

Friday, June 8, 2007

## **Wildlife gains no 'official' attention**

By Eli Segall

The proposed plan to turn rural Coyote Valley into a development the size of the city of Mountain View has sparked residents' concern over the future of countless plants and animals that will be evicted--yet few local officials have come face to face with the natural habitat just south of Almaden Valley.

Since 2001, only three San Jose City Council members have taken a guided tour of Coyote Ridge, a 9,000-acre grassland home to endangered species, said Craige Edgerton, executive director of the Silicon Valley Land Conservancy.

The ridge is home to 430 native plants and more than a dozen plants and animals on state and federal watch lists. Stu Weiss of the land conservancy described it as "the hot spot for threatened endangered species in San Jose."

Roughly 450 to 500 acres of the ridge are targeted for the 3,800-acre housing and commercial development, Edgerton said. The conservancy, a nonprofit preservation group, gave 22 tours of the ridge in April to more than 500 people, including school-children and scientists, Edgerton said. None of the visitors were elected officials. The guided visits are co-led by the state's native plant society and the Santa Clara County Open Space Authority, Edgerton added.

"This year we sent personal invitations to city council members in several cities in Santa Clara County, as well as the county board of supervisors, VTA and [Santa Clara Valley] Water District," Edgerton said. "We got no responses."

San Jose City Councilwoman Nancy Pyle, who co-chairs the Coyote Valley Specific Plan Task Force, said she does not recall ever receiving an invitation to tour the ridge, said Lee Wilcox, Pyle's spokesman.

San Jose officials who have toured the ridge are Councilwoman Judy Chirco, Councilman Forrest Williams, who represents Coyote Valley, and Mayor Chuck Reed, who visited when he was a District 4 councilman, Edgerton said. Staff members of former Councilman Ken Yeager have also taken the tour, he said.

*Residents have until June 29 to submit concerns or comments about the Coyote Valley Environmental Impact Report released in March.*