

# EMPIRE REPORT

## Sonoma County Environmental Awards 2009

Posted by Portia M. Sinnott at Mar 13, 2009

DAVID KELLER, BETTY GUGGOLZ, BETTY BURRIDGE AND COTATI CREEK CRITTERS HONORED. The Sonoma County Conservation Council, the Sierra Club Sonoma Group, and 170 activists gathered Saturday, March 7 at the Sebastopol Veterans Auditorium to honor nine individuals and two local programs working to protect the environment.



Rue Furch and the Cotati Creek Critters - Wade Belew and Jenny Blaker

**March 7, Sebastopol.** The Sonoma County Conservation Council, the Sierra Club Sonoma Group and 170 attendees of the Sonoma County Environmental Awards Dinner gathered at the Sebastopol Veterans Auditorium to honor nine individuals and two local programs working to protect the environment. **David Keller** was awarded the Environmentalist of the Year. **Cotati Creek Critters** was awarded Outstanding Environmental Education Program. **Betty Guggolz** of the California Native Plant Society and **Betty Burridge** of Madrone Audubon Society and Redwood Region Ornithological Society were both awarded the Ernestine I. Smith Lifetime Environmental Commitment Award.

**Other nominees** were the Sonoma County Pachamama Alliance, **Ann Hancock** of the Climate Protection Campaign, Dr. **Zeno Swijtink**, Moderator of the Sonoma Wildlife e-list, **Gerald and Mary Edith Moore** of the Petaluma Wetlands Alliance, **Lynn Houser** of the Milo Baker Chapter of the California Native Plant Society, and **Susan Kirks** of the Paula Lane Action Network of Petaluma.

**Environmentalist of the Year:** David Keller is the Bay Area Director of Friends of the Eel River, a member of the Sonoma County Conservation Action Board, and a Founder of the Petaluma River Council. Nominated by Dennis Rosatti and Bill Kortum of Sonoma County Conservation Action, Mr. Keller has spearheaded efforts to save Shollenberger Park and protect Petaluma's Urban Growth Boundary. A Petaluma resident, he currently is organizing the political campaign against Dutra Asphalt, that is to be located on the Petaluma River opposite the Park. David's organizing skills and passion have ignited tremendous grassroots support from organizations like SCCA, Petaluma River Council, Friends of Petaluma River, Sierra Club, Greenbelt Alliance and several ad hoc groups and individuals who've never participated in public campaigns before. With his long track record of environmental advocacy, including successfully battling full privatization of Petaluma's wastewater treatment plant, helping write the Central Petaluma Specific Plan and bringing the nation's first Smart Code to adoption, getting funding for urban stream restoration, and work to get the Eel and Russian River watersheds managed sustainably for the next 150 years, he is an appropriate choice for Environmentalist of the Year. During his acceptance speech, Mr. Keller said, "I am very honored to receive this award and am very grateful to the many other people whose hard and intelligent work make this all possible."

**Outstanding Environmental Education Program:** Nominated by Michele Livingston, Jenny Blaker and Wade Belew have "grown" Cotati Creek Critters from a small, all-volunteer group, to a well-established, community-based organization that has received local and state funding. CCC has collaborated with a wide range of organizations to engage hundreds of volunteers, from preschool to retired, in restoring the upper reach of the Laguna de Santa Rosa in the Cotati area. Alongside their hands-on work, CCC focuses on raising awareness and fostering a sense of environmental stewardship. Jenny Blaker is responsible for community outreach, volunteer recruitment and the monthly community education program, the Inside/Outside Nature Education Series. Wade Belew is responsible for the restoration and stewardship aspects of the project. Jenny helped start Cotati Creek Critters in 1998. A 2006 graduate of Sonoma State University's "Action for a Viable Future" Conservation Psychology graduate program, Jenny was chosen Cotati Citizen of the Year 2007. Wade is a lifelong Sonoma County resident and popular field naturalist, leading walks for local environmental organizations. He is President-Elect of the California Native Grasslands Association. For six years he was the voice of "The Outsiders" environmental program on KRSH radio. Wade ensures that every Creek Stewardship Day involves opportunities for real-life, hands-on learning.

**Ernestine I. Smith Lifetime Environmental Commitment Award:** Betty Guggolz of the California Native Plant Society and Betty Burrige of Madrone Audubon Society and Redwood Region Ornithological Society were both awarded the Ernestine I. Smith Lifetime Environmental Commitment Award.

Janeann Erickson of the Madrone Audubon Society nominated Mrs. Burrige: "We would like to recognize Betty Burrige for lifetime contributions to citizen science. Betty

has been tireless in furthering knowledge and research efforts for birds and habitat. Of special significance is her leadership and perseverance in authoring and editing the Sonoma County Breeding Bird Atlas (1995), which has been a model for many other Audubon chapters in the Bay area and the state. Such a book is a ten-year effort of gathering data, reviewing, entering and organizing it as well as writing and editing species accounts. For many years she also compiled the Christmas Bird Count data, which is sent on to the National Audubon Society. Recently a nationwide report came from that amassed data, showing the changed wintering locations of many familiar birds due to climate change. She has provided expert knowledge for numerous projects, assessments, mapping, and protection efforts of county and state. Betty provides resource information for many Sonoma County environmental groups and land protection efforts as well as in the Bay Area. She has promoted understanding and knowledge of avian behavior and we recognize her contributions to excellence in conservation science with special emphasis in avian research.”

Mrs. Guggolz of Cloverdale was nominated by Gary Hundt and Lynn Houser of the Milo Baker Chapter, California Native Plant Society (CNPS): “Betty Lovell Guggolz has been a tireless advocate for plants and ecosystems threatened by development in Sonoma county since the early 1970's. She founded the local Milo Baker chapter of the CNPS. Betty monitored many of the rare and threatened plant locations first identified by the pioneering SRJC botanist Milo Baker, providing field data invaluable to support listing several plants under the federal and state endangered species acts, data for CNPS’s authoritative CA Rare and Endangered Plants publication, and for the Flora of Sonoma County. She frequently contributed plant information to local Environmental Impact documents and Timber Harvest Plans, and was often consulted by state and local agencies on land-use and resource management issues. She fought for and obtained conservation easements to preserve threatened species on Rincon Ridge and Cunningham marsh, was involved in plant salvage operations and pre-inundation vegetation studies on Warm Springs Dam, and helped determine the routing of the wastewater pipeline to the Geysers. In 1988 Betty was named a fellow of CNPS, that organization’s highest honor. Today she continues to serve as reviewer on the State CNPS Rare Plant Scientific Advisory Committee, and to share her knowledge of several decades with local CNPS members and Laguna Foundation members on the historical vernal pool plant populations.”

### **Event Details**

This was the 33rd annual Sonoma County Environmental Awards Dinner and the celebration of Sonoma County Conservation Council’s twenty-fifth anniversary. The program included a showcase of 29 Environmental Groups, a dialog on opportunities and challenges for environmental groups between Petaluma City Councilmember David Glass and Environmental Champion Rue Furch, and the annual award program. Mr. Glass, Ms. Furch and Portia Sinnott, Chair of the Awards Committee, presented the awards. The offices of Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey, Senator Pat Wiggins and Assembly Members Noreen Evans, Mark Leno, Jared Huffman and Wes Chesbro provided the award certificates. Also in attendance were State Senator, Pat Wiggins,

District Attorney Stephen Passalacqua, Santa Rosa Mayor Susan Gorin and Council Members Veronica Jacobi, Marsha Vas Dupre, and Gary Wysocky, Sebastopol Mayor Sarah Gurney, Windsor City Councilmembers Deborah Fudge and Cheryl Scholar, Petaluma City Councilmember Teresa Barrett, and Healdsburg Councilmember Mike McGuire. A zero waste event, the dinner was produced by Green Synergy, a local green event team led by Portia Sinnott and Wendy Krupnick assisted by Diana Nasser and Gary Hundt.

**For additional information or photos,** please contact Portia at: [lite@sonic.net](mailto:lite@sonic.net)