

# Edgewood Explorer

September 2004

Volume 11 Number 3

## **GENERAL MEETING AND MEMBERS APPRECIATION PICNIC IS OCTOBER 17**

The annual general membership meeting of the Friends of Edgewood is set for Sunday, October 17<sup>th</sup>, from 12 noon to 3 pm at the Day Camp picnic area. Once again, the Friends will host an appreciation picnic for our members and special invited guests.

These events are a great way for Friends to socialize with friends, both new and old, review this year's activities, elect Board members, and of course, learn who has won the coveted Best Friend award.

Mark your calendar now and plan to join us!

## **INTERPRETIVE CENTER UPDATE**

**By Julia Bott**

There are many steps to building the Interpretive Center at Edgewood. The planning phase is complete and fundraising continues. A recently completed draft environmental review document found that there are no environmental impacts with building the center and other improvements to enhance environmental interpretation and education at Edgewood.

The 1200-sq-ft Center will be built between the Edgewood Trail and the kiosk at the Day Camp entrance. It is currently marked so that visitors can envision the building's location.

A new pedestrian bridge over Cordilleras Creek will link the Center and outer parking lot, which will also be improved. Views from the bridge will give park users an opportunity to appreciate the riparian habitat of Cordilleras Creek that runs through Edgewood. Plans also include restoring the creek to its former native habitat.

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## **EDGEWOOD IS CLOSED TUESDAYS - THURSDAYS**

**By Kathy Korbholz**

As a consequence of the budget reductions enacted last July, the Parks and Recreation Division decided to close 4 County parks 3 days per week. The affected parks are Edgewood, Junipero Serra, San Pedro Valley, and San Bruno Mountain.

Over the past 3 years Parks and Recreation (P&R) has suffered a total of 42% in budget cuts. Since 1990, P&R has seen the equivalent of 40 of 94 full-time positions eliminated.

The County's funding shortfall for Parks has persisted for some 15 years. It has finally reached the breaking point this year; P&R is no longer able to staff and maintain all parks all the time.

Simply, they are no longer able to fulfill their mission: *Through stewardship, the San Mateo County Park and Recreation Division preserves our County's natural and cultural treasures, and provides safe, accessible parks, recreation and learning opportunities to enhance the community's quality of life.*

There is a small window of opportunity to correct this situation. The Supervisors will be

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## BIOCONTROL REPORT V: YST PERSISTS

**By Paul Heiple**

The weevils and flies that attack Yellow star thistle (YST) have now been in Edgewood Park for five years. They have had time to build up their numbers to the levels of maximum control. Is it enough to make Yellow star an uncommon plant? No, it appears that even with six biocontrol agents released in the state and five species now established in Edgewood, Yellow star, if left alone, would remain a common weed.

However, in Edgewood, YST is not being left alone and the combined efforts of the volunteer weeders and the biocontrol agents have begun to make a big difference in the area covered and the number of plants remaining. Two large areas on both sides of the central ridge are now down to very low numbers and some areas had no plants at all this year. With new biocontrol agents on the horizon and continued weed removal, we may in the next five years be able to say that YST is an uncommon plant in Edgewood.

The past year's weather has once again been good for Yellow star thistle; plenty of rain fell in the period before March to recharge the subsoil, an important factor for YST growth and survival. The rains ended in March with unseasonable warm dry weather. This early end to the rainy season has brought the plants to flower earlier than normal.

YST seemed to flower a bit too early for the weevils and flies, as more of the early flowers survived than in previous years. An additional factor to help YST was a cool summer which is not the favored weather for the biocontrol agents. The combination made this year one of the best years for seed production since the first biocontrol agents entered the park. I expect in untreated areas the number of plants could increase next year.

Control efforts however still benefited from the biocontrol agents in two important ways: a

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## WILDFLOWER WALKS WRAP-UP

**By Carolyn Strange**

Weather made the flowers put on less of a show and fade early, but the wildflower walks program still had a great season. Our docents guided 420 visitors on walks, roughly 100 more than the two prior years.

We asked more of our docents this year, and they came through admirably. They racked up more volunteer hours due to our experiment with starting walks from the Clarkia and Edgewood trailheads. (As you may recall, Parks and Rec. told us we could no longer use the unofficial entrance near the Park & Ride.) Meanwhile, we still kept hikes going from the Day Camp every weekend.

The busy days were usually (but not always) due to special request hikes. Our biggest day was Saturday, May 1, when Bay Nature magazine scheduled a hike. Having read about Edgewood in the magazine, visitors came from all over the Bay Area to enjoy our gem firsthand. That day, docents led more than 50 visitors from three different trailheads!

Turnout at the alternate trailheads was low all season, and no decisions have been made yet for next year. But docents who led from Clarkia liked the quick access to the serpentine grasslands, and with more publicity it might become a good starting point.

We capped the season with a docent meeting and picnic on June 26<sup>th</sup>. More than a third of our docents were able to attend, despite short notice. As planned, we combined the business of evaluating the season just completed and planning ahead for the Interpretive Center, with the pleasure of sharing stories and getting to know each other better. The event was productive and enjoyable (and tasty, thanks to Arguello Catering), and many hope to make it an annual affair.

To our docents, thanks again for another great season! ^

## STELLER'S JAY

By Lee Franks

During Vitus Bering's ill-fated 1740-1742 expedition, the ship St. Peter spent only one day anchored off Kayak Island, near present-day Cordova, Alaska, before heading back to Siberia. The ship's naturalist, Georg Wilhelm Steller, spent that July day in 1741 frantically collecting specimens and observing wildlife on the island. He was impressed with a black-crested, blue jay common on the island, but did not recognize it from the boreal forests of the Old World. Its similarity to the painting of the Blue Jay that he had seen in Mark Catesby's 1731 portfolio "The Natural History of Carolina" convinced Steller that the expedition had reached America. Although Steller's specimen was lost when the expedition was later marooned on Bering Island, his field notes describing the bird made it back to St. Petersburg where J. F. Gmelin used them to formally describe "Steller's Jay" in 1788.

Steller's Jay, *Cyanocitta stelleri*, is a conspicuous, crested jay of western coniferous and mixed-coniferous forests, breeding from Alaska, western Canada, and the United States south through western Mexico to Nicaragua. With a crest unmatched by any other North American song bird and delicate blue hues sparkling in its plumage, this bird is as striking as it is extroverted and mischievous. It is less known to most North Americans than the familiar Blue Jay, and eastern birdwatchers often visit California to observe it.

Steller's Jays travel throughout the eastern sections of the Park in loose flocks in August and September, and it is interesting to watch them fly directly to their destination in single-file. They noisily announce their arrival with their **shack-shack-shack** call. Habituating readily to humans, Steller's Jay is well known in the picnic areas of the Park, where its loud, often raucous calls announce its presence.

### Appearance

Blue overall, with a jet black crest, throat, and upper breast. Black bars on wings and tail. A



whitish line over the eye and faint, whitish streaks on forehead and throat. They are about 11.5 inches long, and the plumage of the sexes is similar. The only other crested jay in the United States and Canada is the Blue Jay, which is distinguished from the Steller's by its uniform blue forehead, crest, and back.

### Behavior

They hop while on the ground, and climb trees by hopping from branch to branch, spiraling near the trunk. Their flight is strong and deliberate, but not sustained for long distances.

Their social interactions involve complex combinations of postures, movements, crest displays, and vocalizations. Erectile crests are used as social signals in many different social contexts, and in combination with other postures, such as wing-spreading and tail-flicking. The crest is generally depressed when the bird is at

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(*STELLER'S JAY, Continued from page 3*)  
rest, foraging or preening. Higher crest angle indicates greater aggressive arousal or stress. The crest becomes fully erect during high-intensity fights and predator-mobbing.

Steller's Jays are socially monogamous. The male closely guards his mate during fertile periods. Pairs remain together throughout the year. They are highly social, with frequent interactions and displays among neighbors and small groups. In spring and fall, large flocks may form.

### Food

Steller's consume a wide variety of animal and plant food, including arthropods, nuts, seeds, berries, fruit, small vertebrates, and eggs and young of smaller birds. Mast seeds, such as acorns and pine seeds, are important food sources when available. In our picnic areas, they consume a wide variety of foods, including peanuts, meat, cheese, bread, and cookies.

They forage on the ground and in trees and bushes. About 70% of total foraging time is spent in trees, with peak use in spring and fall. Foraging on the ground seems to increase in summer and winter. They typically carry nuts or large food items to elevated perches, then hold food items under one or both feet and strike them with a slightly open bill.

They will cache food such as acorns by pushing them into crevices in the ground or in the bark of trees. Soil is loosened with the bill, sometimes digging a small hole, inserting a single food item in the hole and then covering the hole with soil or vegetation using their bill.

### Breeding

Courtship begins in March or April, with nest building peaking in April. Nest site appears to be

selected by both members of the pair. Nests are typically placed on horizontal branches close to



the trunk, often close to the top of a tree.

Although both sexes participate in nest-building, the female contributes the most. Pairs often fly together to gather nest material, consisting of plant fibers, dry leaves, moss, and sticks. They will mix in some mud and line the nest with rootlets, pine needles and animal hairs.

A typical clutch size is 4-5 eggs which are incubated for 16 days. Both sexes feed the young, which remain in the nest for about two weeks. Both parents continue to feed the young for about a month after they leave the nest. These dependent fledglings which beg loudly and chase parents, are capable of weak flights at age 15-22 days. Sustained flights occur at about 30 days of age.

### Reference

The Birds of North America, No 343, 1998;  
Erick Greene, William Davison, and Vincent  
Muehler.

### Photo Credits

Dr. Lloyd Glenn Ingles © California Academy  
of Sciences. `

*(INTERPRETIVE CENTER, Continued from page 1)*

The San Mateo County Parks and Recreation Foundation is raising approximately \$1.5M for the Interpretive Center and for operations and maintenance. With the exception of \$250,000 in park bond funds, County funds will not be used. Funding is coming from donations from the community and grants.

Groundbreaking is expected in Summer 2005, with the Center fully operational by the 2006 wildflower walks. A 7-minute video describing the project can be viewed at [www.friendsofedgewood.org](http://www.friendsofedgewood.org), or a DVD or video can be mailed to you by the Foundation.

For more information, please contact Julia Bott at (650) 321-5812 or [Julia@SupportParks.org](mailto:Julia@SupportParks.org). `

*(EDGEWOOD CLOSED , Continued from page 1)*

reviewing the current budget in September, and they can choose to allocate additional funds or approve additional Ranger positions so that parks can re-open and operate 7 days/week.

We need to take advantage of this small window. I strongly **urge you to write a letter of support NOW for this additional funding to the Board of Supervisors c/o President Mark Church**. It is critically important that our elected officials hear from their constituents now.

You can view a sample letter at [www.friendsofedgewood.org/sample.htm](http://www.friendsofedgewood.org/sample.htm), but I encourage you to personalize your letter and highlight the reasons why access to our precious parks is important to you.

Address your letter to:

San Mateo County Board of Supervisors  
c/o President Mark Church  
400 County Center  
Redwood City, CA 94063

**To be effective, letters must reach the Supervisors by September 15.**

I hope I will have good news to report in the next issue of this newsletter. `

**ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY UPDATE****By Ken Seydel and Bill Korbholz**

Our road warriors now clean the eastern side of I -280 alongside Edgewood on the first Saturday or Sunday of **every** month.

In June the trash gods seemed to be frowning upon us. In addition to a rather disappointing volunteer turnout, we had to mop up the mess that the CalTrans mowers left after chopping everything, including trash, into tiny pieces.

On June 5<sup>th</sup>, Billy James, Lucy Krensky, and Ken Seydel covered about 1/3 of the site, and Ken returned to finish it 2 weeks later.

In July, Carolyn Dorsch and Bill Korbholz filled 5 bags on Saturday, and then Susan Russell, Katherine Greene, and Kathy and Bill Korbholz finished up on Sunday.

Sarah Devine, Carolyn Dorsch, Billy James, Lucy Krensky and Ken Seydel came out in August and collected 11 bags.

Another 10 bags were filled in September by Susan Russell, Pat Bennett, Katherine Greene, and Kathy and Bill Korbholz.

All told, we removed 53 bags of trash from our stretch of highway during these 4 months, thanks to our intrepid road warriors, who volunteered 62 work-hours of their time. In addition to the usual hubcaps and money (\$3), we found several watches, a jewelry box, a pregnancy testing kit, and the grand prize, a Hooter's license plate personally signed by Amber, Lisa and friends.

Picking up trash along the highway, while not a tremendously romantic pursuit, is a great way to contribute to our community. We only ask you to try to come out 6 days per year for about 3 hours each day.

If you have an interest in joining our great group please contact Ken Seydel. We will see that you are safety-trained and equipped with your very own picker, hard hat, goggles, gloves, and bright orange vest. `

*(BIOCONTROL, Continued from page 2)*

reduction and a delay in seed production. Even a good seed production year like this is way below the seed production before the insects arrived. No plants can be found that do not have some damage. With fewer seeds produced there are fewer plants to pull. More surface area can be treated and the delayed seed production gives the weeders more time to pull the plants before any seed is produced.

In some areas of poor soil, YST seed production reduced by the biocontrol agents can not keep up with normal seed and plant mortality. These areas now have far fewer plants even without any treatment; some areas have no plants at all.

It was noted this year that where YST has grown in very thick stands in the past, there were no new plants among the skeletons. This may be the result of the hairy starthistle weevil, *Eustenopus villosus*, which does not like to travel very far if it can find food.



Hairy starthistle weevil, *Eustenopus villosus*  
2003 Acterra

These insects can build up locally to very high numbers if they encounter plenty of food. The adults' habit of feeding on young buds can prevent a plant from flowering for months. The adults then deposit their eggs in the few flowers that do bloom and the larvae eat all or most of the seeds in those heads. So it would seem that the thicker the stand of YST, the more likely it is

to die out if the weevils are present.

A new biocontrol agent was released in California this year. It is a plant pathogen, the first plant pathogen approved for release in the continental United States. The pathogen is a rust, *Puccinia jaceae* var. *solsstitialis*.



*P. jaceae* var. *solsstitialis* on YST leaf  
Agricultural Research Service

Since 1978,

This pathogen has been tested under domestic quarantine. Approval for field trials came in 2003. This pathogen was found to be highly species specific during the testing so there is little concern that it will impact any non-target species. So far it has been released in twenty-five locations in twenty counties. I do not know if it was released in San Mateo County and have seen no evidence of this pathogen in Edgewood so far. It is expected to cause damage to the leaves of young plants and weaken or kill those infected. Since it acts on the plant at a different part of the life cycle, it will enhance the current biocontrol agents. Some other insects are also under consideration for release, one of which is a crown weevil that will also attack young plants.

The current state of biocontrol is that they slow the spread of YST, slow the recovery of treated stands, and remove YST from marginal areas. They delay the seed production and make the window for successful removal much larger. With the new control agents, the table may tip to make all locations marginal. ^

## EDGWOOD WEED REMOVAL TO BE RECOGNIZED AT STATEWIDE SYMPOSIUM

As an indication of the success of the weed removal program at Edgewood, Ken Himes and Paul Heiple have been invited to make a presentation at the upcoming annual California Invasive Plant Council Symposium this October in Ventura, California.

This statewide symposium, whose theme this year is Invasive Plants and the Wildland-Urban Interface, will be a perfect setting for Ken and Paul to describe the efforts at Edgewood, a wilderness preserve virtually surrounded by urban development.

The symposium runs from October 7 - 9. Ken and Paul are on the agenda for Thursday October 7.

For more information, see [www.caleppc.org](http://www.caleppc.org).

## MEMBERSHIP DUES

New or renewing members may clip and complete this section to pay **tax-deductible** annual membership dues. Please send your check payable to **Friends of Edgewood Natural Preserve** to the return address on the back of this panel. Renewing members can determine their membership expiration date by checking the six-digit code to the right of their name on their mailing label. For example, if the code is 06/2001, membership runs through June 2001. Questions, call (866) GO-EDGEWOOD or contact [membership-coordinator@friendsofedgewood.org](mailto:membership-coordinator@friendsofedgewood.org).

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## SPECIAL WEEDING EVENT

By Ken Himes

We have scheduled a special event on Saturday November 6 from 9 am to noon to remove Bristly ox-tongue, *Picris echioides*, from the yampah and caryx meadows near the west kiosk.

These meadows have nearly returned to their native condition thanks to 10 years worth of volunteer efforts. Some of us can remember when the ox-tongue was chest-high and crowded out nearly everything. Now the yampah meadow has become one of the most pristine habitats at Edgewood.

However, ox-tongue is a persistent biennial, and there are still plants that need to be removed. Meet at the Edgewood trailhead at the intersection of Edgewood Road and Cañada Road, or find us near the west kiosk. Bring water and sun screen. Gloves and tools will be provided.

- \$15 Basic Membership (includes newsletter)
- \$25 Family Membership (newsletter)
- \$7 Student/Retired Membership (newsletter)
- \$50 Supporting Membership (newsletter, *Edgewood Checklist of Plants*, boxed set of Edgewood photo greeting cards, and 1-year subscription to BAY NATURE magazine)
- \$100 Benefactor Membership (above premiums plus Toni Corelli's Flowering Plants of Edgewood Natural Preserve)
- \$250 Patron Membership (above premiums plus 16x20 photo-poster)
- I am enclosing a gift of \_\_\_\_\_.
- Please send \_\_\_ copies of the *Edgewood Checklist of Plants* (\$2), \_\_\_ copies of *Common Native Wildflowers of Edgewood* (\$2), \_\_\_ copies of the Apr-Jun 2004 BAY NATURE magazine (\$5), \_\_\_ copies of Flowering Plants of Edgewood Natural Preserve (\$25). Includes tax, S&H. All items subject to availability.
- Please do not send any premiums.

I would like to participate in the following:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Docent program   | <input type="checkbox"/> Weed management     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GIS/GPS mapping  | <input type="checkbox"/> Schools outreach    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter/web   | <input type="checkbox"/> Habitat restoration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public relations | <input type="checkbox"/> Adopt-A-Highway     |



## UPCOMING EVENTS

- q **Sat. Sep 18, 10 am - 1 pm, OAKS OF EDGEWOOD.** Join Paul Heiple and Ken Himes on this CNPS field trip to view the oaks of Edgewood, including some very interesting and rare hybrids. Meet at the Day Camp parking lot and bring water and lunch.
- q **Oct. 7 - 9, CAL-IPC SYMPOSIUM: INVASIVE PLANTS AND THE WILDLAND/URBAN INTERFACE.** See the article on page 7.
- q **Sat. Oct. 9, 10 am - 4 pm, CNPS NATIVE PLANT SALE.** Come to the CNPS nursery behind the Visitor's Center at Hidden Villa in Los Altos Hills. Parking is free. Books, seeds, bulbs, posters, and note cards will be for sale.

q **Sun. Oct. 17, 12 - 3 pm, GENERAL MEETING AND MEMBERS APPRECIATION PICNIC.** Join your Friends for this annual fun event. See the article on page 1 for details.

q **Sat. Nov. 6, 9 am to noon, SPECIAL WEEDING EVENT.** Meet Ken Himes at the Edgewood Trailhead at Cañada and Edgewood Roads to help in the removal of Bristly ox-tongue. See the article on page 7.

q **Monthly, ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY.** The next sessions are scheduled for 10/2, 11/7, 12/4 and 1/2/2005. Contact Ken Seydel for more information.

q **Monthly, BIRD WALKS.** Meet Audubon Society docent Lee Franks at 8 am at the Day Camp kiosk on 9/26, 10/31, 11/21, or 12/19.

The Edgewood Explorer is published quarterly by the Friends of Edgewood Natural Preserve, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving Edgewood for the human, plant, and animal generations to come. The newsletter is produced by Bill Korbholz with assistance from Laverne Rabinowitz and contributions from many Friends. For more information about the Friends of Edgewood, visit our web site at [www.friendsofedgewood.org](http://www.friendsofedgewood.org), mail us at PO Box 3422, Redwood City, CA 94064-3422, call or fax toll-free at (866) GO-EDGEWOOD (866-463-3439), or email [info01@friendsofedgewood.org](mailto:info01@friendsofedgewood.org).

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**Save the date for the next  
Friends of Edgewood  
General Membership  
Meeting:  
Sun. Oct. 17!**

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