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SONOMA WEST - times + news

SONOMA West Aug. 16-22, 2001

# Cats, ducks and transients call Laguna park home

by Corey Young  
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**SEBASTOPOL** — A committee charged with overseeing city land in the city's Laguna Wetlands Preserve will meet next week to talk about several unwanted residents of the area.

Non-native ducks, feral cats and homeless campers in the Laguna will be on the table for discussion when the Laguna Implementation

Committee meets next Monday.

"The idea of the Laguna preserve is to try and bring back native species," said city Planning Director Kenyon Webster.

The Laguna Implementation Committee, which helps the City Council with policy matters for the preserve, will hope to create a plan for dealing with the three groups. Webster said non-native animals

like feral cats are a threat to the existing wildlife, and that he has personally seen feral cats kill a duckling in the preserve. The cats, which were lost or abandoned by owners, could pose a danger of disease because they are not properly cared for by a veterinarian, Webster said.

The city isn't sure how many feral cats live in the Laguna preserve, and while Webster hasn't received any

complaints about the cats from the public, "It is an issue," he said. Volunteers working to preserve the native plants and animals in the Laguna have complained about the number of non-native animals, Webster said.

At the entrance to the city's wetlands preserve, a notice asks pet owners to please see *Laguna* page A9

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ers not to abandon their animals at the preserve, and advises park users that "Kittens, cats, ducks, turtles, snakes and other pets have been abandoned at the Laguna. Fledgling native ducks are regularly killed by feral cats abandoned by their owners."

At the July 17 city council meeting, Sebastopol animal rights advocate Paul Toussaint asked the city to consider trapping, neutering and returning the feral cats to stop their population from growing. Webster said the "trap-neuter-return," or "TNR" approach, could be used to deal with the Laguna cats.

"It's certainly an option," said Webster. The county's Humane Society has offered to trap up to half-a-dozen cats in the Laguna and find homes for them, Webster said, but they can't handle any more than that.

The recent issue of non-native ducks in the preserve will also be discussed at the committee meeting. Webster said the city has stopped removing the ducks that frequent the Laguna ponds, until a clear policy can be worked out.

Homeless camps have been dis-

covered in the wetlands preserve area as well, Webster said.

"There are periodic encampments and people camping out and depositing trash and debris," he said.

"There are definite issues," added Webster. "I can recall one incident where homeless campers were cutting down trees."

Over the past couple of years Sebastopol police and public works employees have removed trash from

homeless camps, and the city's fire department responded to a fire at one of the camps, Webster said.

"The homeless issue is a significant one," said Webster, citing safety issue for users of the Joe Rodota Trail and the destruction of wildlife habitat. "That may be the most significant of these issues."

The Laguna Implementation Committee will meet at 8 a.m. Monday in City Hall.