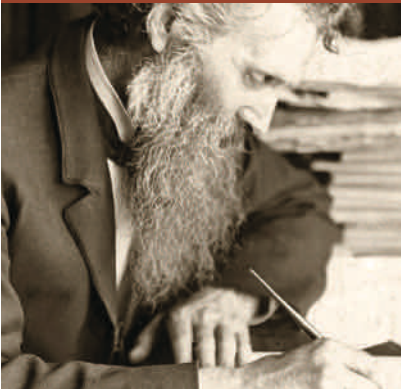




The View

There is a love of wild nature in everybody, an ancient mother-love showing itself whether recognized or no, and however covered by cares and duties.
- John Muir



The mission of the John Muir Association is to celebrate the life, share the vision, and preserve the legacy of John Muir through education, preservation, advocacy and stewardship, in partnership with the National Park Service at the John Muir National Historic Site.

Birthday–Earth Day Is Coming!

By Linda Vida, JMA Vice President

John Muir’s Birthday and Earth Day (BDED) are both just around the corner. Come help us celebrate on Saturday, April 20th from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. The event is free and will take place in the orchard behind John Muir’s house. This year, in addition to music, birthday cake, vendors, a silent auction and educational activities for kids, we will have a special focus on California native plants.

We will cluster booths that have information pertaining to all aspects of native plants, and docents will give short tours of the spectacular native garden in front of the National Park Service (NPS) Visitor Center. There will be a variety of timed short information sessions in a seated area so the audience can relax and listen to the speakers.

This aspect of BDED is new and still in the planning stages—suggestions are welcome. The sessions may include the following topics:

- Native plants: their impact on birds and pollinators of all types including native bees
- Rebates for lawn removal and water-saving aspects
- How to get started with garden design, seeds and propagation
- Tools and pruning—what tools are needed and how to care for them
- Native plant nurseries
- Invasive species
- What do local creek groups do?
- What does the Contra Costa Resource Conservation District do?

We hope you join us this year for a fun and educational day. The John Muir House will be open too! For more information or to be involved with the native plant emphasis, please contact Linda Vida, linda vida55@gmail.com, or cell (510) 917-8648.



Photographs by Karen Najarian (including the one shown here) will be among the items to be found at this year’s silent auction.



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The President's Corner

By Mark Thomson, JMA President

Every so often I crack open *Son of the Wilderness, The Life of John Muir* for inspiration. This great book, by Linnie Marsh Wolfe, is one that is just as meaningful when re-reading as it was the first time. The details of Muir's conservation efforts show the herculean efforts that helped save America's wilderness, and they are punctuated with great examples of Muir's spirit. For example, on reaching the flanks of Mt. Rainier, battling food poisoning and stampeding pack animals, Muir wrote, "Did not mean to climb it, but got excited, and soon was on top." "Soon was on top" was a bit understated given that the ascent entailed trekking through glaciers, overnighting at "Camp Misery" and dodging rockslides. It makes me want to climb a mountain. If you haven't read this book, you are in for a treat. You will want to climb a mountain, too.

The John Muir Birthday–Earth Day celebration is right around the corner. We are working on a great event on Saturday, April 20th. If you had a good time last year, you'll do the same this year.

Mountain Day Camp will be held again this year and we are collaborating with another local group. We will have all the things that make Mountain Day Camp great, plus some new additions. Things are not quite finalized, so I can't say much more than please check our website. If you've given us your email, we will send out a message about the new plans soon.

There's been lots going on with the John Muir Association recently. Check out our new website and join us at the joint Martinez Historical Society presentation on Sunday, April 14.

See you at Mr. Muir's birthday celebration.



Mark Thomson in the Scribble Den at Mountain Day Camp, 2023. Photo courtesy of Mark Thomson

Here are the 2023 John Muir Conservation Awardees

By Jamie Fox, JMA Board

2023 Conservationist of the Year John (Jack) Muir Laws

JOHN MUIR LAWS, who goes by Jack, is a nationally recognized and beloved artist, author, naturalist, and educator. For 40 years, he has dedicated his life to helping others connect with and fall in love with nature. He has created, written, and illustrated many outstanding books, including *Laws Guide to the Sierra Nevada*. Thousands consider this book to be a definitive resource to the natural history of the region. Jack is also the author and illustrator of *The Laws Guide to Nature Drawing and Journaling*, *The Laws Guide to Drawing Birds*, *Sierra Wildflowers*, *Sierra Birds*, and *How to Teach Nature Journaling*, co-authored with Emilie Lygren.



John Muir Laws

His website, JohnMuirLaws.com, receives hundreds of visitors daily. It is a treasure trove of *free* resources and video tutorials, for educators and anyone who wants to explore and connect with the natural world. In 2022, Jack co-founded the Wild Wonder Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit that is dedicated to encouraging nature connection and conservation through attention, curiosity, art, science, and community.

2023 Environmental Education - Habitat Restoration Elaine Jackson



Elaine Jackson with her husband Phred, in front of a larger-than-life sneezeweed plant

ELAINE JACKSON has been extremely active in the native plant and gardening community for well over 20 years. She is a passionate advocate and stays up-to-date on gardening developments that enhance habitat for wildlife. She volunteers at numerous creek plantings and cleanups in Martinez and elsewhere in the East Bay area. Regarded as a native plant expert, she strives to educate other volunteers and organizations about the benefits of native plants.

Elaine has been active in many organizations including the California Native Plant Society (President of the Board 2005-2007), Natives Here Nursery in Tilden Park in Berkeley, the Phenology project at Strentzel Valley (John Muir National Historic Site), and Friends of Alhambra Creek, and she leads a crew of volunteers at the native garden at the John Muir Visitor Center.

2023 Environmental Education Improving Urban Areas Jeff and Tina Sherwin

JEFF AND TINA SHERWIN have improved their local Alhambra Creek by removing invasive plants and debris, while adding locally native plants to enhance and stabilize the creek bank. Jeff has installed several wildlife cameras along the water's edge—the videos are popular with social media users, and inspire local residents to embrace wildlife as part of the community.



Jeff and Tina Sherwin

Recently, Jeff and Tina spearheaded the creation of a new mural on Alhambra Way in Martinez. What was a tall, bare concrete wall is now covered with beautiful sunset colors and dozens of local animals and plants, reminding us all that we share our home with nature. Jeff and Tina led the grassroots effort and offered everyone an opportunity to donate and participate in design suggestions.

(continued on next page)



Martinez Has a New Mural!

By Jamie Menasco, JMA Treasurer

Approximately a one-half-mile walk from the John Muir House, over Alhambra Creek via a pedestrian bridge, is a panoply of color: a mural featuring larger-than-life versions of local native flora and fauna. Jeff and Tina Sherwin developed the idea for a mural while walking around their neighborhood during Covid stay-at-home days. They are active members of Friends of Alhambra Creek (FOAC), the local creek group. They presented

the idea to the Martinez City Council. They procured all necessary permits and approvals from many different agencies—a three-year process. They began a successful fundraising campaign to hire **Illuminaries**, a local cooperative of muralists: Tim Hon, Steve Ha, Romali Licudan, and Eric Nodora. These artists began painting in December 2023 and completed this project in January 2024, with some help from local invited volunteers.



Martinez is so proud of this colorful mural that brightens the neighborhood with its realistic depictions of newts, birds, fish and native plants. It reminds all who walk and drive under this imposing Highway 4 overpass of our native creatures, both plants and animals, aquatic and terrestrial, that have called our neighborhood home for centuries and evolved together. (The underpass has concrete walls measuring 260 feet long and rising 10 feet high. It often accumulated litter and graffiti.)

These plants and animals can successfully remain here *if* we continue to give them space and protect and care for their natural environment.

Dedication of the mural was held in early February 2024. John Muir would be proud. Next time you visit the John Muir National Historic Site, take time to walk to the mural and enjoy this colorful artwork depicting native plants and animals.

Conservation Awards

(continued from page 3)

2023 Educational Institution Environmental Education Advocacy

**Ben Nelson, Program Director at Merritt College,
Natural History and Sustainability Program**

FOUNDED IN 2018, the Merritt College Natural History and Sustainability Program prepares students to obtain employment in a variety of positions in the Environmental/Conservation fields. With 14 faculty across 5 departments, the goal is to train students for careers in environmental science, natural resources, and the interface between society and the environment.

The degree and certificate program is offered through a California Community College in the San Francisco Bay Area. Examples of jobs that graduates obtain include: Park

Ranger, Field Technician, Environmental Conservation, Interpretive Aide, Environmental Educator, Urban Farmer, Food Production Analyst, and Water Quality Technician.



By creating an interdisciplinary curriculum, the program has fostered collaboration between departments and prepares environmental and policy leaders of the future.

Natural History and Sustainability



Be Curious.

Note: Parts of this article are quoted from the John Muir Association Conservation Award nominations.

The View

Photos with this article: Opposite page, a White Sturgeon crests through a wave in the Carquinez Strait. On this page, clockwise from top left: A Great Blue Heron stands tall beneath the overpass; a Monarch caterpillar on Showy Milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*), its host plant; the California Newt trekking over the hills, shaded by Sneezeweed (*Helenium puberulum*) and California Fuchsia *Epilobium canum*); Jeff Sherwin, Jamie Menasco, and Tina Gonzalez Sherwin at the dedication of the mural. *Photos courtesy of Jamie Menasco and CCRC.*



Alhambra Way Mural Plants and Animals

- White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*)
- California Newt (*Taricha torosa*)
- California Fuchsia (*Epilobium canum*)
- Sneezeweed (*Helenium puberulum*)
- Alameda Whipsnake/Alameda Striped Racer (*Masticophis lateralis euryxanthus*)
- Mt. Diablo Fairy Lantern (*Calochortus pulchellus*)
- Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*)
- North American River Otter (*Lontra canadensis*)
- Steelhead Trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*)
- California Sea Lions (*Zalophus californianus*)
- White Sturgeon (*Acipenser transmontanus*)
- Monarch Butterfly and Caterpillar (*Danaus plexippus*)
- Showy Milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*)
- California Pipevine Swallowtail Butterfly (*Battus philenor*)
- California Pipevine/Dutchman's Pipevine leaves (*Aristolochia californica*)
- Flame Skimmer Dragonfly (*Libellula saturata*)
- Cormorant (Phalacrocoracidae Family)





NPS RL_01340, Yosemite Historic Collection

John Burroughs, noted conservationist and friend of John Muir, visiting Muir's grave.

The John Muir Association (JMA) and the Martinez Historical Museum invite you to a presentation by Ranger Andrew Marker, John Muir Historical Site

This lecture will be held on Sunday, April 14, 2024 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Veterans Memorial Building 930 Ward Street, Martinez, CA

The lecture is free. There will be plenty of time for Q & A. Light refreshments will be served.



The Strentzel-Muir Legacy and the Lasting Impact on the Alhambra Valley

MOST AMERICANS are familiar with John Muir's national prominence as a preservationist, but few are aware of the resources that became available to him by marrying into a wealthy ranching family in Martinez.

The Strentzel and the Muir families made lasting impacts on the Alhambra Valley, and this presentation by a National Park ranger will delve into the past, present, and future effects of their legacies. Join us from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. for some fun, wit and wisdom.

JMA's New Board Members

Jamie Fox and Nicole Sylvester

Jamie Fox moved to Martinez in 2006, after attending Cal Poly San Luis Obispo for an electrical engineering degree. Before college, Jamie was raised in Auburn, California, driving across the 700-foot-tall Foresthill Bridge on a daily basis.

After reading about the Alhambra Hills development project in 2010, Jamie began work earnestly documenting all of the 300+ trees slated for removal. Along this journey, Jamie discovered a map in 2014 proving that John Muir owned the ridgeline in 1894. Fast-forward 12 years later: Jamie spearheaded Measure F that preserved the historic ridgeline for all future generations as public open space, gaining a supermajority of voters with 68.8%.

When not hiking around sunset, Jamie enjoys spending time with his family Marcela, Owen (12), and Hazel (10), driving to and from many soccer practices.



Jamie Fox

Meet Nicole Hope Sylvester, one of our newest board members. She is a true lover of nature and holds a deep appreciation for the great outdoors. She is a mother and former primary grade teacher and currently



Nicole Sylvester

serves as a Wellbeing Guide offering her clients stress-relief practices that include nature walks and forest bathing. She has also led many groups on local hikes to discover the beauty this area has to offer. Nicole is looking forward to growing the JMA community and sharing John Muir's goals of conservation and preservation of the great outdoors.

Our website has a new look!

<https://www.johnmuirassociation.org/>

Years ago, Sherida Bush and Eric Akeson designed a wonderful website that stood the test of time for us, but styles change and so must websites. We've updated the look, but kept the content. Take a look and let us know what you think. As always, it's a work in progress, suggestions are welcome! — Susan Garbarino

Bringing Back the Natives – Sunday, May 5th, 2024

By Linda Vida, JMA Vice President

The National Park Service (NPS) at the John Muir Historic Site and the John Muir Association (JMA) will participate in the 20th Annual Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour on Sunday, May 5th, 2024.

Organized by Kathy Kramer, this is a free event that provides access to private native gardens and some public native gardens. The native garden in front of the John Muir Visitor Center will be open from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. that day.

Please visit the Bringing Back the Natives garden tour’s website for a wealth of information about these tours: <https://www.bringingbackthenatives.net/>. There are virtual garden tours as well as on-site garden tours listed by city. You can find listings for garden designers, nurseries, awards, articles, sponsors, etc. Take your time to peruse this website. You can register for the tours online or register at one of the gardens the day of the tour. It’s very easy to participate and see native plant gardens firsthand.

The John Muir Historic Site was

on this tour last year and welcomed over 200 visitors to the Visitor Center garden. We expect a similar turnout this year. The garden will be staffed with docents to answer any questions you may have about the plants and maintenance.

This garden is maintained by a group of volunteers that work in the garden every Monday from 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. In addition, this same group maintains several small native plant gardens in the City of Martinez called the Alhambra Native Plant Trail. The trail is intended to educate residents about native flora and to create a wildlife corridor throughout Martinez for birds as well as bees, butterflies and other beneficial insects. You are welcome to visit gardens on the trail but they will not be staffed with docents. You can download a map at the Friends of Alhambra Creek website, <https://www.ccrd.org/friends-of-alhambra-creek>. Scroll down for “The Alhambra Native Plant Trail,” where the map is the first item on the list—or pick up a map at the

John Muir House Visitor Center on May 5th, 2024.

See you in the gardens!



What a difference a native garden makes! Top: entrance to the Visitor Center circa 2006, courtesy of Elaine Jackson. Bottom photo 2023, courtesy of Jeannine Gendar.



Lindsey and Buddy recently, in the parking lot at the John Muir Historic Site. Photo by Jeannine Gendar

Stickeen Lives On

By Linda Vida

In June 2022, staff at the John Muir Historic Site noticed a little black dog running around the orchard. In the spirit of John Muir, he liked being on the property and was able to find warm, dry places to spend the night during a year of historic rains. He cleverly eluded capture for over sixteen months, while he won the hearts of the entire staff and nearby neighbors. Ever so gradually, he agreed to be petted, and one day Lindsey, Store Manager at the Site, was able to slip a leash on him. In October 2023, she was able to adopt the four-year-old dog and named him Buddy. He was checked out by a local veterinarian and found to be extremely healthy. His time spent outside had no ill effects on him. To the delight of staff and visitors, on occasion Buddy comes to work with Lindsey. The adventurous spirit of Stickeen, John Muir’s occasional companion, lives on.



John Muir
ASSOCIATION

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Thank You, Bruce

This newsletter marks a change in the John Muir Association (JMA). After years as Newsletter Editor, Bruce Campbell has passed on the torch to Linda Vida. We've been blessed with his energy, ideas and wit, not only with the newsletter, but also in his roles as Co-President and Membership Chair. Bruce has been a valued part of the JMA and leaves it a better place than when he found it.

We look forward to seeing you around town in one of your many bands, or as the downtown Santa, or as a member of the many other organizations you are involved with. Thanks again for being such a robust part of the John Muir Association.

Registration is open now for Summer 2024:

July 15-19: John Muir Mountain Day Camp
July 22-26: John Muir Mountain Day EcoKids
Leadership Camp

 8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. 

Naturally good times and mountains of fun—
a John Muir immersion experience.

For more information:

<https://johnmuirassociation.org/muircamp/index.php>