

Volunteer pulls plants in wetlands to save two other species

■ **ENVIRONMENT:** Student helps OSPIRG in Willow Creek area in lieu of writing a term paper

By Abe Estimada
Community Reporter

With his long, red hair tied back in a pony tail and armed with thick, yellow work gloves and a pair of garden clippers, OSPIRG volunteer Ty Vrudney is ready to do battle with the Scotch broom plants, which have infested the Willow Creek wetlands area.

Crawling on his hands and knees through the foot high grass, Vrudney spots a Scotch broom plant hidden in the field. He initially tugs on the plant, but it refuses to budge. Realizing that the Scotch broom will not surrender easily, he stands up and wraps the plant around his right arm to get a better grip.

He pulls with all of his might, and after struggling and twisting

with the plant for a few minutes, the Scotch broom finally pops out of the ground — with a foot long root in tow.

"That hurt. It really did," Vrudney said, shaking his arms and trying to get the feeling back in his hands. The process of pulling plants during a down-pour or in the heat of the sun can be grueling.

With at least 10 acres of Willow Creek wetlands teeming with Scotch broom, OSPIRG volunteers said the work is sometimes overwhelming. And for three hours a day, four days a week and seven weeks out of the two month term, Scotch broom pulling can be downright monotonous, volunteers said.

But for each plant that is pulled from the ground, Vrudney and the other OSPIRG volunteers know that is one less Scotch broom that could threaten the existence of two endangered species.

"It's a great opportunity as a

student to do your little part for the community," Vrudney said. "It makes your day a whole lot better knowing that you're helping out an endangered species. If this isn't done now, we lose two more species."

What's at stake is the survival of the Kincaid's lupine and Fenderson's blue butterfly, which is native to the Pacific Northwest. The Scotch broom, an aggressive, wiry plant that can sometimes grow up to 10 feet tall if left unattended, chokes the life out of the lupine by overrunning its habitat. During the spring, thick patches of Scotch broom can be easily spotted by their bright yellow flowers.

But beneath the blooming spring scenery, the Scotch broom slowly saps the life out of the plants it shares space with. Once the lupine goes, the Fenderson's blue butterfly that relies on the lupine's nectar for its sustenance also disappears.

Two person teams from

OSPIRG's Streamwalk project venture into the wetlands along four designated paths and monitor the wetlands by reporting any inappropriate activities, such as fires or trash dumping to Ed Alverson, an ecologist for the Nature Conservancy group that owns the wetlands.

University and OSPIRG volunteers have been assisting Alverson for five years in monitoring and maintaining the environmental integrity of the 250 acre-Willow Creek area.

"I think it's a good case of thinking globally and acting locally," Alverson said. "The tropical rain forests get a lot of attention, and I don't mean to downgrade the importance of the rain forests. But right in our own backyard, we have those same kinds of issues going on. We can apply those global concerns here and make a contribution at home."

Some of the 40 OSPIRG volunteers are also part of professor

John Baldwin's class, who are given a choice between doing volunteer work or writing a term paper for a better grade. University student Owen Smith, who is in Baldwin's class, chose to volunteer his time for OSPIRG.

"It's actually been fun," Smith said. "If it's going to give other species a chance to grow, it's worth it. I'm not used to the manual labor scene myself, but it's all worth it, if it makes a difference."

Vrudney is once again crawling on his hands and knees, ever watchful for even the tiniest Scotch broom sprouts. Ahead of him lie dark green sprouts, dotting the landscape and hidden in the light brown grass.

"Maybe if we do enough, we can make a dent through our small efforts," Vrudney said. "The big picture is helping two endangered species, which is something you don't do every day."

Rabago testifies clerks were victims of Dari Mart thrill kill

■ **TRIAL:** Daniel Rabago, who took part in attack, faces the death penalty if convicted of murder

By Regina Brown
Higher Education Reporter

Four men who robbed a Dari Mart in 1994 and killed a clerk were looking for easy victims for a thrill kill, Daniel Rabago, who took part in the attack, told a packed court room last Tuesday and Wednesday.

Rabago testified against Michael Hayward, 20, who could face the death penalty if he is convicted of killing Dari Mart clerk Fran Wall, a 28-year-old mother of four, on April 10, 1994. Hayward is charged with three counts of aggravated murder and nine other felonies.

But Rabago's testimony contradicted testimony of another who was involved of the crime, Juhl Brock, 20. The men originally intended to rob the Dari Mart for drug money, but decided to kill the clerks to eliminate witnesses, Brock told the court Wednesday morning.

Both Brock and Rabago were sentenced last summer to nine to 11 years for their roles in the crime. Both men will get time taken off their sentences for testifying in the Hayward trial. The other man involved in the attack, Jason Brumwell, 20, was sentenced to life without parole in October.

Rabago, 18, claimed the idea for a thrill kill was originally his, and that Hayward would only play a backup role while Rabago and one of the others, Jason Brumwell, 20, did the killing.

In their original plan, Brumwell would club the clerk at the counter, Donna Ream, with a metal bar, Rabago said. Ream nearly died from the beating she received that night. After that, Rabago would slit Ream's throat. He said under questioning from Deputy District Attorney Bob Gorham.

The plan went awry though when Brumwell did not immediately club Ream upon entering the store, and as a result, the rest of the attack did not go as planned, Rabago said.

Rabago and Brumwell planned the attack to satisfy an inner drive they felt to kill, Rabago told Gorham. Both men were self-pro-

claimed Satanists who felt killing would release stress, he said.

"I just couldn't take it any more. I had to do something," Rabago said of his emotional state at the time of the murder.

But Juhl Brock claimed the plan to murder evolved because the men did not want to leave any witnesses to their robbery. The men thought they could steal a few hundred dollars from the Dari Mart that could be used to buy drugs, Brock said.

Under questioning from Gorham, Brock claimed Hayward talked of killing people long before the men attacked the Dari Mart.

"[Hayward] said it was a goal of his to kill someone some day," Brock told Gorham. "He wanted to kill someone before he died."

Conversation between the men in the group they hung around, which included Brock's younger brother Jason Brock, centered around death when Hayward was with them, Brock claimed. The group talked about killing only when Hayward was present, he said.

But Rabago said the men rarely discussed killing with Hayward.

"It wasn't very often that [Hayward] talked about killing people," Rabago said. "Mostly we just talked about smoking weed, our dreams."

For Rabago and Brumwell, the urge to kill was Satanic, but while both Rabago and Brock described themselves and Brumwell as Satanists, they claimed Hayward was not. He claimed to believe in evil, said Brock.

"Sometimes he said he was an Atheist, sometimes he said he just believed in evil," Brock said.

The court also heard testimony from the former medical director of the now defunct Sacred Heart Adolescent Recovery Program, Peter Patricelli, who spoke about effects of LSD. The defense claims Hayward took 30 to 40 hits of LSD the day of the crime.

Detecting drug use in someone who is accustomed to taking LSD can be difficult, Patricelli said. Hayward could have been on the drug at the time of the murder, and still could have been capable of rational thought, he said.

Patricelli's testimony suggests that LSD will not necessarily make an individual capable of violence, as the defense has suggested.


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