

MDIA E-Newsletter • September 2024

#### Hint For Mobile Users: Turn your phone sideways for a better view!



Summit Sunrise by Steve Smith

#### **Hike of the Month: Donner Canyon**

As Fall descends upon us and cooler temperatures begin to prevail many of us return to regularly hiking the mountain. This is a time for fall foliage (namely Poison Oak), fall and winter berries, occasional rains and of course our beloved Tarantulas. This month's hike takes us on a tour of Donner Canyon (and some Mitchell and Back Canyons) where all these sights and more await you. This hike is 6 miles and 1150 feet of climbing.

Starting at Mitchell Canyon, head up the canyon to your first left on Oak Road. This is your first steep climb, but it is brief, and the views of the mountain await you. Continue straight onto the single-track Coulter Pine trail. Notice the namesake pine trees off to your right. (Note the needles on the Coulter and how they differ from the Ghost Pine—while the ghost has droopy relaxed needles, the Coulter's are erect like a toilet brush.) Continue to a right on Bruce Lee Road and cross Back Creek to a right on Back Creek Trail.

At the first intersection, turn left up Tickwood Trail. Notice one of our largest stands of Poison Oak in its fall glory off to your right. Continue winding up and down the beautiful single-track through woodlands, grasslands, and chaparral until you reach the terminus at Donner Canyon Road. Turn right and then left about 200 yards up onto Donner Trail. Here you will have a lovely descent to Donner Creek through thick chaparral...this is a good place to see Tarantulas in the early morning or late afternoon. Turn left and follow the creek on Hetherington Trail. Just before the creek crossing, turn right and climb Bruce Lee Spring Trail. As you ascend the woodlands, be sure to turn around for a beautiful view of the Summit and North Peak.

As the trail starts to level out, bear left at the



IN THIS ISSUE:

Donner Canyon

What's Next?

Hike of the Month

**Education Center** 

50th Celebration

**Upcoming Events** Great things to see and do

Join us (take two)

Tickwood view by Steve Smith



Bruce Lee Spring by Steve Smith



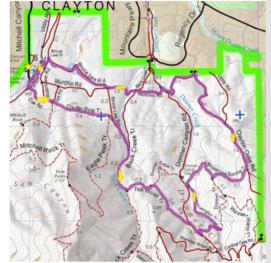
intersection to remain on Bruce Lee Springs, winding through a dense stand of aromatic chaparral. At trail's end, turn left on Clayton Oaks Road. You'll spend the next mile and a half winding up and down through the grasslands where you are likely to spot deer and maybe a snake or two. As you approach Donner Canyon, you'll make a right then a quick left onto Murchio Road. At the intersection at the top of the hill turn right onto Bruce Lee Road. Notice this area's recovery following last May's controlled burn. Continue down around Coulter Pond and watch for wildlife until you continue to the end and turn left on Watertower Road. Make a quick right on Bruce Lee Trail and head down the single track. Just to the left of the big iron gate is a lovely single track, Terrace Trail which will bring you back amongst the Oaks and offer views of the Mitchell Canyon entrance and Native Plant Garden before you make a pair of right turns to return on Mitchell Canyon Road.

Bruce Lee Spring by Steve Smith



Coulter Pond by Steve Smith

Note: You've completed the trifecta of Bruce Lee Trail, Bruce Lee Road and Bruce Lee Spring Trail. These were named not after the legendary martial artist but after the past president of the Concord Mount Diablo Trail Ride Association, the equestrian association that sold 350 acres to Mount Diablo State Park in the 1960's, much of which you will have explored on this hike. For a print map of this hike click <u>here</u>, for a .gpx file for this hike click <u>here</u>.



## **Education Center: What's Next?**



We are so excited to be nearing our goal of raising \$4.6 million for the new Education Center at Mitchell Canyon. You likely have questions about the project as we move toward the actual construction phase of this important project.

What's first? Our first order of business in the process is to turn to our architectural team as we make final decisions on design issues as well as infrastructure issues. Ware and Associates will be working throughout the coming months to work toward the 100% completion stage of our drawings. We have been collaborating with them on the project since hiring them in 2021.

Why the cost? You may have been wondering why it would cost \$4.6 million to build a 1500 square foot building. The short answer is that the structure part of the project is the easy part, the infrastructure changes are the costly part, and the most difficult to anticipate and plan for. One of our major challenges is in making the site ADA compliant which will require extensive grading of the site to bring the level of the future site to the same level as the existing restroom structure (which will remain as is). The retaining wall behind the current structures is also failing and will need to rebuilding. This is especially important given that the back wall of the Education Center will function as part of that retaining structure.

Utilities are also a major issue for us. *Having been installed 80 years ago*, utilities such as storm water drainage and domestic water need upgrading, and the electrical system will be undergrounded on this side of Mitchell Creek. Further, our water pressure is not sufficient to support our new fire suppression system requiring installation of a holding tank and water pumps. Beyond these costs are those associated with fees, permits, soil-testing, architectural renderings and blueprints, interior design and fabrication, etc. The construction process also must adhere to stricter (and more expensive) state standards including performance bonds, bid bonds, prevailing wages, etc.

When will construction start? We will be working diligently throughout the remainder of this fiscal year to prepare everything needed for this project to go to bid. At the opening of the next fiscal year, mid-2025, the state can then add the project into their budget process. Even though MDIA has raised the money needed, everything involved from the architectural plans on up through the actual structures will be donated to the state and become state property. We are hoping that the bid process can begin in the Fall of 2025 with a realistic ground-breaking of early 2026! Though this seems like a long wait there is much to be done in the meantime.

Why are you still raising money? In the complicated process of submitting a grant proposal to the Wildlife Conservation Board we made assurances to them that the State would be contributing \$1 million (through budget allocation by Assembly Member Rebecca Bauer–Kahan) and MDIA would be matching with their own \$1 million. While we were successful in achieving that milestone (thanks to our private donors like you), we have spent \$150,000 thus far on architectural, engineering, exhibit planning, and permitting/CEQA review expenses. *Our end–of–year campaign to refill our fund will be a necessary part* of honoring our obligations to ensure the success of this project...you will hear more about how you can contribute after election season concludes.

How can I learn more? Come to our information event this November held at Heather Farm Park in Walnut Creek. Share appetizers and wine with us as we answer questions about the process, in particular, what we have in mind for the most important part of it all...the exhibit space itself! Save the date for Wednesday November 20, 2024, from 3–5:00 pm. Of course we will send out more information as the date approaches. We are always here to help answer any questions you may have in the meantime, and you can contact us directly at mcec4me@gmail.com.



We're on Facebook! Come like and follow us on our brand new Facebook page. You can see several posts every week, cool photos, interesting creatures, event updates, great articles and much more. Come give us a like!

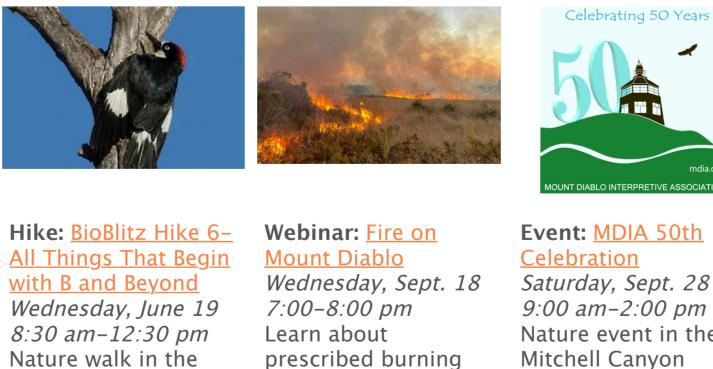
# **Fun Fact**

Tarantula Hawk Wasps seek out and attack tarantulas. After delivering a paralyzing sting the wasp drags the spider to a hole and lays an egg on the helpless creature. When the egg hatches, the young wasp eats the tarantula alive. While these wasps are not looking to attack or sting you, they do pack a punch. Their sting has been rated as 4/4 on the Schmidt Sting Index and is described as "blinding, fierce [and] shockingly electric".



Tarantula Hawk Wasp by Steve Smith

# **Upcoming Events**





prescribed burning on Mount Diablo

Event: MDIA 50th **Celebration** Saturday, Sept. 28 9:00 am-2:00 pm Nature event in the Mitchell Canyon parking area

## **MDIA 50th Anniversary Celebration**

While MDIA celebrates its 50th anniversary all year, our grand celebration in April was a rainout! While our dedicated presenters were still on hand with live animals and our board members were keeping our tents from blowing away, the turnout was understandably low. Which is why we are excited to announce a redo! We will again celebrate our 50th on September 28, 2024 at Mitchell Canyon. We have booked the same presenters and will have a host of live animals, games, scavenger hunts, nature hikes, and prizes. Stay tuned as we get closer to the date.

Mitchell Canyon area



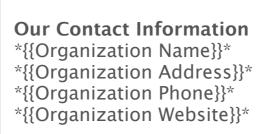




Thank you for your support of the Mount Diablo Interpretive Association and I will see you on the mountain!

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*"We acknowledge that Mount Diablo is the ancestral home, since time"* immemorial, of the Wilton Rancheria, Bay Miwok, Confederated Villages of Lisjan, Northern Valley Yokuts, Muwekma, and Ohlone peoples."



\*{{Unsubscribe}}\*

