

Spring 2006

Docent Newsletter



The Rookery



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Docent Profile-Jennifer Joell

Jennifer Joell, '01 has been interested in the Laguna de Santa Rosa for most of her adult life. She was born and raised in Sonoma County and she enjoyed Environmental Studies at Sacramento State as a young woman. 14 years ago Jennifer was on the original board of directors for the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation and served for two years. She has also been involved in a variety of Laguna issues over the years. When the Joe Rodota trail was first built, she and her son Joshua planted some of the original trees that are still there. In addition, she spent two years as a naturalist for Alliance Redwoods Camp.

Jennifer has enjoyed watching the ebb and flow of the Laguna and the improvements that have been made for both public access and revegetation. In 1986, while living at Laguna Farms (35 acres on the edge of the wetlands on Cooper Rd in Sebastopol), Jennifer experienced extreme winter flooding. Her family and her neighbors tried to help some cows that were surrounded by water and found out that cows can swim.



For about 10 years now, Jennifer has been self employed as a Motorcycle Safety Teacher. She is thrilled to have a job which combines her loves of cycling and the outdoors with education. She currently owns and rides two motorcycles. One is an ex CHP bike which she uses for long distances and the other is a 250cc Ninja which gets 70 mpg but she hopes to convert to electric.

This Fall, Jennifer introduced us to a new classroom activity called the camouflage game. The game is currently with the curriculum committee. We hope to incorporate it into the Learning Laguna Program this Fall. Jennifer enjoys engaging children and helping them to develop an interest and appreciation for the natural world.

**WELCOME
CLASS OF
2006
DOCENTS**

Classroom Update-Tracks

Last Fall, when Daught Geiger, '04, was confronted with a 2nd grade, mostly bilingual class, she realized that the current version of the Tracks game would be a difficult challenge for the students due to both age and language issues. Daught put out a picture of an animal at each student's place. Then she passed out the feet one at a time after the students had answered questions

and figured out which foot went with their picture. She adapted to the new situation on the spot and it lead to a flexible age appropriate version for one of our classroom games. Thanks for your quick thinking Dotty! The new tracks write up is in the packet that all docents received in the mail.



Daught Geiger, '04



Notes from Mary



The Laguna Foundation has been growing by leaps and bounds – and the Education Program right along with it. It has been a while since we published *The Rookery*, but recently Docent Dana Blake, '02 offered to get it going again. This is her first issue – thanks, Dana, good job!

CJ continues to chair the Education Committee which has added fresh perspective by welcoming Denise Cadman, Christine Fontaine (Coordinator of the Pt. Reyes Field Seminars) and new Board Member and soon to be docent, Jeannette Anglin to the Committee. Raini is heading up the Curriculum Committee adding new members Marcia Johnson, '01 and Helen Heal, '05. They will be introducing some new curriculum in the Fall, including the Camouflage game. Denise, aka PowerPoint Queen, has put together a stunning array of pictures for our new “slide show” introduction for the classroom. The piece she did is being made over by Raini and CJ into several, age appropriate presentations. Our laptop and new projector are itching to be pressed into service! We will let you know when the new program is ready to be learned.

We've had some docent migrations in the past year. Nemea Arborvitae, Sharon Bouton, Bev Buswell, Patricia Canfield, Susan Churchill (now LF President), David Hanes, Joe Honton (now LF Staff), Jan Lochner, Terriann Tomlin, and Robert Thille have moved on to other pursuits. We thank all of you for your contributions to Learning Laguna over the years and wish you all the best.

Do you want to write about your experience as a docent? Have an interesting story of something that happened in the classroom or the field? Creative writing? Great photos? Please send submissions to Dana Blake at danablake02@comcast.net and put *Rookery* in the subject line. We hope to keep you informed on everything that is going on, give some tips on docenting and acknowledge you for all you do to help kids, and the public to learn about the Laguna.

And lastly, please take some time to review the classroom and field activities before your first docent date this Spring. Remember:

Asking the question is infinitely more important than knowing the answer.

Mary



Welcome Catherine Cumberland

Greetings fellow naturalists! My name is Catherine Cumberland and I'm the new assistant in the Education Program. I'll be providing support for public education activities and programs, including Learning Laguna and the Docent Training Program.

A little about me: I'm a recent graduate of Sonoma State (B.A.'s in Biology and Environmental Studies). For the past few years I have worked as a naturalist and land steward at Fairfield Osborn Preserve, and as assistant to the lead gardener at SSU's Native Plant Garden. I am currently SSU's volunteer liaison for the STRAW program (an Environmental Ed program at the Bay Institute) and work with STRAW at restoration sites in Marin, Sonoma and Napa counties.

I'm a big fan of bugs, amphibians, and native plants (current favorite: *Ceanothus*). As far as indoor activities, I enjoy yoga, cooking, and music. I'm excited about my new position here at the Laguna Foundation and am looking forward to meeting all of you soon!

From the Field-Bat Day for Docents

Laguna Foundation Docents and Volunteers have employed an effective, non-toxic tactic to reduce our mosquito population in and around the Laguna, a common mosquito breeding area. In a one day workshop last Fall, the docents learned about the number of species of bats that live in the Laguna such as Mexican Free Tail Bats, Hoary Bats, Red Bats, Pallid Bats and others. Without predators like bats, insects would soon overwhelm the earth!

Bats consume enormous quantities of insects, primarily mosquitoes. In fact, Bats can consume between 600 to 700 mosquitoes per hour each night, and more when they are feeding the single pup they raise each year. The Laguna Bat



Laguna Foundation docents & volunteers built bat box habitat for the Laguna: Pictured are (back row left to right) Glen Lippard, Alysha Lippard, John Condon, Veronica Bowers, Raini Vallarino, Steve Erhman, Patrick Woodworth, CJ Johnson, Jeanette Doyel, Mary Abbott. (front row left to right) David Woltering, Nancy Dakin, Beth Haylock, Joany Goodwin, Chris Engel,

population is invaluable in helping to reduce the risk of West Nile Virus.

However, the single most significant threat to bat survival is loss of habitat, followed by the use of pesticides in gardens and crops. More than half of the 45 species of bats in the United States are either endangered or in rapid decline.

The docents spent part of their “bat” day building bat boxes that are currently being installed in and around the Laguna. The boxes can each house up to 150 bats, and with the volunteer help

of a local contractor, Glen Lippard of Tradecraft, the docents built 30 bat boxes.

Local Bat expert, Patricia Winters aka The Bat Lady gave a presentation about the various bat species in the Laguna and brought some live bats to look at too. She inspected the houses and was confident that the boxes would soon be occupied.

At dusk that evening, just before Halloween, the docents gathered to view a massive Bat Colony as they exited a building near Topolos Winery. The bats swept over the Atascadero Creek in search of mosquitoes and other delicious insects.

KRCB's Bruce Robinson (North Bay Report) picked up on the story when it was featured in Sonoma West. He interviewed Mary Abbott, Patricia Winters and the Sonoma/Marin Mosquito District to talk about bats and mosquitoes in the Laguna De Santa Rosa and Bat Day for Docents. His piece aired over two days on KRCB radio.



Docent Corner



ALONG WINDSOR CREEK

Along Windsor Creek, the light rain doesn't diminish the delight of this two-legged creature out for a dawn stroll. It doesn't seem to diminish the delight in which the "caaw" of the crows announces my presence. The old coast live oaks that overlook the meandering stream are drenched with moisture. Water droplets glisten among the moss and lichen.

This is the seventh spring in which I find myself walking this ribbon of pathway, which serves as a contiguity between the asphalt tameness of Brooks Creek Senior Housing and the natural wildness of Windsor Creek.

Today I am seeing with new eyes. I recently signed on to be a docent for the Laguna de Santa Rosa. At the completion of my ten-week training I will be charged with taking local third and fourth graders on field trips. At my orientation I realized that there is much I don't know about the Laguna. I suppose I have just taken it for granted. For my entire life I have annually seen it flood its adjacent low-lying farmlands. In the late winter I always enjoy seeing the egrets and herons dressed in mating feathers. These usually solitary creatures gather to feed in the flooded fields and can be seen from the roads and bridges, which weave through the Santa Rosa Plain.

Recently I was treated to a taste of the wild lands that remain along the Laguna. I visited Alpha Farm, which is owned by the City of Santa Rosa. It was another one of those showery pre-spring days. I delighted in driving through gigantic mud puddles and walking through fields of indigenous grasses, sedges and rushes. There are still foxes, badgers, and coyotes doing their thing out there on the plain. The sanctuary contains many vernal pools, which were filled with Lobbs Buttercups. I learned a new birdcall. The marsh wrens had just arrived. They sound like a rain-bird sprinkler: "jet-t-t-t-trr. Those little birds were impossible to see in the tall reeds, but their song warmed my heart.

As we carpooled back to civilization sloshing through the seemingly bottomless potholes several white pelicans glided silently overhead. Just passing through!

I look forward to many field trips along each of the creeks, which drain into the Laguna; among these are Roseland, Copland, and Mark West. The Laguna basin filters the water and re-fills our important aquifers, before it dumps into the Russian River. (Boy did I take it for granted. It does all this as well as providing feeding and nesting grounds for migrating birds.)

This morning I am blessed with a rainbow as I return home to my cozy nest. Soon the buckeye and black oaks will burst forth in foliage. The creek will become seemingly distant. I will still hear the chattering of the black phoebes, the sweet little sounds of the bushtits and the loud crow conversations, as they raise their young. Perhaps an occasional flock of chickadees will mingle with the western goldfinch, which grace the many bird feeders on the civilized side of the ribbon.

Jeanette Doyel, '05

Como Se Dice in Español? How do you say in Spanish ?

Last Summer, Jimmey Purtill, '04, Patrick Woodworth, '03 and Barbara Briggs-Ledson, '02 formed the Multicultural Committee to collaborate and introduce new concepts for Learning Laguna in order to increase our connection with non- English and bilingual speakers. In the Fall they gave a presentation to the docents at our Breakfast in the Laguna to help warm up the docents to other cultures. You don't have to speak a second language to make a connection, you just need to be open to asking questions.

Some docents got so excited about this that they introduced a few Spanish words into their presentations and others asked the students and parents, "Como se dice in Español?" Jimmey, Patrick and Barbara have been in contact with three teachers who expressed an interest in helping us add more of these kinds of elements to our program. They are putting Spanish labels on the backs of the Who Am I cards, and they're also developing an invitation in Spanish for families to come and visit the Sebastopol Wetlands Preserve. If interested in helping please contact Jimmey, Patrick or Barbara!!!



Off the Joe Rodota Trail last Fall

Docent News



Pam Murnane & her 3rd grade class from Marguerite Hahn school at Kelly Wetlands in the Fall



Jeannette Doyel, '05 with students

Thanks to a generous donation from Chris Engel, '04, The Migration Game has a new look!!
The funds allowed us to hire a graphic artist.

- We're excited to announce that Jim Dempsey, '04 will be a new Day Leader this Spring.
- Kudos to Joany Goodwin, '05 for becoming LF staff as Major Gifts & Events Coordinator.
- We're thrilled that Chris Engel, '04 and Sue Shea, '04 have stepped up in their new role as Day Leaders for our Community Walks program. They are in charge of scheduling walks and running the program which is primarily for adults. See the Laguna Foundation Website for dates.
- Welcome to Catherine Cumberland, a new staff assistant for the Education Program-see page 2.
- Congratulations to John Condon, '02 for the full page feature article in the Press Democrat on January 22. He's a great role model. Men can docent too!!
- Thanks to KRCB 91.1 Radio/Sonoma Spotlight and KRSH 95.9 Radio/Outsiders Page for previewing our docent program.
- Thanks to Sonoma West Times and News for showcasing both our docent program and our bat box day.
- Docent training begins on March 13th and runs through May 22nd (from 12:30-4:30 in the Estuary Room at the Laguna Water Treatment Plant on Llano Road). This is a great opportunity to drop in for a class if you need to brush up on a particular topic or if you just want to meet the new docents!
- We have 17 classes signed up for the Spring Learning Laguna program. It starts on April 5th and goes through May 26th. Thanks to all of the docents, our volunteer slots are filled for every date!!! Rainy days will not be a problem in the field this year as REI has donated raincoats for our students. Thanks REI!

Continuing Education

-Saturday April 8th 9am-2pm Botanizing with CNPS at Cherry Creek Road in Cloverdale. Come to see thousands of lovely fawn lilies. Watch for Carpool Information in your email.

-Saturday May 13th 9am-12pm Birding with Guy Smith in Georgetown where bald eagles have been spotted.

-Friday June 2nd Graduation Party & Potluck at the Alexander's property along the Laguna De Santa Rosa. Meet the new docents and enjoy surprise entertainment. Save the Date!

OPPORTUNITIES ELSEWHERE

-Wildflower Walks every Saturday with Sonoma County Parks Volunteer Phil Dean-If interested call John Ryan at 565-2041

-2006 Tillie Hardwick Lecture Series on California Indians at the California Indian Museum & Cultural Center in Santa Rosa-If Interested call 579-3004

-Marin County Open Space District Spring 2006 Naturalist Outings-If interested, go to: <http://www.marinopenspace.org/home.asp>

-Madrone Audobon offers many free bird walks and even talks-If interested, go to: <http://audubon.sonoma.net>

-Fairfield Osborne Spring Workshops-If interested, go to: <http://Sonoma.edu/org/preserve>



Fawn Lilies



Red Clover



The photo above was taken by Erin Sheffield from the docent guided tour last Spring to Fairfield Osborne Preserve