

# OSA OUTLOOK

Winter 2011 • Vol. 5 No. 4



A buck in a natural state – photographed recently in Rancho Cañada del Oro Open Space Preserve (Trail Cam Image)



## MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER **ANDREA MACKENZIE**

As stewards of the land, creeks, trees, plants and wildlife across Santa Clara County, we know that each season creates a special magic. Winter months offer cold, clear night skies for stargazing. The migration of birds adorns the skies of the Pacific flyway. A greening occurs as rain nurtures the landscape and all living things. The trails in our open spaces provide us opportunity to slow our pace, observe, listen and enjoy the subtle nuances of the natural world.

The wild beauty of this winter is poignant as we contemplate the closure of over seventy California State Parks due to budget cuts, putting at risk the natural, historic and cultural legacy that belongs to us all. With such drastic reductions in funding at the state and local levels, volunteerism and philanthropic leadership play an increasingly critical role in the ongoing conservation and stewardship of all of our parks, open spaces, working lands and wildlife habitat. Please join the Open Space Authority or one of the many dedicated land conservation agencies or land trusts this season in giving something back to the land. You can connect to over sixty land conservation organizations at work in the San Francisco Bay Area at [www.openspacecouncil.org](http://www.openspacecouncil.org).

This season provides us with the opportunity to rekindle our commitment to closely held values and principles. As we explore the richness and vastness of our “back yard” wilderness areas, and contemplate the coming year, may our vision of the future include recognition for the inherent value of our natural world. As Aldo Leopold said, “There are some who can live without wild things and some who cannot.” I contend that very few of us can live without.

# Quick Action by Marijuana Eradication Team Restores Habitat and Saves Steelhead



Dana Litwin, Andrew Evert, Joelle Garretson, Cody Fickes, Lt. John Nores, Lt. Jeff Puente, Apollo (Photo by Patty Eaton)

**A** deadly threat to steelhead spawning in Llagas Creek was narrowly averted just days before the onset of the fall rains. Pot growers had dammed up a tributary of Llagas Creek to irrigate their crop, resulting in an environmental disaster of pesticides, fertilizers, massive debris, and a dried up tributary. Tragically, a gray fox was found dead after drinking contaminated water.

The Marijuana Eradication Team (MET), led by Lt. John Nores of the CA Fish and Game Department, removed the dam and cleaned up the toxic mess to allow the steelhead safe passage during the spawning season. They arrested the pot growers and charged them with diverting water, destroying habitat, killing wildlife, and illegally cultivating marijuana.

OSA General Manager Andrea Mackenzie commented, “These people have total disregard for our streams and wildlife and the parks that belong to everyone. Regardless of how one personally feels about marijuana, these pot growers are wreaking havoc on our public lands.”

The pot farm was located in a remote area of the Rancho Cañada del Oro Open Space Preserve. It is just one of numerous pot growing operations to be eradicated in pristine open space areas in Northern California in the past year. Thus far in 2011, the MET has made twenty-five arrests related to grow sites with 168,000 marijuana plants. Twenty-three of the arrests resulted in environmental charges of water pollution, stream alteration, littering, and poaching big and small game animals. Approximately thirty-five weapons and firearms have been seized related to these cases.

You can help to keep our open spaces safe for wildlife and people by reporting any suspicious activity and/or materials to OSA at 408-224-7476.



## Meet OSA's New Communications Specialist, Patty Eaton

**Q:** What do you do as Communications Specialist?

**A:** My role is to get the word out about Open Space Authority: inform, engage, and inspire all members of the community. Everyone should have a chance to enjoy our wonderful open spaces and help protect the wildlife within them.

**Q:** What motivated you to join the OSA?

**A:** It is exciting to be with people who love their work and feel a personal sense of mission for wilderness areas. The OSA staff is talented as well as dedicated to their work.

**Q:** What do you do in your spare time?

**A:** I do love to hike (of course!), spend time with my spouse, Geoff, and my dog, Scout, and enjoy all the gorgeous places in our area.

 **Like OSA on facebook!**

To join our Facebook community, just look up Santa Clara County Open Space Authority on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/openspaceauthority](http://www.facebook.com/openspaceauthority) and “like” our page. You will see updates on events, trail news, nature photos, and more.



# docent activities CALENDAR

DEC | JAN | FEB

Rain cancels all outdoor activities unless otherwise noted.  
For hiking tips visit [www.openspaceauthority.org](http://www.openspaceauthority.org).

## Bugs! Bugs! Bugs!

### Evergreen Public Library in San Jose

- **December 13 11:30am - 12:30pm**

Bring your little ones and discover what's behind the intricate behavior of common crawling and flying insects. Learn about their amazing adaptations, for example, how ants greet one another; why grasshoppers jump; and cracking the secret codes of bees. Enjoy a multimedia presentation and hands-on creative arts and crafts. Meet in the community room.

## Winter Solstice Wander

### Rancho Cañada del Oro Preserve

- **December 22 9:00am - 1:00pm**

{ A moderate, 4.5 mile hike }

Revel in the exquisite natural beauty of this spacious preserve on the Winter Solstice, the shortest day of the year. Learn the significance of the Solstice in various cultures while observing heightened wildlife activity and experiencing the quiet majesty of sweeping vistas. Meet in the parking lot.

## It Happened on a Trail:

### A Wildlife Mystery Adventure

### Rancho Cañada del Oro Preserve

- **January 7 1:00pm - 3:00pm**

{ A flat, 1-2 mile hike }

Put your sleuthing skills to the test, and help solve a wildlife mystery! You become part of the Crime Scene Investigative team, as you follow a series of clues, examine animal tracks, and deduce a solution to the crime. Bring your family and join the fun. Meet in the parking lot.



## Newts, Newts, Newts!

### Rancho Cañada del Oro Preserve

- **January 21 and 28 9:00am - 1:00pm**

{ A flat, 3 mile hike }

Winter is the breeding season for California newts. Come learn how a creature with no teeth and no claws defends itself. Hike with us on this lush, out and back route as we explore the preserve in search of these colorful creatures. Hike takes place rain or shine. Meet in the parking lot.

## Healthy Weight Walk

### Ulistac Nature Area

- **January 26 9:00am - 11:00am**
- **February 2, 9, & 16 9:00am - 11:00am**

{ A flat, 1-2 mile hike }

Lighten up! Come celebrate Healthy Weight Day with a brisk jaunt through the Ulistac Nature Area in Santa Clara. This is an easy hike/stroll, full of birds, rabbits, flowers, and fresh air. Meet at the South entrance nearest Hope Road.

## Leap Year Sunrise Salute

### Sierra Vista Open Space Preserve

- **February 29 5:30am - 8:30am**

{ Moderate, 5-6 mile hike }

Leap year occurs only once every 4 years. Why not celebrate it with a spectacular silent sunrise celebration? Join OSA as we watch the sunrise together, salute the coming 4 years, and hike the scenic trail down to Alum Rock Park (hike portion is optional - trail has a long and steep downhill portion with an elevation loss of 1,300 feet). Families welcome. RSVP to reserve your spot now. <http://osaleapyear.eventbrite.com>. You will receive further instructions upon registration.

## Join the Cadre of OSA Docents!

Do you enjoy nature, hiking, bird watching and sharing nature with people? Maybe you like the idea of working someday as a park interpreter. This is the opportunity for you! Sign up for OSA's annual docent training. We'll explore the properties, learn about the agency, and discover how to lead fun and engaging programs for the public.

### TRAINING DATES AND TIME:

February 18, 19 and 25, 26

10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Call Teri Rogoway at **(408) 224-7476 X17** to register now.

# RECAP | SIERRA VISTA TRAIL DEDICATION

OCTOBER 22, 2011



Top: Andrea Mackenzie, Janet McBride, Jim Beall, Chuck Reed and friends at ribbon-cutting ceremony;  
Left: Garnetta Annable, Rachel Santos, and Virginia Holtz;  
Right: Roberta Gonzales, CBS Meteorologist (Photos by Liz Ames)



The day dawned clear and bright, and OSA staff and volunteers arrived at sunup to set the stage for the trail dedication and official opening of the new trails at Sierra Vista Open Space Preserve. At 10:30 a.m. sharp, the people-packed shuttles from the overflow parking lot began to wind up Sierra Road. By noon, over 250 people were gathered for the trail dedication.

The ceremony was set on a hill overlooking the breathtaking vastness of the preserve. OSA General Manager Andrea Mackenzie welcomed local luminaries including Bay Area Ridge Trail Executive Director Janet McBride, Coastal Conservancy Deputy Bay Program Manager Matt Gerhart, Mayor Chuck Reed, Assemblymembers Jim Beall and Nora Campos, Silicon Valley Leadership Group CEO Carl Guardino, and CBS Meteorologist Roberta Gonzales.

In her comments, Ms. Gonzales focused on the many benefits that open space affords the environment: "Plants, especially trees, absorb enormous amounts of carbon from the air as they grow. Natural landscapes like Sierra Vista lessen the impact of heavy storms by absorbing potential flood waters.

The Open Space Authority also helps to save traditional agriculture in Santa Clara County, which keeps our food sources local and reduces the need for transportation. This improves the quality of life for everyone."

Following the speeches, a stream of people hiked, biked, and maneuvered wheelchairs down to the trailhead for the festive ribbon-cutting. The diverse crowd of hikers, cyclists, geo-cachers, and wandererlusters then set off to explore grand vistas, cool canyons, and natural wonders along the fresh new expanse of trail.

## Sierra Vista Open Space Preserve QUICK FACTS

- Preserve is open from 8:00 am to sunset; no dogs are allowed.
- Access to Sierra Vista Open Space Preserve (OSP) is through Alum Rock Park only, which is closed on Mondays. There is no fee to use Sierra Vista OSP, however, Alum Rock Park will charge \$6 per vehicle to park on weekends. There is no parking along Sierra Road.
- No bathrooms, water sources, or parking areas are in the preserve.
- Wildlife commonly seen include: Golden Eagles, coyotes, bob cats, American Kestrels, turkey vultures, black-tailed deer, and Western Rattlesnakes. Mountain lions are rarely seen, but are on the property.
- Visit [www.openspaceauthority.org](http://www.openspaceauthority.org) for a Sierra Vista OSP trail map.