

General Meeting:

Tuesday, October 24
San Leandro Main Library
300 Estudillo Ave.



The Splash

Summer 2017

Upcoming Events

- ♦ Creek Cleanups/**Family Creek Walk: Saturdays, August 26 & October 14 9:30 AM-12:30 PM** Root Park **NEW!**
- ♦ General Meeting: October 24 6:30-8:00 PM Main Library
- ♦ Video Contest for kids Ongoing from August 1-October 31 (see insert)

This Issue:

The Chickadee's Guide to Gardening In Your Garden, Choose Plants That Help the Environment

I recently came across the following article that highlights which plants *should* go into our gardens. The author's experiment is not totally scientific, merely a test done by someone (albeit a professor of entomology and wildlife ecology) in his own yard by noting the bird and insect life there. It illustrates a significant point about landscaping with plants that have a *genuine history* where they are planted.

(Continued in next column)

"An American yard dominated by Asian ornamentals does not produce nearly the quantity and diversity of insects needed for birds to reproduce." **Douglas Tallamy**

Natural predators have a history with their prey, a biological *memory* that tells them whether to eat, or not. No one likes insects in their garden, but without them, there will be a shortage of food to support birds and their young. In the end the equation is simple: When we plant natives, birds will get sufficient amounts of food to produce more birds! Hopes are that this article is just another reason to *think native* when visiting your local gardening center.

- Susan

OXFORD, Pa. — I GREW up thinking little of plants. I was interested in snakes and turtles, then insects and, eventually, birds. Now I like plants. But I still like the life they create even more.

Plants are as close to biological miracles as a scientist could dare admit. After all, they allow us, and nearly every other species, to eat sunlight, by creating the nourishment that drives food webs on this planet. As if that weren't enough, plants also produce oxygen, build topsoil and hold it in place, prevent floods, sequester carbon dioxide, buffer extreme weather and clean our water.

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Officers and Board of Directors:

Michael Gregory President; Dave Owen Vice President, Jan Woycheshin Secretary, Melanie Courchaine Treasurer, Claudia Taurean Membership Coordinator, Maureen Forney Member at Large
Susan Levenson, Watershed Awareness Coordinator/Newsletter Editor

Friends of San Leandro Creek is a 105(c)(3) non-profit organization made up of citizens, students, and businesses dedicated to improving community understanding and awareness of San Leandro Creek and its watershed.

Over increasingly large areas of the United States, spring now comes unheralded by the return of the birds, and the early mornings are strangely silent where once they were filled with the beauty of bird song.~ Rachel Carson

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Considering all this, you might think we gardeners would value plants for what they do. Instead, we value them for what they look like.

When we design our home landscapes, too many of us choose beautiful plants from all over the world, without considering their ability to support life within our local ecosystems.

Last summer I did a simple experiment at home to measure just how different the plants we use for landscaping can be in supporting local animals. I compared a young white oak in my yard with one of the Bradford pears in my neighbor's yard. Both trees are the same size, but Bradford pears are ornamentals from Asia, while white oaks are native to eastern America. I walked around each tree and counted the caterpillars on their leaves at head height.

I found 410 caterpillars on the white oak (comprising 19 different species), and only one caterpillar (an inchworm) on the Bradford pear.

Was this a fluke? Hardly. The next day I repeated my survey on a different white oak and Bradford pear. This time I found 233 caterpillars on the white oak (comprising 15 species) and, again, only one on the Bradford pear.

Why such huge differences? It's simple: Plants don't want to be eaten, so they have loaded their tissues with nasty chemicals that would kill most insects if eaten. Insects do eat plants, though, and they achieve this by adapting to the chemical defenses of just one or two plant lineages. So some have evolved to eat oak trees without dying, while others have specialized in native cherries or ashes and so on.

But local insects have only just met Bradford pears, in an evolutionary sense, and have not had the time — millennia — required to adapt to their chemical defenses. And so Bradford pears stand virtually untouched in my neighbor's yard.

In the past, we thought this was a good thing. After all, Asian ornamentals were planted to look pretty, and we certainly didn't want insects eating them. We were happy with our perfect pears, burning bushes, Japanese barberries, porcelain berries, golden rain trees, crape myrtles, privets, bush honeysuckles and all the other foreign ornamentals.

But there are serious ecological consequences to such choices, and another exercise you can do at home makes them clear. This spring, if you live in North America, put up a chickadee nest box in your yard. If you are lucky, a pair of chickadees will move in and raise a family. While they are feeding their young, watch what the chickadees bring to the nest: mostly caterpillars. Both parents take turns

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feeding the chicks, enabling them to bring a caterpillar to the nest once every three minutes. And they do this from 6 a.m. until 8 p.m. for each of the 16 to 18 days it takes the chicks to fledge. That’s a total of 350 to 570 caterpillars every day, depending on how many chicks they have. So, an incredible 6,000 to 9,000 caterpillars are required to make one clutch of chickadees.

And chickadees are tiny birds: just a third of an ounce. What if you wanted to support red-bellied woodpeckers in your yard, a bird that is about eight times heavier than a chickadee? How many caterpillars would that take?

What we plant in our landscapes determines what can live in our landscapes. Controlling what grows in our yards is like playing God. By favoring productive species, we can create life, and by using nonnative plants, we can prevent it.

An American yard dominated by Asian ornamentals does not produce nearly the quantity and diversity of insects needed for birds to reproduce. Some might argue that we should just let those birds breed “in nature.” That worked in the past, but now there simply is not enough “nature” left. And it shows. Many bird species in North America have declined drastically in the past 40 years.

Fortunately, more and more gardeners are realizing that their yards offer one of the most empowering conservation options we have, and are sharing their properties with the nature around them.

By the way, you might assume that my oak was riddled with unsightly caterpillar holes, but not so. Since birds eat most of the caterpillars before they get very large, from 10 feet away the oak looked as perfect as a Bradford pear.

Douglas W. Tallamy, *“Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife With Native Plants.”*



A field rich in goldenrod, Joe-Pye weed, boneset, milkweed, black-eyed Susan, and dozens of other productive perennials supplies copious amounts of insect biomass for birds to rear their young. After it has been invaded by autumn or Russian olive, that same field is nearly sterile.~ Douglas Tallamy,

**SPECIAL
INSERT**

San Leandro Creek Video Contest

Calling all San Leandro area students! Grab your camera, phone or tablet and make a five-minute video that will show **why San Leandro Creek is important.**

Your video can be based on a question you have about the creek, then go about discovering your answer! **Get creative:** Our creek is a wildlife corridor, a source of beauty and a source of fresh water for the SF Bay estuary system. From butterflies to redwoods, we can ask where the Creek starts and where does it reach the bay? How is the creek habitat abused? Is it protected? How big is it, and how many communities does it run through? How does it affect that community? What animals live along it and are there any endangered species? You can talk about climate change and watersheds. Creepy crawling things, native vs. invasive species. You can describe our region's history: Originally it was home to the Jalquins, part of the Ohlone People. In the 1800s, our creek became an historical border: An early Spanish Land Grant north of our creek was given to the Peralta family, and a later Mexican Grant bestowed the southern area to the Estudillos.

Video making hints: Ask for help. See if your class or club wants to join your team. Want to tour an area of the creek? Meet us at Root Park on Saturday, August 26 or October 14 from 9:30 AM- 12:30 PM. (call 1st to reserve your spot 510-577-6069) Find someone who has lived in San Leandro a long time and interview them. Use Wikipedia online, and books like "A Garden Grows in Eden" by Harry Shaffer, "The Ohlone Way" by Malcom Margolin, "The Water King" by Sherwood Burgess, and "Images of America, San Leandro" by Cynthia Simons. These are great sources to answer your burning question!

Prizes:

Three to five videos will be chosen for prizes. Prizes include: \$ 100.00 for 1st place, \$ 75.00 for 2nd place, \$50.00 for 3rd place and possibly 2 additional \$25.00 winners. All winners' videos will be viewed by the public on Saturday, November 4 at the San Leandro Main Library at a video viewing party(!). Prizes will be given on that date. Winning videos will be displayed on the FSLC website and other social media channels to be determined.

Video Competition Rules and Guidelines:

1. Videos must be the original work of the entrant, produced by amateurs, not produced for any other purpose, compensation or previously posted on the Internet or used in any other medium.
2. The contest is open to any student in the San Leandro *area* from age 5-18.
3. FSLC reserves the right to disqualify and/or destroy entries that are determined, in The Friends' sole discretion, to violate the law, violate the rights of third parties, depict violence or otherwise be detrimental to the interests of FSLC or any other party.
4. Videos must be produced and narrated in English.
5. Only one entrant, class or club can be named per video, although you can include other people in your video.
6. Videos must be no longer than 5 minutes, including titles and credits. Please limit your video to 500 MBs.
7. Videos must not directly advertise a product, service, logo, or name of any non-profit organization, government agency, or private company.
8. See conditions of entry below.

Please email any questions about the video contest to slevenson@sanleandro.org
Entry Deadline: The competition opens August 1st, and ends October 31, at 11:59 PM Pacific Time. By submitting an entry, each entrant agrees to the rules of the contest.

How to Submit Video Entries: Upload your video to Google Drive like this: type in google.com/drive/. Go to Google Drive. Log in to creek.video.contest@gmail.com. The password is **videocontest17**. Right click on an unnamed folder (Folder 1, 2, etc) and **rename with your name**. Then **drag and drop your video** in your folder.

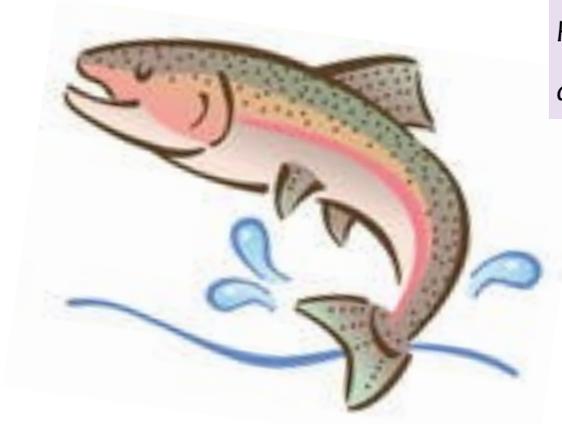
Send an email to slevenson@sanleandro.org and make sure to include your email address and contact information, your full name, mailing address, age, name of the school you attend. That's it! Submit your video before 11:59 PM Pacific Time, October 31, 2017. We will review videos to make sure they conform to rules.

Judging: A panel of judges will decide the winners based on content, storytelling ability, production quality, creativity, and overall impact.

Students with limited resources, technical skill and experience with film production should not feel discouraged from entering the video competition. While we look forward to enjoying creative, well-prepared submissions, the most important aspect is your ability to communicate an important story in a compelling and effective video.



We're on the web:
www.fslc.org



The **San Leandro Creek Watershed Awareness Program** is a comprehensive watershed education program funded by Alameda County Flood Control and Conservation District, with additional support from the City of San Leandro, implemented by Friends of San Leandro Creek. Thank you to the following for your continued support: Alameda County Public Works, The City of San Leandro, Robert and Lois C. Braddock Charitable Foundation, and FSLC Members and Volunteers like you.

Friends of San Leandro Creek Membership Application

Yes, I would like to become a member/renew my membership in the following category: (Please circle one)

- Student \$ 1
- Individual \$5
- Family \$15
- Non-Profit \$25
- Business \$100

Make checks and please remit to:

Friends of San Leandro Creek
C/O RHSD
835 E. 14th St.
San Leandro, CA 94577

Friends of San Leandro Creek is a 501(c) (3) not for profit corporation. Your donations are tax deductible

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

I have a special skill or interest in: _____

Only Rain Down The Storm Drain!

