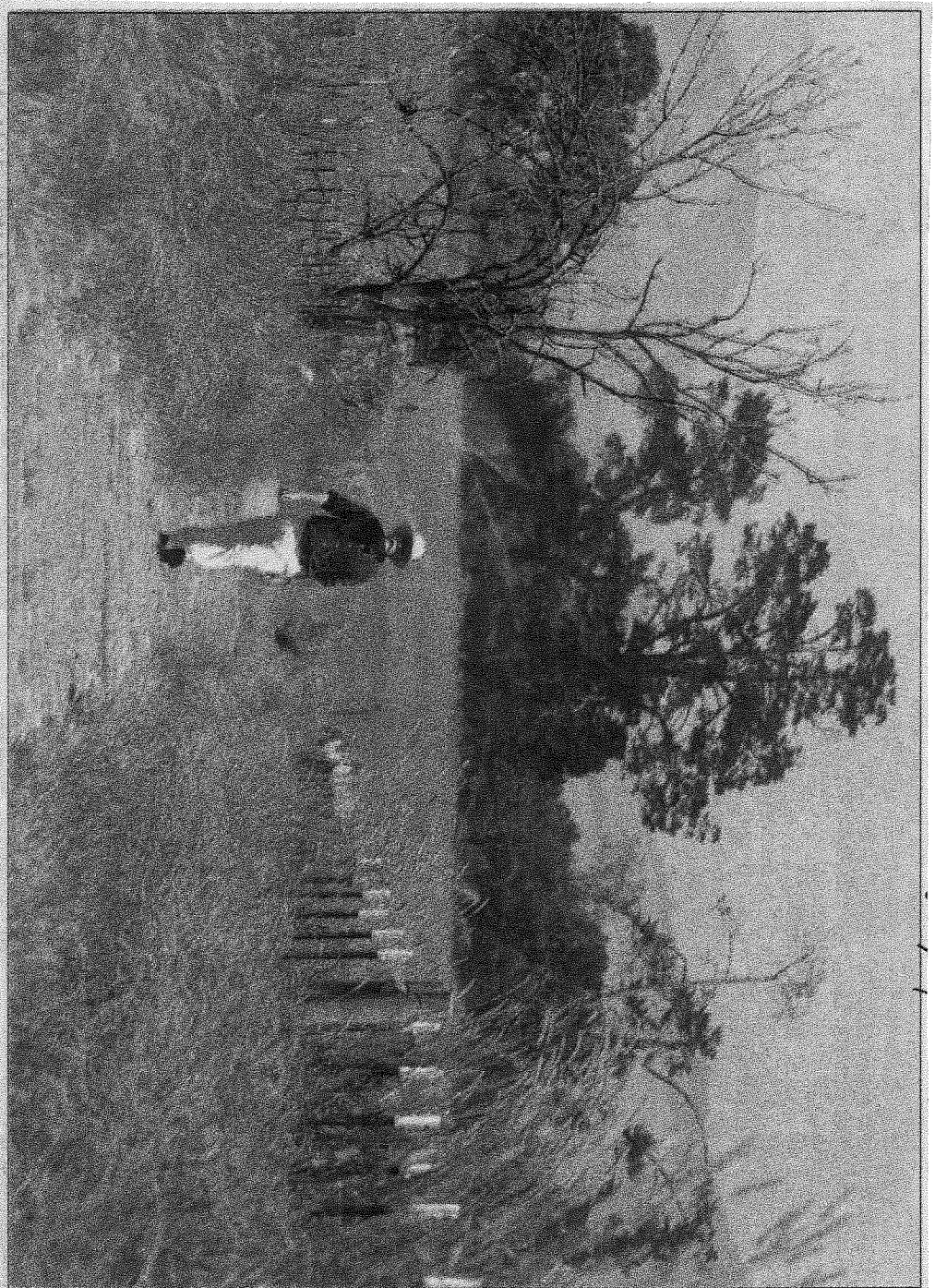


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Sebastopol planning director Kenyon Webstop walks along a newly opened stretch of trail along the Laguna de Santa Rosa east of Sebastopol. Hundreds of valley oaks and other native trees and shrubs have been planted along the mile-long trail.

Photos by JENNAH WARD / The Press Democrat

Serenity in Sebastopol

New trail restores tranquil Laguna habitat

By CAROL BENFELL
THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

A mile-long trail, passing through secret river coves and along wildflower-decked meadows, is open for hikers on the outskirts of Sebastopol.

The trail, a 20-year-long dream of Sebastopol environmental and civic groups, is part of a restoration effort that has turned weed-choked, trash-littered fields and ponds into a glimpse of what the Laguna might have been 200 years ago.

Along the coast, other trails are being built or refurbished. About 3,000 feet of trail will be added this fall to the 4-mile Kortum Trail between Blind Beach and Wrights Beach, and a new half-mile trail has been approved through the Bodega Harbour subdivision, from the parking lot to the shoreline of Bodega Bay.

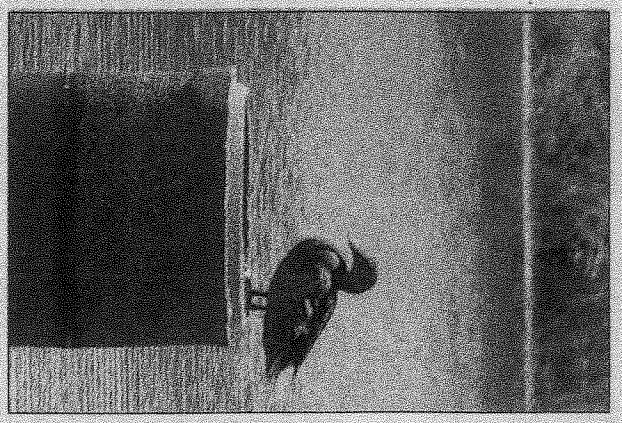
Trails are proliferating because a growing number of people want to walk, either for health reasons, to simply enjoy nature, or both, said Richard Nichols, executive director of Coastwalk. The Sebastopol-based organization is pushing for a continuous trail along the California coast, from the Mexican border to Oregon.

Two martial arts students, Joe Stubblefield and Amanda Bricker, run the Sebastopol trail three times a week to condition for their classes and to enjoy its tranquility.

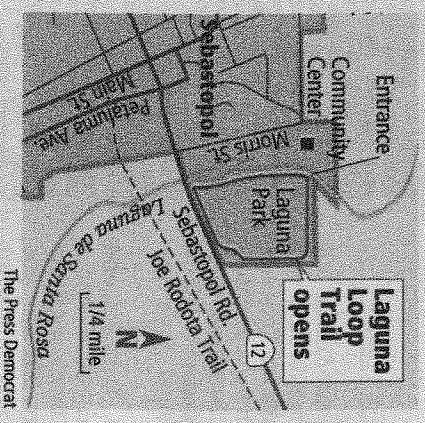
"The terrain is level and it's strangely quiet," said Stubblefield, a Sebastopol hairdresser. "You walk a hundred yards and you can barely hear the traffic."

"It's a place to just get away from everything," said Bricker, an Analy High School student. "A place to think and let go of everything around you."

The idea of the trail and the La-
TURN TO TRAIL, PAGE B3



A duck sits atop a concrete structure in one of the ponds in the Laguna de Santa Rosa near Sebastopol.



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