

a voice
for the natural
landscaping
movement



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Celebrating natives
plant and natural
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since 1979.

The Grapevine

By Maryann Whitman

Dune Restoration

Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge in northern California has a great diversity of wetland habitats in and adjacent to the Bay: seasonal wetlands, salt marsh, tidal mud flats and channels, open water, and uplands. The refuge exists primarily to protect wetland habitats for migratory birds that stop over by the hundreds of thousands to rest and feed.

The dunes of Humboldt Bay are among the largest stands of pristine coastal dunes in the Pacific Northwest. The Lanphere Dunes, at the southern end of Humboldt Bay, have been restored. The dune mat community is again home to the native dune grass, *Leymus mollis*. Another inhabitant is the federal- and state-listed Humboldt Bay wallflower, *Erysimum menziensii* ssp. *eurekaense*, which is endemic to Humboldt Bay.

European beach grass (*Ammophila arenaria*) invades coastal dunes on the Pacific coast and significantly changes dune morphology and hydrology. Dunes that form under cover of native beach grasses and forbs have low slopes and run at an angle of 90 degrees to the beach. Infestations of *A. arenaria* trap more sand than the native species; consequently, dunes that form under its cover have steeper slopes and are aligned nearly parallel to the shoreline. The change in dune morphology and topography prevents the movement of sand from the beach to interior dunes and disrupts conditions that support native plant communities. The changes also promote *A. arenaria* so that it becomes more and more dominant and species richness declines sharply until nearly pure stands of *A. arenaria* form.

The Nature Conservancy, in the early 1990's, demonstrated that European beach grass could be brought under control with intensive manual labor. Over the course of three years and three thousand person/hours per acre, five heavily infested acres were cleared. By 1997, the entire ten-acre area of the Lanphere Dunes had been cleared and native communities had returned without replanting.

In March, Wild Ones Vice President Mariette Nowak visited the Manila Dunes on a spit of land at the northern end of Humboldt Bay, between the bay and the ocean. Nowak reports that Friends of the Dunes, a volunteer organization, is carrying on the work started by The Nature Conservancy. Armed with shovels, pulaskis (axes) and gloves, volunteers are tackling three major invasives: yellow bush lupine (*Lupinus arboreus*), iceplant (*Carpobrotus edulis*) and European beach grass. On the day Nowak visited with a walking tour, there were several great piles of weeds along the trail ready for burning.

"People thought these beaches were so overridden with weeds that it was hopeless to attempt removal by hand," explained a docent for Friends of the Dunes. The group is opposed to the use of herbicides. "But it's been very successful," she said. "Within months, we can see native plants resprouting." Various wildflowers

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were just coming into leaf and blossom – a patch of white-flowering wild strawberries and the fresh greens of native beach grasses, sedges and rushes, and later-flowering goldenrods and asters. The docent was hoping to show the group the rarest treasure of the dunes. Rounding a bend, she shouted, “There they are!” and pointed to a small bouquet of four-petaled yellow flowers in a sandy pocket: the Humboldt Bay wallflower, *Erysimum menziesii* ssp. *eurekaense*. Several other pockets of wallflower blossoms were found that morning. The species has been brought back from near extinction by a group of dedicated volunteers. It is wonderful to hear a success story like this to spur us all to similar action.

Tug-a-suckle

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) has developed an alternative method of removing honeysuckle and buckthorn in Wyalusing State Park. Eschewing herbicides, the WDNR has opted for youth-power. The program is called Tug-a-suckle and was piloted in the spring of 2001 with middle and high school students, who had a great time hauling 20-foot honeysuckles out by the roots. The method should work well for any organization with volunteer forces available. It is easy, effective, cheap, and kids love it! You will also want to have safety glasses, a lot of gloves, and a vehicle to haul

away the refuse. Visit Friends of Wyalusing State Park at www.wyalusing.org and click on Tug-a-suckle.

Recognizing the Founding Members

Donna VanBuecken, national Wild Ones Executive Director, who works very hard to increase Wild Ones’ membership and also to maintain existing membership, has asked me to pass on a suggestion to all Chapters.

As Wild Ones approaches its 25th Anniversary, the number of chapters has increased to forty. Donna points out that, while every member is important to our growth, each chapter owes its existence to the dedication of a small group of founding members. She suggests that it would be very appropriate in this celebratory year to recognize them. It occurs to me that older chapters, which may have trouble tracing their history, should be overly inclusive rather than risk missing someone. For chapters still being led by their founding members, the best recognition would be for newer members to volunteer for organizational duties and to become familiar with the workings of the chapter in preparation for leadership positions in the future.

Let’s do some creative thinking and come up with ways to show our founding members how much their efforts are appreciated.

Maryann Whitman is a member of the Oakland (MI) Chapter and the Journal’s features editor.