

# Rancho del Oso

Nature and History Center

News

July–September 2013



Volume 28/3



## From Sea to Tree: The Marbled Murrelet

with Portia Halbert • Saturday, July 27 • 10 am • Nature Center



Join California State Park Environmental Scientist **Portia Halbert** as we learn about the elusive, endangered Marbled Murrelet, which lives most of its life at sea and nests only in the tallest trees in the world.

The story begins with how this mysterious bird was rediscovered at Big Basin Redwoods State Park in the 1970s, then takes to the high seas and back in time with Captain Cook, fast forwards to the Smithsonian Institution, and returns to the foggy coastal forests of northern California. Learn about the Marbled Murrelet's habitat and life cycle, and the scientific efforts under way to prevent its extinction.

## Grizzly Bear Festival

Saturday, August 17 • 12 noon to 4 pm • Nature Center

Celebrate an afternoon with us hearing about the once-abundant California Grizzly Bear that roamed Waddell Valley. Learn what the bears would have eaten and why it was such an ideal place for them to live. There will be activities for all ages and a talk by **Susan Snyder**.

At 3 PM, **Susan Snyder** will be telling stories about the California Grizzly Bear, once arguably the most powerful and terrifying animal in the landscape. Susan is from the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley and the author of *Bear in Mind: The California Grizzly*.

Bring a lunch to enjoy on the Nature Center's deck overlooking the valley, or in our sheltered courtyard. Dream about what it was like living among grizzly bears!

**Nature and History Center Summer Hours**

July through August, Thursday–Sunday, 12 noon to 4 pm

Visit us on the Web and Facebook!

[www.ranchodeloso.org](http://www.ranchodeloso.org) and [www.facebook.com/RDOSP](http://www.facebook.com/RDOSP)

# What's Happening!

## Wildflower Saunters

**Sundays, July 14 † August 11 † September 8 † 10 am**

Want to explore the variety of wildflowers in Rancho del Oso? Within Rancho del Oso's seven different habitats, there are easily over fifty species of flowers you can view in a day. This hike is great for photographers who want to slow down and take photos. Please wear sturdy shoes, bring a lunch and water. Docent **Scott Peden** will lead this four and a half mile hike beginning at the Nature and History Center.

## Fireside Stories

**Sunday, July 21 † 2 pm**

**Sundays, August 11 † September 8 † 11 am**

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

## Hike to the Falls!

**Sundays, July 28 † August 25 † September 22 † 10 am**

Join in the adventure of an all-day hike to Berry Creek Falls. Hiking from the Ranger Station to the three splendid waterfalls is an all day affair, so bring lunch, water and energy. We'll walk seven miles each way over moderate terrain; wear good hiking shoes for a long fourteen mile hike. Arrive early at the Highway 1 gate across from Waddell Beach, and walk in about a mile to the Ranger Station to meet your guide.

## Critter Crafts

**Fridays, July and August † 12 noon to 4 pm**

Drop in for fun nature-themed craft time at the Nature and History Center on Fridays throughout July and August. We will have a make-and-take-activity most children can complete independently, although parents may need to assist preschool-aged children. Any age child is welcome to participate.

## Coastal Clean-up Day

**Saturday † September 21 † 9 am to 12 noon**

Join **Save Our Shores** for California's biggest volunteer effort, Coastal Cleanup Day at Waddell Beach. Save Our Shores will provide cleanup supplies, but volunteers are encouraged to bring their own gloves, buckets, and a reusable water bottle. If you have any questions, please contact 831 427-2288.



## President's Report

On Thursday, May 16, the State Parks Commission along with park officials, took a tour of Big Basin in connection with the adoption of a General Plan for the park, and finished with dinner at the Nature and History Center. The Mountain Parks Association provided the dinner and we provided the beverages. I had the privilege of attending on our behalf. Interpretive Specialist Morgan Dill gave a very nice description of the Center's history, and I spoke briefly about the renovation and our part. It was a lovely event, and I spoke to people who were all very enthusiastic about the renovated facility.

Art and Edie Lachenbruch, who served both as docents and board members at Rancho Del Oso, recently sold their seventy-six acres on the western edge of Big Basin to the Sempervirens Fund. The property contains 115 old-growth redwoods and therefore also habitat for the endangered Marbled Murrelet. Art said, "My wife Edie and I have always felt incredible places like this should be protected forever. We are very grateful to Sempervirens Fund for stepping in to make this happen."

Santa Cruz city celebrated the opening of the Emma McCrary Trail on June 1 in Pogonip Park. Emma, the wife of Big Creek Lumber co-owner Bud McCrary, was an avid equestrian, and she and Bud created miles of trails in the Santa Cruz Mountains. They—and Bud's brother Lud and his wife Barbara—had a long-lasting relationship with the Hoover family, started Big Creek mill in the Waddell Valley, and are known and admired for sustainable logging. They have made generous contributions to our Association, including major gifts that helped us pay for remodeling the Casita. —Walt Hays



## Critter Safari

Sundays, July 28 ♦ August 11 ♦ September 15 ♦ 1 pm

We'll search for wildlife and uncover the tracks and other signs that animals leave on this relaxed family-friendly walk. We'll notice how predator and prey, from deer and bobcats to hawks and lizards, survive in our streams, forests and fields. Meet up at the Nature Center.



## Welcome New Volunteers

It has been an exciting spring at Rancho del Oso, with a busy and beautiful wildflower festival in April, firesides stories each month and the completion of our first new volunteer training class. Seven new volunteers completed a four-week training course learning about the cultural and natural history of the Waddell Valley, from William Waddell to the Hoover Family, invasive plants to birdwatching and more. This excited crew of volunteers will be helping staff the Nature and History Center and Ranger Station, as well as getting out on the trails as roving docent naturalists. Please welcome Betsy, Don, Jesse, Mark, Brad, Mark, Tata, and Mike!

This summer, hiking Skyline-to-the-Sea has gotten even easier. On the weekends, you don't need to park a car at both ends of the trail; instead you can take the bus. On weekends until mid-December, bus service to Big Basin Redwoods State Park in Boulder Creek has been reinstated. The bus line to Boulder Creek (Route 35/35A) will end at Big Basin Redwoods State Park, leaving from the Santa Cruz Metro Center at 8:30 AM and 6:30 PM. If you start your hike up at Park Headquarters in Boulder Creek, you won't be trapped at Waddell Beach, because service to Waddell Creek has been added in the afternoon as well. This added trip will depart Santa Cruz Metro Center at 4:30 PM and arrive at Waddell Beach at 5:15 PM. Please be sure to use the bus, so they continue service each summer! Check [www.scmttd.com](http://www.scmttd.com) for more details.

—Morgan Dill



# Wide-eyed at Waddell

One of our most frequent visitors to the Rancho del Oso Nature and History Center is not a person, but a Western Scrub-Jay. If you have ever spent a little bit of time on the front deck, you probably have met this blue and gray bird, with a pale underside broken up by a blue necklace. Western Scrub-Jays are entertaining to watch because they're so animated, often hopping around, tilting their head in interest and looking all about. These birds are quite vocal and can be territorial during the breeding season.

While happy to snag a snack from your picnic on the front deck, Western Scrub-Jays eat mostly insects and fruit during spring and summer, and switch to nuts and seeds during fall and winter. They sometimes eat small animals, and just the other day as I was coming in to Rancho del Oso, I saw one with a lizard in its mouth! Scrub-Jays have been shown to plan ahead for meals in the future, which was previously thought of as a uniquely human trait. Studies have shown that they can remember locations of over 200 food caches, as well as the food item in each cache and its rate of decay.

Clearly, Western Scrub-Jays are intelligent birds, and recent research has suggested that they, as well as other corvids, are among the most intelligent of animals, with a brain-to-body mass ratio similar to chimpanzees and cetaceans, and dwarfed only by that of humans. They have also been shown to summon others to screech over the body of a dead jay, according to new research from the University of California, Davis. The birds' cacophonous "funerals" can last for up to half an hour, though the reasoning for their calls is not entirely clear. So, the next time you spend some time at the Nature and History Center, say hello to our little winged friend. While writing this article, our resident Western Scrub-Jay actually hopped inside! —Morgan Dill



## Join the Waddell Creek Association!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

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### 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.

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 [parksrdopis@parks.ca.gov](mailto:parksrdopis@parks.ca.gov).

**If you would like to go paperless, please send your full name and email to [judybugg46@yahoo.com](mailto:judybugg46@yahoo.com).**

We do not share your information with any other group.

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*Rancho del Oso News* is published quarterly by the Waddell Creek Association, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization.

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