Fire on the Mountain • Carl Nielson, Mount Diablo State Park Peace Officer

A human-caused wildfire burned 3,111 acres in and around Mount Diablo State Park. It started on private property near Morgan Territory Road on September 8, 2013. Most of the spread occurred during a two-day period, but the fire was not called out for nearly a week. A large suppression effort was led by Cal Fire, with support from the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District, the San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District, and other local agencies. Aircraft, both fixed-wing and rotary-wing, played a major role in checking the spread of the wildfire.

The south slopes of North Peak and Mount Diablo saw significant fire. Much of this area also burned in 1931, 1961, and 1977. Needless to say, wildfires can be very destructive and very dangerous. Fortunately, no homes were lost in this wildfire. Several outhouses and picnic tables within the park were destroyed. But there are benefits to the natural world as a result of the wildfire.

Many of the plants of Mount Diablo are fire adaptive. In fact, many are fire dependent! Lightning-caused fires and fires ignited by the native Californians long before the arrival of Europeans have burned the slopes of Mount Diablo for millennia. Ceanothus, for example, sets its seed in soil, and heat generated from a wildfire opens these seeds. Following a wildfire, basal sprouting is evident with poison oak, chamise, and some species of manzanita. The soils in post-fire areas are rich with nutrients.

Animals, too, can benefit from a wildfire. The threatened Alameda whipsnake prefers an open, rocky habitat that is created by a wildfire. Wildfires also create mosaics. Fires can vary based on behavior and intensity. A moonscape appearance is a result of a high-intensity, stand-replacement fire. In other areas, a lower-intensity fire perhaps burned the dried grasses on the surface, but left the mature oaks standing and very much alive.

The “rebirth” of the fire zone was immediately evident following the first rains after the wildfire. And it can be witnessed by you, the park visitor. The fire zone can easily be accessed off Summit Road.

(continued on page 2)

Citizen Scientists: Help Monitor Fire Recovery!

Check out the four camera stations along the Mary Bowerman (Fire Interpretive) Trail and other locations in the Morgan Fire burn area. Please take photos with your smart phone and upload them to social media. Our partner group Nerds for Nature will use the photos to create a time-lapse video of the landscape recovering and changing over the next several years. Please participate when you see the stations and be a part of studying the fire recovery. Contact Cyndy Shafer at Cyndy.Shafer@parks.ca.gov.
Get Dirty on the Mountain

Imagine finishing a rugged hike at Mount Diablo State Park. On your trek, you have just enjoyed the mountain scenery and the endless sun-swept panoramas. Your face is covered with sweat and dirt. You spot one of the park’s water spigots to clean the dirt from your face. You turn the handle, but no water comes out.

This situation has become a reality in the park with perhaps the worst drought that California has ever seen. Most of the water in the park comes from a series of springs that feed into various water tanks, where the water is treated, tested, and readied for public use. However, with the lack of rain this year, the springs on the mountain have been reduced to a trickle.

In order to meet the park’s basic water needs, we have been forced to take a number of drastic measures. We have temporarily closed most of the park’s permanent flushing restrooms and have rented porta-potties. The showers in the campground have been closed. Many of the water faucets have been shut off for the duration.

When you finish your next hike, wear your sweat as a badge of honor and feel proud that you got dirty on the mountain, for you have helped save one of the earth’s precious resources.

For information on permanently reducing water use in general—regardless of whether California is in a drought—go to saveourh2o.org.

Fire on the Mountain (continued from page 1)

Visit Blue Oak Picnic Area or Muir Picnic Area. Hike the Oak Knoll Trail or upper elevations of the Summit Trail and Juniper Trail. Look for the mosaics within the fire zone. Observe and appreciate the plants that are regenerating the burned slopes. Wildflower displays within fire zones can be spectacular indeed!

Park Supervising Ranger’s Report

Dan Stefanisko

Welcome to Mount Diablo State Park and all its interesting features and many miles of trails and fire roads to explore. The many enthusiastic volunteers of Mount Diablo Interpretive Association (MDIA) work hard to see that you and other visitors to the park thoroughly enjoy your visit. Whether you are climbing the rocks in Rock City, picnicking in one of our many unique picnic areas, hiking in the back country, or taking in the sights on the observation deck at the Summit Visitor Center, you have a good chance of encountering one of our volunteer docents in the park to inform and assist you. You can identify them by the park volunteer docent vests they wear, whether they are hiking, biking, astride a horse, or assisting at an entrance station.

The Morgan Fire of 2013 has changed the park dramatically. Just over 3,000 acres were burned, mostly on the south slopes of Mount Diablo and North Peak. Both the short Mary Bowerman Trail at the Summit and the much longer Grand Loop Hike cover both burned and unburned areas and make for interesting hikes. Check with a docent or go to MDIA.org for more information on these and other hikes.

Thanks to the generous donations of many caring individuals, fire restoration efforts have already begun. You can see several of the damaged picnic tables have been rebuilt, trail signage in the burned areas is being replaced, and next we will replace several other structures that were burned to the ground.

This year California State Parks celebrates its 150th anniversary. The weekend of April 26 and 27 is a celebration of this anniversary at Mount Diablo State Park, as well as MDIA’s 40th anniversary, with special events and activities throughout the park. Visit MDIA.org for more details. Please join us in celebrating the Mountain throughout the year, and enjoy your visit to Mount Diablo!

Celebrate on the Mountain!

April 26-27, 2014 11AM-4PM

MDIA President’s Column

Mike Woodring

Mitchell Creek Habitat Restoration Effort Progresses

Cyndy Shafer, Senior Environmental Scientist, Diablo Vista District, California State Parks

Anyone who has hiked up Mitchell Canyon recently has probably noticed the “Mitchell Creek Riparian Restoration and Fish Passage Project” site. While the cleared area and changes to the landscape may seem shocking, we are not finished yet. Project construction is complete, and an extensive revegetation effort is under way. We are working with park volunteer Dave Camiglia, the Native Here Nursery, and contractors to raise and plant thousands of native plants in this area this winter/early spring.

The purpose of this project is to restore habitat and improve water quality. A considerable amount of sediment was perched along the banks of Mitchell Creek where an old earthen dam was constructed over six decades ago. The dam formed a reservoir along the creek in which sediment built up until the dam was breached around the 1970s. The nearly vertical banks were eroding and depositing sediment into the creek. The steep, unnatural banks prevented establishment of creek floodplain and limited riparian vegetation.

During project construction, we removed the dam fill and sediment from the creekbanks and recontoured the area to restore floodplain and riparian habitat and reduce sedimentation of the creek. Directly downstream of the earthen dam, two concrete dams in the project area prevented fish passage to the upper reaches of the watershed. We removed one of these dams and lowered the other one during project construction. We also constructed a new hydrologically restored channel section with a series of step pools to restore a more natural stream gradient and allow for fish passage. You may be thinking, “I’ve never seen fish in Mitchell Creek!” Surveys documented a small population of rainbow trout (Oncorhynchus mykiss) along Mitchell Creek within the park in 1985, 1988, and 1993, however, it is believed that this population no longer persists. Concrete dams in the project area prevented fish passage to the upper reaches of the watershed. The Mitchell Creek Watershed Inventory Final Report (June 30, 2006) identifies the project site as one of only five confirmed barriers to fish migration in the entire watershed, all the way to Mount Diablo Creek’s outlet to Suisun Bay.

Fish passage was included in this project due to the historic presence of rainbow trout along Mitchell Creek, and the hope is that fish will return to the park in the future if other barriers in the watershed are addressed and/or rainbow trout are reintroduced.

This project also includes enhancing upland habitat above the creek. We recontoured the old “bowl” of the reservoir and removed two old road beds along the creek. During construction, we removed the majority of the non-native poison hemlock (Conium maculatum) dominating the old bowl of the reservoir, and control of non-native plants will be ongoing in these areas as they are revegetated with native plants. Restoration of riparian vegetation and adjacent upland vegetation throughout the project area will include planting and maintaining thousands of native plants grown from seeds and cuttings salvaged and collected from the project area and Mitchell Canyon. Mitchell Creek provides habitat for a diversity of amphibians, reptiles, mammals, and birds. Restoration of this area should improve habitat conditions for a diversity of native wildlife species. Stay tuned for future updates on the revegetation effort!
Mount Diablo has three designated family camping areas and five group camps: Juniper Campground (36 sites, elevation 3,000 ft.) Located approximately 2 miles below the summit, on Summit Road, Juniper is known for its fantastic views. Three campsites meet accessibility (Americans with Disabilities Act) standards. Reservations available.

Live Oak Campground (23 sites, elevation 1,450 ft.) Located one mile above the South Gate Entrance Station, off South Gate Road. Live Oak is near Rock City, where one can explore rock formations. Reservations available.

Junction Campground (6 sites, elevation 2,200 ft.) Located where South Gate and North Gate meet at the Ranger Station. This campground is situated in an open woodland area. Available on a first-come, first-served basis only.

All campgrounds are provided with picnic tables, fire pits or stoves, potable water and restrooms.

The campgrounds are mainly designed for tent camping, yet they can accommodate RVs up to 20 ft. in length. There are no hookups and no dumping stations provided in the Park.

**Camping Procedures**
You may make reservations from 48 hours to 7 months in advance by calling Reserve America at 800.444.7275 or by visiting their website at www.reserveamerica.com. Reservations can be made for a specific campground but not a specific site. Campers cannot be registered at Mitchell Canyon.

Check-in time is 2:00 p.m. Check-out time is 12:00 noon.

**Group Camps** are Buckeye, Barbecue Terrace, Wildcat, Stagecoach, and Boundary. Reservations are available for all group camps with Reserve America. Each campground is primitive with running water and pit toilets. Barbecue Terrace is equipped with horse ties for equestrian use. Motorhomes are not allowed in the group camping areas. During the fire season (generally May to October) the park is subject to closure due to extreme fire danger. Campers must call the park at 925.837.2525 or 925.837.0904 one day prior to their arrival to confirm park status.

**General Rules**
- Alcoholic beverages are prohibited in the park.
- 8 people and 2 vehicles maximum per campsite.
- Each juvenile (under age of 18) must have written permission from his/her parents (with parent’s phone number) prior to camping without adult supervision. Phone verifications will be attempted.
- Quiet hours are from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.
- No electric generators from 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 a.m.
- Firewood gathering is prohibited.
- Fires must be in stoves or fire pits provided. NO GROUND FIRES.
- Campfire restrictions are in effect during the fire season. Check fire conditions for appropriate use (see page 6).
- Campers are locked in the park overnight from sunset to 8:00 a.m. For emergencies dial 911.
- Peace and quiet—noise must not carry beyond your immediate camp or picnic ground.

**Group Picnic Reservations:** Call Ranger Daniel Golde at 925.837.6129 x3

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**Camping at Mount Diablo State Park**

**Legend**
- Accessible Feature
- Entrance Station
- Ranger Station
- Visitor Center
- Point of Interest
- Horse Staging
- campground
- Campground (Group)
- Rock
- Peak
- Major Road
- Park Road
- Fire Road
- non-MDSP
- Single-track Trail
- Trail Bikes OK
- Paved Trail
- Mirage Creek
- Seasonal Creek
- Pond
- Administered By EBRPD
- Mount Diablo State Park

**Park Fees per Car**
- Mitchell Canyon Entrance* $4.00
- Macedo Ranch Entrance* $6.00
- North and South Gate Entrances* $10.00
- 150th Commemorative Annual Pass $150.00
- California Park Experience Annual Pass $75.00
  * MINUS $1 FOR SENIORS 62+

**Group Camps**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>SITE</th>
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<th>CAMPER VEHICLES</th>
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<tr>
<td>Stagecoach</td>
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<tr>
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* Group Picnic Reservations: Call Ranger Daniel Golde at 925.837.6129 x3
2014 Public Astronomy Programs on Mount Diablo

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>Start Time</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>March 22</td>
<td>7:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Stars and Butterflies</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April 26</td>
<td>7:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Galaxies and the Distant Universe</td>
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<td>May 31</td>
<td>7:15 p.m.</td>
<td>Saturn’s Rings, Jupiter’s Moons, Mars, &amp; Mercury</td>
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<td>June 21</td>
<td>8:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Search for Alien Worlds</td>
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<td>July 5</td>
<td>7:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Explore Our Sun and Moon</td>
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<td>Aug 2</td>
<td>7:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Rocks and Ice in the Solar System</td>
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<td>Aug 30</td>
<td>7:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Our Place in Our Galaxy</td>
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<td>Sep 27</td>
<td>6:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Supernova! Get Ready for the Eclipses in October!</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oct 25</td>
<td>5:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Why Earth?</td>
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2015 • Mar 21 • 7:00 p.m. • First Astronomy program of 2015—mark your calendar!

Time: Beginning about an hour before sunset. Enter the park gate at least 45 minutes before the program starts.
Where: Lower summit parking lot of Mount Diablo State Park.
Cost: The astronomy program is free; there is a park entry fee.
Bring: Kids, binoculars, warm clothes (temperature can drop significantly), snacks, water. If you bring a flashlight, please cover it with red cellophane or red cloth.
Leaving: The Park gates will be locked and visitors will only be able to leave the summit and exit the park by escorted caravans through the North Gate a few times during the evening. Caravans will be announced at various intervals during the program and visitors should only leave with these escorts.

For more details, go to Mount Diablo Astronomical Society’s website, www.mdas.net, and on Event Calendar, or call Mount Diablo State Park at 925.837.2525.

Park Rules

You are responsible for obeying these and other Park rules.

- All Features of the Park Are Protected! Do not remove or disturb plants, animals, or geological features.
- Park Hours: Opens at 8 a.m. and closes at sunset. Visitors should be in their vehicles heading out at sunset to avoid being locked in.
- No Alcohol: All alcoholic beverages are prohibited in the park.
- Vehicles/Bicycles Speed Limit: 15 to 25 mph on park roads, 15 mph in campgrounds and picnic areas. All vehicles must stay on the pavement and are prohibited on trails and fire roads.
- Bicycles are allowed only on paved roads, fire roads and designated trails. Check at the Ranger Station for current regulations.

Fire Danger: How Will It Affect You?

- Maintain fires at all times in a safe condition that does not threaten any person or natural or structural feature.
- Never leave a fire unattended.
- Extinguish all fires prior to departure.
- Ground fires are not permitted.
- Firewood gathering is prohibited.
- Report all wildfires immediately. Call 911.

Fire Danger Chart

- **Low:** No danger
- **Medium:** Some danger—be alert to fire danger
- **High:** Danger exists—take extra precautions
- **Very High/Absolute:** Extreme danger—fire is likely

- **Use of Self-contained Stove:** Yes
- **Use of Self-contained Stove:** Yes
- **Operate Stove:** Yes
- **Park Closure:** Yes

- **Use of Compressed Log:** Yes
- **Use of Compressed Log:** Yes
- **Operate Stove:** Yes
- **Park Closure:** Yes

**Total Amount (includes sales tax, shipping & handling)**
Thank you for your order! Profits from sales support the educational programs of MDIA.

MDIA Product Order and Membership Form

- **Maps and Hiking Information**
  - Trail Map of Mount Diablo State Park (7th Ed.)
    - 7.50
  - Hiking Brochures: Easy, Moderate, Demanding (set of 3)
    - 2.00

- **Interpretive Publications**
  - Mount Diablo, The Extraordinary Life and Landscapes of a California Treasure
    - 60.00
  - The Mount Diablo Guide (3rd Ed.)
    - 17.00
  - Mountain Lore—History & Place Names of Mount Diablo
    - 7.50
  - Trees and Shrubs of Mount Diablo
    - 7.50
  - Common Birds of Mount Diablo
    - 7.50
  - Mt. Diablo Wildflowers
    - 7.50
  - Geology Brochure and Map
    - 2.50

- **Nature Guides (Laminated/Folded)**
  - Local Birds of the San Francisco Bay Area
    - 9.75
  - Local Rocks of North America
    - 7.50
  - Local Animal Tracks of North America
    - 7.50
  - Local Butterflies of the San Francisco Bay Area
    - 9.75
  - Local Wildlife of Mount Diablo
    - 7.50
  - Mountain Lore—History & Place Names of Mount Diablo
    - 7.50
  - Trees and Shrubs of Mount Diablo
    - 7.50
  - Mount Diablo Wildflowers
    - 7.50

- **Products with Mount Diablo State Park Logo**
  - T-shirts: Sky Blue or Stonewashed Green, S, M, L, XL (circle size and color)
    - 16.00
  - Mount Diablo Patch
    - 4.00
  - Mount Diablo Lapel/Hat Pin
    - 3.50

**SUBTOTAL** $[enter subtotal here]

**Membership Application**

**Membership Category**

- [ ] Student/Senior (55+)
- [ ] Individual
- [ ] Family
- [ ] Contributing
- [ ] Lifetime

**Donation** $[enter donation amount here]

**Address:** [enter address here]

**City:** [enter city here]

**State/Zip:** [enter state and zip here]

**Telephone:** [enter phone number here]

**Email:** [enter email here]

**Join MDIA now.** It’s easy. Use your smartphone.

[MDIA.org](http://mdia.org/site/online-store/memberships)

**Summit Museum**

- **Open:** 7 days a week
- **Hours:** 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- **Phone:** 925.837.6119

**Event Calendar**

Check out all the hikes and other events happening in Mount Diablo State Park.

[www.mdia.org/site/mdia-event-calendar](http://www.mdia.org/site/mdia-event-calendar)

**Article or Photograph Submission**

To submit articles or photographs for the next issue of the Mount Diablo Review, email info@mdia.org or leave a message at 925.927.7222. Submission deadline for the Fall/Winter issue is July 15.
Almost 400 trail signposts identify over 155 miles of hiking trails and fire roads in Mount Diablo State Park’s nearly 20,000 acres.

The trail signs in the park follow the California State Parks uniform format. The name of the trail you are on is specified in relatively small horizontal type near the top of the sign.

The name that appears vertically in large type (usually another trail but sometimes a destination or park boundary) shows the termination of that particular trail; the word “TO”, in small letters, is important. The mileage to that end point is specified at the bottom.

In 1921, the State of California designated a 630-acre area surrounding Mount Diablo’s summit (elevation 3,849 feet) as a State Park and game refuge. In 1931, Mount Diablo State Park was officially opened to the public as a California State Park. Today, the Park encompasses nearly 20,000 acres. Home to extraordinary biodiversity, compelling natural terrains, and incomparable vistas, Mount Diablo State Park welcomes nearly 700,000 visitors each year to its preserved and protected public lands within easy reach of the San Francisco Bay Area.

State Parks represent the beauty and legacy of California, and as stewards of this movement, we strive to both serve our visitors and preserve our natural and cultural resources so that future generations can continue to enjoy them. This 2014 is the year to visit a State Park and experience firsthand the impact State Parks have had, and will continue to have, in the lives of the millions of people who visit them every year.