

Environment

Old-Growth Forest Network Dedicates Bluff Lake Reserve

BY HEIDI FRON
Reporter

An ecological reserve in the San Bernardino Mountains was dedicated May 29 as an old-growth forest, the first in San Bernardino County to be admitted to the Old-Growth Forest Network (“the Network”).

The Wildlands Conservancy’s Bluff Lake Reserve, located at 7,600 feet, has mature forests of lodgepole pine, Jeffrey pine and white fir surrounding a unique alpine meadow and a 20-acre lake. The dedication ceremony, held lakeside beneath an enormous lodgepole pine,

geographical features of the location have enabled the majestic forest to thrive for more than 450 years.

Joan Maloof, professor emeritus at Salisbury University in Maryland, is the founder and executive director of the Network. She explained that the features of the forest at Bluff Lake fulfilled the requirements for designation as an old-growth forest, worthy of protection for enjoyment by future generations. After brief remarks, Maloof presented Myers with an official sign to mark the reserve as part of the Old-Growth Forest Network.

Another presentation surprised the attendees. Stephanie Thot from the Big



TWC

The Bluff Lake Reserve south of Big Bear was dedicated on May 29 as an official part of the Old-Growth Forest Network.

Forest Service (USFS) land.

THE NETWORK

The Old-Growth Forest Network was established in 2011 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Maloof is a scientist who enjoys studying the natural workings of our amazing Earth, observing systems that enable trees, flowers and animals to subsist on their own with no help from humans.

However, she discovered that such natural places were being logged and converted into monoculture tree farms.

Maloof understood the need to harvest trees for board and fiber, but she developed concerns about sacrificing biodiversity and the beauty of natural places. She recognized that some places should be left to nature’s processes so people can witness how nature works.

She wrote and published a book entitled “Teaching the Trees: Lessons from the Forest” and soon learned that few of her readers had ever seen an old-growth forest. She

discovered that almost all of America’s original forests are gone. Fewer than 1 percent remain in the east, and only 5 percent exist in the western United States.

Many of these forests are the last ones left in a community. Most often they are privately owned and threatened with development. The Network has helped local groups save these forests by advising private landowners about their forests, enabling them to realize the value and merit of preservation.

Through Maloof’s efforts, 20 old-growth forests joined the Network during the first year. Now there are one or more forests in California, Colorado, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Virginia. She and her nonprofit team are actively working in Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, New Mexico, Vermont and other states.

“We want to be the organization that ties the forest groups together across the

country, and perhaps someday across the planet,” Maloof explained. “The time is ripe for a national organization to support, inspire and direct grassroots forest conservation, saving some ancient forests for people to experience for all time.”

VISITOR OPPORTUNITIES

The Bluff Lake Reserve is open seven days a week to visitors between May 1 and Nov. 1, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. The property is deeply snowed in throughout winter and spring. USFS gates are closed and locked when snow accumulates.

Use is restricted to hiking designated trails, picnicking, photography, bird-watching and quiet reflection. Many other passive activities are acceptable, and dogs on leashes are welcome.

The Champion Lodgepole Pine is accessible from the reserve. See the posted maps or ask the ranger on duty for a map and directions.

Leave No Trace principles must be observed. The property is an ecological reserve. It is home to unique plant communities and wildlife. Access to the reserve will continue as long as visitor use is acceptable.

ACCESS

Take State Highway 18 east toward Big Bear Lake. At the west end of town where the highway becomes Big Bear Boulevard, turn right either onto Tulip Lane or Mill Creek Road.

At Oak Knoll Lodge, turn south on Forest Service Road 2N10. The pavement ends after about a mile and becomes an improved dirt road. When conditions are dry, the road is accessible by passenger car, but be careful with low-profile vehicles. When wet, precipitation might pool water across Forest Service roads, in which case vehicles with high clearance are recommended.

Slowly follow the 2N10 another 2.6 miles to the junction with 2N86. Veer left, toward the sign that reads “Bluff Lake Reserve.” After 1/2 mile, look for a sign on the right: “Bluff Lake Reserve 1/2.” Turn right and proceed another 1/2 mile to the parking area on the right.

Visit www.wildlandsconservancy.org for more information. Call (909) 790-3698 with any questions or to find out about property closures.



The Bluff Lake Reserve features an old-growth forest, a 20-acre lake and an alpine meadow with federally threatened and endangered wildflowers.

was hosted by David Myers, founder and executive director of The Wildlands Conservancy (TWC).

Master of ceremonies was Tim Krantz, professor of environmental studies at the University of Redlands, who described how the unique ecological and

Bear Chamber of Commerce presented a Certificate of Appreciation to TWC for its work in preserving land. Sara Seburn, marketing and communications director, accepted the certificate on behalf of TWC.

Also attending the event were TWC preserve managers, rangers, naturalists, current and former staff members, and Peter Jorris, executive director of the San Bernardino Mountains Land Trust.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the group hiked a short distance from the lake to pay homage to the Champion Lodgepole Pine – one of the biggest in the world – with a circumference of 121 feet and a tremendous height that towers over its neighboring pines on U.S.

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LACC

Turf grass mitigates the “heat island” effect. Grassy areas are 14 degrees cooler than bare soil, remove dust and dirt from the air and purify percolating water.

Mountain Greenery Is More Than Scenery

BY RICK ZIMMERMAN
Special to the Mountain News

While we all know how beautiful the mountain landscape is, there is much more behind this attractive greenery than meets the eye. Trees, ground cover and grassy areas can be considered the “Earth’s living skin.” They assist to reduce carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, remove the carbon and return oxygen to the environment.

Congress has acknowledged the benefits of turf grass to mitigate the “heat island” effect, reduce energy consumption and contribute to the efforts to reduce global warming trends. There are, unfortunately, some who do not fully agree with these claims.

Well-maintained grass areas are the largest carbon sinks in the country, and trees and other plants also contribute. In addition, they act as nature’s air conditioner: On a hot summer day, grass areas are 14 degrees cooler than bare soil and 30 degrees cooler than asphalt. Grasses also remove dust and dirt from the air, and purify water percolating to the water table.

The Lake Arrowhead Country Club (LACC) irrigates everything with reclaimed water from the sewage treatment plant, and the grass and underlying soils filter it clear by the time it reaches the water table far below.

One acre of well-maintained turf eliminates approximately 920 pounds of carbon per acre per year, or 3,373 pounds of carbon dioxide per acre per year. Using the 90 acres of turf at LACC as an example, 540 tons of carbon dioxide are extracted from the air; 147.3 tons of carbon are stripped, and the oxygen is returned to the environment. The carbon is utilized by the plants to create blades of grass, leaves, stems and wood.

LACC also has more than 1,000 mature trees, one of which is over 400 years old. One mature tree removes 48 pounds of carbon dioxide per year, so LACC removes 24 tons of carbon dioxide, or 6.6 tons of carbon, per year from the atmosphere.

Various other sites on the mountain contribute to the green efforts, including many schools, parks, the UCLA Conference Center, surrounding forests and many residential properties. The mountain greenery is a significant contributor in keeping our environment much cleaner.

For more information, contact Rick Zimmerman through LACC at (909) 337-2441.

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