



The Post

News from the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy

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Photo: Beverly Speck

Nickie and Wallace Cleaves walk in the Claremont hillsides in May, six months after the 2003 fire.

CWC Sees Improved Hillside Situation

CWC was founded in January of 2000—4 ½ years ago. If you have been with us since those early days, it may feel like you signed on for an E-ticket ride with thrilling ups and disheartening downs: now we have an option; now we don't. We have a good shot at fund; funding falls through. Where are we now? Still on the roller coaster, but with a much improved situation.

On the upside: The Conceptual Area Protection Plan that we submitted to the state Department of Fish and Game (DFG) has been approved at every level and is in line for funding. Several parcels from that plan are likely to be considered for funding this summer by the Wildlife Conservation Board (the funding arm of DFG).

We've been told the chances are good for getting funding that will allow Trust For Public Land to purchase several major parcels. It is also a plus that the city has applied for a California Transportation Commission grant that could supplement state funding from DFG. We should hear whether or not that funding is received this summer.

In more good news, you will recall that the city of Claremont received a grant last year to purchase a section of the upper hillsides. The city is close to closing escrow on that property and is planning a hillsides celebration on July 30 when that purchase is finalized (see below). As several parcels are purchased and added to the Wilderness Park, we move one step closer to preserving all the Claremont hillsides.

On the downside: The owners of the main part of Johnson's Pasture are marketing their property, so there is still a chance that a developer could get an option and proceed with a housing development plan. We hope eventually to get willing sellers and adequate funding together for this most important piece of the hillsides.

In the meantime, stay tuned: The roller coaster continues.

- Suzanne Thompson

On July 30 at 10am in the parking lot at the north end of Mills Avenue, the City of Claremont is hosting a celebration of the new Noland property addition to the Claremont Wilderness Park.

Please join the city in celebrating this significant addition to open space!

City's General Plan to Include Hillside Group

The City of Claremont has started to develop a comprehensive plan to guide the community's future. This effort fits in the long tradition of citizens and leaders taking the long view and developing strategies to achieve their goals – a pattern of foresight and planning that has always characterized Claremont.

The last time the city's general plan was reconsidered and revised was 1981, and an important result of that effort was the current hillside ordinance. The city has hired two consulting firms to organize the process and set up a website to let you monitor events and progress: www.cbapanning.com/claremont/index2.htm

The first phase focuses on community input. The city recruited volunteers for several subcommittees, including – of most importance to CWC – hillsides/open space/conservation.

The hillsides/open space/conservation subcommittee has met twice already. One of the first decisions was to select Tim Cox as subcommittee chair. The first meeting, largely under the direction of the consultants, focused

on the community's vision for the future of Johnson's pasture and the rest of the hillsides. The consultants' interviews with a diverse set of community leaders, including CWC, reinforced the overwhelming sense of the subcommittee: preserving the hillsides is central to our vision of what Claremont is and what we as a community wish it to become. Subsequent meetings will focus on open space, rather broadly defined, and on conservation. Part of the charge to the various subcommittees is to do some "visioneering" – conducting focused meetings with community organizations to supplement and complement their work. The CWC board will hold one or more "visioneering" sessions; details will be announced soon.

So what does all this mean? The good news is that the citizens of Claremont, largely through the efforts of CWC, have made preserving the hillsides a prominent part of the agenda for the future. The more challenging news, I believe, is that the campaign to save the hillsides is entering

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Late Spring.....A morning walk in the hillsides brings both disappointment and joy

I was disappointed.

This morning as I walked up to Johnson's Pasture, I expected to see the bounty and diverse array of annual spring wildflowers that customarily follow fire—just as I had seen over the past weekend on hikes along the Glendora Ridge Road and in the Stoddard Flats area (just south of Baldy Village).

Instead, our hills above Claremont, including Johnson's Pasture, mostly are covered with the dry grass stalks of Wild Oats (*Avena fatua*), bristly Milk Thistle (*Silybum marianum*), Star Thistle (*Centaurea melitensis*), and Wild Mustard (*Brassica* sp.)—all exotic plant imports that have been long established and naturalized in our oft-disturbed western landscape.

Nonetheless, the morning was cool with June cloud cover and my dogs (on leash!) and I enjoyed being up above the houses and busyness of the city. The Quail called, an Acorn Woodpecker tapped away at the Pine, Scrub Jays and a Stellar's Jay flew in and out of the trees. We surprised a lone Coyote in the meadow—my dogs and I and the Coyote exchanged careful observation of each other. I extended silent friendly greetings on our behalf as well as one yip for good measure.

Along the way, closer observation revealed Gum-plant (*Grindelia*) in bloom—the center of its yellow daisy-like blossom full of a sticky substance that is said to be an antidote to poison oak!

I spotted the more common Narrow-leaf Milkweed (*Asclepias fascicularis*) that grows in the area, and in the Pasture stands of California Milkweed (*A. californica*)—notable with its very wooly, larger leaves. Both Milkweeds are host

plants to the Monarch Butterfly.

Later in the season, if you look carefully, you may see the Monarch's stunningly beautiful green chrysalis studded with gold spots suspended from a Milkweed leaf or the perambulations of its handsome yellow-green, black and white banded caterpillars.

As I rounded the top of the Pasture, the road banks revealed one of my favorite "JP" spring flowers—Plummer's Mariposa Lily (*Calochortus plummerae*)—with its lovely pink flowers. The interior of each petal is covered with delicate yellow hairs—resembling a more vibrant version of the inside of a cat's ears! The California Native Plants Society (CNPS) has listed these bulbous plants with a 1B rating, meaning that it is rare, threatened, or endangered in California. We are fortunate that Johnson's Pasture remains open space and that we have a population of these beautiful members of the Lily Family growing in our hills above Claremont.

There were others: Honeysuckle (*Lonicera*), red-orange Heart-shaped Penstemon (*Keckiella cordifolia*), golden Sticky Monkey Flower (*Mimulus aurantiacus*), Indian Pinks (*Silene laciniata*)—delicate, brilliant red "cousins" to the Carnation, white Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) and yellow Yarrow (*Eriophyllum confertiflorum*).

Many of the bushes and small trees whose charred trunks looked so stark in November, now sport skirts of freshly stump- or crown-sprouted leaves—creamy-flowering Elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*), Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), Scrub Oak (*Quercus* sp.), Chamise (*Adenostema fasciculatum*) one of the dominant

plants of the Chaparral, as well as the abundant Laurel Sumac (*Rhus laurina*). The Poison Oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*) also is making a strong comeback—leaves of three, let it be!

Our hillside lands may not possess the diversity of the mountains above us, but they provide a buffer, a respite, and the promise of regeneration—I specifically am thinking of the ACORN project newly initiated by Mark von Wodtke. Mark and many dedicated volunteers are working to reintroduce Oaks back into their native habitat above Claremont. You may view the ACORN project website at: www.csu.pomona.edu/~mjvonwodtke/

On the return loop of my walk, I paused a moment at the head of the Pasture—the coyote's ears peaked up above the tall grass, the crickets chirruped, the faint whoosh of the 210 freeway wafted up the hill, the birds flew from branch to branch, and there were the pants of two tired pooches. All was not still, but all was calm.

- Linda Lee Worlow, 8 June 2004

Mining Project Proposed in Northeastern Claremont

Vulcan Materials Company has submitted a proposal to mine gravel on a 214-acre site in the San Antonio Wash on eastern edge of Claremont. The mining operation is expected to excavate 18-22 million tons of earth and result in 1 to 2 million tons of production.

There are a number of concerns that have been raised about this proposal. The site contains a rare form of coastal sage scrub (alluvial fan coastal sage scrub) and provides habitat for numerous native plants, birds, mammals, and reptiles. The area is currently designated a Significant Ecological Area by the county of Los Angeles.

In addition to habitat destruction, the effect on Claremont may include nighttime lighting, noise and dust from excavation and trucks, scarring from mining, a possible impact on ground water quality, and rising ground water. More information about this proposed project can be found on our website (www.claremontwildlands.org).

City's Hillside Plan...

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a new phase. The planning process will force the community to think about priorities among a diverse array of dreams and values and there will be many competing claims for scarce resources. Moreover, as the discussion of preserving the hillsides moves beyond defining the long range goal to fundamental strategic choices about how to acquire the resources to achieve our vision, a number of hard practical and political questions will have to be addressed.

The revision of the city's general plan is an important milestone in the campaign to preserve the hillsides. As Winston Churchill put it, "this is not the end, it is not the beginning of the end, but it may be the end of the beginning."

Watch for the announcement of the visioning session. CWC will keep you informed of other opportunities to participate in the planning process.

- Seth Thompson

Volunteers Needed!

The CWC is looking for 5-8 volunteers to help work 1-hour shifts at our booth (#19 by Indian Hill & 10th) at the city's annual July Fourth festivities in Memorial Park.

Please call Jayne Robertson at 909/621-2666 or email jarobertsn@aol.com for further information.

The Post is the newsletter of the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy.

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Guest column:

Advocating Parkland: Lessons in Media Strategy from Taylor Yard

A Claremont native, Andy Roth teaches courses on environmental sociology and the mass media in Pomona College's department of sociology. When not doing sociology, he enjoys long-distance running, especially in Claremont's wild foothills.

For inspiration and to learn valuable lessons, Claremont's wildlands advocates should look to Taylor Yard, along the Los Angeles River in northeastern L.A., and the communities that surround it. In December 2001, the state of California announced its intent to buy a 40-acre parcel of the former Southern Pacific freight-switching facility to create a new state park there. This purchase marked the culmination of more than a decade of determined community activism to prevent commercial development of Taylor Yard in favor of creating much-needed parkland. What factors led to this success? As a sociologist concerned with urban land use and environmental protection, I have studied Taylor Yard in hopes of answering this question. Some of my findings will no doubt be familiar to long-term advocates for protection of Claremont's foothills; others may amount to useful news.

At least five basic factors contributed to success at Taylor Yard: (1) alliances with regional and national environmental organizations; (2) effective use of legal tools (including especially the California Environmental Quality Act) to block unwanted commercial development; (3) tapping outside economic resources (most notably funds made available by passage of Proposition 12 in 2000); (4) strategic alliances with local, state and federal government officials to insure that some Proposition 12 money would come to Taylor Yard; and (5) sustained, prominent and positive media coverage, which brought Taylor Yard to the attention of a broader public.

The importance of media coverage may be the area where CWC has the most to learn from Taylor Yard. The conventional sociological wisdom regarding media coverage of social movements is that journalists strongly favor news sources with official, governmental affiliations. From that perspective, what is interesting about Taylor Yard is how frequently news coverage included the voices of unofficial advocates of parkland, including ordinary citizens.

This did not happen by chance or because journalists benevolently recognized that advocates of parkland were "the good guys." It happened because advocates of parkland at Taylor Yard built a successful media strategy. They cultivated ongoing relationships with journalists, not just from local community newspapers but also at the Los Angeles Times; as a result journalists quoted unofficial park advocates nearly as often

as government officials or business advocates. Park advocates achieved what sociologists who study news refer to as "media standing." Journalists treated them as serious players who could make a difference in what would happen at Taylor Yard - a status usually reserved for government officials.

The success of park advocates' media strategy involved more than getting their names and voices included in news stories about Taylor Yard. They also succeeded in framing the contest over land use at Taylor Yard in terms of "community." When quoted in newspaper stories about Taylor Yard, advocates of parkland consistently invoked "community" as an evaluative standard: Proposals that involved the community and took its interests into account (i.e., creating a park) were legitimate; those which excluded the community's involvement or neglected its interests (i.e., commercial development) were illegitimate.

As the battle over land use at Taylor Yard developed, not only park advocates, but also government officials began to speak in the

similar terms. Though charged with maintaining an objective stance, journalists presented park advocates' quotes more prominently in news stories about Taylor Yard. Ultimately, journalists' lead-sentences in stories about Taylor Yard represented the perspective of park advocates rather than commercial developers.

Though insufficient by itself, a successful media strategy can serve to offset the unequal distribution of power that many grass roots social movements face - especially when they attempt to redefine "progress" in terms of park creation or environmental restoration, rather than commercial development.

(For more on Taylor Yard, see <<http://www.riverproject.org>>, the website maintained by The River Project, an exemplary community-based organization that coordinated the coalition for the state park there. I also recommend Charlotte Ryan's *Prime Time Activism: Media Strategies for Grassroots Organizing* [South End Press, 1991] as an overview of sociologists' findings on news, with practical advice for activists.)



Star Lily

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The Claremont Wildlands Conservancy (CWC) is a non-profit, grassroots organization dedicated to keeping the foothills wild and free for all.

In the Claremont Hillsides After Last Autumn's Fire: 'It's a Blooming Miracle!'

From “down below” – here in the city – most of us enjoy our view of the foothills and the rugged San Gabriel Mountains beyond. But when I tell people I walk there daily, they often say something like, “Why do you go up there? It's so barren and brown. Now even the bushes and trees are burned up and gone. The green grass of spring is pretty, but it lasts such a short time. I'd rather go to the Botanic Garden where there are always flowers blooming and interesting plants to see.” They just don't know...

There are literally hundreds of flowering species, annuals and perennials, native and introduced, growing in our hillsides! They come in all sizes from the tiny miner's lettuce (*Claytonia* sp.) to the huge jimson weed (*Datura* sp.) several inches across. Flowers bloom all year round, and all around the rainbow spectrum: the reds of campion (*Silene californica*) and heart-leaved penstemon (*Keckellia cordifolia*); the whole range of orange monkey flowers (*Mimulus aurantiacus*) and paintbrush (*Castilleja* sp.), yellows of the various sunflowers (*Helianthus* sp.), mustards (*Brassica* sp.), gumweeds (*Grindelia*); greens of meadow rue (*Thalictrum* sp.) and star lilies (*Zigadenes*); blues of baby blue eyes (*Nemophila heterophylla*) and blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium bellum*); the gazillion purples and lavenders and magentas of larkspur, filaree, *mirabilis*, and nightshade. The delicate white fairy lantern (*Calochortus alba*) is lovely,



Photo: Beverly Speak

but so is the very common yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*).

This year, especially, we've seen wonderful displays of diversity as our “fire followers” take advantage of the open spaces to bloom happily in the sun. Especially prolific on open slopes this year were the usually shy California Peony (*Paeonia californica*), the above-pictured Soap Lily or Amole (*Chlorogalum pomeridianum*), and the Plummer's Mariposa Lily (*Calochortus plummerae*). No less than five species of Lupine graced the few acres in and around Johnson's Pasture – each with its own distinctive pea-like purple/pink flower and whorled leaf rosettes. The *Phacelia* genus, too, was represented by a number of species, from the familiar Canterbury (or California) Bells (*Phacelia minor*) to the curled-up Caterpillar *Phacelia* (*Phacelia cicutaria*).

Even those invasive thistles and mustards and non-native grasses, while they don't “belong” here, add color and interest as we observe and learn from their adaptive behavior.

Another question I hear often is “How did you learn all those flowers? How can you remember all their names?” There is no one answer – looking in field guides, following people around who know more than I do and asking questions, checking the many wildflower websites, visiting the Botanic Garden. As they become more familiar, they are like friends – and you just, well, KNOW them! Their common names are often descriptive or reflective of their history with human culture (*Yerba Santa* means “herb of health”, and is easier to remember than *Eriodictyon crassifolium*). But when you learn the Latin names, you learn about their families, their genealogy – and you begin to appreciate their relationships to each other. Both common and scientific names have value – when we can name things, we feel some deeper understanding and kinship with them.

We need to preserve and pass on to our children the wonder of it all – our roots and the plants' roots are bound together as we share space and time. We need places like our hillsides – where those beautiful lessons come, not from books and classes, but from the earth itself.

- Beverly Speak