

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



Photo by Steve Smith

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Great things to see and do

### Hike of the Month: Knobcone to Oyster Point

Oyster Point is a special treat as it is a remote destination packed full of adventure and scenic beauty. With the opening of Knobcone Point Road (through Save Mount Diablo's Curry Canyon Ranch property) the opportunity for a proper loop hike abounds, yet this is not for the faint of heart. This hike is about 11 miles with 2,200 feet of elevation gain and this is a good time to do it while the weather is cool and before heavy rains (and mud) come.



Knobcone forest by Scott Heim

Starting from Curry Point we meander along Knobcone Point Road eventually making our way to Balancing Rock, a seemingly gravity-defying bit of Domingine sandstone. Just beyond you will pass through the gate and onto SMD property. (Please use the boot cleaning station before continuing.) The next 1.25 miles takes you through a lovely knobcone pine forest, through deep-shaded, rock-lined canyons, and across open grasslands. Views of the Summit and North Peak abound. Find another park gate which deposits you at the top of Riggs Canyon Road. This is a very steep descent into Riggs Canyon with expansive views of the southeastern side of the park including neighboring Morgan Territory Regional Preserve.



Balancing Rock by Steve Smith

At the end of Riggs Canyon, you'll head right along Old Finley Road until you find the single-track Oyster Point Trail on the right. Winding ups and downs take you through Jackass Canyon on a pleasantly shady 2-mile journey to the Oyster Point turnout. A signpost marks a trail up the hillside to the actual point, however, once you enter the chapparal up top the path is less obvious and you must hunt for the signpost. It is hidden off to the right, tucked in an alcove of chamise and black sage. Be sure to investigate the rocks around it, you will see the fossilized oysters for which it gets its name.

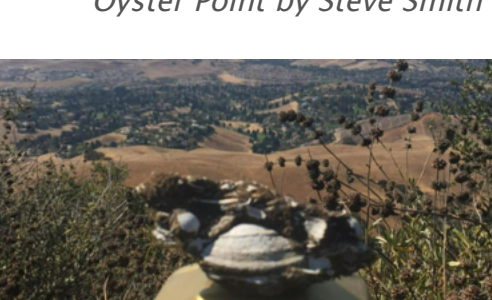
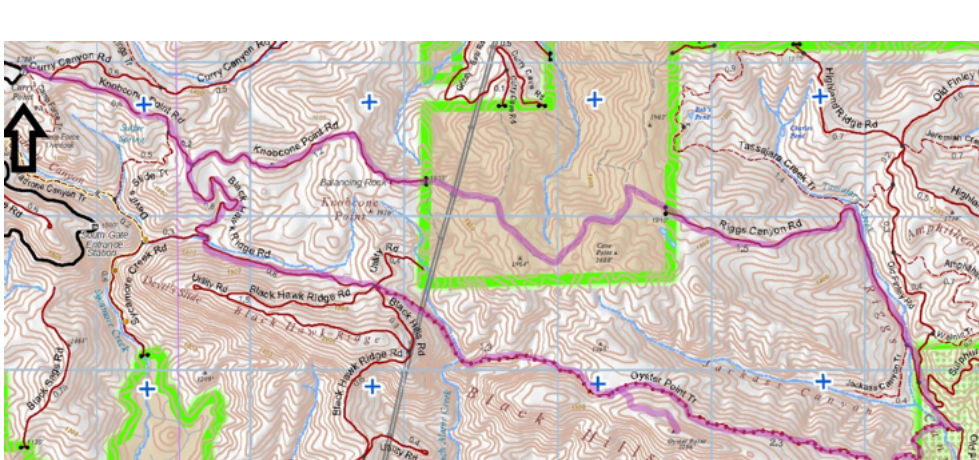


Cave Rocks by Steve Smith

Retrace your steps back down to the main trail and continue, admiring the views of Cave Rocks and Cave Point in the foreground. After another 1.3 miles you will find Blackhawk Ridge Road heading to the right and then steeply down. Continue along the road until you pop back up onto Knobcone Point Road and on back to Curry Point. Click [here](#) to download a .gpx route.



Oyster Point by Steve Smith



Oyster Fossils by Steve Smith

### Year End Fundraising

We have had a very successful year of fundraising to build the new Mitchell Canyon Education Center, including a major budget allocation of \$1 million from the state. But our work is not done! We would like to match that state allocation with our own \$1 million, and we're just \$150,000 away from that goal.

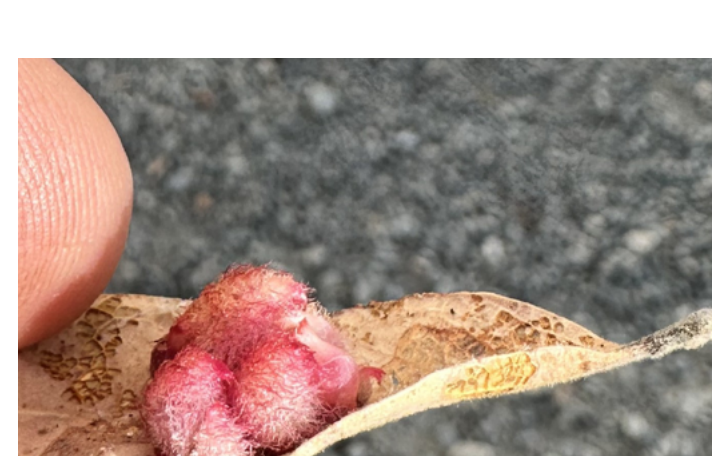
Our goal is to raise \$2M by the end of 2023. We are very fortunate to have received a challenge grant of \$20,000 from an anonymous donor. We now call on you, our friends, and neighbors who love Mount Diablo and share our vision to help us meet our Year-End Goal and double your impact by December 31, 2023.

You will be hearing more from us in the coming weeks as we enter the giving season, including Giving Tuesday and year-end giving. There are so many ways to give including stock transfer, automobile donation, required minimum distributions, employer matching, donor advised funds, and more. Click [here](#) to support our year-end campaign and [matching-gift-challenge!](#)

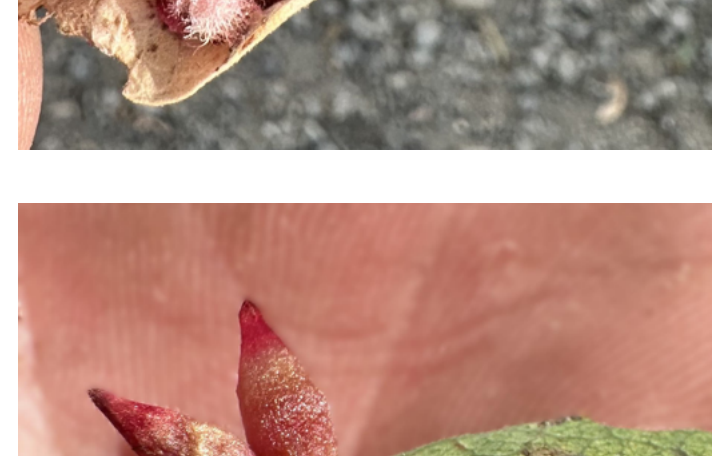


DONATE

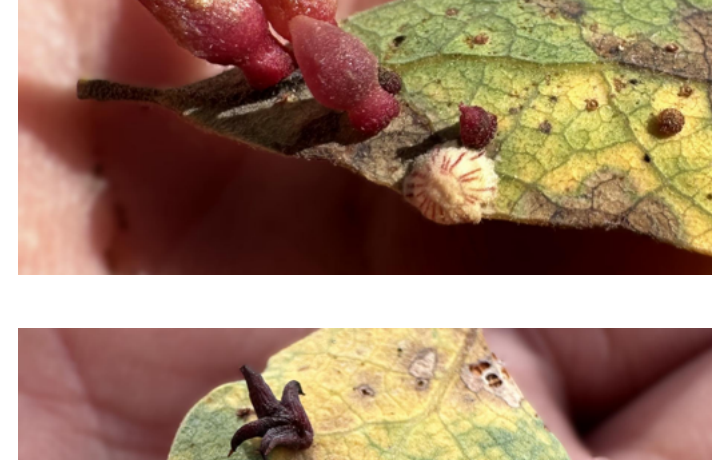
### Weird and Wonderful: Galls



As we wrap up autumn, there has been a bounty of wonderful things Fall-ing all around us. In addition to some brightly colored leaves, you may have also noticed something underneath our Oak trees. In addition to the acorns scattered about you may also spy some bizarre and colorful little shapes littering the ground...galls! They come in a wide variety of shapes, colors, textures, and sizes. Little kisses, witch's hats, flying saucers, puff balls, urchins, etc.



Each of those tiny vessels is a larval nursery of a tiny cynipid wasp. Early last spring, the mother wasp laid her eggs on a blue oak in the western foothills of Mount Diablo and flew away, never to return. The oak took over from there. It built this gall for the larva of the wasp, supplying it, free of charge, with food, water, shelter, and protection until it matures and flies away. The tree, minus the mother's DNA, is the parent of the wasp larva inside. The gall itself is made of oak.



Stranger still, blue oaks make unique nurseries for more than 40 species of these tiny native wasps. They obtain their architectural plans from the wasp mom, who tells them the specifications of her species either through her egg laying or the hatching and munching of her larva. The oak then makes up the order from scratch at its own expense.



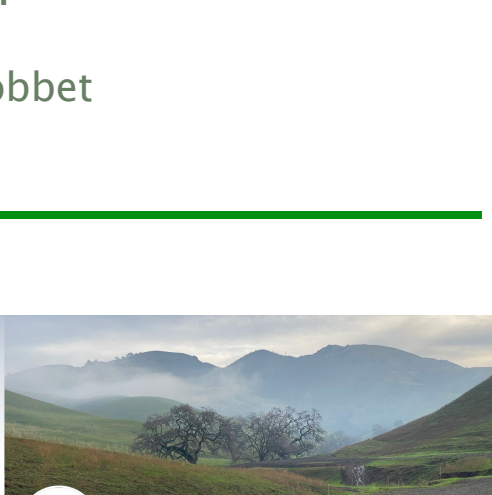
How wasp galls manage this free ride isn't yet explained in full by researchers, but it's fair to say that the oak is reprogrammed by the wasp. Maybe the wasp triggers an autoimmune disorder, making the tree unable to tell the difference between wasp cells and its own. Maybe the egg or the larvae irritate the oak like a grain of sand in an oyster, and the gall structure is the oak's defense: a gall as a pearl. Highly unlikely, I know. It seems certain, however, that galls do no damage to trees in most cases, though long-term droughts could change that.



—By Staci Hobbet

Gall Photos by Steve Smith

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!](#)



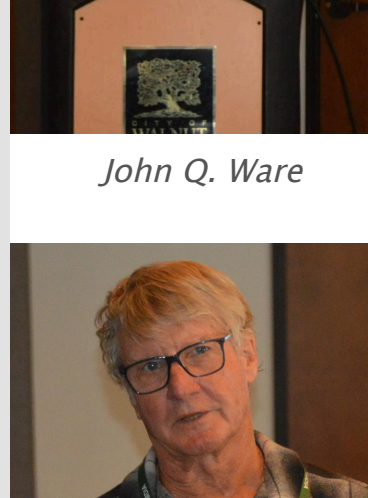
### Meet the Architect



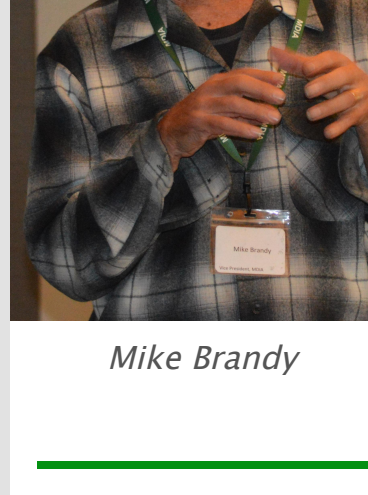
November Meet the Architect Event (photos by Jeff Martin)



On November 8th, MDIA hosted a special event for donors at the beautiful Heather Farm Community Center. This was an opportunity to hear more about our new Mitchell Canyon Education Center project, including the progress being made on fundraising efforts since the project's inception in 2021.



The main event of the evening was a presentation by our lead architect **John Ware**. Donors were delighted to see the latest sets of architectural drawings and ask questions about the center.



Attendees gained a better understanding of how the center will be built, what the site layout might look like, and what the vision is for providing places to gather, recreate and learn.

Thank you to all our donors who have supported this project thus far, we look forward to presenting more events in the future as planning, fundraising, and construction progress.

DONATE

### \$50,000 Donation from CBCA



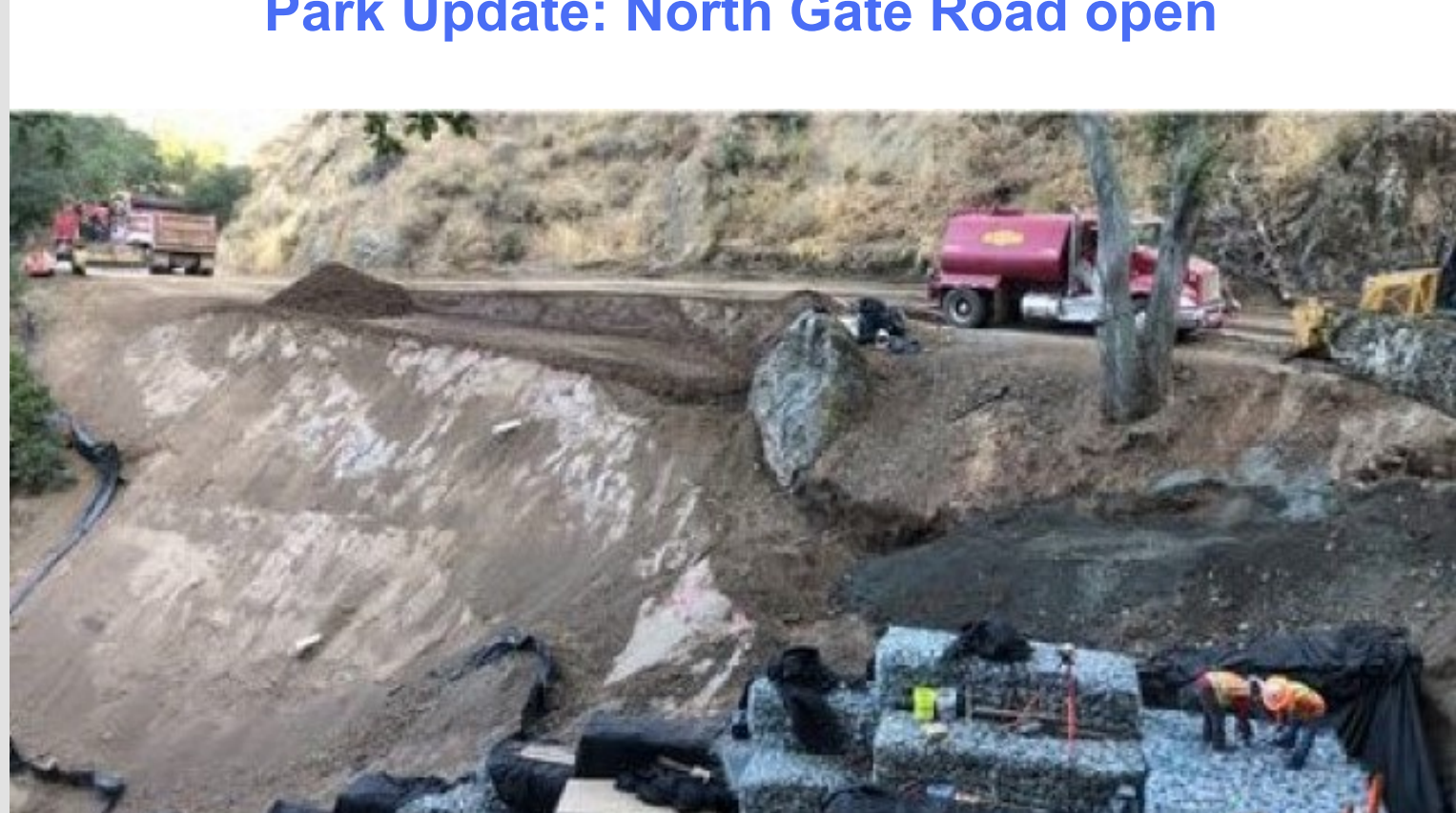
CBCA and MDIA Board of Directors with \$50,000 check

On November 9th, members of our Board of Directors gathered at Mitchell Canyon to welcome members of the Clayton Business and Community Association (CBCA) who were there to present a check in support of the new Education Center project. One of the largest donations ever made on their behalf, the \$50,000 will be utilized for the building project including a custom 3D topographic map of the mountain.

The CBCA formed in 1984, as a non-sectarian, non-partisan and non-profit 501(c)(3) community organization made up of local residents, business entities, and those who wish to serve the Clayton community. The CBCA is independent of the City of Clayton.

Thanks for your most generous support of this project!

### Park Update: North Gate Road open



Almost one year after last winter's storms, work to repair heavy damage throughout the park continues. One of those major projects was to rebuild North Gate Road which partially collapsed into a steep ravine below. After several months of road closure this Summer, and a couple of delays, the road was reopened again in early October! It's a wonder of engineering and construction, including a new stone wall and culvert on the upslope and a lot of industry downslope. Gabion baskets, versatile wire mesh boxes filled with stones, can be seen in the ravine supporting the vital thoroughfare up the northern side of the mountain.

Another project involving a closure is underway now through late November to replace a major culvert under Mitchell Canyon (Fire) Road just before Black Point Trail. This major recreational artery is vital to the area and crews are working double-time to get it finished. You can always find the latest updates on projects like these by visiting our [home page](#) and clicking on the Park Alerts link at the very top.

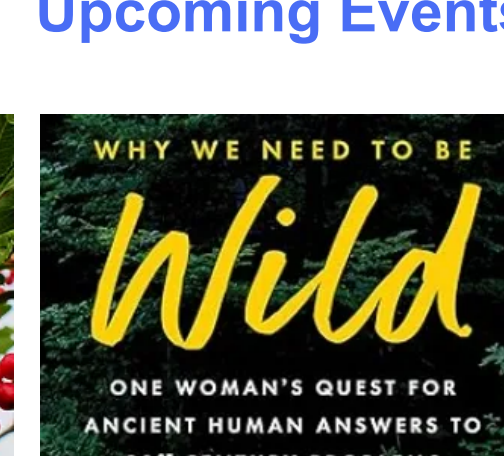
### Fun Fact

The wild turkey is a non-native to California. They were imported as a game bird in the 1940's and hail from Texas as the Rio Grande subspecies (*Meleagris gallopavo intermedia*). The male typically weighs around 20 pounds and females half of that. Despite their large size, wild turkeys can run at speeds up to 25 mph and fly up to 55 mph. Wild turkeys are active during the day, roosting in large trees at night to avoid predators.



Male turkey strut

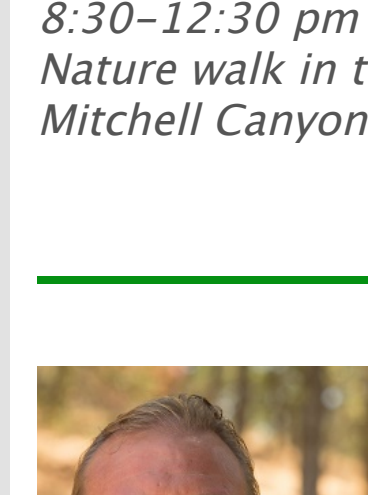
### Upcoming Events



**Hike: Nature Walk: Birds, Butterflies and Blooms**  
Wednesday, Nov 29  
8:30-12:30 pm  
Nature walk in the Mitchell Canyon area

**Webinar: Why We Need to Be Wild**  
Wed, November 29  
7-8:00 pm  
One woman's quest for Ancient Human Answers to 21st-Century Questions

**Webinar: The Mastino of Mastino in California Oaks**  
Wednesday, Dec 13  
7-8:00 pm  
How oak trees synchronize reproductive efforts



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

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