27 ❖ February 24 ❖ March 24 ❖ 10 am

Join in the adventure of an all-day hike to Berry Creek Falls. Hiking from the Ranger Station to the three gorgeous waterfalls is an experience, so bring lunch, water and energy. The hike is seven miles each way over moderate terrain; please wear good hiking shoes for a long fourteen mile hike. Arrive early at the Highway 1 gate across from Waddell Beach, and walk in approximately one mile to the Ranger Station.



Wildflower Moseys

with Scott Peden

Sundays, February 10 ❖ March 10 ❖ 10 am

Take a walk among the wildflowers of Rancho del Oso's Waddell Valley. Docent **Scott Peden** will lead an approximately four mile hike to view a variety of wildflowers in a rainbow of colors within five different habitats, where there are over fifty species of flowers. Photographers are easily accommodated. Show up with lunch, water and enthusiasm. We will meet up at the Rancho del Oso gate located along Highway 1 across from the Waddell Beach parking lot.

Fireside Stories

Sundays, February 10 ❖ March 10 ❖ 2 pm ❖ Nature Center

Pretend, play, sing and explore! Bring the family and gather round the fireplace for storytelling followed by activities focused on the theme of the story. This thirty minute program will introduce youngsters to the wonders of nature! We recommend children be at least three years old.



Visit the newly-remodeled Nature and History Center

Saturday and Sunday, 12 noon to 4 pm

Visit us on the Web and Facebook!

www.ranchodeloso.org and www.facebook.com/RDOSP



Wide-eyed at Waddell

Sunday afternoons at Rancho del Oso have come to be one of my favorite times. I have taken joy in heading to the porch of the Nature and History Center right as the warm, golden light of the sun setting begins to fill the center. The waves hitting the shore and the birds' serenade create perfect music to the sun slowly sinking, seemingly melting into the ocean. Beyond the obvious beauty of the valley, in this "golden hour," I was left wondering about sunset, the fabled "green flash" and what makes these times of day so valued by photographers.

In photography, the golden hour is roughly the first hour of light after sunrise and last hour of light before sunset, with actual time varying between seasons. The quality of light is what distinguishes this time of day, as the lighting is softer and warmer in hue. The sun is low in the sky near the horizon, causing shadows and harsh light to dissipate that otherwise complicate photography in the middle of the day.

Shortly after sunset, and the golden hour is over, the optical phenomena known as the green flash may occur. The last bit of light from the top of the disk itself may be an emerald green color. It is not an optical illusion, but will be visible any time the sun is rising or setting on a clear, unobstructed and low horizon. It typically lasts one or two seconds. Refraction separates the solar images by color, and at just the right instant, the red-orange image of the sun has set, the yellow image is absorbed, the blue image is scattered away, and what is left is the upper limb of the sun, which has a residual green image. I have yet to see this phenomenon, but I'm assured it exists by many green flash enthusiasts. This must mean I need to watch more sunsets! —*Morgan Dill*



Lions, Condors and Bats — Oh my!

Fall was a busy one at Rancho del Oso, with several programs bringing visitors to the Nature and History Center. In early October, **Veronica Yovovich**, from the University of California Santa Cruz, shared the latest research about **mountain lions** in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Her research has shown that there are approximately seventy to 100 mountain lions in the area, with male lions having an average range of 100 square miles, and female lions fifty square miles. These powerful animals are surviving in local mountains amidst the development, with one male crossing Highway 17 thirty-one times since May 2010. Veronica displaced the fear associated with mountain lions, as the group learned that in over 100 years, only six mountain lion fatalities have occurred in California. To put it in perspective, you are more likely to be killed by your own toothbrush than a mountain lion!

The end of October brought back the popular **bat program** led by **Monique Smith Lee**. A large group gathered, as she enthusiastically shared the wonderful world of bats. With over 1200 species worldwide, the information about bats' important role in the ecosystem as pest controllers, nocturnal pollinators, and seed dispersers enlightened the crowd. Before going down to the marsh to view bats as they emerged in the twilight hour, Monique brought out several live native California bat species, much to the delight of the visitors.

Fall was rounded out with **Katie Lannon** from the Ventana Wildlife Society giving a dynamic presentation on the **California Condor**, a bird that has been around for more than 10,000 years. Due to habitat loss, poisoning due to lead and other sources, loss of carrion (decaying flesh of animals), and other threats, the California Condor population was once as low as twenty-two birds. All condors were brought into captivity in 1987, and through a captive breeding program, numbers have increased to sixty-six in central California, with 135 in California. Condors remain one of the world's rarest bird species, with lead poisoning through ingestion of spent ammunition, trash ingestion, West Nile Virus, power line collisions, and DDT poisoning being the primary threats to its existence. Katie's obvious enthusiasm for this bald-headed bird was inspirational in looking to its future in California.

—*Morgan Dill*

President's Report

A holiday docent appreciation event was in jeopardy of being cancelled due to a power outage at Rancho del Oso. The plan was to invite docents and friends of Rancho del Oso to a holiday gathering at the Center. Then the weather intervened, temporarily knocking out power. Carol Fuller came to the rescue, however, calling on her friends. Karen and Darrell Darling agreed to let us hold the event at the lovely Darling House Bed and Breakfast in Santa Cruz, and their daughter Denise hosted us. It was a beautiful sunny day in a splendid setting with a good time had by all.

The renovation depleted our funds, and with the continuing budget crunch at State Parks, we anticipate being asked to contribute more than in the past. Accordingly, we ask you all to consider a higher level of membership when you renew, and thank you for your continued support. —Walt Hays



Fungus Foray

with Trent Pearce • Sunday, February 24 • 2 pm

Slow down, get down and look around for fungi with East Bay Regional Parks Naturalist **Trent Pearce**. This two-hour walk will introduce you to the mycological mysteries of the forest, and all that the rain promises! Our walk begins at the Ranger Station, located one mile up the road from the Rancho del Oso gate, at Highway 1 across from the Waddell Beach Parking Lot.



Winter Walks in Search of Early Wildflowers



Winter walks are often spur of the moment, as they are dominated by the weather. Some times you look outside, the sun is shining, and you grab your hiking boots and go. Other times, after a storm, you hunt for areas that drain quickly, so you won't be knee deep in mud.

The Rancho del Oso trail on the hillside can be chancy after heavy rain, but the multipurpose road, probably an old logging road originally, drains pretty quickly, and unless there is heavy wind, is safe for walking. Wind can bring tree limbs down, so walk in meadows instead if you have "cabin fever."

You will be on designated trail the whole way, so can travel light. I carry a plastic poncho in my pack. They are inexpensive, and although they come in a little plastic pouch, I doubt that you will ever be able to get it back in the pouch if you have to use it. Bring water, of course, and if you are out to find wildflowers, carry a book. I take an old copy of *Plants of the Coast Redwood Region*. It is designed for curious walkers rather than plant scholars, but it gives you "bloom times," and you will not make the mistake of writing down tarweed on a December list, only to find out when you get home, that it blooms from May to September.

What can you expect to find on a winter walk? On one of the rainy days when you can't go out, you may want to flip through the book and know what to be looking for at this particular time of the year. Of course, you can get fooled. I hiked a levee in Belmont on December 12 and there were fresh California poppies, a wildflower that my book confidently tells me blooms from May to October. Always be skeptical. We all know a poppy when we see one.

This is what my book also tells me to find on a winter walk in the woods—the California bay laurel, which blooms early, and in addition to its herbal use in cooking, was dried by the Indian tribes and turned into flour. Look for the California bee plant, which grows in open spaces, not under the redwoods. It grows from three to five feet high and has reddish color petals.

One of my early favorites is Indian warrior. We find the Indian paintbrush at the beach later in spring, but the warrior comes first, seems to grow symbiotically near oak trees, and has a red flower. Another early plant, redwood sorrel, has clover-like looking leaves with lavender flowers. Its Latin name is *Oxalis*.

It is probably too early to find *Trillium*, but this is one of the joys of winter hiking, and by February, if you are walking near brushy slopes, look for three wide leaves and pointy flowers sticking straight up. They range in color from white to dark red. I hike with a three-legged stool attached to my pack, and have been known to set up in the middle of the trail with my sketch book and try to capture their beauty.

Look for meadow flowers, blue-eyed grass, blue witch, and blue dicks, all common in sunny areas. By February, you can expect to see miner's lettuce, huckleberry, and wild strawberries. Later in spring, there will be spectacular flowers at Rancho del Oso, but the plucky plants that bloom early give us exciting discoveries, and a taste of what is still to come.

—Joyce Rosenstiel





Docent Training Classes begin in April

Volunteers Needed at Rancho del Oso

Docents lead guided walks, host the Nature and History Center, staff the Ranger Station, and share their knowledge with the park visitors. Training will consist of a series of classes on redwood ecology, park habitats, local history with expert led guided walks and demonstrations on how to lead park programs for visitors. Training will be held Saturdays in April.

For details, please contact Morgan Dill at 831 427-2288 or email at rdopis@parks.ca.gov.



Join the Waddell Creek Association!

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

Membership categories; please check one:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Associate \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$35 | <input type="checkbox"/> Patron \$250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsoring \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor \$500 |

Please cut out and mail this form with your check, payable to:

Waddell Creek Association
c/o Joyce Rosenstiel
227 Blakewood Way
Woodside, CA 94062



Waddell Creek Association

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Rancho del Oso — Coastal Section of Big Basin Redwoods State Park

The Rancho del Oso Nature and History Center is open to the general public on Saturdays and Sundays from noon until 4 P.M.

The Center is located 2 miles south of Año Nuevo (or 16 miles north of Santa Cruz) just off Highway 1.

Turn at the first road south of the Waddell Creek bridge and follow the signs. Extreme weather may cancel events; please call ahead.

For more information or to register for events, call 831 427-2288 or email rdopis@parks.ca.gov.

If you would like to go paperless, please send your full name and email to judybugg46@yahoo.com.

We do not share your information with any other group.

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