



# PICKLEWEED POST

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## Antioch Dunes

A 9<sup>th</sup> grade Earth Science class from Deer Valley High School joined EarthTeam and National Fish and Wildlife biologists in ongoing classroom workshops and field-based restoration projects at the Antioch Dunes National Wildlife Refuge. The program introduced students to environmental issues related specifically to the Antioch Dunes National Wildlife Refuge and provided training in animal tracking, and an overview of water quality assessment. Through the dune restoration program students received a rare opportunity to explore and discover the biodiversity of a wildlife refuge while engaging in hands-on restoration designed to protect and create habitat for the refuge's three endemic and endangered species: the Lange's Metalmark butterfly, the Evening Primrose, and the Contra Costa Wildflower. Funding for the program was provided via a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant awarded to the Friends of San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge.



## Native Replanting Flourishing

The San Pablo Bay NWR held eight restoration planting events this season. Over 200 school-aged children (1st-5th graders) and >35 adults planted >2,500 plants. Adults that attended the plantings included staff from Conoco Phillips, Audubon California, CSU East Bay, U.S. Coast Guard and the general public.

This season has been one of the most successful since the Refuge began plantings in 2006. Leia Giambastiani, an employee the Refuge shares with the Bay Institute (via grant \$\$), has been the driving force of this success. She propagated the plants, conducted monitoring, and assisted with finding and organizing volunteers. She is a keeper! The Refuge hopes to find grant money to keep her on and keep the ball rolling!

Plantings from previous years are doing well. Some species, such as Douglas' Baccharis, Western Goldenrod, and Beardless Wildrye are spreading rapidly, even amongst the weeds. This is our goal! The paucity of rain last year and this season is tough on the plants. We have found that most mortality is happening in the first few months following planting, not following the summer. So, in years when there is not adequate rainfall, hand watering is conducted. Although not the original intention, the current climate requires hand watering if successful plantings are desired. Once established, the plants appear to thrive despite the reduced rainfall. The Refuge is also experimenting with establishing a ground cover to combat the weeds prior to planting perennials.

## Marin Islands

A group of volunteers embarked from San Rafael to the larger East Marin Island in August to help make the habitat more inviting for the colonies of birds on the west island by removing invasive nonnative plants. Once the site of a vacation home, the East Marin Island is undergoing restoration to become more inviting for migrating birds. Nearby, West Marin Island holds the largest heron and egret rookery in the San Francisco Bay area.



## Volunteer Opportunities

**Annual Meeting:** The annual meeting of the Friends will be held on February 28, 2009 from 9am-12pm at Refuge Headquarters. All are welcome to attend – please rsvp to [friendsofspbwnr@coconutmoon.com](mailto:friendsofspbwnr@coconutmoon.com).

**Greenhouse:** Do you enjoy gardening? Would you like to learn more about plants? The Refuge is always looking for helping hands at the greenhouse. For more information, contact at Refuge Biologist Giselle Block at 707-769-4200.

**Nature Walks:** Do you love nature? Are you interested in sharing your knowledge of bay area plants, animals, habitats, or birding? The Friends and the Refuge are looking for volunteers to lead walks at Tubbs Island and other Refuge locations. For more information on leading nature walks, please contact Refuge Manager Christy Smith at 707-769-4200.

For more information, please contact us at: [friendsofspbwnr@coconutmoon.com](mailto:friendsofspbwnr@coconutmoon.com), or check out what's going on at: [www.pickleweed.org](http://www.pickleweed.org)