



David Danelski Stories

David Danelski, <https://twitter.com/#!/daviddanelski>, has recently written a number of articles about questionable activities taking place on and around the San Jacinto Wildlife Area.

The Friends are very grateful to David for his fine investigative reporting and appreciate his keeping the public informed about not only the SJWA, but also about many environmental issues taking place in Riverside and surrounding Counties.

See David Danelski, page 6

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IF YOU GOT A HARD COPY OF THIS NEWSLETTER IN THE MAIL AND HAVE AN EMAIL ADDRESS, PLEASE EMAIL northfriends@northfriends.org ASAP. If you do not give us an email, we will continue to send you a hard copy.



A Gyrfalcon (left) and an American Golden-Plover (above) at the SJWA.
 Top photo by Dave Furseth
 Left photo by Rosedith Marx

Read more about the Gyrfalcon in the Press-Enterprise. Here's the link:
<http://www.pe.com/local-news/topics/topics-environment-headlines/20120208-san-jacinto-off-course-arctic-gyrfalcon-draws-bird-watchers.ece>

Gyrfalcon: First Recorded Sighting in Riverside County

By Rosedith Marx

On January 15, 2012, a Gyrfalcon was first sighted by Mark Chappell at the San Jacinto Wildlife Area. First chance I had to go out to see this falcon was January 20, 2012. I thought that since it was a Friday, that maybe ten birders might be out there checking out this bird, like other rare bird sightings. To my surprise, there were about 20 to 25 cars and maybe 30 to 40 birders, including Jon L. Dunn. Mr. Dunn has co-authored and co-edited several bird books for National Geographic and Peterson Field Guides.

Some of the other rare bird sightings in 2011 were American Golden-Plover, Bobolink, Glossy Ibis, Eastern Phoebe, Palm Warbler and Rough-legged Hawk. San Jacinto Wildlife Area is a very important area for migrating birds. During the last Christmas Bird Count in December 2011, there was a preliminary count of 146 species for the San Jacinto Valley. There are also weasels, turtles, insects, plants, etc. It would devastate the bird population that shares this valley with us, if the wildlife area was lost due to development in the area. There would be no place for the future generations to come and enjoy the diversity of wildlife that lives among us.

LEGAL ISSUES

Information about all of these cases can be obtained online by going to <http://www.public-access.riverside.courts.ca.gov/OpenAccess/> and typing in the case number

VOL Housing Project

The Villages of Lakeview Project extends over 2,800 acres and consists of 1,350 dwellings, a mixed use town center, four schools and a library, and nearly 1,000 acres of open space, located north and south of the Ramona Expressway, adjacent to both the San Jacinto Wildlife Area and the Communities Nuevo and Lakeview.

On Friday March 2, 2012, Judge Sharon Waters heard argument on the seven CEQA issues [Green House Gas Impacts, Failure to Recirculate the EIR, Health and Air Quality, Traffic, Habitat Conservation Plan, Growth Inducing Impacts] and two General Plan Issues [General Plan Consistency, Extra-Ordinary Amendment on which the *Friends prevailed in the court's tentative statement of decision.*

The final statement of decision will be issued by the court within 90 days. [Friends of the Northern San Jacinto Valley et al. v. County of Riverside et al. RIC10007572] Check the website where we will post the final statement of decision as soon as it becomes available to us.

Edison's Lakeview Substation

Friends made comments on the final EIR for Edison's Lakeview Substation saying that they did not properly implement the western Riverside County multiple species habitat conservation plan when they failed to properly protect the San Jacinto Crownscale, an endangered plant found only in the San Jacinto Valley. In addition, the substation is primarily being built to serve the Villages of Lakeview Project, which will not be built until housing prices go

back up to August 2007 levels, if ever. <http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/Environment/info/esa/lakeview/index.html>

Ramona Duck Club

The Ramona Duck Club Conservation Easement hearing was held on February 24, 2012, by Judge Gloria Trask. The court denied the writ. We alleged that the Conservation Easement was subject to CEQA because there was substantial evidence of a fair argument of significant environmental impacts because the shooting facilities allowed on the Conservation lands did not prohibit the use of lead shot, the Ramona Duck Club has wrongly blocked public access to the San Jacinto Wildlife Area lands, and the shooting facilities conflicted with the wildlife conservation objectives of the MSHCP. We are waiting for the Judge's Statement of Decision to determine the basis for the ruling and will be appealing the ruling to the Appellate Court. . [Paulek v. CA Dept. of Fish & Game et al. RIC 1104726]

Lake Perris Dam Remediation

The Lake Perris Dam Remediation Project matter will be heard in 2012 after the administrative record is complete. In that case we alleged that the Department of Water Resources did not properly mitigate for wildlife impacts, did not properly implement the Stephens' kangaroo rat Habitat Conservation Plan and the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan, and improperly deferred the CEQA analysis of the Emergency Evacuation Channel. [Paulek v. Department of Water Resources RIC1120142; <http://www.water.ca.gov/lakeperris/>

City of Moreno Valley EIR

The City of Moreno Valley Notice Of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) for World Logistics Center Specific Plan improv-

erly/wrongly includes public lands of the San Jacinto Wildlife Area within the Specific Plan boundary as project open space (See: NOP Table 2 The World Logistics Center Specific Plan Land Use Summary and Figure 3- Land Use Map). Apparently, the City of Moreno Valley and Mr. Benzeevi refuse to acknowledge/recognize the Open Space lands designated in the Specific Plan were acquired by the State Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) in 2001 for inclusion in the Department's San Jacinto Wildlife Area (1000 acres for 16 million dollars). The Friends of the Northern San Jacinto Valley's major environmental concern with the proposed project is the impact of the World Logistic Center on these newly acquired public lands and the wildlife resources the land was acquired to conserve. The project proposes forty-one (41.6) million square feet of building area providing for warehouse distribution facilities on the northern boundary of the SJWA. http://www.moreno-valley.ca.us/community/news/news_12/022212wlc.html

Management Plan for SJWA

All Wildlife Areas owned and operated by the Department of Fish and Game are required to have a Management Plan which will tell the on-site manager how to manage the endangered species, recreational and hunting habitats and activities which take place on the area.

A management plan for the SJWA has never been officially approved, although several draft plans have been developed over the years. The SJWA has never had a management plan.

The San Jacinto Wildlife Area management plan is especially important because there are a number of public uses of the area: (1) the SJWA is a Core Reserve in the western Riverside County multiple species habitat con-

Continued on next page

San Jacinto Levee Project

By Jenny Gagnon

A preliminary study given to City of San Jacinto officials in November states that the building of an elevated road that would double as a flood-control levee for the San Jacinto River on the northern side of the city appears feasible from an environmental perspective. The preliminary study done by The Sauls Co., based in Laguna Beach identified a proposed route for the road and compared that to the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority's multi-species habitat conservation maps.

"It stays outside the areas targeted for conservation," Edwin Sauls said. Rather than following an earthen berm just south of the river, the proposed route for the elevated road levee goes along existing Record Road at State Street westward through farmland about 1,000 feet north of the Ramona Expressway. That would avoid the need to study the effect on some riverbed dwelling species such as the federally endangered San Bernardino kangaroo rat and the Los Angeles pocket mouse.

There would still be a need to study the burrowing owl population, but,

Legal Issues

Continued from previous page

ervation plan with over 60 covered species occurring on the wildlife area, including the San Jacinto Crownscale [only in the San Jacinto Valley] and the tricolored blackbird; (2) the SJWA is the most popular waterfowl and upland game hunting area in southern CA; (3) According to our local experts, like Chet McGaugh, the SJWA is the best birding in southern CA and draws birders from all over the US and the world. (4) The SJWA has the potential to become the premier environmental edu-



The San Jacinto riverbed near State Street, north of the Ramona Expressway. The proposed elevated road levee would be along existing Record Road, about 1,000 feet north of the Ramona Expressway. *Photo by Jenny Gagnon*

according to Sauls, it would take discovery of three or more pairs of owls in the road alignment to trigger more detailed environmental studies and possible protective measures. A final report will come out in January 2012.

San Jacinto City Engineer, Habib Motlagh, estimates this elevated road alternative would remove about 500 acres from the flood plain whereas a traditional levee would remove about 2,000 acres from the flood plain and open it up to development. Motlagh estimates that the price tag for an elevated road between State Street and Sanderson Avenue south of the San Jacinto River may be in the \$15 mil-

lion range.

A new levee is needed to provide for 100-year flood protection. The existing river channel and levee is considered inadequate. Past breaches of the existing levee have resulted in damage to agricultural lands and resort facilities, flooded roads, displaced local residents, and inundated large areas adjacent to the river. The levee would also alleviate flooding and disruption of traffic circulation for the major transportation corridors of Ramona Expressway, State Street, and Sanderson Avenue within the City of San Jacinto.

An initial report dated July 2007, stated that the San Jacinto River likely constitutes a wildlife movement corridor between the San Jacinto Mountains, the Badlands, the San Jacinto Wildlife Area, and Lake Perris. Impacts to wildlife movement are to be addressed in a forthcoming Environmental Impact Report.

Although it is still early in the development of a plan for the elevated road, suggestions have been made that a protected bike lane be included.

Road feasible as levee, The Press Enterprise, November 30, 2011
Initial Study for San Jacinto River Levee Stage 4 Project, Albert A. Webb Associates, July 2007

Nature walks and field trips at the San Jacinto Wildlife Area

This spring Friends are sponsoring Raptor, Butterfly, Plant and Bird Box walks at the wildlife area. We hope you can join us and invite your friends and family to learn more about all aspects of nature and how we are connected to and dependent upon the well-being of the environment for our own well-being. All Friends walks are free and open to all. Children are welcome! Binoculars and bird books can be borrowed for the day. For more information call 909-228-6710 or 951-659-2718.

Bird Walks

With Rosedith and Joyce

Mar. 11 & Apr. 8, 9am to 11am

Come and join Rosedith and Joyce at the SJWA to observe birds feeding, mating, nesting and watching us watching them. The second Sunday of every month (except summer). Leaders: Rosedith Marx (951-321-9812) and Joyce Schwartz.

Butterflies, Dragonflies, Damselflies and Moths

Sat. Mar. 17, 9am to 12 noon.

Gordon Pratt, etymologist and butterfly specialist, will help you identify the butterflies, dragonflies, damselflies and moths which you can see on the area, and then take you around the wetlands to capture and observe them close up. This walk is excellent for

Schedule of Nature Walks at SJWA Spring 2012

(Schedule is subject to change)

Subject	Date
Bird Walk	Sun., Mar. 11, 9 a.m. - Noon
Butterflies, Dragonflies, Damselflies and Moths	Sat., Mar. 17, 9 a.m. - Noon
Bird Walk	Sun., Apr. 8, 9 a.m. - Noon
Plants and Wildflowers	Sat., Apr. 14, 9 a.m. - Noon
Bird Nesting Boxes	Sat., May 12, 9 a.m. - Noon

Lake Perris State Recreation Area Birding Walks

Saturdays, 9 a.m. – 11 a.m. • Meet: Lot 12

May 12 • June 9 • Sept. 8 • Oct. 13 • Nov. 10

These are moderately easy walks of 1-2 hours. All are welcome. Wear comfortable shoes and bring water, snacks and binoculars. Free with paid day use fee or camping fees.

students of all ages who want hands on experience. Bring hand lens and butterfly net, if you have one. Contact: Sue Nash at 909-228-6710. (See page 6)

Plants and Wildflowers

Sat. Apr. 14. 9am to 12 noon.

David Bramlet and Patrick Temple, botanists and rare plants of the SJWA specialists, will introduce you to the main plants of the coastal sage scrub, grasslands, riparian and wetland habitats of the SJWA. We hopefully will see the San Jacinto Crownscale, Spreading Navarretia and Thread-

leaved Brodiaea, all plants rarely found outside of the SJWA. Contact Sue Nash 909-228-6710.

Bird Nesting Boxes

Sat. May 12. 9 am to 12 noon.

Samantha Dempster and Dan Lacey, naturalist and bird nesting box specialists, will be taking us to some of the 45 nesting boxes on the area and show us how to inspect, clean and survey the boxes. Information will be provided on how to install and maintain nesting boxes and attract a variety of cavity nesting birds to your yards. Contact Sue Nash 909-228-6710.

Bird Checklist for Beginning Birders

Rosedith Marx has shortened the exhaustive list of the San Jacinto Wildlife Area for beginning birders which shows 175 of the over 350 birds on the exhaustive list prepared by Doug Morton and others. This is the list we are now distributing on our birding walks. Both list can be downloaded at www.northfriends.org before you come on our walks.

On our website you can also find more about the SJWA and Friends; nature walks, take action, membership, contacts; past newsletters; online donations and signing up for email delivery of newsletters and bulletins.

Directions to the SJWA

All walks begin in the SJWA headquarters parking lot, 17050 Davis Road, Nuevo CA. Tel. (951-928-0580) Because Davis (Theodore) Road is closed from Moreno Valley the only access is north off the Ramona Expressway — despite what your GPS may tell you. There is now a traffic light on Davis Rd.

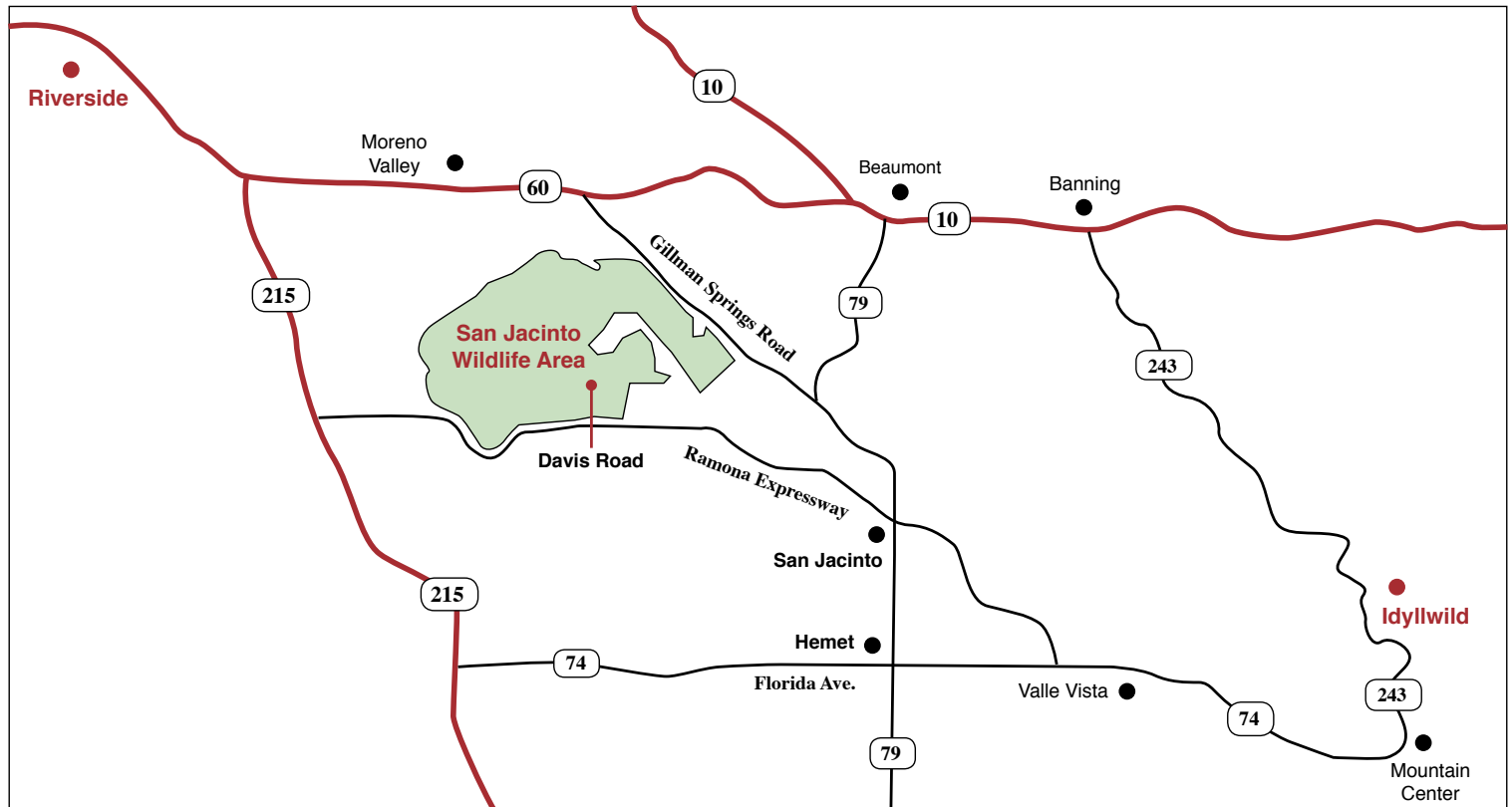
From Moreno Valley: go south on Perris Blvd; east on

Ramona Expressway; north 2.3 miles on Davis Rd.

From San Jacinto/Hemet: go west on Ramona Expressway; north 2.3 miles on Davis Rd.

From Interstate 215: go east on Ramona Expressway; 2.3 miles north on Davis Road.

USE EXTREME CAUTION. If raining, call area office for road conditions: (951) 928-0580.



Information About the San Jacinto Wildlife Area

The San Jacinto Wildlife Area is 19,000 acres of wildlife habitat managed by the California Department of Fish and Game. Its lands are partial mitigation for the State Water Project, the project that brings water from northern California to southern California so that we can live and work here. It is a Stephens' kangaroo rat reserve for the Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency (RCHCA); it is a cornerstone reserve in the Riverside County Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Agency (MSHCP), the county reserve system which is supposed to protect and preserve the county's endangered ani-

mals and plants. Tens of thousands of waterfowl and shorebirds winter in the northern San Jacinto Valley. It is a known resting point and/or wintering site for migrating birds traveling the Pacific Flyway. The northern San Jacinto Valley is known for its large number of wintering birds of prey (peregrine falcon, bald eagle, ferruginous hawk, prairie falcon). The SJWA is considered one of the premier hunting areas in southern California. (All state-owned wildlife areas allow hunting. Hunting fees help support the acquisition of wildlife habitat throughout the state of California.) The northern San Jacinto Val-

ley is considered a Significant Natural Area by the California Department of Fish and Game. The northern San Jacinto Valley and Mystic Lake are considered Important Bird Areas by the National Audubon Society. The San Jacinto Wildlife Area represents an \$80 million investment of the taxpayers' money. The San Jacinto Wildlife Area includes the 10,000 acre Davis Road Unit (includes 2,000 acres of Mystic Lake) plus the 9,000 acre Potrero Creek Conservation Unit. San Jacinto Wildlife Area, 17050 Davis Road, Lakeview; (951) 928-0580; <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/lands/wa/region6/sanjacinto/index.html>

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As these stories come to our attention, we try to send them out to all those whose email we have, but you may also want to follow David directly. Look for an article on the Villages of Lakeview Project when the Final Statement of Decision is issued. Several recent articles about the Ramona Duck Club and the apparently illegal farming of DFG land can be found at: <http://www.pe.com/local-news/topics/topics-environment-headlines/20120218-san-jacinto-army-corps-probes-wet-lands-area-grading.ece>; <http://www.pe.com/local-news/topics/topics-environment-headlines/20120202-san-jacinto-habitat-will-be-off-limits-to-farming.ece>; <http://www.pe.com/local-news/local-news-headlines/20120114-san-jacinto-endangered-plant-loses-to-duck-ponds.ece>; <http://www.pe.com/local-news/topics/topics-environment-headlines/20120114-san-jacinto-wildlife-reserve-land-farmed.ece>

**Wanted:
Submissions For
Future Newsletters**

The Friends welcome articles for the newsletter, subject to the Board's review and approval, regarding any and all issues relating to the SJWA. We want to know about any issue of concern to you, a great birding day, book or movie reviews about the environment, poems, photos, etc. Submit your contributions to northfriends@northfriends.org and we will include as many as possible in future issues.



Photo by Gordon Pratt

Butterflies at the San Jacinto Wildlife Area

By Butterfly Walk Leader Gordon Pratt

Most of the butterflies that we will observe are common species found in southern California. We will probably see many medium sized brownish butterflies heading in a generally northern direction. These are painted ladies in the process of migration. They will be coming from the drying deserts and heading north in search of cooler moister conditions where they will find potential food plants to oviposit upon.

The medium sized white butterflies will be mostly checkered whites with a few cabbage whites. The checkered white is native to North America while the cabbage white was introduced from Europe. The females of these white butterflies will be searching for various mustards to oviposit upon. If lucky we will see monarchs or queens fly by. If we find large blooming bushes such as yellow composites we may observe some of them feeding upon the nectar of these plants.

There will be tiny blue butterflies and checkered skippers that will be flying low to the ground. These tiny blue butterflies are amongst my favorite butterflies. Most of them at this time of year will be acmon blues and pigmy blues. Later in the season there will be Bernardino blues found flying amongst the buckwheat flowers. The checkered skippers utilize various species of mallows as caterpillar food plants.

Because of the permanent bodies of water there will be other large flying insects. Most of these will be the dragonflies and damselflies. Many of the dragonfly species are active in summer only, but there are some that are active most of the year. The largest species are the common green darner and the Blue eyed darner. Both of these species are long lived and travel great distances during their lives. A smaller dragonfly that could be common is the variegated meadowhawk.

Birds of Prey (Raptor) Walk Report

On Saturday February 25, Tom Paulek and Rose Marx lead over 50 people around the Walker Duck Club and Viewing Platform areas of the wildlife area. Most of those attending, from babes in strollers to long-retired seniors, saw nine of the 22 raptors known to occur on the area and got a long view of white pelicans on Mystic Lake for a special treat.

The birds of prey seen include the Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Northern Harrier, Osprey, Red-Tailed Hawk, Kestrel, White-Tailed Kite, Peregrine Falcon, and Turkey Vulture. Although we did not see the Gyrfalcon on this trip, a wonderful time was had by one and all.



Pelicans at Audubon Walk

The Audubon Beginning Bird Walk on the area Sunday, March 4, 2012, was attended by about 20 people. There were several unusual birds including sage thrashers and these white pelicans (above, with nearly the wing span of condors) circling overhead in various groups for over half an hour. The Friends Beginning Bird Walks on the second Sunday of every month and the walks at Lake Perris (*see page 4*) are wonderful ways to learn more about birding in the San Jacinto Valley. — *Story by Sue Nash. Photo by Rosedith Marx*

California Dept. of Fish and Game Strategic Vision

In February 2012, the California Fish and Wildlife Strategic Vision Executive Committee released the interim strategic vision for public review. http://www.vision.ca.gov/strategic_vision.html Public Comments are requested by March 12, 2012. The final document will be delivered by April, 2012.

Friends will be submitting com-

ments and we welcome your review of the document and your also submitting comments. We hope that the result of the new Vision statement for the Department of Fish and Game and the Fish and Game Commission to ensure that both the DFG and FGC pay more attention to endangered species and greenhouse gas issues in the future.

About Friends

The Friends of the Northern San Jacinto Valley is a local conservation group dedicated to preserving and protecting the northern San Jacinto Valley, San Jacinto Wildlife Area, and Mystic Lake.

We are a 501(c)(3) organization. Friends of the Northern San Jacinto Valley, P.O. Box 4266, Idyllwild, CA 92549; (909) 228-6710; northfriends@northfriends.org; www.northfriends.org

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NEWSLETTER
March, 2012

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I would like to become a member of the Friends of the Northern San Jacinto Valley. I will contribute:

__ \$10 __ \$20 __ \$50 __ \$100 \$ _____ Other

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP Code _____

Telephone _____ Date _____

email: _____

Make checks payable to:

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Mail to: Friends of the Northern San Jacinto Valley
P.O. Box 4266
Idyllwild, CA 92549
e-mail: northfriends@northfriends.org

The Friends is a 501(c)(3) organization.
___ I would like to volunteer for the Friends

Make sure we have your email address.

This is the last issue of the newsletter that will be mailed to the general membership. From now on the newsletter will be emailed, and also available for viewing and downloading online.

IMPORTANT!

Email us asking to be included on the email list.
Send the email to:

northfriends@northfriends.org