



The Post

News from the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy

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Botanizing on a Morning Bright and Beautiful

On an especially beautiful morning in September, a group of 11 headed to Johnson's Pasture to get a better understanding of its plant life.

Among the group, and lending their expertise, were staff from the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, Dr. Clement Hamilton, executive director; Steve Boyd, curator of the herbarium; and Bart O'Brien, director of horticulture and member of the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). The group also included CWC members as well as Cal

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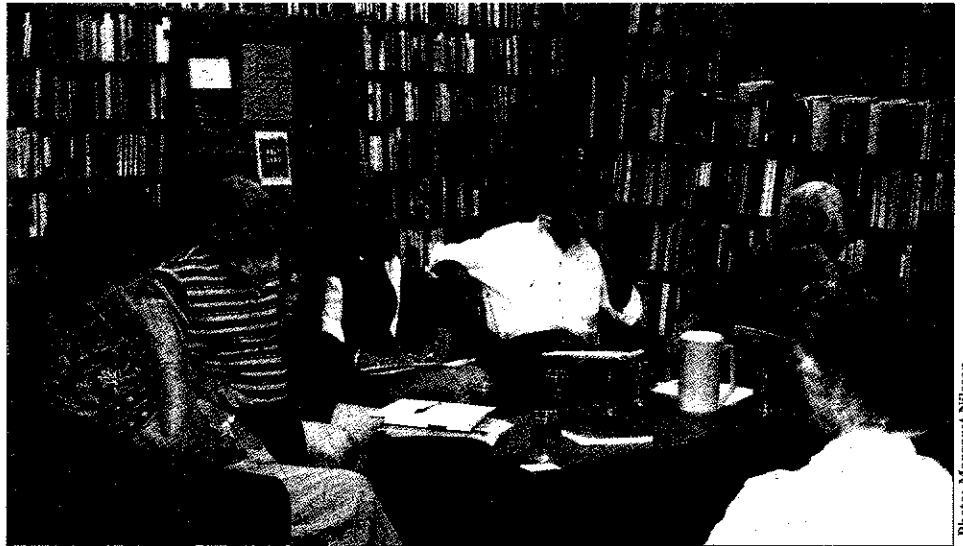


Photo: Margaret Nilsson

Panel discussion at Borders sponsored by CWC. From left, Ann Croissant, co-president, San Gabriel Mountains Regional Conservancy; Dr. Richard Jacobs, Glendora City Councilman; moderator Crystal O'Kelly, independent producer/writer; Mark von Wodtke, professor of landscape architecture, Cal Poly Pomona; and Nancy J. Wing from CWC.

CWC Events Generate Support for Preservation of Claremont's Open Spaces

The Claremont Wildlands Conservancy (CWC) hosted two successful events for the community in recent months.

Borders Panel Discussion

A panel discussion, "Development in the Claremont Foothills: Is Saving Johnson's Pasture a Justified Cause?" was held at Borders in Montclair in June.

Approximately fifty concerned citizens heard a stimulating and passionate discussion of hillside preservation.

Panelists were Mark von Wodtke, professor of landscape architecture at Cal Poly Pomona; Dr. Richard Jacobs, Glendora City Councilman; Ann Croissant, co-president, San Gabriel Mountains Regional Conservancy; and Nancy J. Wing of the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy.

Ann Croissant shared a brief history of the conservancy movement in the San Gabriel Valley. She cited two examples of successful conservation efforts by local conservancies: the Sierra Madre Mountain Conservancy which has preserved approximately 150 acres and the Glendora Conservancy which has preserved 300 acres of open space.

Councilman Jacobs, who describes himself as an improbable politician, shared with the group that, "My life has been a series of noble but losing causes," and that he hoped that the preservation of open space in the local hillsides would be different.

Mark von Wodtke underlined that we take for granted the services nature provides, for example: *watershed* created by the foothills and mountains

is critical for regeneration of water; *airshed* achieved by the trees filtering dust and particles out of the air; *viewshed* or *viewscope*, provided by the beautiful open spaces in our foothills, is a visual amenity. He commented, "Thirty years ago, when the Claraboya housing was established, the visual impact was significant. I have a hard time imagining another incursion of development up there."

CWC's Nancy J. Wing shared how her love for Johnson's Pasture brought her to where she is now—one of the founding board members of the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy. "I never thought I'd be doing this. But I followed my heart," she says.

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Botanizing

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Poly Pomona faculty Mark von Wodtke, Jerry Taylor, Dr. Ron Quinn, and Dr. Todd Jennings of California State University, San Bernardino.

The outing was to prepare for a Land Acquisition Evaluation (LAE) by the State Fish and Game Department. Determining the significance of the biotic community in and around the Pasture is important to securing funds for the purchase of Johnson's Pasture.

The end of a hot, dry summer is *not* the optimal time of year to look for plants, but, as Steve Boyd says, he's had a lot of experience identifying "drystickia." On this day, 108 species and varieties were noted.

Among rare plants sighted were *Quercus durata* var. *gabrielensis*—a scrub oak endemic to the south slopes of the San Gabriel Mountains and Plummer's Mariposa lily, *Calochortus plummerae*—a beautiful spring wildflower.

Part of the group extended its study to Chicken Creek, southeast of the Padua Hills Theater. It is a lovely riparian area with attendant sycamores, bordered by an excellent example of coastal sage scrub habitat. Chicken Creek is slated for development, with plans to fill in the natural creek bed, remove close to 200 mature live oaks and sycamores, and rechannel the creek.

Linda Whitaker, Coordinator,
Wildlife Identification, CWC

The Post is the newsletter of the
Claremont Wildlands Conservancy.

Executive Board

Suzanne Thompson, Nancy J. Wing
Project Coordinator Jeff Johnson
Editor Margaret Nilsson
Masthead design Ellen Perry

For information or to get involved:

Claremont Wildlands Conservancy
459 Baughman Ave., Claremont CA 91711
(909) 624-8869
Suzanne Thompson
sthompson@pomona.edu
Nancy J. Wing nanwyn@earthlink.net



Photo: Jeff Johnson

Above, Claremont High School student Becky Grajeda speaks with people who have stopped at CWC's table at the Claremont Farmers' Market. CWC volunteers are available every Sunday at the Market (in the Rhino Records parking lot) to share information. If you are interested in staffing CWC's table for a few hours, please contact Linda Bartunek, Farmers' Market coordinator, CWC, at (909) 626-7879.

CWC Events Generate Support

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Environmental Roundtable

In September, CWC and the San Gabriel Mountains Regional Conservancy (SGMRC) co-sponsored "Environmental Education and Hillside Preservation," a roundtable discussion at the historic Padua Hills Theater. An attentive crowd of more than 100 people were present at the event to learn about the innovative environmental education programs of several local educators and to hear an update on hillside preservation in the San Gabriel Valley.

Dick Guthrie, director of human services for the city of Claremont, in welcoming the group, said, "I look forward to all of us working together for open space needs here in Claremont." Ginger Elliott, executive director of Claremont Heritage, presented a fascinating history of the theater and the Padua site.

The audience heard from local educators about unique environmental education programs. Speakers included Pitzer College Professor Paul Faulstich; Lorrae Fuentes of the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden; Dietrich Schuhl, science educator at the Webb Schools; and Pat Foy, 11th-grade science teacher at Charter Oak High School in Covina.

The final part of the program consisted of an update from regional conservancies in the San Gabriel Valley. Steve Miller of the Foothills Wildlands Conservancy, described their progress and the overwhelming support their conservancy has had from the city council. Ann Croissant of the SGMRC inspired the other local conservancies to keep working toward their goals: "If we're connected, we can do amazing things for the San Gabriel Valley."

The roundtable, organized by CWC's Suzanne Thompson, brought out an impressive group of citizens who share a commitment to environmental preservation and education. As one Padua Hills resident said of the event, "The meeting certainly confirmed that there are many people who have more than a passing interest in helping to save what little is left of our pristine environment."

Quotes of Note — from letters and literature

"To mountain bikers, Johnson's Pasture is a special place. It provides some of the best trails in Southern California in terms of beauty, diversity of terrain, and accessibility.

Chris Massie and I, who bike throughout the foothills, have been distributing information to cyclists, equestrians, and hikers about the conservation efforts of CWC.

People we have talked to find it impossible to believe that such a wonderful wilderness area could be developed.

Mountain bikers are willing to help CWC in its efforts in acquiring the land so that it may be preserved for everyone to enjoy."

John Koncki

Cyclist and member of CWC

"...The efforts of [CWC] to safeguard the pristine wilderness areas in the hillsides of Claremont is a foresighted attempt to prevent the overdevelopment of what few wilderness areas remain in our city.

I would ask that the City Council seriously consider the ground-swell of support that the preservation of our hillsides has gained from the citizens of Claremont.

I would hope that the elected members of this group would endeavor to support the Conservancy's efforts in an attempt to reflect the popular opinion of its constituency."

Robin L. Haulman

Attorney at Law



If you haven't been to Johnson's Pasture yet, take a drive up Mountain Avenue in Claremont all the way to the top. Turn right on Santa Catarina, park at the end of the street, and climb up into the pasture. You'll be glad you did.

"CWC's priority properties will make an extraordinary contribution to the preservation of some of the last of the unique transverse foothills/mountains landscape and biodiversity of the region, plus preserving the important regional sense of place of some of the most regionally familiar Claremont properties serving for decades or more as Valley historical and educational landmarks."

Ann Croissant, Ph.D., co-chair, San Gabriel Mountains Regional Conservancy

"...Foothill communities along the base of the San Gabriel Mountains are struggling to preserve their beautiful hillsides. I hope the good citizens and elected officials of these communities can work together to preserve this national treasure.

When I look up to the mountains from my back garden, I cannot see the political boundaries etched according to municipal borders. Rather, I see an unbroken range of mountains that form a significant heritage for future generations...."

Dr. Richard C. Jacobs

Glendora City Councilman

"Development interferes with the natural watershed and often results in contamination of the ground water. Keeping water clean is usually cheaper than cleaning it."

"Accumulating evidence indicates that open space conservation is not an expense but an investment that produces important economic benefits."

"Preservation of the visual qualities of a region is often a prime reason for conservation. The foothill communities of the San Gabriel Valley are an example. Simply put, you don't want to develop over the very qualities that brought people to a region in the first place."

Jeff Stevens, from Appendix D of Reconnecting the San Gabriel Valley: A Planning Approach for the Creation of Interconnected Urban Wildlife Corridor Networks, Jay Brown et al., Department of Landscape Architecture, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, June 2000.

Featured Creature

Velvet Ant

(Dasymutilla occidentalis)

It was our young son who discovered what appeared to be a brightly colored oversized ant sharing the path with us one late summer afternoon at Johnson's Pasture. We stopped to examine it and noted some key characteristics before it headed off solo in another direction. After some research at home, we discovered that what had caught our eye was actually a velvet ant.



Despite the name, velvet ants are actually wasps, not ants. Even so, their brilliant and luxurious hair does make the "velvet" part of their name apt.

Identification tips:

- Adult females are ant-like in appearance, wingless, and 6-20 mm in length.
- Head and body are covered with bright red, orange, or yellow hairs.
- Some have black bands on abdomen.
- Adult males are larger than females and have two pairs of wings.

Distribution:

- Widely distributed throughout the South and West.
- Usually found in open areas.
- Though widely distributed, velvet ants are rarely abundant in any area.

Habits:

- Usually active during warm seasons. Most common in midsummer.

NOTE: Enjoy these attractive insects from a distance: females can inflict a painful sting if handled or stepped on with bare feet. Winged males, however, are harmless.

Other recent sightings:

- Fresh bear tracks
- Mountain lion
- Bobcat

Claremont Wildlands Conservancy
459 Baughman Avenue
Claremont, CA 91711



www.claremontwildlands.org

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

Conservancy Update

- ◆ The purchase of Johnson's Pasture by the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy (in partnership with the Trust for Public Land) is in negotiation. CWC will continue to work for hillside preservation.
- ◆ Finances: Donations are going into CWC's General Fund until the organization is ready to set up a fund for the purchase of property.
- ◆ Membership in CWC is now available (see attached envelope). We welcome *all* donations.
- ◆ Our mailing list now includes more than 800 people.
- ◆ CWC continues to submit grant proposals to raise funds for preserving open space in the hillsides.
- ◆ Don't miss CWC's display in the window of the Folk Music Center in Claremont.

Planning Ahead

Meetings

We continue to meet monthly. November's meeting date will be announced in the *Claremont Courier* and we will send an e-mail reminder to those for whom we have e-mail addresses. If you haven't yet given us your e-mail address, please do so soon!

Village Venture, Saturday, October 28, 8a.m.-4p.m.

Bud's Bike Shop and Full of Life bakery have generously agreed to share their space with CWC. Volunteers from the conservancy will be there with photos, note cards, and T-shirts.

Music for Open Spaces

A musical event of jazz, Latin jazz, and rock is planned to raise funds to help CWC continue its preservation efforts. Date and additional information to come.

League of Women Voters Forum on Hillside Preservation

January 17, 2000. Details about this important event will follow. You won't want to miss it!