

Summer 2012

# Marsh Mailing

Madrona Marsh Preserve and Nature Center

## Electronic Signs Don't Belong on Preserve

—Bill Arrowsmith, FOMM President,

Some of you may recall that soon after Chevron donated the nearly one acre property at the corner of Sepulveda and Madrona to the City of Torrance in July, 2008 to be part of the Preserve, there was talk of constructing a large monument sign there, identifying the property as the Madrona Marsh Preserve. "Monument sign" here refers to the style and size of the sign, in general a large (10-20 feet wide) self-supported sign, similar to a billboard. And since the old chain-link fence at that corner had been used for many years by local organizations as well as City departments to post banners of upcoming events, there was talk also of continuing that use of the corner by making the new sign an electronic message board, and giving access to non-profit groups and City departments.



Beautiful young native plants flourish around the new sign installed by the City at "Chevron Corner."

In fact, in October 2008 the so-called Citizens Enrichment Committee (Councilmen Brewer, Furey, and Barnett) held a meeting to get public input on a sign at the Chevron corner. Most of the discussion at this meeting, which was attended by sign manufacturers as well as citizens, centered on how big an electronic sign should be and what direction it should face to capture the attention of the maximum number of passing motorists. I was a minority of one

who questioned whether an electronic message board of any size was appropriate at the Preserve.

I followed up with a letter to the committee and the Mayor which included the following:

*"We realize that the fence at the Chevron Corner has been used for decades by many Torrance organizations, including the Friends, to post banners describing upcoming events. To keep that from becoming too much of an uncontrolled eyesore, the City Parks Department has regulated the posting for several years. But that does not mean that we have to continue and, indeed, expand this practice. Madrona Marsh is a premier attraction in Torrance, inviting tens of thousands of visitors each year to experience a natural setting almost unchanged from the time Torrance was first settled. Using the southwestern corner of the Preserve as an electronic billboard is complete antithesis to its natural beauty and to the spirit of restoration which led to its preservation.*

*We suggest that further study and discussion of plans for the Chevron Corner should include whether any electronic sign is appropriate for that location. We feel that not only is flashing signage of this type*

*Continued on page 2.*



Traffic zooms by the "Chevron Corner" at Sepulveda and Madrona.

*incompatible with the natural setting of Madrona Marsh, it also constitutes a distraction and safety hazard for drivers at a very busy intersection. If Torrance really needs an electronic messaging board, we recommend that a more appropriate location be found than on its most prized natural resource.”*

Those words still describe my feelings on this subject.

The good news is that there has been no attempt to revisit an electronic sign at that corner since 2008, at least partly due to the cost of such a sign (probably \$100,000 or more) in the current economic climate; no corporate donor was found. In the meantime, the City has replaced the old chain link fence with a continuation of the attractive wrought iron fence that surrounds the Preserve and has installed a perfectly good NON-electronic sign on that corner—one that matches those on the other three corners. Beautiful native plants surround the new sign, installed along with irrigation as part of Ronald English’s Eagle Scout project and maintained by Linda Gonzalez and her Thursday morning Propagation Society volunteers.

The bad news is that there is once again talk of installing a large electronic message billboard at the Chevron Corner. With very little advance notice we learned that the June 12 Torrance Council meeting would have an item on the agenda recommending that the City appropriate up to \$950,000 from the Cable TV Fund for 20 digital signs, including four large monument signs. This item was brought to Council by Cable TV Manager Michael Smith, and would allegedly be funded entirely from the Cable TV Fund. But once again, the Sepulveda/Madrona corner is a suggested site for one of these flashing behemoths.

The signs and areas targeted are:

12 (smaller) digital signage displays at key locations on Civic Center Campus [\$3000-\$6500 ea.]

4 digital signage and cueing system displays at Permit Center [\$60,000]

1 Monument Sign at Torrance and Madrona Blvds. [\$25,000-\$100,000]

1 Monument Sign at Cultural Arts Center [\$25,000-\$100,000]

1 Monument Sign on Madrona Marsh at Sepulveda and Madrona Blvds. [\$45K-\$250K]

1 Monument Sign on Wilson Park at 2200 Crenshaw Blvd. & Jefferson [\$45K-\$250K]

The action taken by the Council on June 12 was to approve an RFP for item #2 above, the pilot project for the Permit Center. (We have no problem with that project.) The remaining items will be brought back to the Council, along with all other items that Torrance Cable TV might want the Council to consider funding in the future, such as high definition cameras and other equipment. This separation was suggested by Councilman Numark, and will allow the Council to properly prioritize the use of Cable TV funds, hopefully for more appropriate uses than flashing billboards.

This delay also gives all of us a chance to consider what we want the City of Torrance to look like in the future. Do we really want more huge billboards, flashing ‘messages’ at passing motorists, day and night? Have we not enough distractions already, with heavy traffic, radios and cell phones?

These huge electronic signs and their constantly changing messages will either be largely ignored—in which case they are a very expensive mistake—or they will distract drivers. Can drivers handle that distraction? Sure, some can, at least some of the time. Can ALL drivers handle distraction ALL the time? You know the answer. But the distraction will always be there. . . flashing and awaiting its ultimate victim or victims.

I invite you all to follow this situation (Nick Green in the *Daily Breeze* keeps us well informed) and to let your Mayor and City Councilmembers know what your preferences are. Fortunately, Mayor Scottto has suggested that the City approach this idea carefully and gradually, perhaps starting with just one sign. Although I do not really want to see any of the large digital signs along our busiest streets, I agree that a gradual approach is best.

We will definitely need a good show of support at future Council Meetings. If you would like to see more information about the sign proposal, see the agenda for the June 12 Council meeting from the City website ([http://torrance.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view\\_id=8](http://torrance.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=8)); it’s item 12A, and there is detailed information in the Staff Report hyperlink. — Bill Arrowsmith

*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 Diane Gonsalves at [gonwild2@yahoo.com](mailto:gonwild2@yahoo.com) or Bill Arrowsmith, [TheArrowsmiths@sbcglobal.net](mailto:TheArrowsmiths@sbcglobal.net), or dropped off or mailed to the Nature Center, P.O. Box 5078, Torrance, CA 90510.

# Ant-Mimic Metamorphosis

—Emile Fiesler

The class insecta can be subdivided into two groups, based on how eggs develop into adults: those that undergo simple metamorphosis (hemimetabolism) and those that undergo complete metamorphosis (holometabolism). Complete metamorphosis consists



Figure 1.

series of molts.

At each molting stage, the hard, restricting exoskeleton is shed and a new, larger one is formed. Nymphs usually look like miniature versions of adults. Hemimetabolism is the rule for insects that have



Figure 2.

that rule of resembling your hemimetabolic parents is the Broad-headed Bug (*Alydus eurinus*). This is a true bug, belonging to the suborder heteroptera. The adult is fairly large at about 14 mm (0.55 inch) and mostly blackish-gray with orange markings on the abdomen (see Figure 1). The nymph, as the immature is called, is an ant-mimic (see Figure 2), and while running around without wings, has a good chance fooling predators about being unappetizing. *A. eurinus* is an uncommon species that spends its complete life cycle on the Preserve.

of four stages: egg, larva, pupa, and adult, where the larva does not resemble the adult. These are more recently evolved insects on the evolutionary timescale. Insects with simple metamorphosis, on the other hand, go through a

# A Perfect Fit

—Cindy Reid

If you're like me, and you probably are, you love being outside enjoying nature. As a Marsh volunteer, I have the unique opportunity to share my love of nature with little ones and their parents every week. The job doesn't pay well, but the rewards are endless. Working with children gives me a chance to rediscover our world through their eyes, while introducing them to nature.

I might be the teacher, but I am learning right along with the children. I was reminded of this just last week while visiting with my in-laws. They see how much I love volunteering at the Marsh and how enthusiastic I am about all the new things that I discover (they often get unsolicited mini lessons). I use the Internet to research the new things that we find each week. It helps to be naturally curious. My husband calls me "little miss must know." The more I learn the more I have to offer on my next trip out into the Preserve.

During the school year, the docents lead tours for preschoolers and grade school children. We also continue our education by taking local field trips together. One trip this year was so wonderful that we plan to make it an annual event. We went to Newport Back Bay and rented kayaks to go bird watching. What a great day!

Being a docent at the Marsh is a perfect fit for me—maybe it could be for you too! The docent training classes will start in August. We are planning six training sessions to learn about the plants, animals, insects plus Marsh history and general information about how to lead a tour. The sixth class will be a water lab offered after the rains come. We are looking for new docents. For more information please contact me, [cindyreid@hotmail.com](mailto:cindyreid@hotmail.com) or call the Nature Center at 310-782-3989.

## Transit of Venus

On June 5th more than 250 visitors came to the Preserve to learn about and witness the transit of Venus in front of the Sun.

Five telescopes with special sun-viewing filters on them were set up in the parking lot for about four hours.

Paul Livio, a local astronomy college professor and his friends at the Riverside Astronomical Society volunteered their equipment and held several programs about the historic event in the classroom.

—Tracy Drake

# Many Shades of Green on the Marsh

Tracy Drake-Naturalist/Manager

The shades of green that denote the wetland areas of the Preserve are a stark contrast to the golden browns of the uplands. By June 30th most of the grasses of spring had gone to seed, dried and been mowed. The pattern of mowing helps the restored areas of the Preserve really stand out. The perennial native plants, not forced into dormancy by the longer, hotter days of early summer, are largely in bloom.



*A young Say's Phoebe, one of two families of three youngsters this year. A huge success for the Preserve.*

Pollinators—among them bees and butterflies—are easy to spot. Even in the evening, dozens of different night pollinating moths are abundant.

The wetlands remain lush and green—water remains in most of the deepest parts of the wetlands. The stands of water grasses (tules) are still thriving and providing protection for many of the babies of Spring 2012 who have not yet grown flight feathers and do not yet know how to fly. Pied-billed Grebes (two families which include six young), ten young American Coots, two young Common Gallinules and more than sixty Mallard ducklings can be spotted being watched by their parents, as they silently glide in the open water or push through the water fern that currently covers much of the surface area of the wetlands. A young Black-crowned Night Heron has made the Preserve his home for the past few months, as have a pair of Green Herons.

The trees of the Preserve seem relatively quiet as the last ever-calling Yellow-rumped Warblers left in late May. No migrants remain. There are only

residents and breeders to be seen and heard. Breeding this year has been amazingly successful for at least 13 different bird species. There were many families of Allen's and Anna's Hummingbirds, California Towhees, House Finches, House Sparrows, Bushtits, American Goldfinches, Red-winged Blackbirds, and Common Yellowthroats. One pair of Black Phoebes fledged two young; the Say's Phoebe double clutched and had two families of three young. The Bluebirds who bred for the first time came back this year and also double clutched and a new pair had two young. One of the Bluebirds is still on nest and cannot be seen, but so far there are six young. The biggest surprise of the year was the breeding pair of Yellow Warblers. In more than forty years of observing the birds of the Preserve,



*A young Western Bluebird flies away from nest box built as an Eagle Scout Project.*

this is the first recorded breeding. This year two, perhaps three, young were born. They are still begging for food from their parents but will soon be foraging on their own as they prepare for fall migration. They will winter in central or northern South America.

Breeding season is not over. There may be more American Goldfinches, Common Ravens, Green Herons, Orange Bishops, Nutmeg Mannikins and Red-tailed Hawks coming off nest soon. Considering how much restoration has been done on the Preserve, it is clear to see

by simply observing the increased numbers of breeding birds that restoration is working—that all the work by staff and volunteers is indeed making a difference.

*Continued on page 8.*



*Jacques Cousteau's granddaughter, Alexandra, a respected defender of Nature herself, enjoys a kayak cruise while at the Marsh where she recently starred in a commercial.*

# Moonlight Magic



Paula McKendry

## **On Madrona Marsh Preserve**

**Saturday, September 29, 2012  
5 p.m. to 10 p.m.**

A Celebration on the Madrona Marsh Preserve  
3201 Plaza Del Amo, Torrance  
310 782-3989

An evening of Music, Wine, Excellent Food  
Unusual Silent and Live Auctions  
Extravagant Gift Baskets and Laughter

**All Under A Full Moon  
\$50 per person**

A fund raising celebration to help sustain and  
protect the programs of the Madrona Marsh  
Preserve and Nature Center

Tickets available at  
Madrona Marsh Nature Center (cash or check only)  
Wild Birds Unlimited in Rolling Hills Plaza (check or  
credit card) and  
[www.friendsofmadronamarsh.com](http://www.friendsofmadronamarsh.com) (PayPal)

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## **A Special Thanks to our Sponsors**

**Toyota  
ExxonMobil  
Walser's  
Supervisor Don Knabe**

We are also grateful to Paula McKendry for donating her magical  
watercolor for this year's signature art piece which will be available at  
the event auction.

Please stop by the Nature Center this Summer to see the menu and the  
many auction items.

# Madrona Marsh Preserve and Nature Center

## Schedule of Events\*

July -October 2012

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2 <b>CLOSED</b>	3 8:30 am- Tour d' Torrance 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders	4 <b>CLOSED for Fourth of July</b>	5 10 am- Tyke Hike 10:30-12:30- Propagation Society 10-12n-Junior Naturalist (fee)	6 10-am-12n- Friday Fun***	7 8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv.Learning 10-12nAnnual Butterfly Count 10 am-12 n- "Fantastical Flies" /Dr. Vadheim
8 2-4 pm- 2nd Sun- day Science "What's all the Buzz?" (fee)	9 <b>CLOSED</b>	10 9 am-Mornings on the Marsh 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders 6:30-8:30 pm- "Fantastical Flies" /Dr. Vadheim	11 8 am- Bird Walk/Bob Shanman 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders 6:30-8:30 pm- FOMM Board Meeting	12 10:30 am- 12:30 pm- Propagation Society 10-12n-Junior Naturalist (fee)	13 10-am-12n- Friday Fun*** Wassenberg Exhibit Ends**	14 8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv.Learning 10 am-12n-Annual Butterfly Count Class (10+ only)
15	16 <b>CLOSED</b>	17 8:30 am- Tour d' Torrance 10 am-Adult Weeders 1-3-Einstein for Kids (fee) 7 pm-Audubon meets Orrantia Exhibit begins**	18 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders 1-3 pm-Einstein for Kids (fee)	19 10:30-12:30 pm- Propagation Society 10-12n-Junior Naturalist (fee) 1-3 pm-Einstein for Kids (fee)	20 10-am-12n- Friday Fun***	21 8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv.Learning 9-11am-Stories of Birds
22	23 <b>CLOSED</b>	24 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders	25 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders	26 10:30 am- 12:30 pm- Propagation Society 10-12n-Junior Naturalist (fee)	27 10-am-12n- Friday Fun***	28 8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv. Learning 10 am-Nature Walk 6:30 pm-Nightlife at the Marsh
29 10 a.m- Nature Walk	30 <b>CLOSED</b>	31 8:30 am- Tour d' Torrance 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders				

**JULY**

*\*All activities and classes meet at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center, located at 3201 Plaza del Amo (between Maple and Madrona) on the north side of the street. \*\*See Artists Corner, page 10. \*\*\* No fee charged for Friday Fun, but reservations are required. For the latest event information, consult website, [www.friendsofmadronamarsh.com](http://www.friendsofmadronamarsh.com).*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders	2 10 am- Tyke Hike (fee 10:30 am- 12:30 pm- Propagation Society)	3 10-am-12n- Friday Fun***	4 8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv.Learning 10 am-12 n-"Hedges and Habitat"- Dr. Vadheim
5	6 <b>CLOSED</b>	7 8:30 am- Tour d' Torrance 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders 6:30 pm- "Hedges & Habitat"/Dr. Vadheim	8 8 am- Bird Walk/Bob Shanman 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders 6:30-8:30 pm-FOMM Board Meeting	9 10:30 am- 12:30 pm- Propagation Society	10 10-am-12n- Friday Fun*** 6:30-8:30 pm- Lisa Orrantia Artist Recept**	11 8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv.Learning 7-9 pm- "Bugs of the Night"(fee)
12 2-4 pm- 2nd Sun- day Science-Animal Tracks in the Sand (fee)	13 <b>CLOSED</b>	14 9 am-Mornings on the Marsh 10 am-12 n-Weeders	15 10 am-12 n- Adult Weeders	16 10:30 am- 12:30 pm- Propagation Society	17 10-am-12n- Friday Fun***	18 8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv.Learning 9-11am-Stories of Birds 11-11:30 am-Kids' Storytime 11:30am-1pm-Nature Crafts
19	20 <b>CLOSED</b>	21 8:30 am-Tour d' Torrance 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders 7 pm-Audubon meets	22 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders	23 10:30 am- 12:30 pm- Propagation Society	24 10-am-12n- Friday Fun*** Lisa Orrantia Exhibit Ends**	25 8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv. Learning 10 am- Nature Walk
26 10 a.m- Nature Walk	27 <b>CLOSED</b>	28 10 am-Adult Weeders Lala Ragimov Exhibit Begins**	29 10 am-12 n- Adult Weeders	30 10:30 am- 12:30 pm- Propagation Society	31 10-am-12n- Friday Fun***	

**AUGUST**

**Nature Center (310) 782-3989**  
**Gift Shop (310) 320-8255**

**Brought to you by**  
**Friends of Madrona Marsh**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						<b>1</b> 8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv.Learning No Native Plants Class
<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> CLOSED	<b>4</b> 8:30 am-Tour d' Torrance 10 am-Adult Weeders No Native Plants Class	<b>5</b> 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders	<b>6</b> 10 am-Tyke Hike (fee) 10:30 am-12:30 pm-Propagation Society	<b>7</b> 10-am-12n-Friday Fun***	<b>8</b> 8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv.Learning
<b>9</b> 2-4 pm- 2nd Sunday Science, Fall Migration of Birds (fee)	<b>10</b> CLOSED	<b>11</b> 9 am-Mornings on the Marsh 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders	<b>12</b> 8 am- Bird Walk/Bob Shanman 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders 6:30-8:30 pm-FOMM Board Meeting	<b>13</b> 10:30 am-12:30 pm-Propagation Society	<b>14</b> 10-am-12n-Friday Fun***	<b>15</b> 8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv.Learning 9-11am-Stories of Birds
<b>16</b> 1-3 pm-Watercolor for Kids, fee 9am-12n-Photographing Wildlife in Nature (fee)	<b>17</b> CLOSED	<b>18</b> 8:30 am-Tour d' Torrance 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders 7 pm-Audubon meets	<b>19</b> 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders	<b>20</b> 10:30 am-12:30 pm-Propagation Society	<b>21</b> 10-am-12n-Friday Fun*** 6:30-8:30-Lala Ragimov Artist Reception**	<b>22</b> 8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Rest. & Student Serv. Learning 10am-12n-Nature Walk 1-3pm-Wicked Weeds.... 7:30-9:30 pm-Star Party-Equinox-First Qtr. Moon. .
<b>23</b> 10 a.m- Nature Walk	<b>24</b> CLOSED	<b>25</b> 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders	<b>26</b> 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders	<b>27</b> 10:30 am-12:30 pm-Propagation Society	<b>28</b> 10-am-12n-Friday Fun***	<b>29</b> 9am-3pm-CNPS Native Plant Sale <i>5-10 pm-Moonlight Magic</i>
<b>30</b>						

**SEPTEMBER**

*\*All activities and classes meet at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center, located at 3201 Plaza del Amo (between Maple and Madrona) on the north side of the street. \*\*See Artists Corner, page 10. \*\*\* No fee charged for Friday Fun, but reservations are required. For the latest event information, consult website, [www.friendsofmadronamarsh.com](http://www.friendsofmadronamarsh.com).*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b> 8:30 am-Tour d'Torrance 10 am-Adult Weeders	<b>3</b> 10 am-Adult Weeders	<b>4</b> 10 am-Tyke Hike (fee) 10:30am-12:30pm-Propagation Society	<b>5</b> 10-11:30-am-Friday Fun*** Lala Ragimov Exhibit Ends**	<b>6</b> 8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv.Learning No Native Plants Class
<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> CLOSED	<b>9</b> 9-11 am-Mornings on the Marsh 10 am-Adult Weeders No Native Plants Class	<b>10</b> 8 am- Bird Walk/ Bob Shanman 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders 6:30-8:30 pm-FOMM Board Meeting	<b>11</b> 10:30am-12:30pm-Propagation Society	<b>12</b> 10am-12n-Friday Fun***	<b>13</b> 8:45am-12 n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv.Learning 10am-1pm-Turtle/Tortoise Day 7-9pm-Night Hike (fee)
<b>14</b> 2 - 4 pm-Second Sunday Science-Fantastic Spiders (fee)	<b>15</b> CLOSED	<b>16</b> 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders 8:30 am-Tour d'Torrance 7 pm- Audubon Mtg.	<b>17</b> 10-12 n-Adult Weeders	<b>18</b> 10:30am-12:30pm-Propagation Society	<b>19</b> 10-am-12n-Friday Fun***	<b>20</b> 8:45 am-12 n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv. Learning 7-9 pm-Star Party-View Jupiter.. 10am-12n-"Mushrooms" (fee) 11-11:30 am- Kids Storytime 11:30 am-1 pm-Nature Crafts
<b>21</b> 1-3 om-Watercolor for Kids, fee.	<b>22</b> CLOSED	<b>23</b> 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders	<b>24</b> 10-12 n-Adult Weeders	<b>25</b> 10:30 am-12:30 pm-Propagation Society	<b>26</b> 10-am-12n-Friday Fun***	<b>27</b> 8:45 am-12n-Habitat Restor. & Student Serv.Learning 10 am-Nature Walk 9am-12n-Make a Difference Day
<b>28</b> 10 am-Nature Walk	<b>29</b> CLOSED	<b>30</b> 8:30 am-Tour d'Torrance 10 am-12 n-Adult Weeders	<b>31</b> 10-12 n-Adult Weeders			

**OCTOBER**

Continued from page 4.

In the middle of June, Councilman Pat Furey came to the Preserve to meet Councilman James Johnson of Long Beach and more than 80 people who are interested in using Madrona as a model as they develop the master plan for Willow Springs Gulch. Willow Springs Gulch is an oil recovery site in Long Beach that is similar in size and habitat to Madrona. The visitors, all of whom arrived on a bus, had really great questions and were passionate about figuring out how to create their own success story.



Eagle Scout candidates combined resources to build a split-rail fence, remove old grass from the front of the Nature Center and help create new landscaping.

Three Eagle Scout candidates completed their projects at Madrona in June. Each project was huge. Adam Ricks built a split-rail fence so the biofilter would be protected, Peter Doykos removed all the old grasses from in front of the Nature Center and created a new landscape, and Alex Lichtman removed weeds and planted more than one hundred plants near the sides of the rip-rap waterfall that carries the filtered water back to the sump. The landscape he created repairs damage to that side of the sump from

construction and lessens the chances for erosion in the next rainy season.

One of the highlights of the month was a commercial that Pelican Products shot on June 17th. It was amazing. First off it was a super beautiful day. Baby ducks and stunning Egrets hung around the location. The crew of 30 was kind and polite and



really seemed to enjoy working on the Preserve. One of the grips for the shoot was an older man—n a m e d Jimmy Stewart. He was usually walking in the water with the kayak and helping the

actress who was featuring the products. Anyway, he fell in love with the place, in time sharing that he had always wanted to be a biologist/naturalist but messed up by partying too much in school. He said he didn't focus on schoolwork so he could not handle the physics and chemistry. When there was nothing to do, he was truly enjoying just being there

Continued on page 9.

## Donations of \$100 or More

Ellen Peterson, Treasurer

DATE-2012	WHO	DONATION	INFORMATION
March	Kathleen & Edward Lahey	\$100	
March	Irma Ruiz	\$250	
April	Karoling Snakenborg	\$100	
April	Richard & Jane Nishimura	\$100	In loving memory of Neil Teague and Jack Knapp
April	Rex Yanase	\$100	
April	Dorothy & Anthony Vinter	\$120	
April	R. Rennie	\$100	
April	L.D. Lincoln	\$100	
April	Mr. & Mrs. Frank Miles	\$200	
April	Ruth Vogel	\$105	
May	James Justiss	\$200	Boeing Gift Match Program
May	New Horizon Conservation Club	\$100	In honor of E. Lenore Johnson
May	Betty Knapp	\$150	In memory of Jack Knapp
May	Jim & Jo Standifer	\$100	
May	Ms. Joan Roach	\$200	
May	David Moody	\$300	

Continued from page 8.

watching the birds, fish and the way the breeze gently moves through the grasses and trees.

The "talent" as the directors called her—was Jacques Cousteau's granddaughter, Alexandra (see page 4). As Jimmy and I worked together and helped her, we shared stories about our past and how we both had watched Cousteau on TV as kids. For the first time, we realized that Alexandra's grandfather was partially responsible for our desire to become involved with the environment.

Alexandra also seemed to enjoy being on the Preserve. Bill Arrowsmith, Bruce Brown (docent), and I worked the shoot, each standing at one of the open gates of the Preserve and on location from 7 a.m. to about 1:30 p.m. Alexandra took the time to talk with each of us individually and as a group. She spoke about how she used to come to the Marsh as a kid

(she is in her thirties) and fish for crayfish using hot dogs! She shared that catching frogs was one of her favorite things to do and in fact caught a couple to share with the film crew.

At the end of the shoot, she came and took a few pictures with Bill and me. Bruce had left for work a short time earlier. She gave us each a hug and thanked us for being the stewards of such a precious place that she will share with her kids. Then in a quiet voice she said, "Please thank those who are part of taking care of this special treasure for me." We said we would.

So, of course, there are a lot of people to thank—so many who are part of the history of this land. All of you made a difference—and for that, really, all of us who are continuing the work—sincerely thank you.  
—Tracy Drake

## Art and Nature--Alive at the Marsh

—Suzanne Gibson

Children of all ages came to the Marsh on May 25<sup>th</sup> to enjoy Storytime for Kids followed by Nature Crafts with Friends of Madrona Marsh volunteer, Suzanne Gibson.

Several times throughout the year, Suzanne brings stories and arts and crafts to the Nature Center to involve and inspire children and their parents to be a part of nature.

After reading a few storybooks, Suzanne and

Nature Guide Dinuk Magamma, lead the children and their parents on a walking tour of the Marsh before starting a painting and craft project.

This program started in the Winter with 6 attendees, had 20 in the Spring, and for our May event, over 40.

The next Storytime for Kids and Nature Crafts events are Scheduled for August 18 (11 a.m.).

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# Shirley's Turn

—Shirley Turner

## Cells, Smallest Form of Life

When my back yard privet plant was being pruned we discovered a hummingbird nest. It was decorated with bits of my blue trim house paint in several places as the bird usually does. Bob Carr came to my house to take it to the Marsh for me so you all could see how tiny it is. He told me about one of his students who had won a science fair project last year. She is continuing her work on Archaea, a group of single-celled microorganisms that have no nuclei or any other membrane-bound organelles within their cell. Its discovery in 1977 is one of 100 scientific discoveries that has changed the world, according to *National Geographic*.

Cells, and their study, are the centerpiece of the extraordinary book *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot. This book is required reading for pre-med students, and everyone who does scientific research should read it. Published in 2010, it has been translated into 20 languages, and has received 60 awards and commendations.

Skloot first learned of her future topic as a freshman at a Portland Community College biology class. The professor, Donald Defler, explaining cells, wrote HeLa, Henrietta Lacks, on the blackboard, and said that cells taken from Lacks were one of the most important tools in medicine. He also mentioned that Henrietta Lacks was black.

Who was Henrietta Lacks? She became a vision that Rebecca could not let go of. Henrietta, a poor tobacco farmer who worked the same land as her ancestors, died of cervical cancer in 1951 at John Hopkins Hospital where she had been examined. The tumor was so unusual her doctor remembered it though he had seen thousands. The PAP test to identify cancer had just been developed. Cells from her tumor were sent to George Gey, Head of Culture Development and an ingenious inventor with new discoveries.

The roller drum to keep the culture moving was carefully watched as cells began to multiply. For the first time, a line of cells was successfully grown outside a human body. Gey named the sample HeLa, using the first two letters of Henrietta and Lacks. The cells were "immortal," meaning they did not die after a few cell divisions, and could therefore be used for conducting many experiments.

The new cells were given away to other researchers for the good of science. With new

freezing techniques the cells were eventually shipped all over the world and became one of most used tools of medicine, allowing polio vaccine, blood pressure medicine and many other drugs to be developed. Some HeLa cells have even gone into space.

Michael Rogers wrote in a 1976 *Rolling Stone Magazine* about HeLa and was able to give Rebecca a lead to Henrietta's family. Rebecca contacted many of them and used their words wherever possible in telling the story, which reads like a novel. The author has also established a Scholarship Fund for descendants of Henrietta Lacks. When some cells became contaminated, family members were asked for blood to check their DNA so they could make a map of Henrietta's genes and then tell which cell cultures were HeLa and which were not. Extreme care must be taken in research with components and data. Cells are now identified with numbers instead of initials like HeLa.

The legal and ethical side of medicine is also covered extensively in the book. Who owns human tissue? Can or should it be commercialized? There are Tissue Rights Activists. Some feel a need for public debate. Gene patents are a concern as well.

For more than 10 years the author pursued information for the book, and there are 10 pages of acknowledgments. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* has been on the New York Times best sellers list. You won't be able to put it down.

## Artists Corner

*Works of local artists and photographers inspired by the beauty of the Madrona Marsh are regularly on display at the Nature Center. Everyone is invited to attend each artist's reception where the artist talks about his/her work or gives a demonstration. Snacks and beverages are served.*

Through July 13 - **Bill Wassenberg**, A Watercolor Exhibit.

July 17 - August 24, **Lisa Orrantia** Exhibit, "Reflections on the Marsh." Artist's Reception - Friday, August 10, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

August 28 - October 5, **Lala Ragimov** Exhibit. Artist's reception September 21, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

*If you would like to display your art at the Nature Center, please call for more information: 310-782-3989.*

# South Bay Native Plant Corner

—Dr. Connie Vadheim, CSU Dominguez Hills



**Sawtooth Goldenbush**  
*Hazardia squarrosa*

Beginning with California Encelia (*Encelia californica*) in early spring, the Sunflower family (*Asteraceae*) supplies us with an abundance of yellow and white blossoms throughout the year. Among those that bloom in summer and fall are the 'Goldenbushes' in the genera *Isocoma* and *Hazardia*. Plants are blooming a little ahead of schedule in this dry year, so you'll likely see Sawtooth Goldenbush blooming right now.

Sawtooth Goldenbush is a part-woody shrub that grows in coastal regions of California from northern California to Baja. You will find it growing on dry slopes in ocean-influenced Coastal Prairie, Coastal shrubland, Coastal Sage Scrub and Chaparral to about 4500 ft elevation. The local variety (*var. grindelioides*) ranges from Santa Barbara Co. to Baja. The plant has numerous stiffly-erect stems that are 2-4 ft tall. In the wild (where the succulent portions are nibbled by wildlife) or in your garden (if pruned) the stems re-grow much of their length each spring-summer.

Sawtooth Goldenbush resembles its 'cousin' *Isocoma menziesii*, with whom it often grows (both are also known commonly as 'Goldenbush' to make matters more confusing). *Hazardia* leaves are smaller and more stiff and sharply-toothed than *Isocoma*. *Hazardia* is a medium green while *Isocoma* is paler, in part due to

numerous hairs. The flowers and seed bristles of *Hazardia* are also narrower and longer than those of *Isocoma*.

Sawtooth Goldenbush is an important source of nectar for summer and fall-flying insects including butterflies, native bees and others. The flowers provide a spot of welcome golden color in the garden and on the Preserve. The foliage is a larval foodsource for the Gabbs Checkerspot butterfly.

*Hazardia squarrosa* likes full sun and needs very little/no summer water once established. In fact, it's a plant that can well be described as 'thriving on neglect'. It grows in just about any soil, including heavy clays.



Sawtooth Goldenbush is often used in hard-to-water places like dry slopes and roadside plantings. It makes a great addition to a life-friendly home garden as long as you understand that it will always look a little wild. Prune back to just above the woody part of the stems in late fall for a fuller plant. Plants are available from Project SOUND (Madrona Marsh) and Tony Baker (Natural Landscapes).

*Learn more about local native plants at our "Out of the Wilds and into Your Garden" series on the first Saturday of each month.*

*[Plant Information Sheets](#) and [Plant Lists](#) are also available at the Nature Center.*

# Friends of Madrona Marsh

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