



# VIEWS

QUARTERLY NEWS FROM THE MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT - SUMMER 2022



Midpen Ranger Lucas on the Grasshopper Loop Trail in La Honda Creek Preserve by Leigh Ann Gessher/Midpen

## Celebrating 50 Years and 250 Miles of Trail

New Grasshopper Loop Trail Opens June 3 in La Honda Creek Preserve

As we celebrate our 50th anniversary, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District is also celebrating our 250th mile of public trail. The new 1.3-mile Grasshopper Loop Trail in La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve opens on the afternoon of Friday, June 3.

This easy-access loop trail is open to hiking year-round and welcomes on-leash dogs seasonally, and can be accessed from the preserve's Sears Ranch Road parking area near the town of La Honda. The trail was expertly designed and built by Midpen staff to be protective of the natural environment, stand the test of time and provide an enjoyable visitor experience.

"The trail crew came up with the name to honor two grassland-dependent species found here: the grasshopper and the grasshopper sparrow," Midpen Open Space Technician Kandahar Husin said. "The name also refers to the experience trail users will have

of hopping between this preserve's different ecosystems over a short distance, with some incredible views along the way."

The Grasshopper Loop Trail's minimal elevation gain, generous width and relatively short distance make it accessible to visitors of diverse ages and abilities.

**Along just over a mile, visitors to the trail traverse working ranchlands with grazing cattle, coastal grasslands, oak woodlands and redwood forests with expansive viewpoints along the way.**

La Honda Creek, along with the Mindego Hill area of Russian Ridge, are the only two Midpen preserves where



Xun Li

### Dog Use "Dos"

- Keep dogs on leash and stay on trail
- Keep dogs to the Grasshopper Loop Trail only
- Pick up dog waste and dispose of it in the provided receptacle

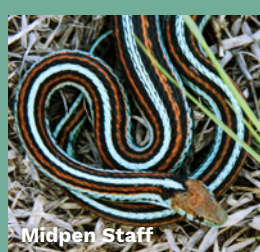
public trails pass through areas that are actively grazed by cattle as part of Midpen's Conservation Grazing Program. Grazing is used to help manage and enhance coastal grasslands and the native plants and wildlife they support.

Dogs will not be allowed on the

Grasshopper Loop Trail from August 1 through December 15, to protect the health and safety of visitors and support Midpen's conservation grazing program during calving season.

**Learn more and take a video tour of the new Grasshopper Loop Trail at [openspace.org/La-Honda-Creek](https://openspace.org/La-Honda-Creek).**

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE



### Saving the Most Beautiful Snake

How Midpen's potential purchase of a coastal property could help a local endangered species.



### A Half-Century of Conservation

Celebrating Midpen's founding, our collective accomplishments, and your vision for the future of open space.



### Free Guided Nature Activities

Midpen docent naturalists share their passion for nature with diverse activities throughout the summer.



# Summer 2022 Guided Activities

## Docent Naturalist-Guided Activities

Are you ready to explore and enjoy the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District preserves? We hope so and invite you to discover these extraordinary places that include many thousands of acres of permanently protected open space, from redwood forest to bay shoreline. All guided activities are developed and provided by docent naturalists who have completed an extensive training program. These docents volunteer their time to enrich your experiences and share knowledge with you about natural and cultural history.

To pique your interest, take a look here at the list of summer's guided activities and then refer to our website [openspace.org/guided-activities](https://openspace.org/guided-activities) for additional details. The activities are FREE and only some require reservations. Please note that some preserves have more than one access point and some activities meet at a preserve or location other than where the guided activity will occur. If there is no special *where to meet* information shown then the activity meets at the preserve's main parking lot.

## June

### Explorer Hike: Skyline to Sempervirens

Wednesday, June 1  
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.  
Saratoga Gap Preserve  
4.5 miles **M** **L**



Curt Bianchi

### Summer Birds and Picchetti History

Friday, June 3  
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.  
Picchetti Ranch Preserve  
3 miles **E**

### All Preserves Great & Small: Monte Bello

Friday, June 3  
9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.  
Monte Bello Preserve  
5.5 miles **M**

### Long Ridge Vistas

Saturday, June 4  
9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.  
Long Ridge Preserve  
5 miles **M**

### Earthquake Walk

Sunday, June 5  
1 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.  
Los Trancos Preserve  
2 miles **E**



Sharla Oliveri

### Signs of Summer

Wednesday, June 8  
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.  
Pulgas Ridge Preserve  
4 miles **M**



Janie Krag

### Butterflies of Sierra Azul

Friday, June 10  
10 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.  
Sierra Azul Preserve  
Where to Meet: Bald Mountain parking lot  
3.5 miles **M** **L**

### Maisie's Peak Vistas

Tuesday, June 14  
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.  
Fremont Older Preserve  
Where to Meet: Stevens Creek County Park-Chestnut Lot  
4.2 miles **M**

### Explorer Hike: Redwood Ramble

Wednesday, June 15  
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.  
Purisima Creek Redwoods Preserve  
Where to Meet: Purisima Creek Road entrance  
5 miles **R** **M** **L**

### Earthquake 101

Saturday, June 18  
1 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.  
Los Trancos Preserve  
2.5 miles **E**

## Daniels Nature Center

We are pleased to welcome visitors back to the David C. Daniels Nature Center, located on the edge of Alpine Pond in Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve. Stop by and say hello to staff, docents and Rolo the gopher snake. Throughout the spring and summer, the nature center will be open Saturdays and Sundays from noon until 5 p.m. unless public health concerns dictate a change.

Plan your visit to the center at [openspace.org/nature-center](https://openspace.org/nature-center).



Karl Gohl

## Legend

- E** Easy Hike/Walk: Flat to gently rolling hills. Total elevation gain less than 200 feet. Leisurely pace. Frequent stops.
- M** Moderate Hike: Steeper or more frequent uphill grades. Total elevation gain 200 to 600 feet. Leisurely to moderate pace.
- S** Strenuous Hike: Steep hills and/or long distances. Total elevation gain greater than 600 feet. Moderate to vigorous pace.
- L** Meal/Snack Break: Bring a lunch, dinner, or snack as appropriate.
- H** Equestrian Ride: Equestrians must provide their own horses (no stallions). Riders under age 18 must wear a helmet. Lead lines are required and breast collars are recommended for horses.
- R** Online Reservations Required: [openspace.org/guided-activities](https://openspace.org/guided-activities) website will accept reservations two weeks in advance of an activity date and allow a maximum of four people per reservation. No walk-up participation allowed. Please cancel your reservation if you can no longer attend.

### All Preserves Great & Small: Miramontes Ridge

Sunday, June 19  
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.  
Miramontes Ridge Preserve  
Where to Meet: Directions will be emailed  
3 miles **R** **M**

### Relics of Ranching

Thursday, June 23  
10 a.m. – 3 p.m.  
Long Ridge Preserve  
Where to Meet: Skyline Ridge Equestrian Lot  
11 miles **R** **H** **L**

## July

### Earthquake Walk

Sunday, July 3  
2 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.  
Los Trancos Preserve  
2 miles **E**



Paolo Vescia

### All Preserves Great & Small: Bear Creek Redwoods

Friday, July 8  
9 a.m. – 1 p.m.  
Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve  
5 miles **M** **L**

### Among the Trees, Bushes and Flowers

Tuesday, July 12  
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.  
Thornwood Preserve  
4 miles **M**

### All Preserves Great & Small: Coal Creek

Sunday, July 17  
9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.  
Coal Creek Preserve  
Where to Meet: Russian Ridge Caltrans vista point  
5 miles **M**



Scott Howard

### Views from the Saddle

Thursday, July 21  
10 a.m. – 3 p.m.  
Rancho San Antonio Preserve  
Where to Meet: Equestrian parking lot  
10 miles **R** **H** **L**

## August

### Signs of Summer

Tuesday, August 2  
8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.  
Pulgas Ridge Preserve  
4 miles **M**

### Earthquake Walk

Sunday, August 7  
2 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.  
Los Trancos Preserve  
2 miles **E**

### Health and Wellness Hike

Saturday, August 13  
12:30 p.m. – 4 p.m.  
Monte Bello Preserve  
4 miles **M**



Karl Gohl

### Horses, History & Views

Thursday, August 18  
10 a.m. – 3 p.m.  
La Honda Creek Preserve  
Where to Meet: Driscoll Ranch Event Center  
10 miles **R** **H** **L**

### The Bats of Alpine Pond

Saturday, August 20  
6:15 p.m. – 8:20 p.m.  
Skyline Ridge Preserve  
Where to Meet: Russian Ridge  
1.5 miles **E**



Ken Lunders

### All Preserves Great & Small: El Corte de Madera Creek

Sunday, August 21  
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.  
El Corte de Madera Creek Preserve  
Where to Meet: Skeggs Point  
4 miles **M**

### Transitions & Life Cycles

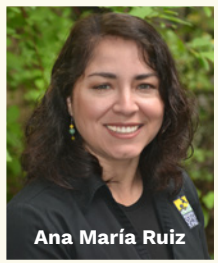
Thursday, August 25  
12:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.  
El Corte de Madera Creek Preserve  
5 miles **M**

### All Preserves Great & Small: Purisima Creek Redwoods

Tuesday, August 30  
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.  
Purisima Creek Redwoods Preserve  
Where to Meet: Purisima Creek Road entrance  
5 miles **R** **M**



## Maturing Into Our Mission



Ana María Ruiz

As we look back, this year, on 50 years since our founding in 1972, an evolution of the emphasis on the various strands of our braided mission reveals itself. For our first 40 years, Midpen focused on acquiring land – to preserve a greenbelt of open space in perpetuity. Our permanently protected lands have grown steadily through the years to more than 65,000 acres... and counting!

Much of this acquisition was accomplished through partnerships with Santa Clara, San Mateo and Santa Cruz counties, various cities and the state, support from community groups like Green Foothills, Audubon and the Sierra Club, and most notably our nonprofit partner Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST). Founded with great foresight in 1977 by Midpen as a private land trust, POST works privately with landowners and raises money to supplement public funding for land conservation.

**By around 2010, the success of community efforts led by Midpen and partners to save sensitive habitats around the bay and along the ridgelines was evident. With a connected greenbelt becoming visible, the momentum shifted to creating wildlife and trail linkages.**

For plants and wildlife, that means creating contiguous corridors and restoring the natural habitat to support biodiversity.

For people, it means expanding regional trails like the San Francisco Bay Trail and the Bay Area Ridge Trail, and envisioning new trails that reestablish prehistoric

bay-to-sea trade routes and provide more immersive experiences in nature. Beyond the benefits that spending time in nature brings to our well-being, open space lands provide other essential ecosystem services: clean air and water; viable agricultural lands that ensure a sustainable, local food supply; trees, grasslands and soil that store carbon and the overall ability to adapt to our changing climate.

To help prioritize these needs, Midpen convened an 18-month planning process that included input from thousands of community members to create a vision plan of 54 “portfolios” of supporting projects. In 2014, voters overwhelmingly approved Measure AA, a 30-year, \$300 million general obligation bond, to fund the first 25 projects. A few of the major accomplishments to date include:

- Habitat restoration and new public access at the summit of Mount Umunhum in 2017 and Ravenswood Preserve in 2021.
- Opening La Honda Creek Preserve in 2017 and the Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve in 2018.
- Restoring the lands’ natural functions so that it can provide clean air and water, carbon sequestration and habitat for plants and animals. For example, repairing old, eroding logging roads in El Corte de Madera Creek Open Space Preserve to significantly improve water quality in the San Gregorio Creek watershed, for people, fish and other wildlife downstream.
- Preserving more than 2,000 additional acres of land as public open space including grasslands and working ranchlands on the San Mateo County coast.

From 50 to Forever marks our commitment to continue protecting, restoring and managing these important natural habitats and to continue creating connections between people and nature on these lands. I invite you to join us as we continue celebrating 50 years of conservation throughout this momentous year.

[Learn more at openspace.org/50-years.](https://www.openspace.org/50-years)

### MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

Midpen helps plants, animals and people thrive throughout the greater Santa Cruz Mountains region by preserving a connected greenbelt of more than 65,000 acres of public open space. Midpen is a public agency created in 1972 by a grassroots voter initiative to protect the green spaces in parts of Santa Clara, San Mateo and Santa Cruz counties. We manage 26 open space preserves with nearly 250 miles of trails for you to explore, free of charge, all year long.

**Our Mission: To acquire and preserve a regional greenbelt of open space land in perpetuity, protect and restore the natural environment and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education.**

**Our mission on the San Mateo County Coast: To acquire and preserve in perpetuity open space land and agricultural land of regional significance, protect and restore the natural environment, preserve rural character, encourage viable agricultural use of land resources and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education.**

### BOARD MEETINGS

Board meetings are held on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month at 7 p.m. Please visit [openspace.org/board-meetings](https://www.openspace.org/board-meetings) for details.

Ana María Ruiz, General Manager  
Leigh Ann Gessner, Open Space Views Editor  
Renée Fitzsimons, Guided Activities Editor



San Francisco garter snake by Brian Hubbs.

### Recovery for San Francisco garter snakes can only happen here, on the San Francisco Peninsula.

Cloverdale is a coastal property near the Town of Pescadero, a large portion of which Midpen is considering purchasing from our nonprofit partner, the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST). This ecological jewel sits right in the middle of a region that harbors populations of San Francisco garter snakes and has the perfect patchwork of habitats to support them: large, intact coastal grasslands and a system of seasonal and year-round ponds and reservoirs.

“We are hopeful that the potential purchase of Cloverdale could assist in the recovery and possible reintroduction of San Francisco garter snakes at other

suitable locations throughout their historic range,” Midpen Senior Resource Specialist Julie Andersen said. “We monitor red-legged frog populations throughout Midpen lands, so we know which sites could potentially support San Francisco garter snakes. A reintroduction plan like this would be a long-term project.”

If Midpen acquires Cloverdale, extra-sensitive areas within the property may be set aside in one or more conservation management units with limited public access to ensure that San Francisco garter snakes, California red-legged frogs and other sensitive species can thrive.

Recovery for San Francisco garter snakes can only happen here, on the San Francisco Peninsula. It will take open space organizations like Midpen, POST and others working together with the support of the public to save the most beautiful snake in the world.

## Saving the Most Beautiful Snake in the World

How Midpen and Partners are Working Together to Save an Endangered Species on the San Mateo County Coast

With a rust-red head and bright red and turquoise stripes running down its dark black body, it is clear why the San Francisco garter snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis tetrataenia*) has been called the most beautiful snake in the world. Despite its name, this dazzling snake lives primarily in San Mateo County, though its historic range stretches from San Francisco to northern Santa Cruz County. Sadly, this reptilian gem is critically endangered, with only a few thousand individuals left in the wild.

Its brilliant colors do more than inspire awe. Amidst the reds, blues and greens of a marsh; the oranges, browns and golds of a grassland; or the iridescent ripples on the surface of a pond, San Francisco garter snakes blend in as they hunt. They eat a wide variety of prey including small mammals, fish, eggs and even highly toxic newts. Ironically for this

endangered species, one of its primary prey is the California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*), which is itself a federally listed threatened species.

Both the frogs and snakes require a patchwork of habitats to survive. In winter and spring, the frogs breed in freshwater ponds, marshes and vernal pools. In summer and fall they move upland to areas with grassy vegetation and ample rodent burrows in which they wait out the dry season. As the seasons change, San Francisco garter snakes follow their prey from habitat to habitat.

For San Francisco garter snakes to be removed from the endangered species list, they must reach 10 sustainable breeding populations of over 200 individuals each. Currently, there are only about a half-dozen discrete breeding populations, some of which do not clear that 200-snake threshold.



A Midpen biologist surveys a pond at Cloverdale for California red-legged frog eggs by Leigh Ann Gessner/Midpen.

### Cloverdale: Preserving an Ecological Jewel

Midpen is evaluating the purchase of a large portion of Cloverdale, a remarkable swath of open space and agricultural land on the San Mateo County Coast near Pescadero, from our partners at POST. We are engaging with partners and the public about this potential purchase throughout 2022.

**Learn more, take a video tour of the property and sign up to stay informed about this project via email at [openspace.org/Cloverdale](https://www.openspace.org/Cloverdale).**





**We've Moved!**  
**Midpeninsula Regional  
 Open Space District**  
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 openspace.org



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## Stay Connected to Your Open Space

Sign up to receive Midpen's monthly email updates in our *Plug Into Nature* e-newsletter. [openspace.org/subscribe](https://openspace.org/subscribe)

Follow us on social media:



## Reintroducing Prescribed Fire to Midpen's Land Management Toolbox

As part of our Wildland Fire Resiliency Program, Midpen staff is working to add prescribed fire to our land management toolbox in late 2023. We are currently developing the program details and seeking public input through community open houses this summer.

**Get more information and learn how to participate at [openspace.org/fire](https://openspace.org/fire).**



## OPEN STORIES Nonette Hanko

Midpen's 50th anniversary celebrations would not be complete without recognizing Nonette Hanko. She spearheaded the grassroots movement that led to the creation of Midpen by voters in 1972, and served 46 consecutive years on our publicly elected board of directors from 1972-2018. This year, she was selected as a local conservation hero by the Bay Nature Institute, and we are celebrating this well-deserved award and her legacy as a champion of open space.

Hanko was born and raised on the Peninsula where a love of music and time spent in nature shaped her childhood. An aspiring concert pianist, she studied music at San Francisco State University before marrying and moving to Palo Alto in 1950.

In the late 1960s, a recall of Palo Alto City Council members and Stanford University's proposed development of Coyote Hill began drawing Hanko out to public meetings.

"I'd lost the wild places I had as a little girl. In Palo Alto there were NO TRESPASSING signs all the way to Skyline. Coyote Hill was one of the few places I could go and hear nothing but bird song," Hanko said in recalling why she'd wanted to create Midpen.

Palo Alto Times reporter Jay Thorwaldson published an editorial on February 16, 1970, proposing that if conservationists really wanted to preserve land on the rapidly developing Peninsula, they should follow the lead of the East Bay community in creating an agency capable of acquiring land in the public trust. After reading it, Hanko cried herself to sleep and awoke the next morning inspired to take action.

She planned a meeting at her house, inviting everyone she knew who might be able to help create a local open space district. Over homemade blueberry coffeecake, Hanko galvanized a movement that has shaped our region.

**Learn more at [openspace.org/Hanko](https://openspace.org/Hanko).**



**"It's a dream come true, being able to do something about saving our open spaces for people and animals. There is still land that needs to be acquired and trails we need to connect. When you're building something important, and we're still building it, you never lose that joy."**



In celebration of our 50th Anniversary, Midpen hosted a Bayside Family Festival on April 30 in our Ravenswood Open Space Preserve near East Palo Alto.

The event was attended by more than 800 people of all ages who explored the Bay Trail and enjoyed interactive wildlife education, a nature-themed scavenger hunt, local music, dance performances and food.

**Save the date! The fun continues with a Coastside Community Celebration at Johnston Ranch in Half Moon Bay on September 10.**

**Learn more and RSVP to attend at [openspace.org/50-years](https://openspace.org/50-years).**

