

Marsh Mailing

Madrona Marsh Preserve and Nature Center

Marsh Mailing is also available in full color at www.friendsofmadronamarsh.com

Learning Respect for an Old Relative

Tracy Drake, Manager, Park Services

I walked out and onto the land, past the entrance gate and past the interpretive panel, noting the footprints of the animals who had walked the same path the night before. As the sun rose, the early morning light and the smell of the land greeted me and I inhaled slowly and deeply -- I felt as if I had come home. Out of the southwest, on this Friday morning, there was enough of a breeze to carry an early bird chorus to me in the same rhythm as the passing breeze. I could hear White-crowned Sparrows and Yellow-rumped Warblers -- their calls and songs seemed special to me today because soon their winter visit would end, and they would go home to their birthplaces to breed again. I stood alone on this land but I was not really alone. There were, in that early morning, thousands -- maybe millions -- of other lives also active on the land.

I think about these lives and the fact that there has been active life on this land since the dawn of time. I think about that sometimes, and where we fit into that historical perspective. It is clear we are sitting in a good place because now, at this point in time, there are many people who genuinely care and work for a better world and environment.

As I meandered down the path I saw small, dark rocks that were part of oil-soaked roads when the oil fields were in operation. And I also saw bits and pieces of shells and sandstone that mark this land as part of the back-dune history of the South Bay. I cannot think about that history without thinking about the people who came before us. I know the Tongva walked this land, although they did not actually live right here.

The story of Swaanga, the nearest Tongva village to Madrona, was brought to us in a memorable and significant way by Glen Williams. Glen passed late last year, but I think about him almost every day. It is he who made it his life's work to understand his own Indian heritage, and what it meant to be Indian in different generations and successive years. I think all of us who are part Indian have walked the same

path through life that he had. In talking with him about his hidden Indian-ness I am reminded that my mother also walked that same path. By her walking that path before us, the path was almost completely



Glen Williams

obscured from me and my siblings, as it had once been obscured from Glenn and his siblings. But we all know who we are now. He had discovered who he was -- a person closely related to the native people of the land that is now Madrona - the Tongva.

As a teenager, his grandfather, while clearing fields of stones in Wilmington so that farmers could plant crops, slowly, over time and without even clearly knowing why, collected many stones that he

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knew were somehow meaningful and somehow important. His grandpa carried them from state-to-state, home-to-home, for his entire life. Glen said he played with them as a kid but his grandpa seldom talked about them; he just hung on to them. His devotion to preserving these artifacts ensured that they stayed well attended-to by his family for over 100 years. Glen’s dad, and then Glen himself, inherited the collection. Out of respect, Glen knew it was not proper to move the stones out of California; so, when he moved to Texas, Glen donated them to Madrona. In doing so, he inventoried the collection of stones and shared many of their stories with us.

Working with Glen and Tongva elders Linda Gonzales, Craig Torres and Cindy Alvitre, and with other Tongva folks, we gained a better understanding of the native people who walked on this land before we did. The story of those artifacts is long -- too long to share here -- but I can share the core of it. Basically, we learned that it is vital to interact with the land as a relative, not as a resource and to have a reciprocal relationship with it. The word for this type of relationship in the Tongva language is Hiikin ("he-eken"). The Tongva believe that everything and everyone with whom we share breath is related. The word Hiiken captures the belief that wind, breath, and spirit are tied together as a basis for all life.

This is, maybe, a different way of thinking about the land, although it can be easy to relate to. This is how: Think about your relatives for a moment now. Think of the ones with whom you share time on vacations, telephone calls, and perhaps - even in this time - visits to your home. And now think about the relatives who came before you – living their lives, sharing their stores and sharing their gifts. You stand on their shoulders. Their gifts, their legacy became your legacy. Can you feel inside you what an honor it is to be a part of your family? Recognize that feeling and stay with it for a moment. That feeling can be shared about the land, too -- it takes a little practice to recognize the land as a relative, but it is possible.

I think about these types of relationships as I think about generations of plants, animals and soil sharing wind and rain and fresh air, even along oil-slicked roads; and the footprints on this same land of vaqueros and cattle, oil workers of the past, and the students and visitors who come to the land now. Each has had an impact. Some of those impacts have

been positive, some have not. Nonetheless, the land survives and currently thrives.

The Hiiken as a way of life is how Glen lived. His gifts of life, curiosity and generosity became ours. I now choose, in honor of him and of the people who came before, to walk the land with that same respect.

I thank Glen Williams for starting that journey of learning with all of us. I miss his twinkling blue eyes, his southern drawl, and his snow-white hair. Mostly I miss his intense curiosity, love for all of life, and our meaningful late-night telephone conversations – the times he shared his stories.

When you go out on the land, whether you go to the Preserve or simply to the land around your home, please try to feel respect for it. Sometimes that respect comes to us in the form of wonder. That’s a great place to start. And as Spring comes to us, soon there will be wildflowers and fresh new green leaves, and the sound of young birds all around us. A little later the butterflies will be flying. What a wonder nature is -- what a gift. May we, like Glen, like the Tongva, like those of the indigenous nations of the United States - all grow in respect - for all our relations -**T.D.**



**Rock artifacts donated to Madrona by
Glen Williams**

Not Just a Sign

Steve Ash

Early last year before society was placed in COVID lockdown, a young man engaged us requesting to perform an Eagle Scout project. We have done several such projects in the past as each one brings something new and needed to the Marsh. Plus I have yet to meet an Eagle Scout candidate whom I didn't find completely dedicated to pursuing Eagle status. On this occasion, we happened to find an exceptional young man, Sai Akhil Samatham.



Eagle Scout candidate Sai Samatham with his sign. Note the Bluebird box in the foreground, also created by Sai Photo by Steve Ash

What does it take to achieve the Eagle Scout rank? Besides meeting stringent leadership requirements and actively demonstrating ethical moral and responsible service, Sai had to complete a project exhibiting project-based skills. Those skills include: preparation, identifying a project, writing a proposal, drawing a detailed plan, carrying out the project, and completing reports summarizing the project. All this had to go through a daunting Board of Review before Sai might attain the rank of Eagle. Only the top 2 percent of Scouts make it to the Eagle rank.

Sai's well thought-out proposal was presented to Madrona Marsh management at a meeting back in early March of 2020. Needless to say, we were very impressed with Sai and his two-pronged proposal: build a set of a dozen Bluebird nesting boxes and construct a much-needed sign at the entrance to our facility. While the sign project itself was more than adequate, this young man was determined to follow through on both projects.

I must admit, at the time I thought this was truly daunting for someone as young as Sai.

Then COVID hit and within the blink of an eye, we were shut down and scrambling to meet ever-changing situational guidelines and directives. Despite the difficulties that were presented, Sai continued on with his project, communicating by email and eventually at outdoor socially-distanced and masked planning meetings with our staff.

Amazingly, he funded the effort himself by selling handmade candles to family and friends. Yes, you heard that correctly, handmade candles. I can remember chatting with our Maintenance Lead, Morgan Griffin, about Sai's project. We felt it renews ones faith in youth and their energy. By the way, Morgan played a significant advisory role for Sai. The one thing Morgan did for Sai was prepare a concrete foundation that met City requirements. Other than that, it was all Sai.

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Our Coastal Project

Jonathan Nakai



Then (left) and now photo showing prairie restoration area. Note pin flags identifying native plants.
Photos by J. Nakai

When most people think of prairies, they think of lush green fields of grass as far as the eye can see. At the Madrona Marsh, we also have a prairie, but a Southern California coastal one. In a Coastal Prairie, you see not only the native grasses, but also a wide variety of forbs growing within them. Examples of such plants would be Dune Poppies, California Aster, Purple Clarkia, Tansy Mustard, and various lupine species. These plants are host plants to a wide variety of insects and also provide resting and nesting areas for specific animals and grassland birds, such as Western Meadowlarks. This wide variety of plants and animals gives coastal prairies a wider biodiversity than most other prairies, and a colorful sight for visitors in late spring.

Last spring, Madrona Marsh received a \$1000 dollar grant from the Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society to help restore the coastal prairie in the Preserve. The grant allowed us to procure the necessary supplies for the restoration project. Since then, we have been able to plant over 100 native plants and spread 7 different kinds of native annual seeds (Purple Clarkia, Tansy Mustard, Truncated Lupine, Arroyo Lupine, Dot-seed Plantain, Common Sunflower, and California Everlasting) in the southern portion of our coastal prairie.

Although restoration of the coastal prairie is a slow process, we hope the area will soon provide a more pleasing view during the spring. At that time, the coastal prairie's native blooms will offer a diverse color palette. Restoring our coastal prairie would mean not only that native plants and wildlife would flourish, but that people who walk through the Marsh in the future will have a delightful, more enriching experience.

Marsh Mailing is a quarterly newsletter designed to provide information about activities and upcoming events at or relating to the Madrona Marsh Preserve. Contributions are welcome and may be e-mailed to Editorial Advisor, Bill Arrowsmith, FrاندBill@att.net or Editor, Diane Gonsalves at gonwild2@yahoo.com or may be dropped off or mailed to the Nature Center, P.O. Box 5078, Torrance, CA 90510.



Donations of \$100 or More

In Winter 2020-2021

Date	Donor	Donation	Comments
December	Georgia Bellemin	\$250.00	On Behalf of Jeanne Bellemin
December	Alene Gardner	\$100.00	
December	Stettenheim Foundation	\$500.00	On Behalf of Wendy Janes
December	Frank & Marilyn Miles	\$200.00	
December	James and Beth Shibata	\$500.00	
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January	Norman & Suzanne George	\$150.00	
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February	Gail & Richard Cole	\$100.00	
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February	Georgia Bellemin	\$250.00	In honor of Jeanne Bellemin Birthday
February	Barbara Bonesteele	\$100.00	
February	Susan Soto Campos	\$130.00	
February	Drew Jensen	\$100.00	
February	Steven Schlegel	\$100.00	
February	Steven Kriz	\$100.00	
March	June Kagois	\$100.00	
March	Kathleen Lahey	\$125.00	

Mason Bee Project

Natalya Eastepp,
March 2021

During the spring of 2020, California was struggling with raging fires that seemed impossible to extinguish. As our forests were burning, I thought of the role that bees play in pollinating these forests and how long it would take bees to help restore the forests to their original state before the havoc. My concern for the environment led me to read about the problem and I found that bee species are rapidly becoming endangered. Without bees, all species, including humans, would slowly go extinct because the bees pollinate our food plants. My focus became the docile, native Mason Bee. The native Mason Bee pollinates some species of plants better than the honeybee. The Mason Bee, unlike the honeybee, is native to North America and lives well among other bee species.

I chose my project in the summer of 2020, when California was plagued with persistent, devastating wildfires. I decided something needed to be done, and, thus, Community Mason Bee Awareness and Population became the title for my Gold Award project.

I took action by hosting several bee awareness workshops, during which I had the opportunity to speak about the importance of bees and how easy it is to save them. I reached out to Torrance Home Depot, who graciously donated Mason Bee nests. I purchased 680 bee larvae from an ethical Mason Bee farmer. I will be donating the larvae to nature centers, parks, and universities in my local community and surrounding areas.

The nest and bee installation began Saturday, March 6th, and should be completed by Saturday, April 17th. The locations where the nests and bees will make their new home are White Point and George F. Canyon, which wanted nests but no bee larvae; Madrona Marsh Nature Center Native Garden has one nest with 68 bee larvae; Entradero Park received one nest with 68 bee larvae; the South Coast Botanic Garden, which has



requested nests containing 100 bee larvae; California State University, Dominguez Hills, which will be receiving 1 nest with 50 bee larvae; the LA Arboretum, which is receiving 1 nest that has 50 bee larvae; Eaton Canyon, which will be receiving 2 nests that will have 100 bee larvae; Vasquez Rocks, which will be receiving 2 nests containing 100 bee larvae; and UCI Arboretum and Herbarium, which will be receiving one nest and 50 bees.

This project started in August, 2020, and I have already put 250 hours into it. I will most likely put at least 100 more hours in because I will be writing a children's book, which I will be donating to the nature centers where my bees and nests go, as well as to local preschools, elementary schools, and my pediatrician's office. My goal is to educate as many people as I can on the importance of restoring the ecosystems balance by raising bee awareness and making our world more bee-friendly. After all, saving the bees allows them to thrive and, in turn, saves humanity and our world.

Living in Harmony with Skunks

Suzan Hubert

Second in a six part series: Introduction, skunks, raccoons, coyotes, squirrels and opossums

Our South Bay Striped Skunks are the most peace loving, non-aggressive animals you can meet. I have a beautiful, chubby, confident skunk that occasionally visits my garden and I'm happy to welcome him because he eats all the roaches, spiders and small rodents that also visit my garden. He does dig small cone-shaped holes in the lawn and upturns patches of earth searching for grubs to munch. I'm ok with this because many of those insects would have hatched and eaten my plants. In the wild, 70% of a skunk's diet is insects. They also eat fallen fruit, pet food and discarded human food. They don't like citrus and they can't climb, so if you have bites out of your tree fruit it's not skunks.

As I was researching skunks I started wondering how they have survived with such bold coloring. Most animals blend into the environment to avoid predators, but as it turns out, there are many other animals with bold coloring as a warning to potential predators. There are quite a few animals with super powers that totally disregard any need to hide. Some brightly-colored critters are toxic, some just taste awful, and skunks... well, we know what their super power is: their spray. Skunks do have some urban predators—cars and hawks. Hawks avoid skunk spray by the way they grab them. I guess they must taste ok; to hawks anyway.

Skunks have lived in the South Bay since the Pleistocene era, when they shared it with saber-toothed cats and mammoths. In those days, perhaps their coloring was enough protection. Today's skunks have a new skill—they warn you before they spray. Skunks look you in the face, paw their front feet and may raise their tail (see photo) or chitter. These are warnings that mean "go away"! I once encountered a skunk in the wild, and this warning is very clear. They really do just want to be left alone to eat insects and grubs. Maybe they did that warning eons ago, as well, or maybe they developed it more recently for humans. I wasn't there; can't say.

Skunks are nocturnal so you rarely see them during daylight hours. At night they travel solo, looking for food, water and safe shelter for sleeping during the day. The female skunk makes a den once a year when she is preparing to give birth. She builds a den in a quiet, dark place preferably away from people. She likes

abandoned animal burrows, or under decks, porches or houses or in brush piles. They dig their own burrow if nothing else is available. Skunks mate February-March. The babies are born April-June. The baby's eyes open 3 weeks after birth and they nurse for 8 weeks. Young skunks then venture out with mom to learn hunting, foraging and the finer points of survival in an urban environment. On our Preserve young



*Striped Skunk on Preserve warns, "I'm about to spray."
Photo by Steve Ash*

skunks can sometimes be spotted out wandering in the mornings. As any parent knows, human babies take a while to learn sleep patterns; young skunks are the same. They don't quite get the nocturnal thing right away.

Let me clear up some myths about skunk spray. The spray is highly concentrated urine. It comes from glands under the tail. If you don't heed the skunk's warning to stay away, it can turn, aim and spray in the blink of an eye. They aim for the face and are highly accurate from 8-10 feet. Wandering baby skunks are born with this skill so

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Let's Find a Plastic Pollution Solution

Sponsored by UmeWorks

Plastic pollution fouls not only our Preserve, but also our community, state, country and eventually, the world's oceans. Its slowly increasing effects are being felt by life of all sizes and types. We as consumers can make a big dent in plastic pollution by finding new ways to avoid using plastic. On our website, FriendsOfMadronaMarsh.com, there is now a new space where readers can share how they are learning to be part of the plastic pollution solution.

You can click on a button there to send us an email and share your ideas. All viable ideas will be posted. The best idea of the month wins a prize, plus respect and honor for making a dent in plastic pollution.

Here are some starter ideas:

Eco-Nuts is an organic Laundry Detergent. It comes in a cardboard box. Some

of us have used it for years and it works great. Eco-Nuts eliminates use of big plastic laundry bottles. Eco-Nuts is available on Amazon

Never buy water in plastic bottles. Use more permanent refillable bottles.

Always refuse single use plastic eating utensils and straws at restaurants and carry-outs.

Recommend to your friends restaurants and take-aways that use all bio-degradable or compostable containers and no plastic bags.

This is a beginning; these ecologically responsible steps won't eliminate plastic pollution by themselves. But every time you refuse to accept or use plastic, you are taking another step toward the solution.

#

"Skunks ..." continued from page 7

watch them also from a distance. Sometimes spray happens, so be prepared if you know skunks are around. If you or a pet gets sprayed, mix up ½ cup baking soda, 1-2 teaspoons of dishwashing liquid (not powder) and one quart of 3% Hydrogen Peroxide. Don't make this ahead of time; it doesn't store well. Wash the animal or person with this solution, let it sit for 5 minutes, rinse, and then wash the animal or person with species appropriate soap/shampoo. Wash your clothes in the same solution; no bleach. This combination chemically neutralizes the oils in the spray and the smell is gone. Tomato juice does not work. It's just a strong smell that, for a moment, seems to overpower the skunk smell.

Gardeners like skunks because they eat many insects that damage plants, but not everyone shares that feeling. Remember that all wildlife, just like humans, needs certain things to survive: water, food, and safe shelter for sleeping and raising young. They also need enough space to live their lives. Whether you welcome skunks or you just want them to go away, understand what they look for as they travel in our neighborhoods around the South Bay. If you have a fountain, bird bath or any water source they might visit, or if you have a flower bed, lawn, outdoor pet food, mice,

roaches, insects or fallen fruit, then you offer a food or drink source. Wood piles or areas of open access under houses, porches or decks offer them shelter.

If you don't want skunks under your deck or porch, you can put in motion lights or spread citrus peels, cat litter, dog urine or towels soaked in ammonia, and you will make those areas inhospitable. Just take these precautions before nesting season. A skunk living under a porch, shed or deck from April-September should ALWAYS be assumed to be a mother with babies. Be patient; they will leave. You don't want to orphan the babies. PETA.org is a good source for other ways to deter skunks.

If I had a deck and didn't want critters nesting underneath, I would install solar lights under the deck with the solar collector above. This will deter many critters, not just skunks, and give the deck a nice glow at night. Skunks have adapted well to the urban environment we created here in the South Bay. We can adapt to them just as well. Watch for the babies wandering on the Preserve in spring ... just watch from at least 8 feet away.

Next edition: Living in Harmony with Raccoons

See You on the Preserve
Suzan, California Naturalist



Madrona Marsh Preserve Sightings			
This bird list includes 92 distinct species and 1 hybrid. The main contributors are Jeanne Bellemin, Mark Rubke, Jonathan Nakai, Tracy Drake, Kevin Kosidlak, Brian Mason, Diane Wood, Calvin Bonn, Chris Dean, Rob Woodworth, and Candice Byers.			
BIRDS			
Canada Goose	Double-crested Cormorant	Western Kingbird	Lark Sparrow
Cinnamon Teal	Great Blue Heron	Plumbeous Vireo	Fox Sparrow
Northern Shoveler	Great Egret	<i>Loggerhead Shrike</i>	Dark-eyed Junco
Gadwall	Snowy Egret	American Crow	White-crowned Sparrow
American Wigeon	Green Heron	Common Raven	Golden-crowned Sparrow
Mallard	Black-crowned Night-Heron	Bushtit	Vesper Sparrow
Northern Pintail	<i>Turkey Vulture</i>	Swinhoe's White-eye	Savannah Sparrow
Green-winged Teal	<i>Northern Harrier</i>	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Song Sparrow
Ring-necked Duck	Sharp-shinned Hawk	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Lincoln's Sparrow
<i>Hooded Merganser</i>	Cooper's Hawk	House Wren	California Towhee
Ruddy Duck	Red-shouldered Hawk	Bewick's Wren	Western Meadowlark
Pied-billed Grebe	Red-tailed Hawk	European Starling	Red-winged Blackbird
Rock Pigeon	Acorn Woodpecker	Northern Mockingbird	Great-tailed Grackle
Eurasian Collared-Dove	Downy Woodpecker	Western Bluebird	<i>Black-and-white Warbler</i>
<i>White-winged Dove</i>	Northern Flicker	Hermit Thrush	Orange-crowned Warbler
Mourning Dove	American Kestrel	Cedar Waswing	Common Yellowthroat
White-throated Swift	<i>Merlin</i>	Scaly-breasted Munia	Yellow Warbler
Anna's Hummingbird	Yellow-chevroned Parakeet	Pin-tailed Whydah	Yellow-rumped Warbler
<i>Anna's x Costa's Hummingbird (hybrid)</i>		House Sparrow	Townsend's Warbler
Rufous Hummingbird	Mitred Parakeet	House Finch	
Allen's Hummingbird	Black Phoebe	Purple Finch	
Sora	Say's Phoebe	Lesser Goldfinch	
American Coot	<i>Ash-throated Flycatcher</i>	American Goldfinch	LEGEND:
Killdeer	<i>Tropical Kingbird</i>	Chipping Sparrow	Bold = breeding
Wilson's Snipe	Cassin's Kingbird	Brewer's Sparrow	<i>Italics = uncommon sighting</i>
BUTTERFLIES			
Monarch	Cabbage White	Clouded Sulphur	Fiery Skipper
NOTES by TRACY DRAKE:			
The main pollinators remain European honey bees, though some native species are starting to appear.			
Young Western Fence Lizards can be seen throughout the Preserve and in the Garden.			
The rabbit population is stable.			
There have been no coyote sightings in March; there were sightings in January and February.			
No dragonflies or macroinvertebrates are yet present.			
Water quality remains healthy, though the temperature is still too low to support much life except mosquito.			
Poppies and Lupines are blooming on the Preserve; many plants are blooming in the Garden.			



Swinhoe's White-eye (*Zosterops simplex*), taken at infinity fountain just outside the Nature Center by Estelle DeRidder. This is a bird from eastern China and Taiwan which is becoming more common in Southern California, from Los Angeles to San Diego.



Anna's x Costa's Hummingbird (Hybrid), *Calypte anna x costae*. © Kevin Kosidlak@Birdhopper. This is a rare hybrid first seen in this area on the Palos Verdes Peninsula in September, 1970, and later described by legendary local birder, Shirley Wells and two associates; May, 1977.

New Preserve Hours

Effective Friday, March 5, 2021

TUESDAY - FRIDAY, 10 AM – 3 PM

SATURDAY, 10 AM – 4 PM

- A limited number of visitors will be allowed onto the Preserve.
- As visitors leave, additional visitors will be allowed to enter.
- Sign-in at the entry station to the Preserve.
- Sidewalk queuing may be initiated by Madrona Marsh staff based on the number of visitors.
- Time limit of 2 hours on the Preserve.
- Group entry is limited to same household or living unit only.
- **NO OTHER GROUPS OR TOURS ALLOWED.**

We follow the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Health orders for control of COVID-19.

We recommend our visitors comply with CDC guidelines:

- PRACTICE SOCIAL DISTANCING
- WEAR FACE MASK
- USE HAND SANITIZER



FOMM Membership Chair Opening

The Friends of Madrona Marsh Board of Directors is hoping to meet someone interested in joining the Board as our Membership Chair.

Your basic responsibilities would be – helping us find innovative ways to attract new memberships, sending email welcome letters to all new members and sharing information with our Membership Data Manager.

We would welcome any fun and creative ideas you might have about promoting new and renewal membership.

Please email me if you would like more information, or if you are interested in joining us: suzanhubert@sbcglobal.net

“Sign ...” continued from page 3

As a prior manager in aerospace, I can attest to the scope of the project. Hundreds of hours went into planning, designing, executing and achieving final acceptance. As you can see from the photo, this was a superlative effort, put forth by an exceptional young man. It was impressive to watch Sai, along with his cadre of family, friends, and fellow Scouts, bring it all together after many long months; on Wednesday, December 16th. We here at Madrona Marsh want to thank Sai, his dad (Mr. Bhaskar Samatham), mom (Mrs. Sowjanya Samatham) and sister Pranavi, along with many other

participants whom Sai recruited along the way. They can be proud of Sai’s accomplishments as he earned his way to Eagle Scout.

Next time you drive by or stop at the Nature Center, take a look at our new sign, right out in front, and you may even spot some of the Bluebird boxes Sai built. Take a moment to reflect; all this was accomplished and delivered to us by Sai Samatham, Eagle Scout out in front, and you may even spot some of the Bluebird boxes Sai built. Take a moment to reflect; all this was accomplished and delivered to us by Sai Samatham, Eagle Scout. No, it’s not just a sign

Friends of Madrona Marsh

a non-profit organization est. 1972

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