

February 2023

Upcoming Mountain Talks via Zoom

February 1, 7 PM: Reading Critter Prints

February 22, 7 PM: River Otters in Diablo's Foothills



February 1, 2022, 7:00 p.m. Mountain Talk: On Track for Critter Prints 7:00 p.m. via Zoom

The work of Bay Area tracker Meghan Walla-Murphy "is a blend of writing and environmental conservation with an emphasis on wildlife corridors and linkages, a core interest for all of us around Mount Diablo. We'll learn how to be fully present on the trail and open to all detail by walking slowly to note even the faintest tracks.

She'll show us how to judge the number of individuals (pigs or deer, for instance), the weight, and, potentially, the gender. That'll take some practice, and the damp soils will give us time to put new tracking skills to the test.

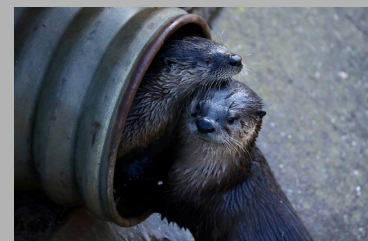
Register in advance for this [webinar](#).



February 22, 2022, 7:00 p.m. Mountain Talk: River Otters in the Hood 7:00 p.m. via Zoom

When Megan Isadore founded the Bay Area's non-profit River Otter Ecology Project (ROEP) a decade ago, official records implied that river otters were uncommon in the watersheds of the Bay. She and her colleagues set themselves a mission, engaging community scientists along the way to get at the otter truth. A major tool was ROEP's establishment of "Otter Spotter," a reporting platform to snap up info on sightings in our watersheds in real time. ROEP's raison d'être is "to support healthy watersheds for otters and all the rest of us," she says, describing her talk as a "deep dive into the Otter Spotter program, what it accomplished, to whom it matters, and where we're headed." She promises lots of photos and videos of "these entertaining and important predators living and thriving in the San Francisco Bay Area." She'll also talk about the "importance of the very cool Contra Costa County otters, and how they're supporting education and conservation," she says.

Register in advance for this [webinar](#).



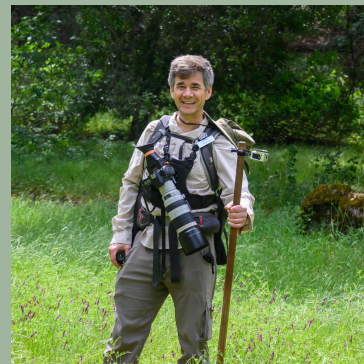
Top, Megan Isadore; bottom, Bay Area otters by Karen James, a long term volunteer with Megan.

NEW SHORT FILM FROM MDIA The Wonders of Our Mountain in 2022

Grant yourself three minutes of nourishing distraction

This shortie is part of a series made by a small volunteer production company we call *Wild Mount Diablo*, a one-year-old project launched by MDIA. Volunteers Kendall Oei and Wally De Young took all the photos in this review of 2022, overseen by producer Joan Hamilton. You will know her from her Audible Mount Diablo films.

View the film [here](#). Photo: Kendall Oei



FUND-RAISING for the Education Center **Members respond with great generosity in December**

More details below

The end of 2022 brought a rush of warmth and generosity from MDIA's members as they learned about MDIA's quest to fund a purpose-built education center in Mitchell Canyon to replace the current cramped 20-year-old trailer. The new structure, indoors and out, will be worthy of the mountain and the people who love it. If you can, join us in funding this effort.

See the architects' drawings, and imagine the future in this [two-minute video](#).

A Mountain of Memories

Tribute to a Loving Father: The Dixon Family

Plans for new education center in Mitchell Canyon inspires a major donation



Above: This ethereal portrait of Mount Diablo, painted by MDIA volunteer Shirley Nootbaar, captures a moment we all seek and treasure when we're on and around the mountain, and it sets the mood for the tribute below by Doyle Dixon, whose father died on Diablo at age 35, when Doyle was a young boy. Doyle and his wife Tere recently gave MDIA a major donation to help build an education center in Mitchell Canyon. His dad's love of the mountain took root in all the Doyle brothers, showing how deep those early experiences can go. It's the very reason MDIA is pushing hard to build a true education center in Mitchell Canyon: school-age kids. Those who live around the mountain are close enough to spend a day in Mitchell Canyon, where they can begin to build their own mountains of memory.



By Doyle Dixon

Ever since I was a child, my family and I have had a deep connection with Mount Diablo.

That connection started in 1968 when my father, Donald Dixon, was hiking with my oldest brother and the Boy Scouts. As they approached the radio towers at the Summit, my father passed away due to a heart attack. He was just 35 years old. This was a time before CPR training was taught to the general public, and well before cell phones, so response on the mountain was slow. His death was quite a shock to the whole family. His four sons ranged in aged from 4-9. My mother did an incredible job raising us, and we all became successful engineers like our father.

My brothers and I feel that our father is our guardian angel. His early passing helped me recognize my own potential for heart disease. I'm an avid cyclist. While cycling up Diablo one morning, I noticed my breathing was more excessive than usual. A treadmill test showed I was in excellent shape with no anomalies. It wasn't until I told the cardiologist of my father's early death, that he proposed an angiogram. By the time I left the angiogram procedure, I had two stents. Two weeks later my brother also had surgery on a blocked carotid artery. It is amazing how my father is still making a difference in our lives.

Donald Dixon grew up in North Dakota where he was the first Eagle Scout in the small town of 350 people. He and my mother moved to California in 1958 and settled in Livermore in 1963. He was very involved with the community and youth programs. He loved nature, hiking, and camping. We spent most of our vacations camping and visiting family in North Dakota.

Our brothers and I have continued our connection to Diablo throughout our adulthood. My wife and I were married at Round Top Picnic area; two of my brothers proposed to their wives on the mountain; and we scattered our mother's and grandmother's ashes on Diablo.



This past October my brothers and I hiked to the Summit to celebrate what would have been our dad's 90th birthday.

As teenagers growing up in Livermore, we rode our bikes up to the Junction Ranger Station a few times a year. My wife and I now live in Walnut Creek's Northgate community and ride our bikes on Mount Diablo several times a week. Mount Diablo has become our playground and sanctuary, so it is important to us to support MDIA through volunteering and financial assistance. Without community assistance, Mount Diablo would not be what it is today.

The education center project at Mitchell Canyon is a great opportunity for the Dixon family to memorialize our father who passed away so young. I am sure there are many families in the area with a lot of their own Mount Diablo stories and memories. My wife and I are on the mountain several times a week, it would be fun hearing about your experiences.

Photos:

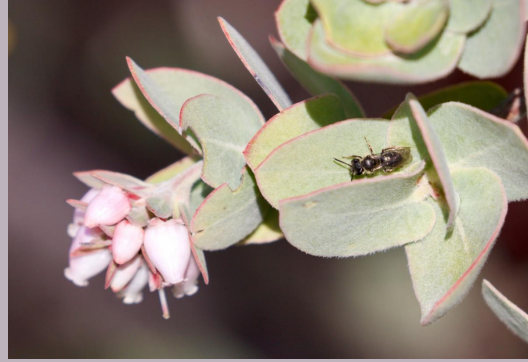
Left: Brothers Kyle, Doyle, and Brent Dixon remember their dad with a hike to the Summit on what would have been Donald Dixon's 90th birthday. Doyle is in the middle. Right: Donald Dixon

Wildlife Awakes: Native Bees on the Mountain

by Dan Sandri, MDIA BOD



Three mountain digger bees: two males atop a female. Males emerge first and search for emerging females. These bees nest in the ground in a single-celled burrow, and may remain underground for years, perhaps awaiting sufficient rains.



A mining bee suns itself on a Mount Diablo manzanita. Mining bees are ground nesters, named for their excellent excavations.

It happens every year: With the rains come rebirth. Hillsides turn green, the early flowers start to bloom. Mount Diablo manzanitas are already in bloom, and the native bees have begun to emerge to take advantage of the nectar and pollen.

It is not known precisely what cues native bees use to determine when to emerge from their underground nests (or cells in twigs for some bees), but ground temperatures or cumulative warmth may play a role. On a hike in mid-January, docents Steve Beatty, Dan Fitzgerald and I encountered a couple of these early-emerging bees on Knob Cone Point Road

Up to 250 species of native bees live on Mount Diablo, and 4,000 statewide. Yet people think it's all about honeybees!



COOL FACT: Unlike native bees, honey bees are not native to the US. They arrived on these shores in the 17th century with early European immigrants who wisely brought beehives along as a sure source of sweetness. Honey bees are significantly slower than native bees in pollinating our native plants and speed up when competing with our natives. This honey bee has been wholly co-opted by local flowers, who know what they're doing.

Photo: © Merav Vonshak, San Jose, iNaturalist CC-BY-NC



In more detail

FUND-RAISING UPDATE

The Ed Center & the money down to the cent

by MDIA Vice-President Mike Brandy

There is good news in this world. Our own little world of Mount Diablo is teeming with it. We need \$3 million to do this right. It's a lot. But as of today, we have \$599,115.00!

This is the most ambitious project MDIA has ever undertaken, and we're approaching the half-century mark since our founding. We began fund-raising in November, 2022, less than three months ago, and now have \$580,000 in donations and pledges, including major funding from our Board and community members, a pledge from MDIA of \$250,000, an open-hearted \$30,000 donation from Save Mount Diablo, and a critical donation from the Mount Diablo Audubon Society.



A major goal is to pump up our outreach to students by offering enough space for classes in natural history, art, and culture, as well as good access for school busses, which is woefully lacking now, and can't be improved at the other entrances due to the instability of the mountain roads. The January rains caused major damage to both North and South Gate Roads. Even given solid foundations, these two entrances are too narrow and twisty for school busses.

The first thing we did was to hire architects, Ware Associates, to reimagine the site. Ware turned in a beautiful set of conceptual drawings, inspiring us to create this legacy project.

The Education Center will be four times the size of the little trailer used as a visitor center now. It will include a large outdoor patio, accessible anytime. It will inspire visitors to appreciate and preserve all that Mount Diablo offers, in part through its green design and construction.

We are well on our way to our goal of \$3 million. If you haven't already donated but wish to, hit the button below with gusto. You can also help by connecting us with people in the community who may quickly see the worthiness of this project. We will be hosting house parties in the coming months to bring these people and groups together.

Email us [here](#).

Donate

IMAGINE

Below is our current visitor center in Mitchell Canyon from the back side. The parking lot is just beyond. Now, imagine this trailer gone, opening the view up the beautiful canyon and revealing the Native Plant Garden in the foreground of this photo. The new education center will be at the bottom of the slope to the right, facing west, with an open pavilion for all weathers. Yes?





John Lennon "Strawberry Fields" memorial, Central Park, New York, Wikipedia Commons.

[Visit our website](#)

[DONATE](#)

Mount Diablo Interpretive Association | P.O Box 346, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0346

[Unsubscribe](#) president@mdia.org

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data](#)
[Notice](#)

Sent by president@mdia.org powered by



Try email marketing for free today!