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Burton Valley Cub Scouts Tour Shell Ridge with Walnut Creek Mayor

Submitted by Dean Smith



Mayor Bob Simmons points to a habitat restoration site above Deer Lake during a tour of Shell Ridge with the Burton Valley Pack 645 Cub Scouts. Photo provided

Local Cub Scout Pack 645 of Lafayette recently were given a private tour of Shell Ridge and Indian Valley by Walnut Creek Mayor Bob Simmons in an effort to learn more about wildlife conservation and habitat restoration.

Pack 645, a Cub Scout group of 6- to 11-year-old boys from Burton Valley Elementary School, met the mayor at the Indian Valley Elementary School entrance to Shell Ridge and spent several hours learning about oak trees, invasive species and the need for habitat conservation. Mayor Simmons discussed the extensive work done by the volunteers over the years, and demonstrated his passion for hiking and wildlife conservation.

In addition to a scenic walk, the hike was extremely educational for the Scouts, who learned about the work being done by the Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation in various parts of the Shell Ridge region, including the restoration of Deer Lake, previously called Ames Pond. The Scouts hiked approximately three miles with the mayor to see firsthand the work being done to restore the pond.

The tour and hike was a component of the Cub Scout naturalist achievement, which includes learning about ecosystems, observing wildlife and protecting the environment. Dating back to when the property was acquired in 1976, the city of Walnut Creek and the Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation have conducted extensive efforts to help restore the area and enhance the ecosystem surrounding Deer Lake. These efforts have included planting trees, trash removal, improving the drainages leading into the lake and planting native grasses. Volunteers have also removed invasive species of vegetation to allow planting of additional trees, willows, milkweed and elderberry.

The restoration of Deer Lake is an ongoing effort to enhance the local habitat and encourage migratory birds to visit the area.

The Scouting program at Burton Valley Elementary offers programs for first to fifth-graders. The activities include hiking, camping, leadership training and a wide-range of adventure catered to the age level. For information, call (925) 385-8877. The local council can be reached at (925) 674-6100.

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