

Rancho del Oso

Nature and History Center

News

January–March 2016



Volume 31/1



Salamander Saturday!

Saturday, March 5 • 12 noon to 4 pm • Nature Center



Join us for our annual celebration honoring the often overlooked, but heroically well-adapted amphibians native to the Santa Cruz Mountains and other moist habitats. Live amphibians will be on display for viewing, with all-age crafts, and activities.

Herpetologist Amy Patten will present her talk, **Salamanders of the Santa Cruz Mountains**, at 1 P.M.

Ranger-led salamander hike will start at 3 P.M. to search for these regal creatures on the Marsh Trail. Learn about salamanders and their ecosystems on this short one mile hike! For more information: (831) 427-2288.

Waddell Valley Birding

Saturday, March 12 • 8 am

Birding for all skill levels. Join Interpretive Specialist **Jeremy Lin**, for an approximate two mile hike to observe, listen, and enjoy morning birding in Waddell Valley. We will take our time and move slowly. Bring binoculars, a bird guide and readiness for silent observation, as we witness wildlife awakening on a crisp winter day. We will meet on the deck in front of the Nature Center.

Wildflower Festival coming in April

Saturday and Sunday, April 23 and 24 • Nature Center

Spring is coming soon to Waddell Valley, so save the date now!



Come visit the Nature and History Center



Open Saturday–Sunday, 12 noon to 4 pm

Check us out on the Web and join us on Facebook!

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



Waddell Valley Wildflower and Nature Hike

Saturdays, February 13 † March 12 † 10 am

Join docent **Scott Peden** and learn to identify many of Waddell Valley's plants within Rancho del Oso's seven diverse habitats. Observe the monthly change of the ecosystems. Each walk is unique as blooming flowers and pollinators are constantly in flux. This walk is a leisurely four-hour amble that is great for learning while experiencing the native habitat. Bring lunch, questions and spirited fervor! Hikes start at the yellow gate across from the Waddell Beach parking lot.

Snake Park Saturday!

March 12 † 2 pm

Why are snakes important to us? How do they see, smell, taste, hear? What and how do they eat? What does a snake feel like? Several snakes will be on display and native reptile adaptations will be discussed in the beautiful backdrop of Waddell Valley. We will meet up at the Ranger Station, a short hike in from the parking lot at Waddell Beach on Highway 1.

Nature Wander

Sundays, February 14 † March 13 † 1 pm

Find out what's growing, living and blooming right now in the Waddell Valley on this approximately one mile, one-hour-plus guided walk with docent naturalist **Ann Garside**.

Information will be shared about the plants and habitats of Rancho del Oso, as we saunter from coastal scrub through one of the remaining five distinct populations of Monterey Pine left in the world. Show up with curiosity and energy. Hikes start at the Nature Center.

Join the Waddell Creek Association!

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

Membership categories; please check one:

- Associate \$25
- Sustaining \$100
- Family \$40
- Patron \$250
- Sponsoring \$50
- Benefactor \$500

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

Waddell Creek Association
c/o Jesse Bregman
519 Van Ness Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

President's Report

I became president of the Waddell Creek Association (WCA) in 2003, taking over from founding president Kirk Smith, who served for seventeen years. At that time, the Center was basically the home of Hulda Hoover McLean and her husband Chuck, but because Hulda was such an excellent naturalist, the home contained wonderful collections of things—butterflies, insects, bones, and old logging tools loaned by the McCrarys from Big Creek Lumber. The Center had an inconvenient bathroom, no potable water, and no handicap access. It also had very few visitors, so was threatened with closure.

Soon improvements started to happen. First, new outside bathrooms with handicap access were installed. Next came potable water. Then the WCA undertook a fundraising campaign to develop new exhibits, raising approximately \$150,000. Supervising Ranger Gary Strachan also placed a request for bond funds, but we assumed that was a very long shot. Then came the pleasant surprise of a grant from the State of \$235,000, and after some negotiations, it was agreed that our funds would go for remodeling the building, and the State's funds for new exhibits. Since then, with the help of outstanding Interpretive Specialists Morgan Dill and Jeremy Lin, attendance has picked up substantially, including an increasing number of school groups.

State Parks still has major budget problems, so we are being asked to pay for an increasing number of improvements; \$5,000 for a new observation deck at Berry Creek Falls, and \$4,600 for a welcome sign for the Skyline-to-the-Sea Trail. Since we have a limited budget, longtime friends have come to our assistance—Big Creek donated \$5,000 worth of lumber for the deck, and the Sempervirens Fund donated the \$4,600 for the sign. We are funding a number of other items, including \$2,500 for new trail signs, \$1,500 to help support the new backpacking program, and \$2,000 toward converting an old bedroom to the Interpreter's office. The big one, for which we will have to apply for a grant, is an estimate of \$150,000 to upgrade the Ranger Station into a visitor center.

Looking back, we've come a long way toward realizing Hulda's dream—sharing of the beauty and diversity of Rancho del Oso with the broadest possible audience. Your memberships and contributions play a vital part in pursuing that mission.

—Walt Hays

New Naturalist-led Backpacking Program

Registration for Summer Backpacking Trips open February 1

Who better to lead you through our parks than California State Park professionals? Travel from spectacular ridgelines, through old growth redwood forests, to sandy shores with our knowledgeable team of naturalists. Imagine if the Santa Cruz Mountains could speak, and the stories they could tell. Our guides will share the secrets of this precious wilderness, and give you a window into the lives of the people who lived here for thousands of years. Call for information at (831) 291-8273 or check out the State Parks backpacking web site.



Wilderness Patrol Volunteer Training at Rancho del Oso



Saturdays, April 2016

Rancho del Oso Big Basin Redwoods State Park is offering a volunteer Wilderness Patrol Training in Spring 2016. Wilderness Patrol volunteers will hike or mountain bike into scenic backcountry and volunteer in the Ranger Station along the famous Skyline to the Sea Trail. Training will take place Saturdays in April. For more information: (831) 427-2288 or rdopis@parks.ca.gov.



Waddell Creek Association

3600 Highway 1
Davenport, CA 95017

Return Service Requested

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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.

Go Green!

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

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

Editor: Judy Buck. **Writers:** Walter Hays, Jeremy Lin.

Production: Linda Brodman.



Our Mission

The Waddell Creek Association, in cooperation with California State Parks, works to educate and inspire public appreciation and stewardship of the extraordinary natural and cultural resources of the Waddell Valley, by providing resources and support for volunteer and educational programs at Rancho del Oso/Big Basin Redwoods State Park. Your membership helps us achieve these goals.