



## Docents at Mount Diablo State Park

by Steve Elliot

MDIA members volunteer in many ways at Mount Diablo State Park. Some work on the trail crew or trash removal program. Others help with school programs, trail signage and in a host of other ways.

One of our largest volunteer efforts is to provide docents to the visitor centers at the Summit and Mitchell Canyon and as "rovers" on the trails. The active docent roster includes 39 people (see accompanying list). Each has been through a couple of park sponsored training sessions and serves as a "Volunteer in Parks."

Serving as a docent is quite rewarding. When on duty, docents are representatives of the Park and primarily assist visitors with hiking information and answer questions about plants, animals and geology.

### MOUNTAIN QUIZ

Which on of these native Mount Diablo flora is not considered a "rare and endangered plant" by the California Native Plant Society?

- a. Black walnut (*Juglans hindsii*)
- b. Mount Diablo buckwheat (*Eriogonum truncatum*)
- c. Chaparral harebell (*Campanula exigulia*)
- d. Mount Diablo fairy lantern (*Calochortus pulchellus*)

If you said a, you are correct

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noticed this past year that many of the plaques have been disappearing, i.e., vandalized and/or systematically removed. Consequently, MDIA decided to recognize those trail signage donors with one perpetual plaque engraved with all of the contributors' names. This has been done, and is installed on a trail signpost affixed to the deck of the Mitchell Canyon Visitor Center. The next time you're in the area, please make a point to see this beautiful perpetual plaque.

MDIA and the Park certainly understands that the trail signage program was a success in the early lean years partly because of the generosity of many people and organizations.

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We have added several new docents in 2008. For example, Dan Thomas started in May. He frequently camps in the Park and loves roving the trails plus a shift a month at Mitchell Canyon. He works at PG&E in the Energy Conservation Program. Kathy DiMonte also joined the team this year. Her interests include native-plant restoration and wildlife protection. Kathy splits her time between shifts at the Summit and Mitchell Canyon.

Other docents are long term veterans. The husband and wife team, Frank and Edith Valle-Riestra, were among the earliest members of MDIA and have been docents at the Park for 34 years! They currently assist with special projects for MDIA, like editing new publications and working on the new trail map. Besides being a docent for many years, Lucy Henderson has been very active over the years in the wildlife hospital at Lindsay Wildlife Museum, specializing in barn owls rehab.

Docents typically work one shift (sometimes two) of three or four hours per month. If they work enough hours, docents earn a free pass to the Park! Docents are scheduled about one month in advance based on their date availability and shift preferences.

For more information about volunteering as a docent, contact Steve Elliott at 925-362-8697 or SAE612@msn.com.

### Docents at Mount Diablo State Park

- |                      |                     |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| Ted Arden            | Alan McGregor       |
| Tyler Austen         | Jim Mitchell        |
| Dave Caniglia        | Mike Nelson         |
| Karen Barrett        | Kathy O'Toole       |
| Harvey Brosler       | Phil Reed           |
| Dennis Butkowski     | Les Ruefenacht      |
| Leslie Contreras     | Bob Slyker          |
| Kathy DiMonte        | Diane Smith         |
| Susan Donecker       | Sam Smoker          |
| Laura Dubey          | Gary Steele         |
| Steve Elliott        | Ralph Tatum         |
| Liede-Marie Haitisma | Diana Tharp         |
| Janess Hanson        | Dan Thomas          |
| Lucy Henderson       | Yulan Tong          |
| Ann Koch             | Ed Totman           |
| Bob Koch             | Frank Valle-Riestra |
| Craig Lyon           | Edith Valle-Riestra |
| Rich McDrew          | Debbie Walker       |
| Larry McEwen         | Michael Wolfram     |
| Kathy McEwen         |                     |

# MOUNTAIN NEWS



Fall/Winter 2008

MOUNT DIABLO INTERPRETIVE ASSOCIATION

The Bi-Annual Membership Newsletter

## President's Message.....

Your membership with MDIA is very much valued and appreciated. Without you, the Park would not be what it is today. The visitor centers at the Summit and Mitchell Canyon are interesting and educational. The MDIA volunteers at each are very helpful to Park visitors. Trail signage is almost complete. Unwanted trash in the Park has been significantly reduced. And, MDIA publications are spectacular. You must acquire MDIA's newest booklets, TREES AND SHRUBS OF MOUNT DIABLO, and COMMON BIRDS OF MOUNT DIABLO. We have commenced work on two new publication efforts: Third Edition of THE MOUNT DIABLO GUIDE, and a photographic book of the Park by Stephen Joseph. The preliminary title is DIABLO: PORTRAITS OF A MOUNTAIN. Both books should be released in 2010.

The long-time publications chair of MDIA, Mike Nelson, has retired from the MDIA Board. Mike has done an extraordinary job expanding and improving upon the suite of MDIA publications. Mike will be missed. The vacant Board position has been filled by Dan Weiss. Dan is a retired corporate attorney. He is an avid bicyclist, and has been active helping to clean up the Mountain.

If you would like to get more involved in the Park through MDIA, feel free to email me at <mcdrewrich@astound.net>.

Saturday, November 1, 2008, is the date of MDIA's annual membership meeting. The meeting will be held under the oak trees in Mitchell Canyon from 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM. Preceding the meeting at noon, Ken Lavin and "Roadkill Nancy" will be leading a very interesting hike in Mitchell Canyon. At the meeting, you will hear from the new Park Superintendent Roland Gaebert, vote on Board members, get an update on MDIA, watch the presentation of awards, and hear from an exciting guest speaker. As usual, we will raffle off prizes, and have refreshments. Please attend you'll be glad you did. Bring the entire family, and non-members are welcome.



Rich McDrew, President

### SUPPORT MDIA THROUGH WORKPLACE CAMPAIGNS

MDIA members who are, or were, employees of the County, State, or Federal Government, are no doubt familiar with workplace giving/donation campaigns. These annuals campaigns provide current employees and retirees with the opportunity to designate pre-tax monetary support to eligible non-profit organizations. Application for inclusion into these campaigns is rigorous, and non-profit organizations must comply with qualitative and quantitative guidelines before they are to be considered. MDIA is pleased to announce that it will again be included in this year's campaigns. If you are participating this year, consider donating to MDIA to help support MDIA activities, publications, and specific events geared to enhancing and enriching one's experience in Mount Diablo State Park. These workplace giving/donation programs usually run September through December. If you have any questions, please feel free to call Rich McDrew at 925-932-7511, or email him at <mcdrewrich@astound.net>. Thank you for your considerations!

### Board of Directors

- Rich McDrew (President)
- Jim Mitchell (Vice President)
- Stephen Elliott (Treasurer)
- Tom Nootbaar (Secretary)
- &
- Burt Bogardus, Harvey Brosler, Leslie Contreras, Leslie Dawson, Sue Donecker, Ken Lavin, Roi Peers, Maria Tice, Nancy Topp, Verne Van Vlear, Dan Weiss, Ralph Wright

If you wish to submit articles or photographs for the MOUNTAIN NEWS, contact Rich McDrew at 925-932-7511 or via e-mail at <mcdrewrich@astound.net>. Submission deadline for the Spring/Summer edition is February 1, and for the Fall/Winter edition is August 1, 2009.



## Congratulations to Diane Smith

Diane Smith is an MDIA member and ardent volunteer. She recently was honored with a prestigious award from the Sierra Club. The following article about the award and Diane appeared in the SIERRA CLUB YODELER's July-August 2008 edition:

"The Bay Chapter Activities Committee has announced the presentation of this year's annual Dave and Pat Michener Outings Leadership Award to Diane Smith. The award, commemorating the many years of volunteer service performed by the Micheners as editors of the Chapter Schedule (the predecessor of the calendar in today's Yodeler and Chapter website), recognizes superior leadership by Chapter outing leaders.

"Diane has led a wide variety of hikes for the Mount Diablo Group [of the Sierra Club since 1982, averaging about seven per year. Her 'Beginner Hike' series (usually scheduled in March) has introduced many a novice to the joys of hiking. Diane is always there to encourage and support them when they are timid and unsure. Here, as in all her hikes, Diane shows her concern for each individual participant.

"Diane's more difficult series, 'Any Which Way to the Top', leads hikers by different routes to the summit of Mount Diablo. Once again, Diane is always at hand to encourage those who are not sure they made the right choice that day.



Diane Smith

"On all her hikes Diane loves to share her knowledge of the flora and fauna, and the local geology.

"While leading her hikes, Diane also tries to awaken a love of conservation values to get participants to think about, appreciate, and take action in support of our environment. Diane's own actions include volunteer service as a docent for the Mount Diablo Interpretive Association visitor center, as treasurer of the Mount Diablo Group, and as Group outings chair.

"All these ancillary volunteer activities demonstrate Diane's appreciation and love of the overall Sierra Club goals: to explore, enjoy, and protect the planet."

Congratulations to MDIA's very own, Diane Smith!

### Meet an MDIA Board Director: Harvey Brosler

Born in Connecticut, Harvey is a graduate of the University of Connecticut, the University of Baltimore Law School, and has a Masters Degree in law from the George Washington University National Law Center.

His work experience has been varied but always-involved positions working with and assisting people. While going to law school in Baltimore at night, he worked as a social worker for the Baltimore City Welfare Department. From there, he moved to Washington D.C. to NASA Headquarters, and then on to the U.S. Corps of Engineers facility located at Fort Belvoir, Virginia where he worked as a civilian attorney while going to George Washington Law School at night. Upon completion, he moved on to the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission at its Kansas City, Missouri facility and completed his government service with the Department of Energy in Oakland, California in 1998 as a senior attorney in its Oakland Operations Office.

His activities have involved and currently involve many areas of volunteer work. In addition to being an MDIA Board Member, he is an usher at the Leshner Center for the Arts, the publicity and outreach coordinator for the Stroke Support Group of Contra Costa County, and a Mount Diablo Park docent at the Mitchell Canyon Visitor Center. A major volunteer activity, now in its 10th year, has involved providing photographic services to nonprofit organizations located in the San Francisco Bay area relating to fundraising activities including golf tournaments, volunteer recognition affairs, and other special events.

Although living near the Mitchell Canyon entrance to Mount Diablo State Park since 1974, he never went to the Park until

## Disappearing Trail Signage Donation Plaques by Rich McDrew

Twenty years ago in Mount Diablo State Park, most trails were not signed, and those that were signed needed to have the signs replaced. In fact, the 583-page 1989 General Plan for the Park cited the need: "The trails are not clearly marked as to destination and distance . . . Improve, maintain, and sign the hiking and riding trail system."

So, with Park management support and encouragement, MDIA began in 1993 the trail signage project. The objective was "to install clear and complete trail signs, directional signs, and location signs on all trails and prime locations comprising Mount Diablo State Park as it is currently constituted or as it

may be it may be enlarged by future acquisitions or additions". Two MDIA volunteers, Paul Bennett and Harvey Brosler, with the Park's Sue Schwartz, spearheaded the project. Trail signs were manufactured by the State's prison industries and paid for by the Park, but there was no money for the signposts. These posts are made of recycled plastic, and cost \$30 each. To raise money for the posts, a unique program began with the approval of Park management. For a \$100 donation to MDIA, a person, business, or organization could "adopt" a trail signpost of their choice, and MDIA would install an appropriate dedication plaque on that adopted post. Many persons, businesses and organizations donated funds. Thousands of dollars were raised. The signposts were purchased. So today, there are 403 signposts in the Park to help orient hikers as to where they are and where they are going. MDIA believes that Mount Diablo State Park is the best signed Park of its size in the State.

Unfortunately, in the year 2000, Park management disapproved the plaques being placed on the posts, because new State regulations prohibited commercialization/advertising in State parks. So, MDIA stopped the dedication plaque program. However, Park management agreed that the plaques that had been installed could remain on the posts, but if they got removed, they could not be replaced. We have

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Harvey Brosler

joining the Sierra Club and taking some hikes in the Park. After becoming a hike leader for the Sierra Club, he recognized that the Park had almost nonexistent trail signage. In 1994, he started the Trail Signage Project that was adopted as one of the MDIA major projects.

Harvey resides in Concord with his wife of 40 years and their dog Sydney. Two children, Adrienne and Joe, are not in the area but visit with the grandchildren.

"I have enjoyed being involved in many MDIA projects before or after becoming a Board Director. Although MDIA is a wholly volunteer nonprofit organization, I have been impressed by countless hours that many of the Board directors and volunteers spend to assist the Park in its educational and interpretive activities. It is fun, rewarding, and an interesting learning experience. Being a docent is very rewarding as so many patrons drive to the Mitchell Canyon staging area without knowledge of the Park, and appreciate speaking with someone who can assist them by recommending hiking trails or by providing directions to drive to the Summit.

I am especially proud of the fact that the Trail Signage Project was recently completed and will be used by patrons for many years."

Like most organizations, MDIA does some communication via email—it is not only timely but cost-effective. Nancy Topp maintains the MDIA email directory. If you would like to add or update your email in this directory, please provide it to Nancy at <mnvtopp@pacbell.net>. Please be assured that your email will not be shared with any other organization or company without your permission.

### Matching Gift Program

If you or your spouse work for, or retired from, a corporation that operates a "Matching gift Program", your contribution to MDIA may be matched by your employer. Obviously, this doubles the financial impact to MDIA. In addition, if your employer conducts an annual charitable gift drive, you can designate MDIA to be the recipient of your payroll deduction gift. Please ask your employer's Human Resource Office if they have a "Matching Gift Program" or a "Workplace Giving Program."