
NEWSLETTER

Working for a safe, sustainable and natural environment

Bad Plants and Very Bad Plants

Everybody hates broom. Well, almost everybody. What's not to hate? The stuff spreads like mad on sunny slopes and meadows, takes over habitat that other vegetation covets, makes people sneeze, ignites easily, and burns really, really well.

So, why are some folks, who are responsible for managing many acres of public lands in the East Bay hills, so adamant about promoting landscape transformation projects that results in the proliferation of French and Scotch broom, and their equally hated plant brethren, hemlock and thistle as well as dense, highly flammable brush?

Yes, it's true. Some folks are so adamant about removing trees they don't like, that they are willing to accept *whatever* landscape will result from the removal of said trees and the canopy they provide. They won't admit that this is what they are doing, but in fact that is exactly what's happening.

The standard storyline is that if you cut down the trees you don't like, trees that you do like will take their place. When asked how this will happen, given that the projects currently under discussion for these hills pay *only* for *removal* of "bad" tree species, and include no funding for planting "good" tree and plant species, the answers go something like this:

"Well, you see, the birds and squirrels will transport the seeds from the good trees to the

areas where the bad trees were, and we will have nothing but good trees."

If one asks the obvious question, "How will the birds and squirrels know that they should transport only seeds from good trees?" the answer is usually not so clear. The answer we have heard is, "It just happens."

Then there's the storyline that relates good trees to the spreading of two feet of wood chips on the ground. That one claims that, after cutting down the bad trees, chipping them and spreading the chips over the ground, the even worse species will be prevented from appearing just long enough for the good species to spring up and thrive. The chips will apparently not only prevent bad species from growing; they will somehow encourage good species to grow.

Not only does this not make any sense; it just hasn't worked out that way.

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In fact, what has happened is that, where the bad trees have been cut and their chipped remains spread in a thick blanket over the soil, the species that have done the best are the very species that everyone agrees are the least desirable. Yes, areas where bad trees were cut down have become ideal habitat for broom, hemlock, and thistle.

Last summer, UC was caught applying herbicide to the hemlock that had taken over the area where some really bad trees had been recently cut. Of course this was done with no notice and



Chips have not prevented the growth of undesirable vegetation.

conditions that ensure the rapid and uncontrolled growth of bad species that are easier to ignite and are more flammable than the trees that were removed.

HCN has been and will continue to be resolute in demanding honesty of purpose in vegetation management programs that use taxpayer funds intended for fire risk mitigation. To hijack these scarce funds for projects that are little more than thinly disguised landscape transformation projects is unacceptable.



UC applying pesticides in an attempt to control hemlock in Claremont Canyon, July 2010.

no pesticide warnings, because to do otherwise would have been a tacit acknowledgement that the two feet of chips approach had not prevented bad vegetation from taking hold. So, what's going on here? If the objective is to reduce fire danger by eliminating bad species, why would one create ideal conditions for the proliferation of highly flammable brush? Why indeed? As these photos show, the removal of canopy, even canopy provided by bad species, results in



Self-congratulatory sign overrun by flammable brush.

Celebrating Trees

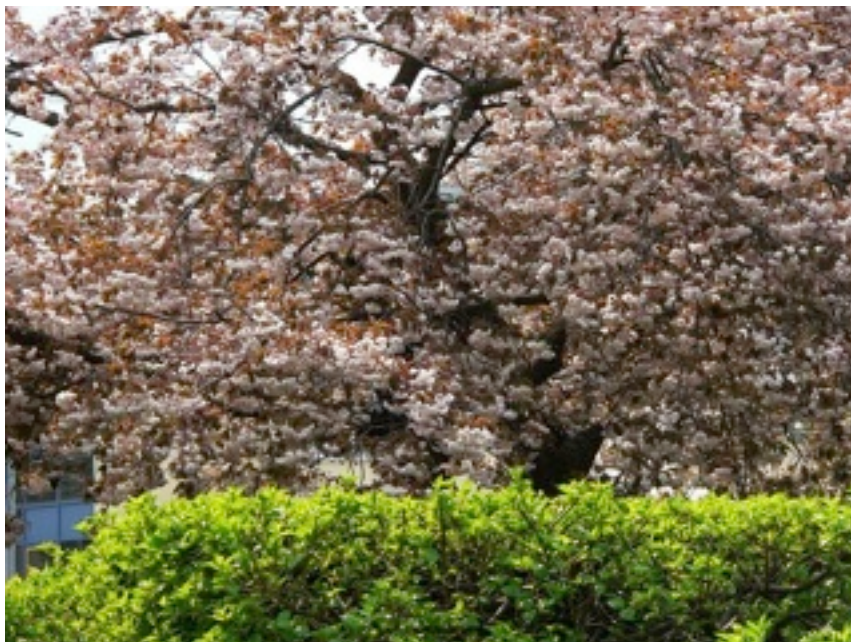
Loveliest of trees, the cherry now

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

--**A.E. Housman** (1859-1936)



Top and lower photos: Japanese cherry trees (credit: Edition Handdruck). Middle photo: cherry blossoms (credit: J. Hovland).



Plum trees blooming in Strawberry Canyon, from the Save Strawberry Canyon website (credit: Phila Rogers).

Save Strawberry Canyon Invites Friends to Evenings Opposite the Golden Gate

This is a rare opportunity to learn about the early history of Strawberry Canyon and the biology of Strawberry Canyon's watershed.

Friends of Save Strawberry Canyon are invited to three outdoor presentations by local authors on successive Thursdays at UC Botanical Garden's Amphitheater in the Mather Redwood Grove.

- May 12th, Malcolm Margolin, author of *The Ohlone Way* and publisher of Heyday Books, "The Native Way Along the Canyon Creeks."
- May 19th, Christopher Richard, curator of aquatic biology at the Oakland Museum and editor of *Guide to East Bay Creeks*, "The Strawberry Creek Watershed Phenomenon."
- May 26th, Gray Brechin, historical geographer and author of *Imperial San Francisco*, "An Amphitheater for the Damming: Strawberry Canyon in the 20s and 30s."

The presentations will take place from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. The suggested donation is \$20.00 per person for each presentation (students, \$10.00). Please make checks payable to Save Strawberry Canyon.

If you plan to attend, RSVP by emailing savestrawberrycanyon@gmail.com, or call 510 652-2255.

To find out more about Strawberry Canyon and Save Strawberry Canyon's efforts to preserve its beauty, go to:

<http://www.savestrawberrycanyon.org/>

Native Americans at Glen Cove Ask for Your Support

Local Native American communities are protesting the desecration of their ancestors' sacred sites at Glen Cove. Vallejo wants to create a public park with restroom facilities, a parking lot, picnic tables and a paved trail on known shellmound/burial areas. The planned development includes cutting down trees and applying herbicides to prevent their regrowth.

Elders in the Native American community say that all life is sacred and must be valued, not exterminated.

You can find out more about the Glen Cove occupation at [http://protectglencove.org/about/Supporters of the Native American community](http://protectglencove.org/about/Supporters%20of%20the%20Native%20American%20community) are asked to help by writing letters. See: <http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2011/04/24/18677948.php>

EBRPD Reports Pesticide Use

EAST BAY REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT

Table 5: 5-Year Comparative Use Levels for Park Pest Management Activities

YEARS	ROUNDUP (GAL)	SURFLAN (GAL)	BANVEL (GAL)	CASORON (LBS)	GARLON (GAL)	DIPHACINONE/ (LBS)
2005	83	57	4	0	16	985
2006	56	41	5	0	23	1045
2007	73	41	2	20	38	1071
2008	104	48	5	0	34	1509
2009	106	36	3.5	8	18	1696

2005 through 2009

- Roundup average use increased by 25%
- Surflan average use decreased by 19%
- Banvel average use decreased by 10%
- Casoron average use increased by 43%
- Garlon average use decreased by 30%
- Chlorophacinone/diphacinone average use increased by 40%
- 5 year park acreage 9% (89,500 acres to >98,500 acres)

This table is from EBRPD’s “Draft of the 2009 Annual Analysis of Pesticide Use.” It reports information that Nancy Brownfield, EBRPD’s IPM specialist, recently submitted to EBRPD. The table (Table 5 in the Report) shows EBRPD’s use of pesticides from 2005 through 2009. Figures are not yet available for 2010.

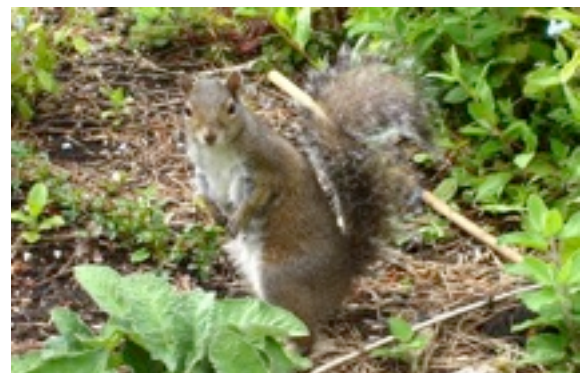
Garlon use may have decreased because fewer trees were cut in 2009 than in earlier years. (Garlon is painted on stumps of non-native trees to prevent them from resprouting.)

The increase in the use of Roundup and diphacinone (a rodenticide) is disturbing.

Roundup is used primarily to kill weeds. Glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup, is acutely toxic to fish, birds and insects. It is the most common cause of pesticide illness in landscape and agricultural workers in California.

EBRPD uses diphacinone to kill ground squirrels, rats and gophers. EBRPD says squirrels must be killed because they gnaw on cables and make holes (burrows) in the ground.

Diphacinone is an anti-coagulant that sickens and may kill nontarget animals such as dogs that ingest it. It may kill raptors such as owls and hawks that prey on rodents and other creatures in the food chain. When rats and squirrels eat diphacinone, they die slowly, which gives raptors an opportunity to catch and eat them. And so the chain of death continues.



Ground squirrel (credit: J. Hovland).

The report states that non-chemical means are used to control rodents and other pests over a majority of Park District land.

—Madeline Hovland

Environmental News

Bees Are Back

Honey bees, those hard-working non-natives so important for pollinating crops, are rebounding from the low numbers they have had for the past seven years. Nobody knows exactly why, but the unusual amount of rain this past winter may have helped the bees cope with “colony collapse disorder,” the deadly disease that wiped out thousands of bee colonies.

Beekeepers take some credit for the improvement. They are using new methods--like removing hives before farmers spray insecticides. See: <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2011/04/11/MN971IRGIA.DTL>

More Monarchs Migrate

Last year the bad news about monarchs was that the number migrating from Canada and the United States to Mexico was down 75 percent from previous years. This year there’s good news: the number of migrating monarchs has doubled. It’s still lower than average, and a cause for concern, but scientists are encouraged by the trend towards recovery.

Climate change and deforestation may be causing the long-term decline in monarch butterflies. See: http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20110214/ap_on_re_la_am_ca/lt_mexico_monarch_butterflies

Is Earth on the Brink of Its Sixth Mass Extinction?

UC Berkeley scientists reported in the Journal *Nature* that endangered species are disappearing at an unprecedented rate. Fossil records show that there have been five mass extinctions over the past 540 million years. In each mass extinction, great numbers of species vanished within a few million years. Now, because of global warming, the rate of extinctions is far above normal. Scientists have different opinions about what--if anything--humans could do to slow the extinction rate. See: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/05/science/earth/05climate.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=Multitude%20of%20species%20Face%20Threat

SOD Attacks Presidio Tree

Sudden oak death has infected a coast live oak in the Presidio. Although it is rampant in the forests and wildlands of 14 California counties, including Mill Valley, Big Sur, and Jack London State Park, SOD has rarely been seen in San Francisco. It is only the second time that it has been implicated in the death of a San Francisco coast live oak.

According to Matteo Garbelotto, head of UC Berkeley’s Forest Pathology and Mycology Laboratory, the source of contagion is most likely an infected California bay laurel or a rhododendron. Both species are known to carry the disease without showing signs of it. See: <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2011/03/30/BAG11ILPL5.DTL>

The following article was submitted by a neighbor who is a resident of Evergreen Lane.

Changes in Our Garber Park Neighborhood

I have been thinking about our Garber Park neighborhood and how it has changed over the past 25 years that we have lived here on Evergreen Lane. I have been thinking how habitat has altered since 1986 and how the overstory of greenery has declined.

In 1986, Evergreen Lane was truly evergreen. In September of 1987, I recall that our neighbor, Mr. Garfield, a professor at Cal, described it as a "magic street."

At that time the street looked like a green tunnel, with big trees on both sides all the way down to Garber Park. A giant eucalyptus tree stood majestically at the intersection of Evergreen and Slater Lane. The air was cool and fresh, invigorating with the moisture of shaded land.

For several years after we moved into our house, deer abounded. There were spots below our home where they rested during the day. When the heat became extreme in late summer, the deer found cool places to sleep under our house. Often, in the fall, we would see male deer butting heads down the hill, while the does hid in the deeper tree growth.

There were raptors perched in the oak trees and hawks flying across the skies. We would see bats fly by the windows at night. And, at certain times of the year, we would hear owls calling to each other in the dark as they waited to spy mice and other small night-time venturers. Every night, we would be greeted by a mother raccoon and three



Young black-tailed deer (credit: Wikipedia Commons).

babies eager to hunt for crumbs that might have dropped from the picnic table on the deck.

Mobs of robins arrived to find berries before they embarked on their migratory journeys. We enjoyed watching the abundance of spiders, tiny orange fellows that would spin their webs on plants in summer, adding dashes of color among the greenery. It was beautiful to watch them spin their slivery architecture; their webs were jewels that reflected the dappled sunlight.

Wild bumble bees built a hive under the house, and yellow jackets would visit us when lunch was outdoors, snatching tiny bits of food from the tablecloth. We had an Alameda Creek water snake living in our garden for several years. In the garden, we also hosted voles and, once in a while, we would spot the woodland pack rat, an intelligent, clean animal.

Now, when we look around us, we see changes everywhere. Nature no longer seems as close as it used to be. When we look down at the arena where the bucks once battled, it is empty. It has been years since those scenes occurred. The path between houses here where we often saw three or four deer ambling down together is seldom used.

We had one doe and a fawn visit last summer under the house, but they stayed for only a day, then disappeared. We spotted one deer resting down the hill this last year.

We know fatalities have occurred due to heavier and faster traffic on Claremont Avenue; that may account for part of the loss. But we suspect that the deer may miss the trees and bushes that have been removed over the years. Careless pruning has opened up much of the green overstory that once existed.

The raccoon population was bothering a neighbor so raccoon families were trapped and taken away as nuisances. Few have been our way since that time. This last year I counted only four or five cobwebs in the garden. The bumble bees have disappeared, as have the yellow jackets. Wild bees' nests were destroyed by people who believe that bees' nests house "dangerous pests." Someone used a shovel to kill the water snake. Its body was left to rot in the sun.

The robin activity was much lower this year. Perhaps they miss the berries; many of the berry bushes have been removed because they are said to be invasive; they are "not the right kind," except that the robins really liked them.

We read that rat poison is spread in parks and lands owned by our water company to discourage rodents. The poison moves up the food chain to destroy other species. We have never used pesticides or any other materials that would harm the abundant life that the park and the overhanging trees on Evergreen Lane once supported. Yet, the majority of the wildlife described above has disappeared.

Granted, the 1991 fire (which thankfully did not reach Evergreen Lane or go into Garber Park) and construction in surrounding areas have occurred in the intervening years since we have taken up residence here.

But the raptors are leaving us; a few hawks roam the area but lately I have seen or heard only one. Now, with more eucalyptus trees removed, the evening dance of the bats has also disappeared. We have no idea why so many animals, birds, and insects have left us. Something in the environment has removed what they needed. We don't know what it is.

We know we miss the spontaneous and vibrant natural environment that greeted us here in 1986. Now we are scrubbed and clean. The bothersome species have been banished.

We miss the cool, scented evenings filled with moist, clean air. Dust is much more a part of our life now, seeping into our house through any crack or cranny, making us think twice before we throw open the sliders for fresh(?) air.

With all respect to those who have come to restore Garber Park to its "native" beginnings and have worked hard to remove built up debris, we can't help but long for that time when venturing into the Park was a near wilderness experience with dark, cool overhead coverings and the unexpected rush of an animal disturbed in its quiet retreat from the heat.

I understand that the work that is going on in Garber Park is well intended . . . I also feel the magic slipping away.

—Diana

In *The New York Times*, “Mother Nature’s Melting Pot”

Hugh Raffles, an anthropology professor at New York city’s New School, and the author of *Insectopedia*, wrote “Mother Nature’s Melting Pot,” an essay that appeared on the op ed page of the Sunday *New York Times*, April 3, 2011.

In his article Professor Raffles defends non-native plants. He compares them to human immigrants, who “arrive unannounced . . . and proceed to remake each other and their surroundings.” He reminds us that the anti-immigrant movement in the United States has its corollary in the fear that waves of non-native species of plants and animals will take over our land. Non-natives of all species are labeled as “aliens,” as interlopers, even though many of them have environmental or economic benefits.

Professor Raffles provides several examples of non-natives that benefit the environment and our lives; he notes that eucalyptus, for instance, is vilified as a non-native; yet it is a source of winter nectar for honeybees and monarch butterflies.

Professor Raffles’ article about attitudes towards immigrants is timely; he became a U.S. citizen just last month. He recalls that the judge presiding at his citizenship ceremony emphasized the value of diversity that immigrants bring to our nation. That diversity, Professor Raffles writes, applies also to non-native plants and animals.

To read the entire article, Google: Mother Nature’s Melting Pot.

A bee of unknown ancestry enjoys a Presidio poppy (NPS photo).

In *Nature Conservancy* magazine, Chief Ecologist Kareiva says, “Nature must be managed for people.”

The lead article in the spring issue of the magazine *Nature Conservancy* features the views of Peter Kareiva, chief scientist at the Nature Conservancy. Regarded as a dissident by many NC members, Kareiva believes that “the days of pristine wilderness are gone,” and that protecting nature from humans is a losing game. Nature, he says, should be managed for human benefit. To read this important article online, see: <http://www.nature.org/newsfeatures/magazine/beyond-man-vs-nature.xml>

How Might Kareiva View Spending NPS \$ to Destroy “Bad” Poppies?

The Presidio Trust, which strives to protect the “genetic integrity” of the Presidio’s native plants, wants to rid the Presidio of California golden poppies that are orange. Golden poppies are the state flower, native to California, but that’s not native enough for the Presidio. To qualify as poppies that can live at the Presidio, poppies must be small, yellow poppies native only to the Presidio.

How does protecting one native poppy species from another native poppy species benefit humans?



Fire Hazard Increases with Increase in Shrublands

This sounds like old news, but it is important information that is still being ignored.

In 2001, the California Wildfire Conference met to discuss vegetation changes in the wildlands that might increase (or decrease) the risk of fire in the San Francisco Bay area.

Various vegetation species were sampled on seven sites (most of them in East Bay Regional parks) to measure changes over the 10 years after the 1991 Oakland-Berkeley fire. Aerial photographs were also used to come up with the report's findings.

Fire spread simulations were conducted using a tool called FARSITE that measures average rate of spread, flame length and fire line intensity for each vegetation type.

This is what the study found:

- **There was a significant increase in biomass (woody fuel) due to conversion of grassland to shrubland.**
- Higher flame lengths were associated with shrublands over all other vegetation types.
- The dominant vegetation type in the sampled areas is a mixed evergreen forest of fir and native trees such as oaks, buckeyes, big leaf maples, and, in a few places, redwoods.
- Stands of Monterey pine and eucalyptus exist in scattered areas where they were introduced at various times in the past.

To summarize the report's conclusions:

- In EBRPD parks, **grassland and trees decreased while shrub cover increased.**

- **Monterey pine and eucalyptus decreased while oak woodland (mostly grassland with scattered oaks) increased.**

According to FARSITE measurements, the greatest average flame lengths and fire line intensity occurred in shrub dominated sites. (Note: **The majority of these highly flammable shrubs—which were found to be more flammable than grasslands, pines, or eucs--are native chaparral species such as manzanitas and coyote brush.**)

When trees are removed, shade canopy disappears and shrublands/brush thrive. **Shrublands in this area are broom, primarily native coyote brush (also called chaparral broom) and non-native French broom.**

The report concludes that this change in vegetation types “indicates a greater possibility of fire being spread into adjacent forested areas and residential communities.”

We wonder: If the number of eucs and pines was decreasing in 2001 (and most probably still is in decline), why are EBRPD and UC so determined to eradicate eucs and pines, even though shrublands are increasing and are the most flammable vegetation in this area?

We know of no study of vegetation and fire hazard published since 2001. See: McBride, Joe and Russell, William, “Vegetation Change and Fire Hazard in the San Francisco Bay Area Open Spaces,” pp. 27-37, in Proceedings of the California's 2001 Wildfire Conference: 10 Years After the 1991 East Bay Hills Fire. This document can be found at UC Berkeley's Bioscience and Natural Resources Library.

Learning about Earthquakes from My Daughter in New Zealand

In September of 2010, New Zealand had a 7.1 magnitude earthquake, followed by a more destructive quake of 6.3 magnitude, also in the Canterbury region, but close to the center of Christchurch, on February 22, 2011.



One of many damaged homes in Christchurch.

My youngest daughter, Lisa, experienced both earthquakes and sent me emails and photos about them. I am writing this article because what I learned, especially about the 6.3 quake from Lisa, may help (or interest) others.

Lisa had married Mark, a New Zealander, when she was only 19. They raised two children in a suburban community across from Lyttleton Harbor. It looks a bit like Sausalito but is more rural and picturesque. They later bought a home in Christchurch.

The terrible 9.0 Japan earthquake and tsunami of March 11 have dominated the news. However, **it is the Christchurch earthquake that is similar to earthquakes we may experience along the San Andreas or Hayward faults.**

The New Zealand quakes were strike-slip events, whereas the Japanese quake was a

subduction event that occurred almost 20 miles undersea. **Both the Hayward and the San Andreas are strike-slip faults.** The motion of earthquakes on strike-slip faults is horizontal, with two plates on the earth's surface moving parallel to each other. With a subduction fault, one plate is thrust under another plate. The closest subduction fault to us is the Cascadia fault that goes from Vancouver Island to northern California. A quake on the Cascadia fault would be huge, but not likely to affect us in a major way unless it triggers a quake on the San Andreas fault.

Strike-slip quakes tend to be not as strong as subduction quakes. However, the 6.3 quake devastated Christchurch and caused 184 fatalities. More than 2000 people were treated for minor injuries, with more than 200 treated for major injuries. Because it bears repeating, although quake effects are unpredictable, and every quake is different, our big earthquake may resemble the Christchurch earthquake.

Approximately 90% of our planet's earthquakes occur in an area called the Pacific Ring of Fire. The Ring of Fire stretches from New Zealand to Japan, catches a piece of Russia, moves over to the Aleutians, Alaska, then southward including all of the west coast of North America, Central America, and almost to the tip of South America. The Ring encompasses many named faults, including San Andreas which is local to our neighborhood. <http://engwell.wikispaces.com/RING+OF+FIRE+MAP>

Perched on the border of two continental plates, New Zealand's position in the Pacific Ring of Fire provides the country much of its astonishing natural beauty. Its mountains,

volcanoes and geothermal springs are all the product of intense tectonic activity. But geological beauty is a double-edged sword.

Getting back to my daughter's experiences, Lisa completed her nursing degree after she and Mark moved to New Zealand. Mark, with a degree in geology, built a consulting business, currently including the City of Christchurch as a customer.

The 7.1 earthquake did little damage to their home in Christchurch, although chimneys fell from many of their neighbors' homes. Wall cracking was repairable. The 7.1 earthquake was a mild preview to the 6.3 quake that happened six months later.

Lisa described the 6.3 earthquake as very loud and lasting for a few minutes. The earthquake extensively damaged the city center, which is still quarantined and guarded.

Technically, any new structure built in New Zealand has to be able to withstand intense quakes, but footage has shown that, although older buildings in Christchurch seem to have been hit hardest, plenty of newer ones that should have been able to survive a 6.3 quake were damaged by "liquefaction," with the soil changing into liquid under structures.

Liquefaction produced local flooding, along with odd eruptions of underground clay-like fines. In some cases, mud erupting from underground was knee-deep and blocked roads. Road surfaces cracked and rose up. Debris falling from buildings crushed cars and buses. Collapsing buildings buried some people downtown.

A very large number of businesses simply stopped, so many families suddenly had no income. With a loss of power, almost all food

markets shut down. Residents had to spend time locating food sources. The quake broke



Roads were damaged in unpredictable ways.

significant parts of the sanitary sewer system. Many residents resorted to their back yards for a toilet. Gradually the government brought in



Liquefaction conceals a ruptured sewer line.

portable toilets, and later imported many from other countries. Some communities still lack sewer function; in those places, a group of families now may share one portable toilet.

In Lisa's neighborhood, power, gas, and water were restored soon after the quake hit, but water required boiling. Liquefaction was widespread. The lower floor of the hospital where Lisa worked was flooded and unusable, so all activity moved to the second floor. Structural damage and liquefaction closed many schools, so the remaining schools now run double sessions—6 a.m. to 12:00, and from 12 to 6 p.m. Demolition still continues on a daily basis.

Liquefaction caused many homes, which otherwise suffered negligible structural damage, to settle out of level. Portions of roads simply receded away.



These railway tracks show how the land was displaced.

Initially, Lisa's 20 minute commute to the hospital took 2-3 hours. Students were organized; they brought shovels, and cleared many intersections. With the restoration of power to traffic signals, Lisa's commute gradually normalized.

The 2011 quake reconstruction put both Lisa and Mark on overtime. Their Christchurch house suffered minor damage, and is only slightly out of level. But they consider themselves lucky to be employed, doing useful work when so many others no longer have a job or any income.

Those of us who lost a home as I did in the 1991 Oakland-Berkeley fire can empathize with how the residents of Christchurch must have felt after their earthquake.

We must ask ourselves if we are prepared for a major earthquake like the one that happened in Christchurch.

An important way to prepare for an earthquake is to get to know your neighbors. Know who might need help. Find out how to help yourself and others by taking a first aid class or CORE training. Keep an emergency bag or kit that you can grab and take with you. When the shaking starts, or you feel that first sharp jolt, get under a table if you can, and hold on to it. Protect your head!

In our neighborhood, homes rebuilt after the fire have especially ridged foundations: steel reinforced concrete on grade beams anchored into the earth. It is important for everyone to make sure that their house (if it has not been rebuilt) has been seismically upgraded. Steel hold-downs should tie the wooden frame to its foundation. Plywood sheathing is needed to resist a quake's shearing forces. Otherwise, a house may twist off its foundation.

As in Christchurch, liquefaction here is a potential problem (although not so much in our hills) since many neighborhoods in the Bay Area were developed on land that filled in marshes and the Bay. In our hills, earthquakes can trigger landslides on steep and saturated slopes. Houses, gas and power lines may suffer damage, and some roads may crack. Depending on the earthquake's epicenter, there may be more damage in other parts of Oakland than we have here, so we must be ready to help out wherever we are needed.

—Bob Sand

Book Reviews

When the Killing's Done

by T. C. Boyle



This novel spins a tale of environmental adversaries familiar to our community: restorationists who want to eradicate non-native plants and animals versus those who want to save non-native species from extermination.

Both of the main characters are equally obsessive, arrogant and fanatical, although some might argue that the rageful animal rights activist Dave LaJoy is a bit more of an extremist than Alma Takesue, the self-righteous National Park Service biologist. There is nothing admirable or likable in either of them.

Alma is in charge of the killing of rats and feral pigs that have changed the ecology of California's Channel Islands. Dave declares war on her mission. He protests the killing of innocent animals but is as determined as Alma to control nature even when it comes at a terrible human cost.

This is not a novel that is enjoyable or entertaining, but it is well-written and worth reading. No matter which side of the environmental issue you are on, you will find much to think about in this story that contrasts the enduring beauty of natural wilderness against the ugliness of human nature.

Where the Road Begins:

The Saga of Big Sur's Pioneer Families, and Environmentalism in America

by Peter Gray Scott



Peter Scott's recently published book describes the tough lives of the homesteaders in Big Sur, and shows how their dependence on the health of the environment forged a strong community.

When, over half a century, well-meaning outsiders attempted to "protect" or transform the area, the Big Sur community stood firm. Ultimately, credit for preserving the awesome Sur environment goes to those pioneering families who kept large tracts of land intact and undeveloped. But as those clans die out, the coast may again be at risk.

This carefully researched work combines history, geography and biography, and is written in almost poetic style. Many photos were borrowed from family albums that Big Sur residents had kept for more than 200 years.

Scott centers the story on the Post family, the first to homestead in Big Sur. He traces the Post genealogy back to 1634, showing how many generations were significantly involved in American history.

Scott spent many hours interviewing, riding and hiking in Big Sur with Bill Post, and the book has several entertaining excerpts from Bill's father's personal journal.

From an Amazon review: "beautifully written . . . the reader will be surprised by how fascinating PGS's subject really is . . ."

Lucky to Live Here

My wife and I moved to our house on Alvarado Road in the North Hills of Oakland just over 20 years ago. Soon after we had settled in, the 1991 Oakland-Berkeley fire partially destroyed our home. We had to move out for almost a year so our house could be rebuilt.

The possibility of another big fire, especially one driven by the Diablo wind in the fire season, is without doubt a disadvantage to living here. There is also the possibility of an earthquake on the Hayward Fault—and we live only about half a mile from it.

Why would anyone choose to live in such a dangerous place? For us, the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages.

We moved here primarily because we like the trees and other greenery that are everywhere we look. We love the natural setting, but we do our best to maintain defensible space around our house. We have a row of redwoods between Claremont Avenue and our property, but we do not have tall trees planted close to the house. We keep the understory and litter under our trees cleaned up.

With both fire and earthquake a possibility, we know it's important to be prepared. We have tried over the years to take an active role in the community, to know our neighbors, to work for what we think will make this neighborhood safe, and to take part in both emergency communications and CORE training.

CORE means Citizens of Oakland Respond to Emergencies; it is a free training program of preparedness for and response to disaster that

was developed by the Oakland Fire Department. For more information about CORE, see: <http://www2.oaklandnet.com/Government/o/OFD/s/CORE/index.htm>

New CORE training sessions are beginning this spring. If you are interested in knowing how CORE training can help you prepare for the next natural disaster, contact CORE at 238-6351 or core@oakland.net.

We live on the downhill side of a winding road; there is only a steep bank with brush on the other side. The good thing about that is the privacy we enjoy. The bad part of it is that, after several weeks of rain, there are mudslides into the road from the opposite bank. Sometimes rainwater from downspouts draining the hill floods down the road bringing all kinds of debris with it. We have to help with the clean up when Oakland public works doesn't have time to do it.

We love living close to Claremont Canyon, where wildland meets the city. There are all kinds of opportunities here for hiking, biking, bird watching, and just enjoying the beautiful views of the Bay. By the time we moved to Alvarado Road, our children had moved on to have their own lives. Otherwise, the disadvantages of not having sidewalks, a nearby playground, or even a relatively flat backyard for children to play might have been a problem.

We wanted to live in an area where we would not have to travel in a car for 30-40 minutes to be entertained or to have a good meal out. Although we live in the Oakland hills, we live close to the Rockridge BART station, which enables us to get to other parts of Oakland, to Berkeley, to many of the suburbs, and to

San Francisco. BART goes to the San Francisco airport, so from there you can get to anywhere in the world.



The train is now arriving at Rockridge BART station (credit: Thomas Gorman, Oakland North).

Oakland and Berkeley have many fine restaurants. San Francisco at the right time of day is just 20 minutes across the bridge.

We can walk to Berkeley campus to audit or take classes. We can enjoy concerts at the Greek Theater sometimes without even going there—we can hear the music if the wind comes from that direction. There are movie theaters and live theater, as well as dance and music performances within a short drive into Oakland or Berkeley.

There are many fine, local stores where one can shop for food, clothes, and gifts. Within walking distance, giving us almost the feeling of living in a friendly village, we have Star Grocery, Rick & Ann's restaurant, Bridgeway/Coast service station, and the Bread Garden. Oakland has its own wonderful baseball and football teams, and there are always Cal Sports to watch.

This North Hills community has exceptional people living on every block; they are as diverse in background and education as they are in opinions. We moan and complain and argue

about what is best for our neighborhood because we love it. We live in a place that, if it is not the most beautiful and best in the world, comes close enough to it to satisfy us.

That is why we do not want the good things about our community to change. We want to keep the trees that create the spectacular views we are lucky to enjoy. We want to continue to live close to nature, while working together with our neighbors to solve problems and prepare for the bad hands nature can occasionally deal us, as if in exchange for all the beauty it gives us almost every day. That's what living in this North Hills community is all about.

—Jerry Baer



California native poppies. The golden poppy is California's state flower, but California poppies grow mostly in various dark orange and yellow colors, everywhere in gardens and wildlands (credit: J. Hovland).



Grizzly bear, once native, extinct in California since 1924 (NPS photo).



Forget-me-nots, native to New Zealand, in Claremont Canyon.



French broom, native to Mediterranean countries and the Azores, introduced to the Bay area in the 1800s.

Hills Conservation Network

<http://www.hillsconservationnetwork.org>

Concerned Citizen
Oakland/Berkley Hills