



RIVER PARTNERS

JOURNAL

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Students Break Ground for KCHO Trees



Students from Marigold Elementary School help plant native trees. Photo by River Partners staff.

On October 25, 2007, River Partners' staff dedicated a day to continue a 10-year tradition – hosting Marigold Elementary School at one of our project sites. Welcoming Mary Schoenthaler's 6th graders and Mark Rodriguez's 3rd graders, biologists Colleen Martin, Michael Rogner, and Nick Pacini led tree planting and bird identification activities at the Drumheller

Unit of the Sacramento River National Wildlife Refuge.

Though Marigold students came to learn about native species and riparian ecology, they also helped River Partners accomplish important work. Marigold Students kicked off the installation of 75 new trees that River Partners has dedicated

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Egret. Photo by Matthew Morgan

2008: Celebrating 10 Years of Protecting the Integrity of Rivers

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Acorn nursery at Las Plumas High School.

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Message from the Board Chair

Acorns and Oaks

Board Chair Irv Schiffman

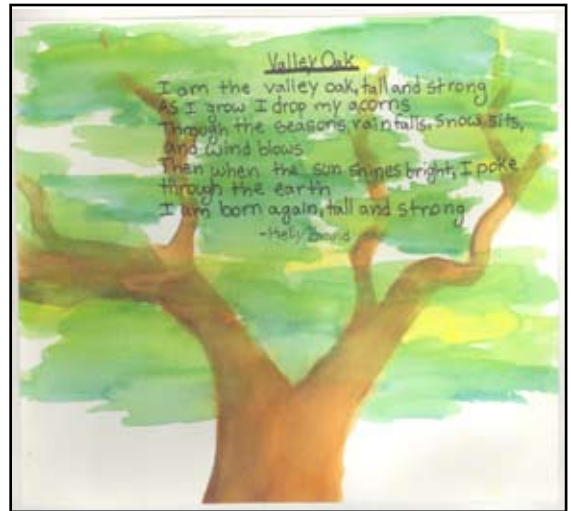
Crunch, crunch, crunch. Two thousand and seven was a fantastic year for acorn production. I can't remember a year when so many acorns covered the walking paths of Chico's Bidwell Park. For certain, no squirrel, Western scrub Jay or Acorn woodpecker (the major eaters of acorns) will go hungry this winter. And River Partners will not have to send out an emergency SOS to find enough acorns to allow it to meet its planting obligations.

Acorn production varies from year to year and last year was one of the best. Oak trees do not start producing acorns until they are about twenty years old and then it takes a good deal of food and energy to produce a good crop, something that is hard for the oak tree to manage two years in succession. Both 2006 and 2005 were off years for the oak trees in California's Central Valley and thus the need for us to scramble to find a sufficient amount.

We need the acorns because the valley oak forms a key part of our riparian planting strategy. Such trees have historically been prominent components of lowland floodplain habitats in the Central Valley. They are deciduous, quick growing trees that thrive in hot, sunny conditions. They are generally planted on the higher elevations of the floodplain while cottonwood and willow trees, which are more tolerant of floodwaters, are planted closer to the river.

Oak forests contribute much to the biological diversity of the riparian corridor. They are the main habitat of Nuttall's woodpecker and the oak titmouse. Numerous species depend on oak woodlands for food and shelter, including the gall forming insects which produce the large number of oak "apples" which drop from the trees along with the acorns.

A mature valley oak tree can produce up to a ton of acorns in a good year. The nutritious acorns were a staple of the Native Californians who lived in the Central Valley and continue to provide nourishment to the large number of species which devour them. One study found that 30 bird species known to use valley oak habitats in California include acorns in their diet. However, a bountiful year of acorns also seems to bring forth a bountiful year of squirrels, an uncertain blessing if you are a homeowner, gardener or motorist.



Irv Schiffman

Project Updates

New \$850,000 Project at the San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge



Riparian brush rabbit. Photo by River Partners staff.

Buffington Unit, SJRNWR – River Partners has prepared this 50-acre tract, adjacent to Caswell State Park along the Stanislaus River, for planting. Since this is a reintroduction site for the riparian brush rabbit, the planting design includes a network of dense riparian shrubs and long berms. These new features will provide flood escape corridors and refuge during high water.

River Partners Receives \$780,000 Grant for Feather River Wildlife Area

River Partners, in collaboration with the Department of Fish and Game, the Wildlife Conservation Board, Ducks Unlimited and Levee District 1, is developing a restoration plan for the Abbot Lake Unit of the Feather River Wildlife Area in Sutter County. We have identified 439 acres containing cells of riparian forest mixed with abandoned orchard that would benefit from River Partners' active restoration and management. Restoration and enhancement activities would eliminate invasive weeds, improve habitat conditions for waterfowl, migratory birds, and other species, and complement the levee repair efforts at Star Bend along the Feather River.

River Partners' Work Featured Throughout California

The James Irvine Foundation's online publication, *IQ: Irvine Quarterly* (Winter 2008 issue), included an interview with John Carlon and Tom Griggs. Recently honored by the Irvine Foundation, Griggs and Carlon highlighted how habitat restoration addresses two state wide issues: wildlife conservation and flood control. To read "Leadership Award Recipients Tackle Key Issues, Balance Competing Interests in Central Valley," visit: www.irvine.org/publications/iq/cp.shtml

River Partners' staff presented 12 papers and posters at the Riparian Habitat Joint Venture Conference: *Integrating Riparian Habitat Conservation & Flood Management in California*. Sacramento, December 4-6, 2007. By highlighting River Partners' model projects, our staff made a significant contribution to this three-day symposium and underscored how habitat restoration intersects effectively with floodplain management goals in the Central Valley.

John Carlon, River Partners' president, chaired the plenary session which hosted John McMahon, Brigadier General, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mike Chrisman, California Secretary of Resources, Lester Snow, Director of the California Department of Water Resources, and other flood control and conservation experts.

Dr. Stacy Small's December conference papers captured the attention of journalists. *The San Francisco Chronicle* article, "Endangered Rabbit Getting Back on High Ground" (January 9, 2008) covered her talk on designing habitat for the riparian brush rabbit in collaboration with CSU Stanislaus' Endangered Species Recovery Program. A future article in *Estuary Magazine* will be based on Stacy's presentation, "Flood timing affects nest predation rates in a breeding riparian songbird population."

Del Rio Wildland Preserve Gets Permit

On Friday, November 16, 2007, River Partners went before the California State Reclamation Board to present its permit application for the Del Rio Wildland Preserve. This was the third request to the Board for this phase of the Del Rio project.

After 2 ½ hours of consideration, the Reclamation Board approved the encroachment permit on a 4 to 3 vote. Although the permit prohibits the planting of elderberry, the Board did leave open the possibility of consideration at a later date.

We received over 40 letters backing the project, and strongly believe that this made a very favorable impression on the Board and greatly contributed to the positive outcome. River Partners is deeply grateful for this show of support and thanks all of its members and partners.

With the permit process completed, River Partners will begin planting the remaining 136 acres at Del Rio in Spring 2008. Currently 96 acres have been in restoration for three years, providing new habitat and opportunities for the public. We hope that the new restoration continues to provide schools and community groups opportunities for education and recreation.

Upcoming Event!

Bioneers Conference Speaker Series

The Chico Women's Club will present the speaker series from the BIONEERS Conferences, Thursdays, February 28-March 20, from 7-9, at their building (3rd and Pine). There are 12 talks on DVDs over 4 Thursdays. Doors open at 6:30 pm. For more information, call (530) 345-5560.

Students Break Ground for KCHO Trees

Marigold Elementary 3rd & 6th Graders On a “Working” Field Trip

Continued from Page 1

to the supporters of KCHO/KFPR, the local National Public Radio affiliate. [see article below]

Students also assisted with important project management functions at the Drumheller site. During the summer, River Partners assessed how many trees and shrubs survived after their first year of growth and flagged specific areas to replant. Marigold students helped implement this management plan by working in these flagged areas.

“We take great pride in our ongoing service learning and restoration project and have seen our students benefit in many ways from our collaboration with the River Partners,” said Rodriguez.

“Through this program our students gain a thorough understanding of riparian and seasonal wetland habitat; they take with



Teacher Mary Schoenthaler assists sixth and third graders with tree planting. Photo by Rivers Partners staff.

them a feeling of accomplishment because they have a true sense of having made a difference. We are always impressed with reading their poems and journals after they have time to reflect on a day that they will always remember.”

By visiting River Partners’ project, these 3rd and 6th graders experienced first hand the wonders of the Sacramento River and learned why it is important to save its surrounding habitat. The bird-watching tour, given by biologist Michael Rogner, reinforced this lesson.

“We did an observational ‘scavenger hunt’ to identify various bird behaviors,”

said Rogner. “We talked about why some birds forage on the ground and some forage in trees; why some forage in groups, and some alone.” Highlights from the walk included finding a Black-headed Grosbeak nest in a planted Oregon ash, seeing a Sharp-shinned Hawk attempting to capture a sparrow, and seeing salmon in the river. After doing field work and hiking, students sat for a session with teacher, Mark Rodriguez, who used sun prints to teach plant characteristics and biology.

River Partners thanks Marigold Elementary School for its 10-year partnership with the organization.

River Partners Helps KCHO station with “Green” Pledge Drive

For its fall pledge drive, KCHO/KFPR, National Public Radio’s North State affiliate, made an eco-friendly offer to its supporters. As part of its selection of thank you gifts, such as a mug, tote bag, or umbrella, KCHO/KFPR included the option of having a tree planted in a donor’s name by River Partners. More than 350 public radio supporters chose the “tree planting” option, helping the station set new fundraising records.

“Thanks to River Partners, KCHO/KFPR listeners were able to support the station and support the important work of restoring riparian habitat in the Sacramento watershed. Everyone wins!” says Brian Terhorst, the station’s General Manager.

“KCHO is a community asset and we were honored to

be invited into this new partnership,” says John Carlon, River Partners President. “The station provided us the opportunity to involve KCHO listeners in our restoration efforts in the Sacramento Valley, which we truly appreciate.”

Although River Partner installs thousands of native trees, shrubs, and grasses every year, the KCHO trees deserve special treatment. In October 2007, students from Marigold Elementary School planted some of the 350 trees at River Partners’ Drumheller Slough project (see article above), part of the Sacramento River National Wildlife Refuge. The remaining numbers will be planted by boy scouts at the Del Rio Wildland Preserve in early spring 2008.



Barry Elementary students with their sprouting acorns. Photo by River Partners staff.

North Valley schools are in the middle of a massive acorn project for River Partners. Seven schools throughout Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Yuba, and Sutter Counties are growing more than 16,000 valley oak trees (*Quercus lobata*) for restoration projects along the Sacramento and Feather rivers.

River Partners' Restoration Resource Specialist, Jessica Gibbs oversees the school acorn program. "We needed to grow out our extra supplies of acorns for the 2008 planting season. Working with students and teachers has been a great way to build our oak tree inventory while also involving the community in habitat restoration," says Gibbs. "Plus, students gain experience in nursery practices. They also see first hand how to incorporate agriculture into environmental science."

Cultivating oaks from acorns is a year-long project for the schools. Starting in the fall, students and teachers receive soil, pots, and acorns from River Partners and they begin tending the planted acorns. Students must water and monitor the shade and sun conditions throughout the year, even during summer break. When the saplings are ready the following fall, River Partners buys back the trees, essentially treating each school like an independent plant supplier.

In the fall of 2008, River Partners will purchase viable oaks from the schools for \$0.50 per plant. The schools will benefit by raising funds for their programs. River Partners will benefit by having enough Valley oaks for over 1,600 acres of

restoration projects.

Las Plumas High School's ROP class, who pioneered the acorn project in 2006-2007, currently is responsible for 4,400 plants. Teacher Paul Olson has his students take advantage of the whole process to build math and vocabulary skills in addition to receiving practical horticulture experience. For example, the ROP students visit River Partners' website to learn about ecological concepts. Like a professional nursery, they use an overhead irrigation system they built themselves to keep the plants watered and shaded during the summer. The ROP class even is coordinating a planting day with River Partners so they may see the completion of their work on a restoration site.

The "Gathering Place," Barry Elementary School's organic garden, is easily handling their 500 acorns. Comfortably nested in the solar-powered green house, the young oaks receive the care and attention from the cadre of 1st through 8th-graders who work the garden during lunch and after school. Art teacher Daniel D'Agostini helps the students manage the acorn project, in addition

The Great Acorn Grow-Out

North Valley Schools Begin Massive Acorn Project for River Partners



Las Plumas High School students assist River Partners for two years in a row.

to tending to the beds of lettuces, flowers, sugar peas, fava beans, Echinacea, and egg-laying chickens. Like Las Plumas High School, Barry School students intend to see their product through to the end. They plan to install their crop of oaks at River Partners' restoration site at Abbot Lakes in the Feather River Wildlife Area.

River Partners thanks all of the teachers and students involved in this project. We will continue to cover the progress of the Great Acorn Grow-Out throughout the year.

Thank You! Participating Schools



Barry Elementary School, Yuba City - 500 acorns

- Hamilton City HS, Hamilton City - 5,000 acorns
- Las Plumas HS, Oroville - 4,400 acorns
- Colusa HS, Colusa - 1,000 acorns
- Marysville HS, Marysville - 5,000 acorns
- Chico HS, Chico - 500 acorns
- Chico Country Day, Chico - 100 acorns



10th

Anniversary

**Dinner
&
Silent
Auction**

***A Benefit &
Celebration***

***10 years of
protecting the
integrity of rivers***

**Live Music &
Dancing
Hors d'oeuvres
No Host Bar**

**Friday,
April 11, 2008**

6:00 pm

**Sierra Nevada Big
Room**



*River Partners is a 501(c)3
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For more information, please contact:

Julie Pokrandt (530) 894-5401 ext 22 or jpokrandt@riverpartners.org

Please make donations payable to River Partners and mail to:

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Make a Difference for Future Generations

Introduce your family and friends to River Partners. Make them partners in protecting our rivers, fish, wildlife, and recreational areas.

Gift members will receive a special membership certificate and decal, our quarterly newsletter, *The Journal*, plus special invitations to River Partners' events.



(left) Canoers on a recent River Partners float. Photo by Matthew Morgan.



(above) Female Black-headed Grosbeak, like the one students saw at River Partners' Drumheller Unit restoration project this fall. Photo by Dave Menke, USFWS Digital Library.

Honorary Tree Planting!

Gift "Investor" members (\$100+) and above will also have a native tree planted in their honor. This special bonus will be noted on their new membership certificate.



Become a River Partner or Make a Special Gift

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www.riverpartners.org. Thank you for your support!

Gift Membership Options:

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Return Service Requested

River Partners and Climate Change



By John Carlon, President

In the era of global warming, planting a tree represents a small step towards reducing our carbon footprint and providing clean air. Every year, River Partners plants lots of trees... and shrubs, grasses, vines, and forbs. In fact, River Partners soon will plant its one millionth tree, which is significant for wildlife as well as our climate.

River Partners' large scale restoration projects will sequester thousands of tons of carbon dioxide. In addition to reducing this greenhouse gas, our projects will help alleviate the flooding caused by melting snow pack and extreme storm events—the side-effects of global warming.

Given these multiple benefits, River Partners has taken its first steps in entering the carbon offset arena. With partners such as Winrock International, the Conservation Fund, and CSU Chico, we are determining the practicality of developing a state-wide carbon sequestration program and entering the carbon credit market. These initial steps will be featured in a documentary by Prairie Public Television (North Dakota) later in 2008.

As you will read in this issue, the recent success of the KCHO/KFPR “green” pledge drive demonstrates that Californians are interested in confronting global warming and enhancing the quality of life in our region. In addition to addressing climate change, River Partners' restoration work overlaps with many of the goals important to California: improving flood protection, educating children about nature, and protecting open space for recreation.