

Summer 2006

Docent Newsletter



The Rookery



Docent Profile-Marcia Johnson

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**CONGRATULATIONS
DOCENT GRADUATES
CLASS OF 2006
(see photo page 3)**

Delta Pond Fundraiser A Huge Success !

The Community Walks day leaders, Sue Shea and Chris Engel, and staff organized and promoted a special Spring walk to the Delta Pond rookery on May 21. We decided to ask a \$10 donation per person, with all proceeds going to the 2006/07 bus fund. The public leaped at the chance to see the rookery and all docents were pressed into service. The enthusiasm was infectious and we continued to open more time slots until 150 people had signed up. Hikers were very generous and we raised over \$1600! That translates into 8+ fully funded field trips!

You'd never know that Marcia is retired because she is involved with so many projects and organizations. Marcia has always loved animals and birds. In fact, when she was a child she liked sharing snakes and spiders with her mother. Although she was graciously praised, it wasn't until years later that she found out that Mom was really afraid of snakes. This was the beginning of Marcia's relationship with the out of doors.

Sitting by her pond in her habitat garden filled with native species we were graced by 4 species of swallows (who reside there), dragonflies laying eggs on the pond and butterflies enjoying the plants. The sound of the water was relaxing as we talked about the Environmental Volunteers of Palo Alto, Wildlife Rescue, Laguna Keepers, the California Native Plant Society and the Sierra Club. These are all groups that Marcia has been or is currently involved with in addition to the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation. She recently joined our Curriculum Committee and she currently volunteers once a week with Veronica Bowers helping to rescue & restore birds.

It was obvious from the surroundings that Marcia loves plants and animals. When she and her husband Ralph (of almost 40 years) first moved to the property in Sebastopol, one of the first things they built were bluebird boxes. The birds settled in the boxes before they were even complete. Next, they built their home by themselves including putting in their own leach field. Their home and their property is a labor of love which they have continued to work on since 1999. They have put in several hundred species of plants including species like penstemon and



Don Jackson, '04 Photographer

Check out his bio at: www.donjackson.com/bio.html



salvia which attract birds and insects.

Marcia has enjoyed and recorded 65 species of birds visiting her property including great egret, snowy egret and great blue heron stopping by for a dip or a drink at the pond. They have pacific chorus frogs gracing them with song in the spring time and unfortunately, they have also had the non native bullfrogs which like to eat the pacific chorus frogs. They're not sure how the bullfrogs came to the property.

Marcia also likes to go to far away places. She has traveled quite a bit in South America and has been to Africa 3 times on camping and tracking trips but it was in Japan that she had a run in with a baby elephant. At age 22, she was in Japan to watch the Olympics and of course, she had to go to the nearby Zoo. Well, she was so drawn to the cute baby elephant that she hardly noticed the sign in front and the fact that most people were standing back a bit. She went right up to that cute elephant and "whack" it slapped her across the face with its young but very powerful trunk. It didn't knock her down but it sure surprised her.

Another love of Marcia's is mountains and mountain climbing. She has belonged to the peak climbing section of the Sierra Club and has reached the top of many glorious mountains including: Mt. Dana, Clark Mountain and Half Dome in Yosemite. Half Dome was 9 miles almost straight up and then back down again. Even though she started so early it was still dark out, she noticed a pile of gloves at the bottom and wondered who they might belong to. It wasn't until she neared the top that she realized they were there to help protect your hands while using the cable. This didn't slow Marcia down though, she just continued back down the same 9 miles going head first.

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Notes from Mary

What an honor it is to work with you! This Spring was a test for all of us, as schedules kept changing, the rain kept pouring, STAR testing reared it's (ugly) head at the last minute and... the docents hung in there! If trying times show our true colors, then the docents and day leaders are true blue. We still managed to bring Learning Laguna to over 400 children at eight different schools this Spring alone. Congratulations are in order! Our bus fund coffers have grown now too, and we will hopefully be able to attract more low income kids next year (see Delta Pond story).

Likewise, the 2006 docent training class had challenges due to weather, missed field trips and constantly changing shadow dates. But everyone keeps taking me aside saying, this class of docents is fantastic! We graduated 18 new active docents. I hope you had the chance to meet each other at the lovely Laguna party hosted by Gary and Bannee Alexander on June 2. Our docent pool, with the new class, is now at 59. We can begin adding more classrooms to our calendar now.

New developments are on the horizon for the Education Program. We are in the beginning stages of developing a teacher training program, an essential element to deepening the scope and range of our wetlands education to all children in the watershed. Hopefully you will see more teachers at our continuing education programs too, as we find new ways to include them. Other developments include a re-design of our docent training Native American Day as part of our growing relationship with the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria. We hope to include new Native American cultural elements into our Learning Laguna curriculum and community walks too.

I hope to see you this summer at our full moon walk at Delta Pond, for the Tule Harvest at Kelly and of course, we ask for full attendance for all docents at the famous "Breakfast in the Laguna" on Sept 8 and "Classroom Catch-up" on Sept 18th. Please see the calendar for dates and times and, watch your email too!

Yours for the Laguna,

Mary

New Field Journals for Delta Pond



The new field journals were developed by the curriculum committee members which include: Marcia Johnson, Helen Heal, Virginia Strom-Martin, Denise Cadman, Magi Discocoe, Vicky Riley, CJ and Raini (chair). Feel free to contact any of the committee members with ideas or suggestions. The journals were used this Spring at Delta Pond and were well received!!! The committee will be also be introducing journals for our other field sites this Fall. A new class room activity developed by Jennifer Joel and refined by the committee, "The Camouflage Game", will also be introduced this fall. The curriculum committee is also working on improving the Teacher packets and developing a new power point presentation for our class room visits.

Marcia continued-

Even though Marcia has known about ten people who have died while Mountain climbing she feels that is safe if you're smart and well prepared. Just 2 years ago when Marcia & Ralph traveled to Tanzania she was one of 3 people (and a support staff of about 25 or so) that made it all the way to the top of Mt. Kilimanjaro. It's more than 19,000 feet high and at least 5,000 feet higher than any mountains in the contiguous United States. Even though her two grown daughters worry about her Mountain climbing, Marcia enjoys the challenge and feels that it's a wonderful experience.



With recent concerns about youth detachment from outdoor activities, lack of physical exercise and increased health risks, the California Roundtable on Recreation, Parks and Tourism adopted the [California Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights](#) for the purpose of recommending a fundamental list of experiences that every child in California would benefit from experiencing, before entering high school.

Numerous studies document that children who do these things are healthier, do better in school, have better social skills and self-image, and lead more fulfilled lives. The California Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights provides that every child should have the opportunity to:

1. Discover California's Past
2. Splash in the water
3. Play in a safe place
4. Camp under the stars
5. Explore nature
6. Play on a team
7. Follow a trail
8. Catch a fish
9. Celebrate their heritage
10. Learn to swim

Rachel Carson's Wish for Laguna Docents:

"If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over the christening of all children, I should ask that her gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life."

The Awesome Class of 2006



Front Row: CJ, Ramona Minero, Deborah Grace, Patty Newland, Tara Henteleff, Jeannette Anglin Back Row: Richard Mayer, Jan Crowe, Magi Discoe, Bob Murnane, Carol Simpson, Gretchen McIndoe, Mat Keller, Catherine Cumberland, Andy Fleming, Judy Krist, Frank Dono, Sandy Steele and Raini. Not pictured are Sheila Handley and Kate Madley.



-The 2006 docent training class, hard at work during the final exam. Pictured are Tara, Carol, Andy and Mat, the "All American Coots," the name they chose for their working group. The final exam has been revamped into a more interactive, competitive learning game. Broad, multi-answer questions are given to the whole class to work on and then given to one group to respond. If they give an incomplete answer, other groups have the option to vie for extra points by finishing the answer. The exam has become another learning tool for the training, and, is lots of fun for all. This year's panel to give questions consisted of Executive Director Dan Schurman and docents Jeanette Doyel, Marcia Johnson and Joany Prezokp

Touching the Future

My first time day leading in a classroom turned out to be really interesting. I was scheduled to do two classes on a Friday morning at La Fiesta School in Rohnert Park. I got a frantic phone call late Thursday afternoon from the teacher of the early Friday class explaining that the end of the year fifth grade play had just been rescheduled for the same morning we were to be there, and her kids would be very disappointed if they missed it. The play was to last only about a half hour – could we still fit the Laguna presentation in? We talked for a while and concluded that even though we would start 45 minutes late, if everything fell exactly into place and we docents could trim a minute or two here and there, it could probably work. But I started to get a little nervous.

We were supposed to start at 9:00, but it was closer to 9:10. A few more precious minutes to trim. Everybody was staying pretty calm (thank you, docents) except me, so I was really ready to blow through the slide show, and that's exactly what I was doing, until I got to the slide that shows the oak trees in the late afternoon sunshine on the hills east of Santa Rosa. I did the commentary we've all heard 50 times about how this type tree is everywhere in the Laguna watershed, is really important, is a keystone species, etc. Then I asked if anyone knew what type of tree this might be. Someone said maybe this? and someone said maybe that? and then a little third grade girl with a quiet little voice said, "Are they broccoli trees?"

I went on with the slide show but part of my mind shifted to a different plane for a moment while I thought about what this kid said. Her brain took some sensory data, processed it, and came to a plausible, if faulty, conclusion. A mature oak tree seen from a distance does look surprisingly similar to the head of steamed broccoli.

I've been an adult for a REALLY long time, have experienced maybe 90% of the new phenomena I am going to experience, have had a lot of practice mentally categorizing new stuff when it does come along, and live in a reasonably well-ordered world where there aren't too many earth-shaking surprises. I've lived in a world like this for so long that I sometimes forget that it hasn't always been this way for me. I look at my grandchildren and marvel at the amount of new data that bombard their brains everyday that somehow has to be analyzed, processed and put into some sort of coherent order. In doing this they can ask some off the wall questions, and reach some amazingly creative, fanciful, albeit sometimes faulty, conclusions. Adults and older children act as mentors in these situations to guide these youngsters to a better understanding of how (we think) this world works.

But every once in a while a kid might ask a question or make a comment that shows an insight to a problem that maybe no one has ever really thought of. I'm sure there are solutions to problems floating around out there that are just waiting for someone to put facts together just the right way and say, "What if. . .?" What I find really exciting about being a Learning Laguna docent is giving these young minds facts and concepts about our immediate environment, then letting them run with them. The kid who thinks broccoli looks like an oak tree today, may come up with a really revolutionary process to deal with waste water or something else in twenty years.

The rest of the day went really well.

Jim Dempsey '04

An Enchanted Evening at the Sebastopol Wetlands Preserve, or, Why we love this place . . .

Entering the Preserve around 6:15 one summer night, I see violet green and tree swallows flying about and all the cliff swallow nests empty. Have they all fledged? This made me look carefully at the duck pond, filled with 2 groups of young mallards, more like teenagers, just hanging out as was a phoebe on the input valve. Two young grebes were slowly swimming with no diving for food as yet and it was evident how shallow the pond is already. I finally spotted just a few cliff swallows colorfully aglow in that dusky light.

I walked past the south end of the pond briefly paying homage to the walnut when I noticed ahead on the trail between the coot pond and the overflow pond 2 more phoebes on the ground. Having never seen this behavior, I watched for a moment and as I looked overhead it appeared that 2 great egrets were coming from the rookery in search of food. As I approached the overflow pond, I scared up a green heron who gave me a pretty good look at his plumage, flying into the riparian area of the main channel.

Walking between the overflow and the channel never disappoints and as I entered an overgrown brushy area, a flock of bushtits scrambled to go deeper into the riparian. Finally, a view of the channel and 3 young grebes swimming slowly with only one diving occasionally were my first greeters. I stayed in this most amazing light looking hard for other signs of life. But just a look up to the snag across the Laguna, in a most dignified, upright posture gave me a clear view of 3 cormorants. "Look at us" they seemed to say and stayed poised even after I headed back to meet John Condon. I couldn't resist the funny calls coming from the coot pond and followed them as I walked between the coot and overflow ponds until I saw the moorhen family. The 2 adults had their red bill markings but the many young were not quite fully adorned. All were clamoring and moving about among one another as dinner time approached.

I quickly got myself back to the duck pond noting the birdsong of song sparrow and mourning dove. I planted myself at the duck pond to watch the mallards and grebes and was surprised by the arrival of another great egret. Easily walking much of this very low pond, he seemed smaller with fewer feathers and a technique that was more miss than hit. His walking was as slow and precise as to be the root of Tai Chi. Catching something that was obvious as it bulged down his long neck, I decided he was a new fledge from the rookery, out on his own in a new solitary existence.

Soon another surprise: a fast swimming, long tailed mammal cutting through the pond almost touching a group of mallards until coming to stop at a deeper point to take a dive. "Oh, please come up" I thought and he did. I saw a fat little body with what I guessed was a flat long tail as efficient as a rudder. "Yes, it must be a muskrat" I again thought as I hear John call my name in greeting. I tried to get John over to the pond to see but the muskrat was gone that quickly.

The walk participants arrived and as John took them along the trail I tried to tear myself away from the pond. "Muskrat Love" or the draw of the secret life of the Laguna honoring anyone who bothers to pause with small gifts was keeping me from leaving. The light was so amazing at about 7:15 that I teared up with pure joy. I was jostled by a strange birdcall and above me on the wire was mockingbird telling me get on my way. As I walked slowly to the car among the radish, chicory and other invasives, I first noticed the seeds and then was happily surprised to see a lesser goldfinch eating her way from plant to plant with no regard for me. Another very distinctive group song overhead and coming into the Preserve was a flock of about 30 cliff swallows allowing me to take my leave as they headed for the now plentiful insect filled air.

-PS: John phoned me at about 9:15 to tell me that he and his group got to see the muskrat after all. It's magic out there.

Chris Engel, '04



The Dean Witter Foundation made a **\$15,000** grant to our Education Program— **WOW!**

Fishing & Wildlife Commission gave us a **\$2600** grant for spotting scopes and taxidermy. We've been enjoying the new scopes in the field!

-The Foundation office has **moved** & is now located at **2150 West College Avenue** in **Santa Rosa** on the west side of the old water agency building site. Stop by and visit if you'd like to check out a book from our growing library or stop by just to say hello.

-Thanks to Sonoma West Times and News for informing the public about the Stone Farm Project and our new Learning Laguna Center that will be there!!!

-Magi Discoe, '06 has joined the Curriculum Committee - welcome!

-Welcome back to Lanny Keyston, '05, back on the trail again after a challenging Spring.

-Jeannette Anglin, '06, has joined the Laguna Foundation board and will be serving on the Multicultural Committee of the Ed Program, among other things.

-Chris Engel, '04, Betsy Sanville, '04, Patrick Woodworth '03, and Catherine Cumberland. '06 all took week long classes at the Sierra Nevada Field Campus this summer, so please direct all your questions about birds, birdsong and insect biology to them!!

-Veronica Bowers, '03, had a big year: While tending baby birds this Spring, she became President of Madrone Audubon AND moved La Dolce V to downtown Sebastopol, so please stop in to visit and sample her amazing chocolate.

-Learning Laguna classroom sign-ups are better than ever! Our Spring 2007 session is nearly full and Fall 2006 is filling fast. We hope to add more slots to the calendar this school year, continuing our commitment to bringing this program to more children each year. Watch your email for **docent registration week, scheduled for Sept 4-10.**

Continuing Education

-Friday, July 14, 7pm Docent Soiree at the Moskovitz's Shadow Puppets by Amber & friends

-Wednesday, August 9, 7pm Full Moon Walk at Delta Pond—Families Welcome.

-Friday, August 18, 8am Tule Harvest at Kelly Farm

-Sunday, September 10—Laguna Foundation art & Wine Gala



Vaux Swift

-Friday, September 22, 7pm Caravan to see the Vaux Swift Migration

-Monday, October 9, 1pm Betty Goerke, anthropologist. Workshop "Bears, Birds & Bobcats: The use of Fur & Feathers in Ceremonial Clothing."

-Friday, October 27, 6:30pm Bats at Topolos with a special guest speaker



Traditional Tule Gatherer

Friday, September 8 - Breakfast in the Laguna

Tuesday, September 18th -Classroom Catch Up Attendance Required Please !!!

Required attendance? Yes, even though you are a volunteer, we need to keep you up to date on the changes in Learning Laguna. Our curriculum committee has been working hard this year to update activities and have made some changes we think you are going to like. Each year, we provide two fall docent training classes to get the school year off to a great start. The first is **Breakfast in the Laguna**, now a tradition at **Kelly Farm (Friday, Sept. 8, 8 - 11 am)**. The Laguna Foundation provides breakfast, a packet of new materials, and some fun activities before we review our Learning Laguna field work.

The second class is called **Classroom Catch-Up (Monday, Sept 18, 1 - 4 pm)** and is held at the classroom at the **Water Treatment Plant**. This year we will be teaching you how to run the camouflage game, the bird beaks activity, the bird nest touch table and preview the new power point introduction. These classes are a lot of fun and everyone enjoys seeing old friends again, getting ready for the best season yet -- Learning Laguna season!! See you there!