



SPAWNERS

San Pablo Watershed Neighbors Education and Restoration Society

Fall 2006

Wildlife -101

(no test at the end)

Wednesday, October 4, 7:00-9:00 P.M.

El Sobrante Library, 4191 Appian Way

At this meeting Jim Hale, wildlife biologist and member of the CCC Fish and Wildlife Committee, will present his wonderful slide show on the wildlife that still lives all around us. Jim will combine his slides with his extensive knowledge of local wild animals and Native American uses and interactions with the natural world. Jim's stories of animal adventure in Contra Costa County are fascinating and inspiring.

Refreshments served. Newcomers are always welcome.

Volunteers urgently needed

October 14, 9:30 - 12:00, El Sobrante Library
4191 Appian Way, El Sobrante

We have plants ready to go in the ground, but still need to clear a significant area of creek bank before the rains begin. Please pitch in and lend a hand - or four - bring a friend!

If you can't come Oct. 14 but want to help, please call or email. We will fit in an extra workday in the next few weeks, probably on a Sunday afternoon: martha@thewatershedproject.org or 222-3120.

Healthy Homes, Gardens, and Creeks

Check out this workshop series on environmentally friendly gardening and cleaning practices, co-sponsored by the City of El Cerrito and the Watershed Project. Starting on October 7, the series covers a wide range of environmental actions that residents can immediately put into practice. Noteworthy is Gardening for Creek-side Residents, on Wednesday, October 25, 2006, 7:00 -9:00 p.m. - perfect if you have a creek side property and would like to learn how to preserve and protect it. The Urban Creeks Council and the Watershed Project will give a presentation on stream processes, techniques for bank stabilization, and how to use local vegetation to help preserve your creek and property.

All workshops are free and take place at the El Cerrito Community Center, 7007 Moeser Lane. For the full list of workshops or to register, visit the Watershed Project's Website: www.thewatershedproject.org, e-mail staff@thewatershedproject.org or call (510) 665-3430.

Details of San Pablo Creek

"Creeklets" of our watershed

The lower San Pablo Creek Watershed, from the Dam to the Bay, varies greatly through private, varies greatly in its geography and has a large number of tributaries contributing to its beauty. Beginning in this issue, we present a series of articles on the tributaries which flow into and sustain our Creek.

Year after year, San Pablo Creek runs happily on its east-west course from the San Pablo Reservoir, through El Sobrante, Richmond, and San Pablo, to its mouth on San Pablo Bay. Fed by water releases from the dam, and runoff during winter storms, San Pablo Creek, for most of the time and along most of its course, runs full and strong. But during the hot summer months, the upper stream between the dam and Castro Ranch Road can slow to a trickle, or even standing pools, because no water is released from the reservoir once the rainy season ends. What, then, keeps the creek flowing to the Bay?

Luckily, San Pablo Creek's flow is augmented by the year-round addition of water from three (or four, depending on your definition of a "year-round" stream) small tributaries. These "creeklets" are all located on San Pablo Creek's north side, and flow from north to south. Let's take a look at each of these streams, starting with Kennedy Creek near the San Pablo Reservoir, and moving west.

To be honest, Kennedy Creek is not technically a "year-round" stream, in that it does stop flowing during a typical year, at least on its lower reaches. But it does run for a long time, well into the summer (it ran freely through August this year). And along its upper reaches, it continues to flow year round, and standing pools are always in evidence. Most people are familiar with the lower portion that runs through the west end of Kennedy Grove. Kennedy Creek is unique among the north side creeks in that it runs through completely undeveloped land, with no houses along its banks. As a result, Kennedy Creek suffers little from the trash build-up that is the bane of more accessible creeks. The creek provides a source of water and cover for the wildlife community in the area and a sense of serenity for park visitors.

Castro Creek is the next tributary we encounter. It begins on the east side of Sobrante Ridge Preserve then flows along Carriage Hills North before turning southwest toward Castro Ranch Road. Closely following the north side of the Road for about a quarter of a mile, the creek suddenly disappears into a deep, almost inaccessible gorge, not re-appearing until it passes underneath Castro Ranch Road about a quarter mile

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Visit our website at www.spawners.net.

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1327 South 46th Street
155 Richmond Field Station
Richmond, CA 94804

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up from Olinda School. From this point it flows along the south side of the road, where, unfortunately, it suffers from the accumulation of rubbish thrown from passing vehicles.

A little further on, at the point where Castro Creek passes under Hillside Drive, hundreds of California newts gather each year to spawn. Forced to cross the road to reach their ancient breeding pools, many of these slow-moving creatures are crushed beneath the wheels of passing cars. But the newts have found a friend in local resident Annabelle Travis. Over the years, Annabelle, along with devoted volunteers, have hand-carried their little copper-colored charges to safety and continued life. From this point Castro Creek largely disappears from view, flowing through private land for about another quarter of a mile before it empties into San Pablo Creek.

by Don Bastin

Next issue: Wilkie and Appian Creeks

Change of coordinators

Elizabeth O'Shea, who has been coordinating SPAWNERS for three years, is returning to volunteer status. Replacing her will be Juliana Gonzalez who has a strong academic background in watershed management and extensive experience in community outreach, project management and fundraising. Come meet Juliana at our October meeting.

Appreciation

SPAWNERS is grateful to the many people who support our goals by volunteering at events and behind the scenes. We especially want to thank Mimi Smith for building a secure storage closet for our restoration tools and supplies.

Development update Forest Green report due

The Forest Green Estates project is in a critical phase. The Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) is due to be released in October. We are concerned that all of the issues brought forward by government agencies, environmental groups, worried neighbors and residents of the surrounding area, will not be addressed. The 119 home development would be located above Jana Vista street, with entrances from Clark Road and Wesley Way.

This steep, slide prone site, currently has a horse stable located in the upper south-west corner. Adjacent properties include a large private residence and Wild Cat Canyon Regional Park, and the quiet county neighborhoods below. La Colina Creek drains the 80 acre parcel which has oak woodlands, grass lands, and riparian areas. Native wildlife is abundant and there is at least one species of special concern hunting there – the sharp shinned hawk.

The planning commission has a meeting on this project tentatively scheduled for October 5. It is important that residents who have concern about this development attend the meeting and make voice their concerns. Please visit the Canyon Parks Friends of Open Space web site for updated information, at www.saveelsobrantehills.org.

Calendar of Events

SPAWNERS meeting

Oct. 4, 7 to 9 p.m. at the Library

Restoration Days at the Library

Oct. 14, Nov. 11, Dec. 9

Open House at the Watershed Project

Oct. 15, noon - 3 p.m.

SPAWNERS Holiday meeting

Dec. 6

Yes! I want to become a member of SPAWNERS

and support its mission of protecting and preserving the San Pablo Creek Watershed.

MEMBERSHIP* CATEGORIES

Name:

Address:

Email address (for E-newsletter):

- (\$15) Student, senior, low income (\$25) Individual (\$35) Family
 (\$50) Contributing (\$100) Patron (\$500) Benefactor/Corporate

Please accept my additional donation of \$_____.

Please send checks payable to **the Watershed Project** (write SPAWNERS in the memo line) to:

The Watershed Project
1327 S. 46th Street
155 Richmond Field Station
Richmond, CA 94804.

SPAWNERS is a fiscal project of **the Watershed Project**, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Your contribution is tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law. *Memberships are non-voting.