

June 18, 2020

Dear Open Space Authority,

Over the last 15 years or so I have had the distinct pleasure of being able to take my students on many Audubon organized, funded and docent led field trips. The Wetlands Discovery Program is a unique experience for our youth because they learn about our local environment and wildlife habitats, how human activity impacts these natural systems and what they can do in the present and future to better take care of our local natural systems.

The school I teach at is >90% free/reduced lunch so we love these opportunities where financial assistance is offered since we may not go on field trips otherwise. These are the best kinds of learning experiences for kids. Furthermore, I hope these trips will inspire future scientists and advocates for our wild places. There is a huge disparity in minorities who partake in activities in our parks and trips like this will help correct this.

I would love to see this type of experience expanded it into Coyote Valley. This unique habitat provides an important genetic link for large mammals between two larger habitats and can serve as a model for the science of connectivity. The diversity of raptors in Coyote Valley is rivaled in very few places in the country. To have students go into the field and see science in action, in their own backyards, is a unique experience. The creek that runs through the valley also runs through their local park, Hellyer County Park, just a few blocks from their homes, so they have a connection and invested interest in these studies. I live in Coyote Valley and have taken many classes through De Anza College with the study area as Coyote Valley so I am very familiar with so much great science that goes on there. I really want my 6th grade students to be a part of that when they reach high school. I hope that you can partner with the Santa Clara Audubon Society to expand a great program and make it even better. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

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