

# MORE MESA PRESERVATION COALITION



## MMPC e-Update

September 2015

### How You Can Help ...

#### Talk It Up!

As you can see from the "development news" section of this newsletter we will need all the volunteer help and time our community can muster to deal with the issue of potential development. The most important way you can help now is "talk up" More Mesa, how important it is to our community and this new threat of development. Take walks with your friends and point out More Mesa's treasures, discuss it over a meal or a party and mention it over and over again. Enlist family, friends and colleagues. We need everyone we can get to hear about More Mesa and why it belongs to this generation and every generation to follow.

Thanks so much!

*Valerie Olson*  
*President, MMPC*

### Any News About What's Happening With Potential Development?

#### *Independent gets it wrong, but MMPC gets it right!*

*While the announcement of potential development was no surprise to us at the More Mesa Preservation Coalition, you might have seen the article in the Independent that got it wrong. We have been tracking the possibility for development almost on a day-to-day basis for more than a year now. And while we did not know exactly when the owner of More Mesa would choose to announce the potential for development, we were expecting it.*

*We were also expecting the developer to take exception to restrictions which have been in place for More Mesa for decades, as well as to seek approval for a much larger development. They did both things, with an attempt to expand the development envelope and number of units in the Community Plan. Finally, while none of these moves by the developer was a surprise, the task ahead is daunting and we will need all the volunteer time and financial help our community can muster. I will keep you posted. Thank you for being there.*

*Valerie*

### Ask The President

**Q:** How and when will the recently predicted El Niño affect More Mesa?

**A:** In general, positively, and during late Winter and early Spring.



*With Rain, the Ravine is Green*



*East Trail in a Rainy Year*



*El Niño will Fill the Vernal Pool*

It appears that all the wishing may make it so! Since January, we have been hearing a lot about the potential for an El Niño this fall and winter. An El Niño event is one of the two complex weather patterns that result from variations in ocean temperatures in the Equatorial Pacific. This means that for Santa Barbara, and all of the west coast, the rainfall that usually accompanies this event would, most likely, represent the end of our record drought. And happily, we are now seeing very promising signals for an El Niño this year.



*The Coast in a Rainy Year*

As for More Mesa, a rainy El Niño will bring lots of wildflowers, tall grasses, a full vernal pool, a bog in the middle of the main north-south trail, mud and some glorious views. So if the waterworks start soon, put on your boots and go looking for the fascinating bubbling springs that appear right after a big rain. However, please do not use the trail right next to the coast! This trail will be [dangerous](#) and [unsafe](#) after ANY rain, especially a big one.

Look for more about a potential El Niño in future updates and on our web site. We will keep you posted.

### [This Month on More Mesa ... Kites Have the Last Word](#)



In last month's update on "What is Happening on More Mesa", we lamented the fact that our famous signature raptor, the White-tailed Kite, a bird that historically lives and breeds in profusion on More Mesa had not produced a single chick for at least three years. Now, we are delighted to report that the kites have found a way!

One of our most avid and dedicated birders, Jessie Altstatt, had been seeing one or two kites, all through July. Then she suddenly noted four kites. They were in the oaks close to Atascadero Creek, on the north edge of More Mesa. Even more exciting was the conclusive identification of three juveniles among these four! The [markings](#) of juvenile kites are clearly shown in the accompanying photo, courtesy of Mark Holmgren. These are bold white margins on most of the dark feathers and gold breast feathering.

***It is the mission of the More Mesa Preservation Coalition to preserve More Mesa, in its entirety for all time***

*energy, for all time.  
We've been at it since  
2000.*

On another note, further identification revealed that this group was definitely not the family that bred in July at Lake Los Carneros. Bottom line ... this sighting, while exciting news for More Mesa, it is only our second kite breeding event in the entire Goleta Valley this season.



*Juvenile Kites on More Mesa  
(Photo by Mark Holmgren)*

An additional observation about food, yields even further "food for thought." The four birds reported were observed feeding on a larger mammal; perhaps a ground squirrel. This food choice is extremely interesting in that kites in the Goleta Valley almost always rely on California Voles, or to a lesser extent, on other vole-sized mammals as a food source. Another drought related issue?

### [The Past - We Live in a Coastal Desert](#)

With all the talk about the existing record breaking drought and now the talk of El Niño, with its flooding potential, it is important to remember that we live in a coastal desert. These kinds of drought/flood events are cyclical and have occurred before; even in our recorded history. You may recall one of these cycles described in recent updates where we reported the disastrous [flood](#) of 1861-62 followed by an equally distressing [drought](#) in 1863-64.

Hopefully our ability to predict temperature and precipitation gives us an edge in preparing for whatever part of the cycle occurs next.

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