News from the Friends of

The Bernard Biological Field Station

Of the Claremont Colleges

Volume 6 No. 3 October 2005 P.O. Box 1101, Claremont, CA 91711 bfsfriends@earthlink.net www.fbbfs.org

The CGU housing project

The Claremont Graduate School housing project was approved in June. The Students for the BFS and several residents asked that an appeal of the approval be heard, but the City Council decided not to allow this.

However, we were able to get some changes made to the plans that will reduce the impact to the Field Station. The original plans called for 34 feet of traffic and bike lanes and the approved project calls for 30. In order to widen the road, the fence will need to be moved. CUC will move it beyond the new edge of the road, to the west property line of the parcel owned by KGI (see map on back). This is 8-10 feet east of the existing fence. Any of the coastal sage scrub to the east of the new road edge that is damaged by the widening or by moving the fence is to be replaced in kind. No timetable has been given for the start of construction, but it is likely that CUC will move the fence in December or January when the academic term finishes.

✔✔Sightings ✔✔

- White-crowned sparrows, back for the winter
- Yellow toyon berries, on the way to Christmas red
- Ground squirrels heading underground
- Golden daisies of needle-leaved pinebush attracting autumn pollinators
- Alders setting their flowers in groups like tiny, green pine cones
- More jays than last year, survivors of West Nile
- Tall, dry stalks of telegraph weed, shedding tufted seeds
- Butterflies sipping from fall blossoms
- Late flowers of annual *Lessingia,* blooming yellow
- Russet petals of wild buckwheat in rings around Harvester ant mounds
- Small, circular holes of solitary bees in the roads
- fluffy, white blooms of coyote brush
- ducks swimming composedly on pHake Lake

Preliminary Draft of the General Plan

Here is the tentative review schedule for the preliminary draft of the new general plan. After these meetings, the actual draft plan will be produced, along with the environmental impact report. The actual draft will come before the City for approval next spring.

All meetings are open to the public so come to any that interest you. Future environmental decisions will be based on what is in the plan so do look it over!

11/18/05: Copies of the draft will be available on the City website, at City Hall, the library, the Hughes Community Center, and the YAC. Hard copies will be available for checkout or purchase at City Hall.

11/30/05: Community Festival at the Claremont Inn, 555 W. Foothill (time TBA)

12/06/05: Scoping Meeting at Planning Commission, 7 pm, Council chamber

Commission Reviews (normal meeting times, City Hall)

12/01/05 Police Commission–Community Mobility and Safety/Noise elements

12/07/05 Human Services Commission–Community Facilities/Services element and shell of Housing element

12/15/05 Traffic/Transportation Commission Community Mobility element

1/11/06 Architectural Commission–Land Use/Urban Design/Historic Preservation element

1/12/06 Community Services Commission–Open Space/Conservation/Parks/Recreation and Community Facilities/Services elements

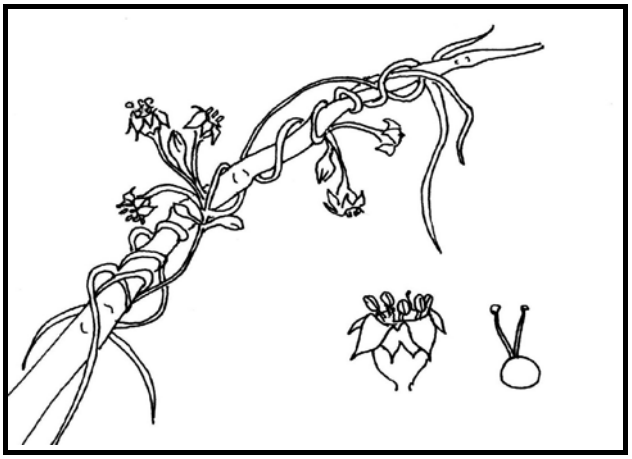
1/17/06 Planning Commission–Land Use/Urban Design/Historic Preservation and Economic Redevelopment/Fiscal elements

There will also be meetings of the Citizens Committee for Claremont in December. Again, these are open to the public. Held at City Hall, time TBA (check City website)

The Citizens Committee for Claremont

12/12/05	Community Mobility and Public Safety/Noise elements
12/12/05	Open Space/Conservation/Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities/Services elements
12/19/05	Land Use/Urban Design/Historic Preservation and Economic/ Redevelopment/Fiscal elements
12/19/05	Housing Element (shell of element only)
1/09/06	Additional meeting if needed

Meet the Inhabitants



Dodder (*Cuscuta californica*)

Love-vine, Strangle-weed, Witch Hair, Golden Thread and Dodder are all common names for this plant, whose orange, threadlike stems are found on many herbs and shrubs from sea level to 8200 ft. It blooms from mid spring to late summer. Now as the year has turned, it is dying off, but some can still be found in the foothills.

This parasitic plant germinates on the ground and sends out long shoots which twine around nearby plants. The shoots send out extensions which grow into the gas-exchange openings (stomates) normally present in the leaves of their victims and tap into the water and food conducting tissues of the host. The unwelcome guest loses its chlorophyll and grows into the tangled mass of brilliant yellow-orange threads which cover many coastal sage scrub and chaparral plants.

Although it looks peculiar, Dodder is a flowering plant, producing tiny, white blooms. Fortunately, its flowers are a principal food plant for caterpillars of the Western Brown Elfin butterfly which eat the buds and thereby slow its spread.

Dodder, or "Cheruku Hoochoot" was a useful plant for the Tongva-Gabrieleno who lived in our area.. They sometimes called it "ahikoli" (breath plant) because its primary use was in treating asthma. The orange stems were brewed into a tea whose steam was said to clear nasal passages and the lungs. Raw stems were also stuffed in the nostrils to stop nosebleeds. A yellow dye produced from the stems was used for painting feathers.

Bobcat (*Felis rufus*)

Bobcats, named for their short tails, are only rarely seen at the Field Station.. They have large, triangular ears with tufts of hair at the tip, and longer hair on their faces which gives the impression of sideburns. They weigh between 15 and 30 lb, stand up to 2' tall, and can be up to 3' long. Males are somewhat larger than females. Their coats are more or less beige with brown and black spots and stripes on the back and legs. Their underside is white with black spots. The tail has a few black stripes on the top and the backs of the ears are black and white. This varied coloration provides good camouflage.

Bobcats tend to be solitary, with home territories ranging from 1 to 80 square miles. They are nocturnal hunters and eat small mammals, birds, and occasionally, animal remains. If a meal is too large, the cat will hide it and come back at intervals. When stalking, bobcats place their hind feet in the prints made by their front feet so that noise due to cracking twigs and suchlike is minimized. They are good climbers and sometimes wait in trees to pounce on prey.

Bobcats can live to 14 years old. They make dens in hollow logs, holes in trees, and holes in the ground Those with a permanent territory normally mate and give birth in the spring, but may do so later in the year. Litters of 2-4 kittens usually arrive in 50-60 days and are cute and furry. They learn to hunt on their own by the fall but stay with the mother up to a year.

Bobcats do fine living near people and rarely hunt domestic pets. They do have an impressive growl, tho!

Auction Donations

Our annual arts and crafts auction will be held in the spring. This is our major fundraiser, so if you have something to donate, please email us. Of course, if you want to donate money (all contributions are tax-deductible), that is happily accepted too!

November Election

If you would like some non-partisan information about the state propositions and our local candidates, you can get it at **smartvoter.org**

A service of the League of Women Voters

Goats, fire prevention, and habitat health

Stephen Dreher, BFS manager

This past month the Field Station had some unusual visitors. A herd of hungry goats and their owners, Hugh and Sara Bunten of Lakeview, Oregon, set up camp in the north "neck" area. It was definitely a sight to behold with over 250 critters eating away at dried sagebrush and leafy poison oak. Those of you living in Claremont probably read the Claremont Courier illustrated article, but for those who missed it, here's some background on why they were here.

The LA County Fire Department has taken a more aggressive stance on vegetation clearance since the Padua fire. Lawsuits between residents and the City of Claremont have served to exacerbate the situation. Inspectors initially ordered large scale clearing by the residents north of BFS as well as within our northern border area. The residents have left much of the native vegetation, choosing to live with it rather than destroy what little of the natural world remains in our area. Naturally the inspectors zeroed in on this area.

The Fire authorities wanted us to clear a large section and, if we failed to comply, planned to hire a landscape crew to clear it and send us the bill. I recalled a presentation by the Buntens at the Botanic Garden about their use of goats to control invasive species and thin vegetation in fire prone areas, so I got in touch. They were finishing a job elsewhere in the Claremont foothills and agreed to come down to the BFS.

Amazingly, the goats will eat even poison oak and there are impenetrable areas of the stuff in sections of the BFS, so bringing them in produced some benefit by reducing this as well as by meeting the fire department's orders. The treated area of the BFS was a dense section of aging sagebrush and other subshrubs. Dried coastal scrub species such as these carry the main fire danger in the summer. These are tough species and will regrow from the base, as will the poison oak. Goats can also target large stands of dried mustard and grasses and may come back sometime to do this. These invasive, annual, European species provide the heavy ground cover of kindling that makes current fires hotter and more intense than in the past. Trees, cacti and larger shrubs were essentially left alone by the goats or only had their "skirts" eaten. It was surprising how much cactus was revealed after the goats set to work!

As urban *Homo sapiens* spreads, the pressure to prevent fires at the urban/wildland interface grows. Much of California's native vegetation, especially the chaparral and coastal sage scrub plant communities, is not only fire-adapted, but requires it for good health. Periodic fire has historically been the agent for habitat renewal, removing thick and dying scrub and opening up space for new plants to emerge. These events are usually followed by a year or two of abundant annual wildflowers. Now, with homes scattered everywhere, fire is actively prevented. Fire-suppression leads to ever thicker and older cover. This will inevitably burn, and will do so at temperatures and at an intensity greater than the plants are adapted to, often killing those that would normally come back from their crowns. Bulldozing the plants out of existence is even worse. There just aren't that many habitat management tools to use in these problem zones.

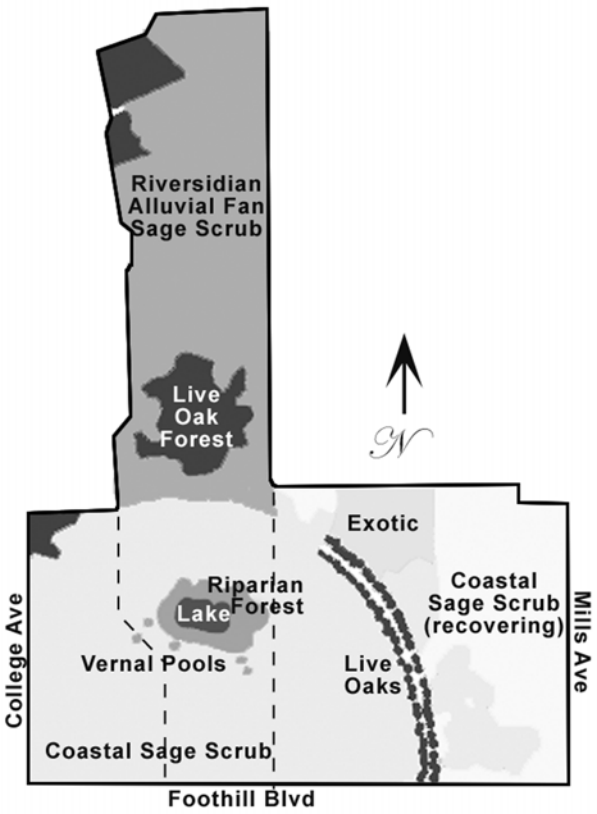
The goats may be a way to simulate the fire process, at least at some level, without risking the potentially catastrophic results of a large-scale fire. True, the smoke generated by fire will be missing; smoke that is known to trigger germination in some fire-following plants. It will be interesting to see what grows after the winter rains. We need to determine positive methods for reducing wildfire risk while keeping what remains of our native ecosystems, especially in heavily urbanized regions where "controlled" burns are just not going to happen. The BFS land has not had a significant fire or clearing in many decades. I was reminded of this clearly as embers landed on the Station during the Padua fire. With more of the nearby wildland disappearing monthly, if the BFS burned, where exactly would its wildlife go? Where else would there be sources for the seeds of the rare plants it currently supports? What would be the future for the BFS if a blaze spread outside our fence? We hope goats will be one useful tool for addressing these issues.

Teachers: to arrange a visit, call Stephen Dreher at 624-6661 or fill out a use form online.

"A tour of the property readily convinces visitors of the importance of keeping such a beautiful expanse of land, shrubs, and trees for scientific purposes."

Robert J. Bernard in "An Unfinished Dream" pg 708

If you would like to be put on the snail-mail or email list, please send a note to bfsfriends@earthlink.net



Now owned by KGI | protected for 50 yrs | ------ not protected ------

Useful addresses

City of Claremont: P.O. Box 880, Claremont, CA 91711
www.ci.claremont.ca.us

Claremont Colleges: www.claremont.edu

The Claremont Courier: 111 S. College Ave, Claremont CA 91711
Phone: 621-4761

The LA Times: Inland Valley Edition, 5555 Ontario Mills Parkway, Ontario CA 91764

Inland Valley Daily Bulletin: 2041 E. Fourth St, Ontario CA 91761

How big is big enough?

A field station is land left in its natural state for use in the study of complex interactions between plants and animals. The usefulness of such natural laboratories depends on size and shape. Extinctions occur frequently in small areas, due to smaller populations. The current 85 acres is just large enough to maintain reasonable stability in the existing ecosystems. Narrow shapes increase the amount of pollution by noise, air, water, and pesticides from surrounding areas, and increase the chances of competition from exotic (non-native) species.

Who uses it?

The BFS is used by Claremont Colleges faculty and hundreds of students every year, as well as by many schoolchildren from Claremont and the surrounding areas. It has also been used by college classes from as far away as Long Beach, by scout troops, and by members of the public.

What's there?

There are over 30 acres of the fast-disappearing coastal sage scrub community with a number of Species of Special Concern. ***Since much of Claremont was originally covered with coastal sage scrub, it is a fascinating window into our past.***

There is a stand of oak woodland in the north where water wells up along an earthquake fault, there is annual grassland slowly returning to coastal sage scrub in the east, and there is a one-acre, man-made lake excavated in 1978 which is a sanctuary for western pond turtles displaced by development.

"Dedicated to Education and the Environment"