



THE VALLEY OAK

Cosumnes River Preserve's Quarterly Volunteer Newsletter



MEET THE NEW VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Hi All, I want to start off by telling you how delighted I am to be working at such an amazing place. I am Madeline (Maddy) Hill, the new volunteer and outreach coordinator for the Cosumnes River Preserve. A little about me; I grew up on the delta, in a small town northwest of the preserve. I, like many of you, have spent many hours volunteering. Giving back to the place where you feel at home. Some of the various volunteer opportunities that I have been able to take part in have been with groups such as: Project Ride, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Youth Soccer League, and my favorite, the habitat and restoration team here at the preserve. Volunteering is an extraordinary experience that provides the opportunity to feel like you made a difference in the places you love.

In 2020, I graduated from Sacramento State with my degree in Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration. While going to school, I worked for California State Parks, where I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to travel around California providing interpretive outreach, to various people of all ages. Towards the end of my time with CA state parks, I had the opportunity to work with the strategic planning division, designing the interpretive section for the Red Rock Canyon General Plan. In 2021, I decided to move temporarily to Washington State, where I worked for Washington State Parks. After making the move back from the rainy state of Washington, I got the opportunity to work with all of you. I am beyond excited to learn about the preserve and be a part of this amazing place we call home. I will end this with one of my favorite quotes by Leigh Hunt; "Colors are the smiles of nature".

THE SPRING EDITION

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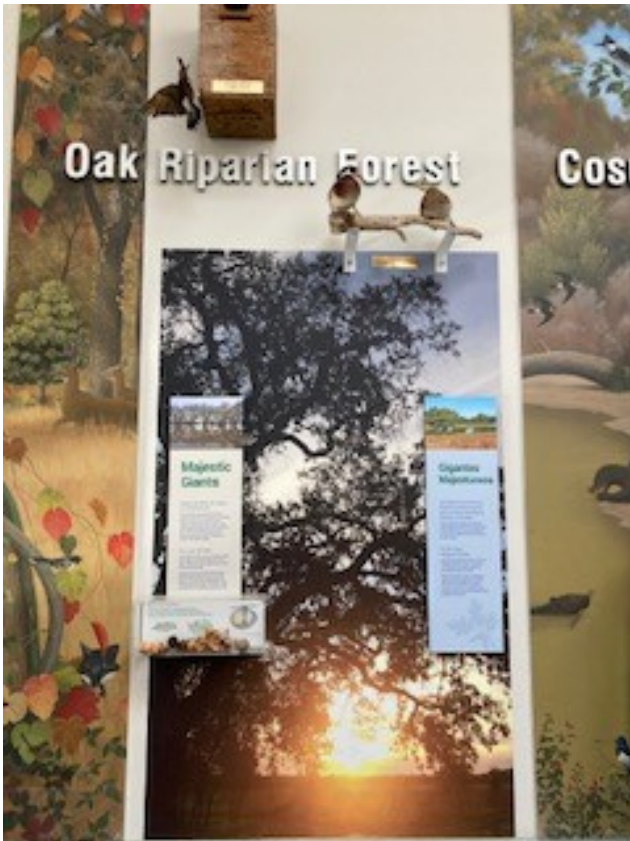
PRESERVE UPDATES

The Rice Barn has been demolished

The rice barn was taken down earlier this month. "The rice barn was damaged beyond repair by previous storm events. Some of you may have noticed the 500 - 600 square foot hole in the middle of the rice barn. I recommended to the field office manager that it be flattened in place under controlled circumstances prior to it collapsing unexpectedly. It was a safety hazard waiting to happen", Mark Ackerman said. But, there is good news; they have begun to rebuild the rice barn and we are hopeful that it will be completed by the end of May!



Rice Barn 2021



Inside the Visitor Center

The Visitor Center has reopened!

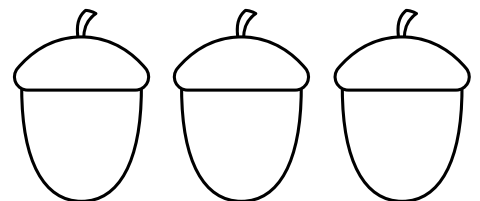
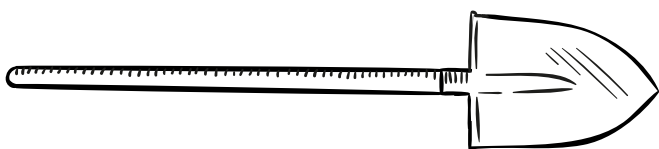
After two long years with our visitor center closed, we have made the decision to open it back up! "I am so excited to be able to open up a piece of this preserve to the public. Being able to educate visitors about the preserve is so important to the well-being of what we do to protect the places we love." Madeline Hill

The Visitor Center will be opened on weekdays and we will begin to open up the visitor center on the weekends as volunteers sign up!

The Castello Creek Restoration Project

About a year before COVID changed our lives, Alex and Mario, both staff at the Cosumnes River Preserve, were working on restoring a piece of property that was owned by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. After months of communication the two decided to break ground and restore Castello Creek. This section of the preserve had virtually no vegetation or what was there was not native. With a group of volunteer and acorns in hand they planted a large number of acorns and tree cuttings. A couple months had went by and the team noticed that the first planting was not successful due to the lack of rain. But, they were determined to try again and started the second trial in February of 2022. This planting workday went a little bit differently, not only were they planting acorns and companion native plant seeds, they were trying a new technique that Alex saw on YouTube of a farmer somewhere in Latin America. This new idea only needed one thing; a recycled 1-gallon plastic water bottle. On the morning of the plant day, a school group from Galt came out for the fun. Not only did they get to learn about STEM Projects but they also got to experience what goes into a habitat restoration project. The students were instructed on how to plant the acorns and other seeds as well as how to deploy tree protectors and water bottles.

Now you're probably wondering how the water bottle plays into all of this. The bottles act as constant water source for the acorns. They also help to reduce costs for added materials such as irrigation lines. They also reduce soil disturbance and most importantly it is conserving water! Also don't worry, in about a year the bottles will be removed and recycled for another project. Let's talk about how this whole process works; first you want to plant your acorn and companion native plant seeds; the acorn should be planted with $\frac{1}{4}$ of the acorn exposed. Your next step is to prepare the water bottle. You make a small hole into the bottom of the bottle, the size of a needle, and then use a pen to indicate what side of the bottom you made the hole. This is to indicate what side the bottle needs to be facing the acorn. The next step is to "plant" the bottle into the ground, roughly about 2- 3 inches, depending on how hard the soil is. You then fill the water bottle as needed and put the cap back on. You can loosen and tighten the cap to control how fast the water drips out. After everything has been planted, the last step is to add the tree protector to the acorn; not only will the tree protector act as a greenhouse for the acorn, but it will also help protect it from wildlife. Once the tree has outgrown the tree protector, it will be removed and recycled for another project. CRP staff currently are already seeing results; the acorns and native plants have sprouted and the oak seedlings are roughly 8 inches tall, which means their roots are now approximately 2-3 feet deep already! Soon the habitat restoration team will be adding mulch around the tree to add an extra barrier to hold moisture. This technique is being tested on about 50% of the planted tree's and is already having great success. These beautiful trees will be around for generation after generation all because of a YouTube and the farmer from Latin America. As this restoration project continues, we will provide you with updates.



A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

Raptors here, raptors there, raptors everywhere!

The raptor survey team is on the hunt! There are 23 active volunteers taking on 7 routes at the Cosumnes River Preserve. The Raptor Survey team goes out every two weeks, volunteering for multiple hours, counting various raptors that they spot. On May 11 they counted 269 raptors with a majority of them being Swainson's and Red-tail hawks. Other Hawks that have been spotted include American Kestrels, Red-Shouldered Hawks, Northern Harriers and Osprey. According to Bruce Miller, the lead, there have been 734 birds of prey spotted on the last three surveys!



We have had some visitors in our wood duck boxes this year!



Our wood duck box monitoring team has had some very peculiar friends nesting this year! In May, at Orr West, two of our experienced volunteers were out checking wood duck boxes and came across this Western Screech Owl! She had four eggs in the nest and two of them had hatched. On the other side of the preserve, staff member Amber was out checking wood duck boxes and came across this beautiful American Kestrel! She was incubating on two unhatched eggs; hopefully we will have babies soon!



Photo by Amber Veselka

The Cosumnes River Preserve Loves Our Volunteers

What a volunteer means to us...

Volunteers mean a lot to me, Alex said. I have always considered volunteers to be very special people! They give their knowledge and time to the preserve. If they were orphans, I would adopt them! -Alex Cabrera

A CRP Volunteer is one of the people that keeps this place going. They are essential for habitat and public use! -Sara Sweet

Volunteerism, specifically at CRP, means utilizing the collective capabilities, skill-sets, and passions of a group of individuals from varying backgrounds to accomplish a multitude of tasks and goals throughout the preserve. And when these goals are carried out and accomplished, hopefully instilling a deep connection between the volunteers and the land, they are helping to manage and conserve. - Clint Helms

The Cosumnes River Preserve wouldn't be what it is today without the support of Volunteers. These dedicated volunteers are the backbone of the Preserve. Staff at the Preserve is limited so we rely on volunteers to assist in a variety of projects that help to maintain the landscape and provide valuable scientific data. - Amber Veselka

The volunteers are the bread and butter at the preserve. Their time is so valuable and I am so amazed with all the work they accomplish. -Mark Ackerman

The Volunteers at the preserve are all stars, sharing their time and knowledge to help make this place flourish! The volunteers are the backbone, providing a sense of community and family! - Madeline Hill

The Preserve Staff wants to thank its volunteers! Without amazing, talented, dedicated hardworking individuals like YOU, our preserve wouldn't be what it is today. Thank you for always showing up, prepared and ready to work!



WHO IS AROUND



American Robin- Jim Dunn



Spotted Towhee- Sam Davidson



Oak Titmouse- Sam Davidson

Songbird Fun Fact:
Songbirds have a local dialect!

Did you hear that?

Lalala, ok so maybe I don't sound as good as a songbird, but when you visit the preserve your ears will capture the real sounds of spring. Songbirds are all very unique sizes, shapes and colors, but what they offer is nothing but magical. A little about these stunning birds; a songbird has a specialized voice box called a syrinx, which produces complex sounds. True songbirds go through training, by listening to tutors and memorizing the tunes until they have mastered the pitch, rhythm, and structure of an adult songbird!



SPRING IS IN THE AIR



Purple Sage



Blue-Eyed Grass

Why are native plant gardens important?

The importance of our native plant gardens is to provide food and shelter for wildlife. Native plants often attract birds, butterflies, and pollinators! This will promote healthy diversity in our ecosystem!



Hummingbird Sage

INTERESTED IN SHARING YOUR PICTURES IN THE VALLEY OAK NEWSLETTER?

Email hillma@saccounty.gov with a submission of your art.

CANOEMOBILE



The Canoemobile Came Back

After two long years of not having our largest educational and outreach program, we were able to bring it back. Over 11 consecutive days, 700 youth, 9 schools, and 30 classes were able to experience the Cosumnes River Preserve. The Preserve partnered with Wilderness Inquiry, who brought 10-person Voyager canoes and took the students out on the water. We also had four land-based stations that were staffed by our amazing volunteers. We offered an orienteering course, invertebrate/aquatic table, fly fishing/casting, and a guided nature walk. Thank you to everyone who participated and to all of our fantastic volunteers and staff! We could not have done it without you!

UPCOMING SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES

For all activities visit our website to reserve a spot:
www.cosumnes.org

May

- 21 Guided Photography Walk
- 21 Guided Paddle
- 28 *Special* Guided Photography Walk to Oak Savannah

June

- 4 Guided Walk: Natural and Cultural History
- 18 Tall Forest Bird Survey
- 18 Guided Paddle
- 18 Guided Photography Walk

July

- 2 Guided Walk: Natural and Cultural History
- 16 Tall Forest Bird Survey
- 16 Guided Paddle
- 16 Guided Photography Walk

August

- 6 Guided Walk: Natural and Cultural History
- 20 Tall Forest Bird Survey
- 20 Guided Paddle
- 20 Guided Photography Walk

