

# The Post

New

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## Saving the Hillsides: From Vision to Conservancy

For Suzanne Thompson, Ellen Perry, and Nancy J. Wing, Johnson's Pasture is a special place. For years they have treasured this beautiful open space in the hills of Claremont. When they learned that a developer wanted to build 150 homes on this site, they had to take action.

"We don't want to be adversarial to developers—we just want to find alternatives. We're not ready to give it [Johnson's Pasture] up," explains Wing.

The three women have a broad vision—to preserve an open space corridor from Claremont all the way to Altadena—a corridor enabling the preservation of plants and animals in the beautiful foothills.

In January 2000, they founded the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy (CWC) to help realize their vision. A conservancy can acquire land and preserve it for public benefit in perpetuity. According to Ann Croissant, co-president of the San Gabriel



Photo by Annie Marquis

Mountains Regional Conservancy, and mentor for Thompson, Wing, and Perry, the conservancy movement has been growing rapidly. "It's a movement whose time has come," she says.

The owners of a critical property in Johnson's Pasture have expressed interest in having their land preserved in its current natural state.

CWC and the Trust for Public Land (TPL) are currently working together to acquire this property. TPL—a "green broker"—acts as a negotiator between property owners and conservancies. It helps in the acquisition and financing of lands to be protected.

If the conservancy acquires this key property, this beloved pastoral area

*(Continued on page 2)*

## The Jewel of Claremont

Johnson's Pasture is 1,170 acres of undeveloped rolling hills and groves above Claraboya and Highpoint in northern Claremont. It is a stunning natural area that is an important part of Claremont's ecological, historical, and recreational resources.

For those who frequently hike, bike, ride horses, or just enjoy the wildlife

and plants of the area, its beauty and serenity provide an "antidote to civilization." According to Judy Wright in *Claremont: A Pictorial History (2nd ed.)*, people have been retreating to Johnson's Pasture for walks and picnics for more than a century.

What makes Johnson's Pasture "the jewel of Claremont" and the surround-

ing foothills is its gentle terrain and its unsurpassed vistas. You do not have to be a mountain biker or an endurance hiker to be able to take advantage of the spectacular views and utter peacefulness the pasture provides.

There is no substitute for this piece of paradise.

(Continued from page 1)

will remain as open space.

CWC and its supporters are currently researching funding for the purchase of property. The conservancy will seek Proposition 12 and 13 funding as well as funding from foundations, other organizations, and individuals.

The conservancy is also sponsoring events to help raise funds and raise

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

**The Post is the newsletter of the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy.**

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**Submissions**

Do you have a story to tell about Johnson's Pasture? Would you like to share any sightings or photographs? We'd love to hear from you. Please keep in mind that we will not be able to publish everything we receive.

**Send submissions to:**

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Please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope if you would like your submission returned.

**For information or to get involved, please contact:**

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**Donations**

Donations are always welcome and deeply appreciated. While we are waiting to receive complete tax-exempt status, we accept donations made payable to SGMRC (San Gabriel Mountains Regional Conservancy—our umbrella organization) for the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy. Donations are tax deductible.



awareness of the necessity to preserve the open space in our hillsides. It is

apparent that there are many in the Claremont area who are deeply concerned about the loss of open space. What began in January 2000 at the initiative of a small group has turned into a strong grassroots movement with a vision and a plan.

*If you are interested in the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy, please contact us. We need help in fund-raising, publicity, and planning events.*

## Claremont Hills Conservation Corps Supports Claremont Wildlands Conservancy

*Excerpts from letter by Nick Presecan, chair, Board of Directors, Claremont Hills Conservation Corporation, to Scott Ferguson, Trust for Public Land. Copied on this letter were: Karen Rosenthal, mayor; Glenn Southard, city manager; and Mark Hodnik, facilities and construction manager.*

Dear Mr. Ferguson,

The Claremont Hills Conservation Corporation Board of Directors supports the efforts of the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy to acquire Johnson's Pasture and other property in the hillsides as public land. The City of Claremont currently manages approximately 1,200 acres in the Claremont Wilderness Park, for which our board is the overseeing body. Because we are in the position to accept more property as part of the public trust, we would be willing to work with the City of Claremont, the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy, and the Trust for Public Land to make such transactions possible.

We strongly believe in the importance of preserving watershed, airshed, and viewshed in the public domain and are also very concerned about sustaining land and animal communities as a cohesive whole along the base of the San Gabriel mountains. Furthermore, we are concerned about the ongoing costs taxpayers would incur providing fire protection, police protection, garbage collection, as well as the maintenance and resurfacing of roads for new hillside development. Studies, such as those done in Palo Alto, have shown that the additional tax base provided by relatively few homes does not support the costs of these additional services. We would rather see the community purchase land and development rights and put it in the public domain to help sustain nature's services for the benefit of all, now and in perpetuity.

We are hoping that you can help acquire public funds for this public investment. Please let us know what we can do to assist these efforts.

Sincerely Yours,

Nick Presecan

## Not to be missed...

### Borders to host CWC Event

Save the date: Sunday, June 25 Borders Bookstore in Montclair will host a panel discussion, "Development in the Claremont Foothills: Is Saving Johnson's Pasture a Justified Cause?" at 3:00 p.m. on June 25.

Panelists will include Mark von Wodtke, professor of landscape architecture, Cal Poly Pomona; Dr. Richard Jacobs, councilman, City of Glendora; Ann Croissant, co-president, San Gabriel Mountains Regional Conservancy; and Nancy J. Wing, president, Claremont Wildlands Conservancy. Independent Producer-Writer Crystal O'Kelly will moderate the panel.

This will be a great opportunity to learn more about the issues involved in

preservation of the foothills.

### Art for the Environment

Local artist Gretchen McGarigle will hold an exhibition of her work in September at the Claremont Community Foundation. McGarigle will donate some of her proceeds to the conservancy.

Anne Seltzer, artist and active CWC supporter, is organizing a public art exhibition and sale to be held at the Claremont Forum in October. *More information will follow.*

### Stay Tuned

A group of dedicated CWC supporters have created a video about Johnson's Pasture. "Saving Johnson's Pasture" airs on Channel 3, Public Access TV, at 6:30 on Tuesday evenings for the next several months.

## Featured Creature

Lazuli Bunting  
(*passerina amoena*)

### Identification tips:

- Small, conical bill
- White wing bars

### Adult male:

- Deep blue head and upperparts
- Orange breast
- White belly and undertail coverts
- Blackish wings and tail

### Adult female:

- Dark brown upperparts
- Warm brown underparts
- Immature plumages similar to adult female-immature male can have blue patches
- Can be told from other female buntings by the white wing bars

Sources: USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center



Lazuli Bunting (photo: USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center)

## Sightings...

### Recently spotted in Johnson's Pasture

- ◆ A meadow of magenta clarkias
- ◆ Native wild peonies
- ◆ Mountain lion
- ◆ Lazuli Bunting
- ◆ Needlegrass and Blue eyed grass
- ◆ More than two dozen raptors (birds of prey) flying together
- ◆ Bobcat
- ◆ Western tanagers
- ◆ Grey fox
- ◆ Mule deer

## "For happiness and good health"

Doris Aschke of Rancho Cucamonga and Marian Nichols and Kenny Fowlkes of Upland—all in their '60s—can be found walking the Johnson's Pasture Road late weekday afternoons.

Doris and Marian first hiked in the pasture with the Sierra Club Monthly Moonlight Hikes years ago. Kenny's

introduction to Johnson's Pasture came three years ago. Overstressed and overweight, Kenny had a heart attack in 1987. For the next ten years, he exercised regularly at Pomona Valley Hospital's Stead Heart Center.

When he became reacquainted with Marian, a childhood friend, in 1997,

she took him hiking in the local foothills. Kenny no longer needs to use the facilities at the Stead Center. He, Marian, and Doris keep their hearts and spirits healthy hiking at Johnson's Pasture. They walk "for happiness and good health," Marian likes to say.

*Karen Chapman Lenz*

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3171143623



*We'd love to see you!*

Summer meetings will be held at 7 p.m. on

June 15, July 20, and August 17  
(the third Thursday of each month)

**Location:**

The Claremont Forum, 111 S. College Ave.  
The Forum is behind the *Claremont Courier*  
Office on the east side of College Avenue  
below the railroad tracks.

All are welcome. Come find out about  
fund-raising, membership drive, and publicity.