

Edgewood

EXPLORER

FRIENDS OF EDGEWOOD • SUMMER 2025

Seasonal Visitors Attract Attention in Edgewood Preserve

Story and photos by Leslie Cavaliere

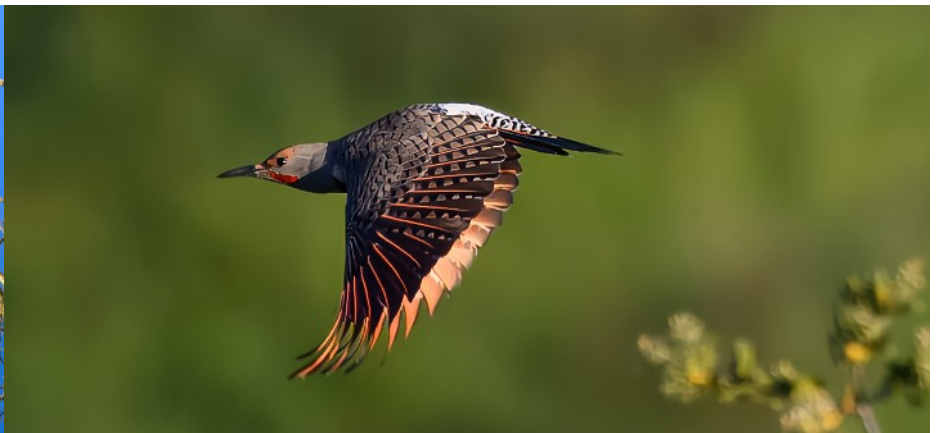
There's something magical about hiking in Edgewood Park and Natural Preserve. In spring, with each step along the trails, the landscape seems to awaken. Blossoms unfurl, animals stir, and the sky fills with the flit and flutter of birds. While I've come to know and love our year-round feathered residents—the cheerful chatter of dark-eyed juncos, the flash of blue from a Steller's jay, or the rhythmic tapping of a woodpecker—it's the seasonal visitors that always get my attention.

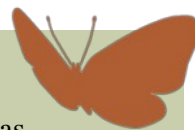


In January, I experienced an awe-inspiring encounter with a migrating merlin. High above Sylvan trail, perched gracefully in a tree, was this sleek, little falcon. I first spotted one last December, and remarkably, in January of this year, it appeared again—same tree, same piercing gaze. (Could it be the same bird?) The thought that Edgewood Preserve might be a regular waypoint on its migratory route fills me with excitement and wonder.



As March rolled in, so did the unmistakable sights and sounds of the northern flicker. These birds begin their courtship rituals around March in northern California, and I love seeing pairs interacting in the branches above the trails. The northern flicker's name comes, in part, from the bright color of wing and tail linings. Flickers are easy to spot high up on bare branches. When the light hits their wings just right, you can catch a flash of color mid-flight. *continued on page 6*





Find Your Place Here

Edgewood Natural Preserve is a community of extraordinary natural resources and Friends of Edgewood, as an all-volunteer organization working to protect the preserve, is a community of extraordinary human resources!

If you are interested in helping out, email us at get-involved@friendsofedgewood.org and tell us a little about what you'd like to do. Below is a list of our greatest needs based on the Board of Directors' work assessing our human resources status and needs. (Read President's Message, page 3.)

Ed Center Hosts Our hosts do the important work of greeting visitors to Edgewood, but we have had to reduce Ed Center hours because we can't find enough people to staff each week. Shifts are Wednesdays and weekends.

Event Support Our General Meeting, Volunteer Picnic, and public outreach events help us build community spirit, but we need help organizing and staffing these fun annual events.

Nature Hikes Administration We offer over a hundred nature hikes for adults and children each year. We have a corps of fabulous docents, but we need help behind the scenes organizing, managing, and marketing these hikes.

IT/Technical Support We need technical support for our Wordpress website and our other organizational infrastructure systems.

Marketing and Social Media We need help promoting Edgewood and FoE's work by developing social media content, videos, emails, graphics, posters, and other marketing materials.

Reaching the Next Generation

by Michele W. Conway

Friends of Edgewood was a sponsor of the Bay Nature Institute's annual Local Hero awards event in April. Avroh Shah was the recipient of the Young Leader award. He also received a \$500 professional development grant from Friends of Edgewood.

Shah is a student at Palo Alto High School, a self-described tree hugger, and a climate change and environmental justice activist. He is passionate about his projects and has a remarkable talent for public speaking. At the event he said, "When something you love becomes threatened, your fight to protect it comes not as a choice, but rather as an instinct." Although young, he has an impressive history of activism. He has talked with Congressional representatives, senators, city councils, and school boards encouraging effective climate solutions and advocating for environmental justice.

Tanvi Dutta Gupta, an editorial fellow at Bay Nature, introduced Shah at the awards event. She commented on Shah's efforts over the past year fighting plans to expand the Palo Alto airport. "He saw the complex systems that bound everything together with such clarity, recognized who it impacted, and saw where he could work to change it," she said. Shah organized a diverse coalition to fight the expansion of the airport into the Baylands. He was joyous when the Palo Alto City Council deliberately omitted the airport expansion from their 2025 agenda.



Avroh Shah and FoE board president Peter Ingram

Wes Radiz, executive director/publisher of Bay Nature Institute, spoke at FoE's annual meeting in October 2024. In preparation for the Local Hero awards event, Radiz suggested to FoE: "In light of your generous honorarium last fall, I'd like to apply those funds toward a \$1,000 event sponsorship, then dedicate your remaining \$500 contribution toward the professional development grant in that amount for our Young Leader, Avroh Shah. Given our shared interest in reaching the next generation, I thought this might be a meaningful way for your team to participate and be recognized."

Read more about Avroh Shah in his LinkedIn profile at www.linkedin.com/in/avroh-shah-a96707319. ❖

President's Message

by Peter Ingram

I could almost feel like a spring outlier—or even a grassland invasive by my choice of topic for this year's message. Many Friends have been out reveling in this amazing season, ranging from composing the weekly Edgewood Wildflower Survey, intrepid and relentless weed warrior-ing, welcoming the flow of curious visitors to the Education Center, leading Wildflower Hikes, or experimenting anew with grassland restoration treatments. However, behind the great outdoors scene, there is a vibrant all-volunteer organization that is in a continuous state of improvement and change. This is what I would like to share briefly with Explorer readers, before you all head out for another fine day in the preserve.

The Board of Directors' current work on organizational infrastructure really gained momentum in late 2022 when our Human Resources Team (directors Sandy Bernhard, Nancy Enzminger, and Kathy Korbholz) presented their report "Understanding Friends of Edgewood's Human Resources Status and Needs." I have vivid recollections of the presentation and ensuing discussion, including some thought-provoking "ah-hah's" that have informed and inspired the subsequent efforts of the entire board and many of our active volunteers.

Fast-forward to early 2024 when directors updated their strategic priorities with goals and specific action items for the calendar year. The goals were bundled under four priority areas:

- 1) Improving our partnership with parks,
- 2) Visitor and community engagement,
- 3) Restoration efforts,
- 4) Support for our volunteers.

With the HR Team report still in the forefront, the board thoughtfully shaped the following goals under Priority 4:

- Identify co-leaders/back-up help for outward-facing key programs.
- Refine and institutionalize our long-term leadership recruitment strategy.
- Explore outsourcing solutions for unmet needs outside our core competencies.
- Match workload of programs with people resources.
- Explore additional ways to celebrate and communicate appreciation for our volunteers.

While good progress was made by the end of 2024, it became clear that we needed a different short-term organizational infrastructure to more effectively address our long-term needs and realize the goals within our strategy. Once again, directors looked into the future and in January established four new standing board committees:

- Board Policies & Procedures
- Board Development
- Annual Meeting Planning
- Finance

In the first months of 2025, these new committees quickly got to work, driven by the need to attract new, talented, diverse, and passionate future leadership and to be ready to make effective hand-offs from those who have carried the Edgewood torch for so long and so very well.

In the spirit of "It takes a village," the Friends' leadership invites you—our special village—to let us know your thoughts, suggestions, and (even better!) if you would like to join in the ongoing work to ensure a vibrant future for the Friends of Edgewood. Some of our greatest needs are listed on page 2.

My sincere thanks to Friends of Edgewood volunteers for all that you do! ❖

What to do in Edgewood this summer ...

The spring wildflower show is ending, but there are still blooming flowers and much more to see and do.

Find out what's in bloom. See the Bloomin' Board at the Ed Center. Subscribe to the weekly Wildflower Survey: wildflower-surveys-coord@friendsofedgeswood.org.

Take a hike. Stop in at the Ed Center for trail information and advice. Check [Eventbrite](#) for listings of docent-led hikes for adults and kid-friendly hikes.

Visit the Ed Center to learn about the plants, animals, history, and geography of Edgewood. Purchase t-shirts, books, cards, and more to support FoE.

See and learn about California native plants in the native garden that surrounds the Ed Center.

Take photos with your phone or camera. Or bring art supplies and draw pictures.

Become a Friend of Edgewood. (See page 7.)

Volunteer! get-involved@friendsofedgeswood.org

Background photo: Golden brodiaea by Sue Lindner

A Tree for All Seasons: California Buckeyes



by Bruce Homer-Smith

The California buckeye is an eye-catching tree throughout the year. In early spring, it’s quick to show its pale green leaflets, which look like long fingers. By early summer, it’s covered in tall spikes of white-to-pink flowers. Later in the summer, the buckeye drops its leaves, leaving pale trunks that stand out against the green background of other trees. In the fall, it dangles large brown “buckeyes,” the biggest seeds of any native California plant.

Look for the trees especially near the main Edgewood Preserve parking lot and on the switchback of the Sylvan trail as you emerge from the woods.

A Tree Suited to California

The California buckeye has been adapting to our Mediterranean climate for about a million years. Its seasonal rhythm helps it make the most of our wet months and avoid the stress of our dry summers.

California Buckeye’s Growing Season

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rain												
Seedlings												
Leaves												
Flowers												
Buckeye Fruit												



California Buckeye
 Top left: Leaf (painting) © John Muir Laws. All rights reserved. Top right: Tree in bloom © Neal Kramer. All rights reserved. Bottom left: Flower by William Follette. [CC BY NC 4.0](#) Bottom right: Fruit by Keir Morse. [CC BY NC SA 3.0.](#)

continued on
page 5

California Buckeyes *from page 4*

Inside the Flower Column

Buckeye flowers grow in tall, sweet-smelling clusters with up to 200 blooms each.

Look closely and you'll see long, orange-tipped stamens. These are the male parts that hold pollen.



Photo by Wilde Legard [CC BY NC SA 3.0](#).

When butterflies and bees visit the flowers to collect nectar and pollen, some of the pollen sticks to them. As they move from flower to flower, they pollinate them. Pollinated flowers then grow into those big, heavy buckeye seeds.

But there's a twist: if a branch has too many heavy seeds, it might break. So, each flower column includes just a few female parts (pistils), limiting the number of buckeyes per branch.

Natural Defenses

California buckeyes protect themselves by producing three kinds of chemical toxins:

Aesculin: Can affect blood flow and is poisonous to some animals.

Alkaloids: Can interfere with nerves, causing weakness or even paralysis.

Aescin: A soap-like substance that can damage cells and upset digestion.

The Pollinators

Most non-native insects can't handle the buckeye's defenses. For instance, non-native honeybees that gather buckeye pollen return it to their colony, where all the bees die.

But native insects have been evolving with buckeyes for a million years. They're not just immune; they thrive on buckeye flowers. You'll see dozens of species of native butterflies and bees feasting on the nectar and pollen.

The Seed Spreaders

Most buckeye seeds are dispersed by gravity. Since buckeye seeds are filled with toxins, almost no animals eat them, except for the California ground squirrel. Evolving alongside buckeyes for many thousands of years, it has developed a digestive system that can handle the toxins.

This is great for the buckeye, whose uneaten seeds are spread wherever the ground squirrel travels, and great for the ground squirrel, who gets plenty of food.

And the food chain keeps going: California ground squirrels are a major source of food for dozens of carnivores—hawks, snakes, and mammals.

Buckeyes and AIs

I love the opportunity to use AI (artificial intelligence) phone apps that let me identify plants. Now I'm finding that AI lets me explore in new ways.

For this article, I took a broad topic—classes of chemical defenses used by the buckeye—and was able to learn about them in a series of questions and answers in Microsoft Copilot. I asked for sources and went to the originals to confirm what AI told me.

Once I had a first draft, I asked ChatGPT to rewrite it in a friendly and easy-to-understand manner. My final draft is about equally AI text and mine. Of course, I had to decide how to combine them. But AI made it better.

AI lets me find previously unreachable information and ideas. It has given me fresh ways of presenting my stories. It makes my nature explorations richer and more interesting.

Please write me with new ways you're using AI. ❖

Seasonal Visitors *from page 1*

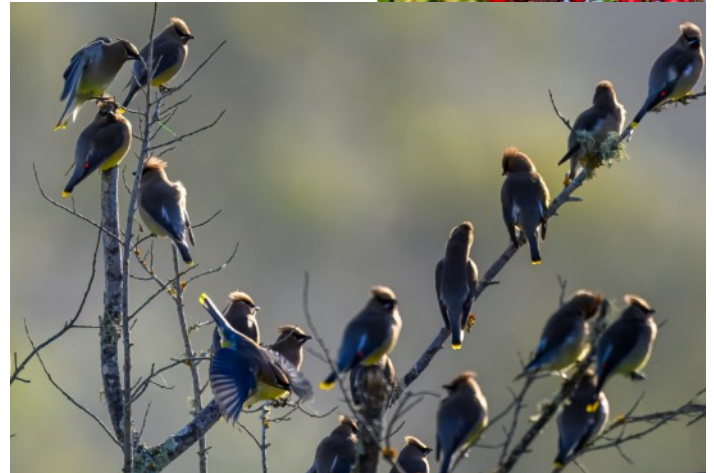


Another sure sign of spring is the changing behavior of the California quail. During winter, coveys roam in large, bustling groups. There's often a sentinel, usually an adult male, that watches for predators while the covey forages or rests. By March, they begin to pair off. One early morning, I watched a pair of quail move gently through wildflowers, a golden wash of light illuminating their path.

Out on the trails, sometimes there are moments that feel like small gifts. On one lucky day, a swirl of red-winged blackbirds danced along Edgewood trail, their crimson shoulder patches catching the sun before the flock lifted off and vanished into the horizon.



One of the more remarkable sights this year was the abundance of cedar waxwings. For several weeks, they arrived in sweeping groups, filling the skies above the trails and gathering en masse in the treetops. One of the waxwing's favorite foods are the bright-red berries found on toyon shrubs in the park. These shrubs are also commonly referred to as Christmas berry or California holly. Watching the waxwings feast in these berry-laden shrubs is a colorful sight.



Spring in Edgewood isn't just about wildflowers and birds—it's a symphony of life in motion. I'll be back out on the trail this summer—camera and binoculars in hand—seeing what shows up next. ♦

Photos by Leslie Cavaliere. She is retired from the education technology industry, and spends much of her time exploring Edgewood Park when she's not on a photo expedition. Some of her recent travels were to the Galapagos, the Amazon, Bhutan, and Patagonia.

Leslie received her first Nikon camera on her eighteenth birthday, which has been an integral part of her life ever since. She currently uses Nikon Z8 mirrorless cameras equipped with a diverse range of lenses, spanning from 14mm to 800mm. Through her lens, she aspires to be a storyteller, uncovering the concealed narratives that permeate our surroundings and inviting others to engage with the world in a similar manner. ♦

2025 Docent Class Graduates!

by Sandy Bernhard and Michele W. Conway

Just after New Year's, in the chill of early January when currants, gooseberries, and leatherwood begin to bloom, 12 individuals gathered to start docent training. By late April, with meadow flowers still dotting the browning grasses, those 12 people, now fully-fledged docents, were leading their first hikes. What came between were four months packed with evening classes and field hikes, homework and practice, shadowing and sharing.

It's not all work and no play, though. On the trails this spring, one new docent donned bunny ears for an Easter morning hike, another did a little dance to demonstrate a flower closing and opening, and another group was offered a tip by appreciative hikers which, although refused, was redirected as a donation to Friends of Edgewood.

Becoming a docent takes curiosity, dedication, and courage. Should you meet them on the trails or at events, please congratulate and encourage the graduates of the 2025 Docent Class: Sally Albert, Scott Bortner, Jason Bosinoff, Steve Clarke, Tracy Cui, Eva Heninwolf, Lily Ng, Julie Rumberger, Anne Scanlon-Rohrer, Vicky Stein, Lise Strom, and Shannon Tunnell.

Sincere thanks, as always, go out to our dedicated team of instructors: Kathy Korbholz (history), Paul Heiple (geology), Gina Barton (wildlife), Howie Smith (morphology), Rebecca Reynolds (woodlands), Alf Fengler (grasslands), and Laurie Alexander (hikes with families).

I also want to thank these experienced docents who served as mentors this year: Sabra Abraham, Deborah Anthonyson, Gina Barton, Caroline Bowker, Kate Connors, Vera Dadok, Emily Fawcett, James Higbie, Lindsay Joye, Sue Lindner, Cynthia McLaughlin, Barrie Moore, and Doug Ward. It takes the combined efforts and good will of a great many individuals to make our program a success. That we pull this off every year is a credit to us all!

To find out how you can become a Wildflower Docent visit friendsofedgeswood.org/become-a-docent or contact me, Sandy Bernhard, the training coordinator at docent-training-coord@friendsofedgeswood.org. ❖

Become a Friend of Edgewood

Help support FoE's habitat restoration programs and activities that connect people to the beauty of nature at Edgewood Park & Natural Preserve.

A donation of any amount is greatly appreciated! Consider becoming a sustaining member by signing up to make a monthly donation of \$5 or more.

Pay by credit card at foew.org/donate, or complete the form below and mail with your check.

Thank you for supporting **Friends of Edgewood**.

Please circle your donation amount:

\$25 \$50 \$100* \$150* 250* \$500* \$_____

Name_____

Address_____

City/State/Zip_____

Email_____

Phone_____

EXPLORER newsletter preference: ☐ email ☐ mail

*Check if you wish to receive eligible thank you gifts:

☐ 6 Edgewood greeting cards for donations of \$100+

☐ Plus 1 year of *Bay Nature* for donations of \$150+

Mail with your check to **Friends of Edgewood**, 3 Old Stage Coach Rd, Redwood City, CA 94062-3801.

Donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law.





Friends of Edgewood Natural Preserve
3 Old Stage Coach Road
Redwood City, CA 94062-3801

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Bill and Jean Lane Education Center at Edgewood Park and Natural Preserve

Permanent and changing exhibits. Staffed by volunteer hosts. Open most Saturdays, Sundays, and Wednesdays.

To learn more about Friends of Edgewood, visit our website at foew.org, call us at 650-367-7576, or email us at info@friendsofedgewood.org.



www.instagram.com/friendsofedgewood/



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Edgewood EXPLORER

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IN THIS ISSUE

Seasonal Visitors Attract Attention.....	1
Find Your Place Here: FoE's Greatest Needs.....	2
Reaching the Next Generation	2
President's Message.....	3
What To Do in Edgewood this Summer.....	3
A Tree for All Seasons: California Buckeyes.....	4
2025 Docent Class Graduates!.....	7
Become a Friend of Edgewood.....	7

- When visiting Edgewood Park and Natural Preserve, please review trail maps, obey signs, and stay on approved trails.
- See friendsofedgewood.org to learn about our mission, find membership information, and discover volunteer opportunities.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Nature Hike: Late Bloomers and Local Birds

June 21, 9 a.m.–12 p.m.

Sign up at [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com) starting June 4.

Nature Hike: Explore Edgewood at Night

July 26, 6:45 p.m.–10:15 p.m.

Sign up at [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com) starting July 19.

SummerFest: A Community Celebration

July 26, 12 p.m.–4 p.m. at Coyote Point

Recreation Area (*Kites at previous celebration shown*)

(Sponsored by San Mateo County Parks)

The Edgewood EXPLORER is published quarterly by Friends of Edgewood Natural Preserve, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and restoring Edgewood and educating the public about its treasures. Friends of Edgewood Board of Directors: Sandy Bernhard, Caroline Bowker, Junko Bryant, Elisa Chavez, Michele W. Conway, Nancy Enzminger, Peter Ingram (president), Bill Korbholz, Kathy Korbholz, Angela Mallett, Perry McCarty, Barrie Moore, Rebecca Reynolds, Matthew Tobin. The newsletter is edited by Michele W. Conway and supported by many friends.