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ISSUE 22

# FRIENDS *of* VILLA GRANDE NEWSLETTER

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## OUR MISSION

- ❖ RESTORE AND MAINTAIN PATTERSON POINT AS A RIPARIAN PRESERVE FOR LIMITED PUBLIC RECREATION USE
- ❖ PRESERVE THE HISTORIC AND UNIQUE CHARACTER OF VILLA GRANDE
- ❖ ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE GREATER VILLA GRANDE COMMUNITY

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Friends of Villa Grande is now celebrating our 10 year anniversary! Congratulations all! We have created a community treasure that from the beginning, everyone wished to preserve and keep open to the public.

I want to thank Ken Wikle, our outgoing and founding president, for his extensive work on the board. I'm honored to follow in his footsteps.

As a founding FoVG board member, I'm proud to have been involved in the planning for the non-profit, the negotiations to purchase the Preserve and the ongoing efforts to stabilize the funding. FoVG has gone from a fledgling organization to a mature, stable, well-funded community

resource for the residents of Villa Grande, the many supporters of our organization and for Patterson Point Preserve.

While FoVG has always been involved with the Villa Grande community, I'm hoping to take it to the next level by reaching out to members as well as the extended community to partner in a shared vision and plan for the future. I invite members to serve on an FoVG committee and for anyone to contact me with questions, concerns or forward-thinking ideas you wish to share. It takes a village.

With gratitude and respect,

Kyla Brooke  
President, FoVG

## BIRDWATCHING EXCURSIONS

To enjoy the best of bird nesting season, Friends of Villa Grande sponsored three bird watching excursions from the Preserve this June. Two of these were by boating down river, and the third was on foot around town.

Highlights included two Bald Eagles on a nearby beach, hatchling Black Phoebes on willow branches being fed by their parents, all five of the local Swallow species that summer here, and lots of babies: Mallards, Common Mergansers, Chestnut-backed Chickadees and American Robins with their speckled breasts.

On the boat trips, a pair of Killdeer was seen along Austin Creek. One Killdeer (in photo) performed an excellent distraction display to draw our attention away from its mate and the nest. Killdeer lay their eggs right on bare gravel, and the eggs blend right in.

There were several juvenile Green Herons near Rein's Beach across from Cassini's.

You could tell they were young birds by the light markings on the tips of the wing feathers that will wear away as the bird matures. Green Herons use sticks or other debris to lure fish, snatching them out of the water as they come up to investigate the "bait." You'll hear their distinctive "skewow" call on the river during spring and summer.



Even though the Osprey nest across from the gravel beach at Patterson Point wasn't occupied this season, that doesn't mean it will be vacant next year. Two Ospreys were seen across the river in the tree usually occupied by the Double-crested Cormorants for drying their wings.

The Ospreys were preening and cuddling each other and are definitely "pair bonding" for the future. We wish them well.

If you have interest in these events, please email [friends@villagrande.org](mailto:friends@villagrande.org), and we will set up more for next year. Thanks to Leah Norwood and Linda Fisher for organizing and leading these wonderful outings.

## SHERIFF PRESENTATION AT TOWN HALL

Charity Koch, the county sheriff's Community Service Officer and Dennis Carrera, a volunteer for the Russian River substation, spoke at a community gathering at the Firehouse Plaza on July 22 and covered the following concerns.

**Crime:** There are only two deputies on duty responsible for our territory, from Gualala in the north, down the coast and over to Valley Ford and from there east to Martinelli Road in Forestville. They ask for our help in reporting suspicious (non-emergency) activity by calling the dispatch number: **(707) 565-2121**.

Dispatch will log the call, give referrals or send help if needed. Budgeting for sheriff services in our area factors in the number of calls to dispatch, so don't hesitate if you see something.

**Burglaries:** Charity and Dennis reported that burglaries in the area have actually decreased during the past two years and agreed with those testifying to the value of web-based "trail cameras" to discourage intruders.

**Marijuana:** Do not call the sheriff's office about pot growing issues; Permits of Sonoma County (formally known as PRMD) is the agency responsible for outdoor growing violations. The exception: call the sheriff for any situation that may be a safety concern, such as faulty house wiring.

**Community Involvement:** Officer Koch addressed the need for

an ombudsman to facilitate problem resolution in the County. Currently Supervisor Lynda Hopkin's office has been handling this role, and she is in the process of establishing a Citizens' Advisory Group based in Guerneville. Contact Hopkin directly at [tinyurl.com/VGsupervisor](http://tinyurl.com/VGsupervisor) for more information or questions.

**Abandoned Vehicles:** It is increasingly uneconomical for the county's authorized towing company (Cream Towing) to haul away vehicles for resale or scrap. Clearing ivy from abandoned vehicles would make them more accessible and better candidates for towing. This could be a project for the community to address together.

**Roads and Parking:** California Highway Patrol is the responsible agency for road, parking and traffic issues. For any "out of control" parking situations,

such as blocking access or restricting maneuverability, call the local CHP office at **(707) 588-1400**.

Further discussion of parking and overcrowding on weekends led to the idea of forming a volunteer group to address property owner rights and suggest parking options.

Andrea Buffa ([andreabuffa2006@gmail.com](mailto:andreabuffa2006@gmail.com)) and Natalie Robb-Wilder (**(707) 865-2470**) have offered to organize online and in-person discussions to get the process started, not just for parking, but for Neighborhood Watch and any other issues of concern. Please contact them for more information.



## UPDATE ON SEPTIC REGULATIONS

The State Water Resources Control Board has issued its draft action plan for the Russian River, which includes new regulations for onsite wastewater treatment (septic) systems. The focus will initially be on systems that are failing, closer than 100 feet to the river, or without permits.

The SWRCB proposes a survey of all properties in the Russian River drainage basin to determine the type of waste system in use. Based on the survey, county records and reported problem areas, upgrade priorities will be established.

The plan includes inspections every five years and requires property owners upgrade substandard systems. Any system within 100 feet of the river will be required to have a supplemental treatment unit. Cesspools are not allowed, and must be replaced. A system installed without a permit on file will need to be permitted, mapped or upgraded.

Documents are available at [tinyurl.com/VGactionplan](http://tinyurl.com/VGactionplan) and [tinyurl.com/VGseptic](http://tinyurl.com/VGseptic). Contact Charles Reed at the SWRCB for further information at **(707) 576-2752**.

## MIMOSAS & GARDENS PARTY

The Villa Grande version of pub-crawling is going from home to home imbibing champagne, nibbling on host-provided bites, while chatting and laughing with friends and neighbors. On Sunday, May 28, the Mimosas & Gardens Party kicked off for FoVG members with appetizers at Jane Saunders' large faerie ring and riverside estate.

The group then migrated across the street to Jay and Erin's redwood grove where Erin's Mexican meatballs stole the show. The climax of the day was dessert (and more mimosas) at Marcy and Jim's new deck and redesigned garden.

At right, party-goers pause to pose for a photo at Erin & Jay's.



## HOLIDAY GIFT SUGGESTION: CHIC VG SHIRTS

If you would like to give a cool holiday gift, how about a Villa Grande tee shirt (\$10) or sweat shirt (\$25)? Order before November 1<sup>st</sup> to ensure delivery. Tax and delivery are extra, or you can pick up in VG to save mailing charge. For sizes, color and ordering, text or call Kyra Wink: **(707) 529-4206**.

## NAMING VILLA GRANDE: 4<sup>TH</sup> TIME'S THE CHARM

Before there was Villa Grande, there was "Big Flat," a patch of land filled with redwoods owned by the NorthWestern Pacific Railroad. After logging the area, NWPRR advertised and sold lots in the "Mesa Grande Addition" and by 1905, we had a fourth-class post office, with a postmaster paid on commission.

The name has endured in our collective memory since original deeds were registered with Mesa Grande. Unfortunately, there was (and still is) another Mesa Grande in San Diego county, so on June 25, 1907, the Post Office name was changed to "Grandville" and operated out of a cubby hole in the general store.

Then, once more, due to misdirected mail and confusion with Grandville in Tulare County, on March 21, 1921, the Post Office - with a linguistic twist - turned Grandville into "Villa Grande". For many years thereafter, the store owner or his



wife would be the designated postmaster. Owner Frank Veronda's wife, Viola (Vi) was named postmistress on May 3, 1961, and ten years later, they purchased a house from John Keating on the other side of the town square.

A former San Francisco fireman, John had a garage and shop on the property to build simple furniture. Viola saw an opportunity to expand the number of post office boxes and create a 24-hour service lobby within the garage workshop. She moved the operation from the general store and the site was officially dedicated as the Villa Grande Post Office on August 23, 1973, where it operates to this day.

The property is now owned by Bob Fredericks and Gianfranco Murani who provide wonderful seasonal displays in the post office front window.

-Roberto Esteves

## ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Celebrating our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, FoVG members convened on July 15 to elect members to the Board of Directors. Later that day, the Board elected officers: Kyla Brooke president, Kyra Wink vice president, Ruben Garcia secretary and Tim Cahn treasurer.

Andrea Buffa led an audience-participation slide show and review, starting with the 2006 town hall meetings that resulted in establishing a non-profit organization to obtain a "right of first refusal" for the purchase of Patterson Point Preserve. Since then, we not only launched FoVG and raised money to purchase the property, but we have restored much of the land to its natural state.

Along the way, FoVG has built a new sense of community through events including memorable fundraising parties! We all smiled remembering when Oscar Wilde hosted "Wilde, Wild West", when we donned our masks for "A Night in Venice", and the dancing at this year's "Falsa

Boda" wedding party.

The last part of the meeting solicited ideas for the next five years. In addition to the ongoing Preserve restoration, members suggested developing a community clubhouse, forming a support group for elderly neighbors and offering first responder training.

Parking was raised as an issue that needs a long-term plan. There was also concern that the identity of Villa Grande is threatened by the possible closure of the Post Office as well as online maps that confuse us with Monte Rio. Members also raised questions about FoVG's liability from gunpowder on the beach on July 4, and what to do with the firehouse and the adjacent plaza.

There was praise for the leadership that FoVG members have taken on environmental issues, and pleas for help with some community-wide issues, including the new street lights and our old, potholed, roads.

## RESTORATION WORK STARTS UP

On Saturday, September 9, from 1-4 p.m., volunteer restoration work will begin again in the Preserve. Please join us as we continue our efforts to remove invasives and encourage the native plants throughout the fall and winter.

One of our restoration stewards will not be returning this year so we are looking to hire someone with a similar level of expertise. Please let us know at [friends@villagrande.org](mailto:friends@villagrande.org) if you can recommend anyone for this part-time work.

## FIREHOUSE UPDATE

Firehouse restoration is nearly complete, with the construction of a front entry step on August 15. We will be doing pest abatement and cleaning up the interior next. Recent work by Sweetwater Springs on pipes along Willow Street has left us with a "gift" mound of gravel that we'll be using to reduce the amount of winter mud at the front door.

## CALENDAR

**PPP Restoration  
Work Day**  
Saturday, September 9  
1:00-4:00 p.m.

**Member/Volunteer  
Thank-You Party**  
Saturday, September 16  
Patterson Point - 6:00 p.m.

**Tee & Sweat Shirt  
Order Deadline For  
Christmas Delivery**  
November 1

Online at:  
[villagrande.org/calendar](http://villagrande.org/calendar)

ON THE WEB AT  
**VILLAGRANDE.ORG**

**WESTERN DOGWOOD (CORNUS SERICEA)**

Western dogwood can be seen on the path and along the gravel beach where it creates dense foliage. It is a deciduous shrub (up to 15 feet tall and 9 feet wide) with clusters of small white flowers followed by non-edible cream colored berries. It provides habitat for pollinators, birds and mammals. It can be found growing in wet areas throughout Western North America.



**NO SWINGS ON SANDY BEACH**

Arborists have recommended we remove rope swings from the Oregon ash trees above the sandy beach. The rope damages the vascular cambium layer just under the bark. We have removed swings twice this year, and ask everyone to not tie ropes on the trees. Thanks.

**MEMBERS APPRECIATION BEACH PARTY**

Once again FoVG is hosting an end-of-summer full moon kayaking, barbecue and sing-along party. On Saturday, September 16, members are invited to a free celebration (guests are \$10) on the gravel beach starting at 6:00 p.m. Food and drink will be provided, but if you'd like to bring a side dish to share, thank you.



**MORE BIRDS**

These adult osprey were photographed on the birding-by-boat trip in June. See article on page 1.

**MEMBERSHIP FORM**

July 1, 2017 - June 30, 2018

Renewal  New

Circle one member category below:

BENEFACTOR	\$ 1,000	2 TICKETS TO FOVG EVENTS; UP TO 2 VOTING MEMBERS
PATRON	\$500	1 TICKET TO FOVG EVENTS UP TO 2 VOTING MEMBERS
HOUSEHOLD MEMBERSHIP	\$ 100	UP TO 2 VOTING MEMBERS; LIST NAMES BELOW
CONTRIBUTING MEMBER	\$50	SINGLE MEMBERSHIP
LOW INCOME	\$25	LOW INCOME

ADDITIONAL DONATION \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL PAID:** Cash/Ck/Pay/Pal: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Last/First Name of member/household members: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Local Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Propane Discount: (circle) Yes No

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send check and form to:  
FoVG, PO Box 28, Villa Grande, CA 95486  
or online through Paypal at:  
**villagrande.org/Membership**