

HOLIDAY PARTY COMING ON WEDS, DECEMBER 9th

Carol Martinez, Skeeter, Jennifer Alpaugh and Jim Steele will bring our suspense-filled holiday party to life at 6:30pm on Wednesday, December 9. As Carol and others call you to invite you, be ready with some ideas for your favorite healthy but delicious holiday side dish. And don't forget to bring your \$10 unisexual gift for each person in your group.



However, the most important thing that you could do to make the party a happy affair, is to volunteer some time by coming early to help set up or staying late to help clean up! Besides, it's a great way to get to know some other wonderful nature lovers. Oh, yes, and remember that we will play the "no holds barred" gift-stealing game, which is not for the faint of heart, especially if you are a possessive person.

SAN PEDRO VALLEY PARK'S FIRST BIO-BLITZ DECLARED A BIG SUCCESS!



Katherine Wright, young and energetic ranger of the San Mateo County Parks, & the professional who created our Plaskon Nature Trail information boards, was the main force & coordinator behind the Bioblitz at San Pedro Co. Pk. The goal was to find as many kinds of living things as possible in 6 hrs. She reported a total of 711 observations made by 23 people, & that these folks saw 210 different species, quite a haul for the few hours given for the study. The leaders hailed from the Cal Acad., Sequoia Aud. Soc, etc. Friends were out there, including **Jim Steele**, who was on the Brooks Falls & Montara Mt. Trail and **Bing Huey**, who signed up to work the Hazelnut with a forensic botanist, who could ID a dried out specimen to its species. Jim Steele has promised to write an article about the event for our next issue.

SHADOW FLYERS—Saturday, November 14 at 3pm

On Sat. Nov. 14, at 3 in the afternoon, we will welcome **Ms. Corky Quirk** once again to our Visitor Center, Corky with her live flight-challenged **bats**, at one time darting, graceful flyers of the night. She will, of course, tell us all about bats in general.



Not only are these rescued Chiropterans no longer capable of flight, but they also rely on this lady naturalist to feed them; on Nov. 14, they will be grabbing meal worms from Corky's forceps, as images of them feeding appear in real time on our screen.

Ms. Quirk is the founder & executive director of NorCal-Bats, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the rescue & rehab. of bats of North-Central Calif., who are among these winged, gluttonous insect eaters. She is also an education associate with the Yolo Basin Foundation who teaches & leads field trips for people of all ages & holds a B.A.in Natural Resources with an emphasis in Environmental Science from Humboldt State University.

ON THE TRAIL

Bing Huey's observation and photo on Oct. 4 shows the strange beauty of a **gall** created by a **golden chinquapin**, *Castanopsis chrysophylla* in response to being "stung" by a tiny **wasp**. Bing, a great plant hunter, saw this one on the Hazelnut Trail. The flowers are a little past their prime, and the golden underside of one of the leaves is visible on the lower right.



On Bioblitz day, Sept. 26, **Bing** captured the image of a **blue-green sharpshooter**, *Hordnia atropunctata*, to me a type of leaf hopper, & a member of the Homopteran order of insects that love to suck juices from leaves. (Note detail on the thorax & head, as well as the second pair of membranous wings under the roof-like overwings. (continued on page 4)



BRUSH WORK

By Joseph Piro



September 12th Trail Day; **Vivianne Hiniart, Lucia Riedemann, Carlo Parra** and I joined Ranger **Matt Auda-Capel** and Park Aide **Steven Clinton** to do brush-cutting work on the upper stretch of the Trout Farm Trail. Working from the bench below the old foundation up to where the trail joins the Brooks Falls Trail, Matt and Steven ran the gas-powered trimmers while we followed and cleaned up with rakes and pitch-forks. This little segment of trail that winds through the trees and along the creek now feels much more open -- enjoy!

FACTOID

In a test conducted at the University of Melbourne, the *Washington Post* reported that 2 study groups were given difficult tasks with 40 second intervals of rest; one group was allowed to look at pictures of concrete roofs during the rest periods, the other roofs with green plantings. The former group made many more errors in their work than the later group. Interesting note: the Facebook building in Los Altos, CA, has planted a 9 acre roof garden, complete with pathways for the workers. See you hiking in the Park, soaking up your restorative nature scenes, I hope.



MAKE IT SMOOTH; MAKE IT RAIN!

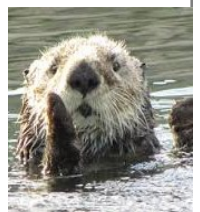
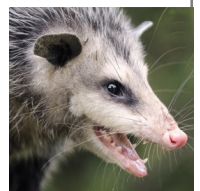
By Joseph Piro

We had a great turn-out for our October 10th Trail Day -- enough people that so we could split into 2 groups and tackle some work on the lower section of the Brooks Falls Trail. My brother **Erik, Vivianne Hiniart, Lucia Riedemann, Keith** and I re-did about a 30-foot section of the trail surface just as you get into the eucalyptus trees, at that little uphill bend where the flat rock is in the middle of the trail. There was a shallow gully running down the middle there, so we cut back the bank and dug one side of it down so it now gently and evenly slopes in towards the hillside and into a new drainage ditch and water bar we made. Meanwhile, **Istvan Puski** & new-comers **Nico, Lisa & Will** worked with Ranger **Matt Auda-Capel** a little further down the trail bank-cutting several spots. Definitely some good work to help prepare for the (hopefully!) winter rains.



CONNECTIONS: OUR PARK'S OPOSSUMS AND OTTERS

The sea affects our Park with its moisture & moderating temperatures, with its **steelhead** that come up our creek, its **Great Blue Herons** that feed on our **gophers**, and undoubtedly in a myriad of other ways. At the same time, the land is affecting the life of the sea, which often receives the bacteria washed down upon it from, quite commonly feces of pets, but lately from the feces of non-native **opossums**, which as reported by the latest issue of *Bay Nature* magazine, are resistant to a parasite, **Sarcosista neurona**, which is very likely the cause of recent **sea otter** deaths.



A NATURALIST'S PERSPECTIVE
by Jim Mackey

Nov./Dec. 2015

A lizard's tale, part 2. In the last issue of the newsletter I described a drama that occurred, last April 27, on the platform over the second culvert that runs under the Weiler Rd. into the first meadow. A common racer (see photo) struck at a fence lizard;



they both shot across the platform and disappeared into the weedy ditch below! After about 10 minutes, the lizard poked his head and body up through a crack in the platform - hooray!



On June 16 I spotted a same-sized male fence lizard on the same platform. But he had a short, black, spike-like stump of a tail - apparently regenerating after the loss of the original tail (see photo). My most recent sighting of him was on Sept. 28, when the regenerated tail looked about

the same. (In lizards the new tail does not contain vertebrae and has lost the ability to regenerate.)

The one that didn't get away. I recently saw one of



Ron Wilson's remarkable photos in the Visitor Center that shows a common racer with the head of a fence lizard in its mouth!

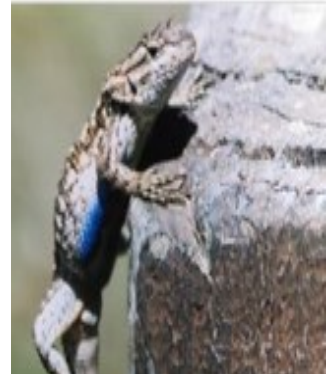
The two are surrounded by straw, which was characteristic of the first platform along the Weiler. Maybe the "snake-in-the-grass" was better able to sneak up on the lizard?

On July 6 I came upon two fence lizards that were interacting (on a concrete block at the base of the chain-link fence between Weiler and the water district property. (See photo: The one on the left, facing away, is



a male - as indicated by his darker color, blue dorsal spots and wide tail base - where the hemipenes are located; the other is female.) Twice he moved directly toward her while nodding rapidly. She retreated, arched her back and lifted her tail off of the ground (a "rejection posture"). Perhaps this date (July 6) is past the mating season. The incubation period is about 2 months, and I saw the first hatchling this year on Aug. 3.

Color. Both sexes may have blue patches on the abdomen, like the male photographed on the retaining wall at the western trailhead of the Valley View Trail. (Hence the common name: "blue-bellied lizard".) These patches are displayed when the



lizards do push-ups with their forelegs. Hatchlings don't have blue yet but they instinctively do push-ups toward each other, for example when competing for a basking site. Fence lizards are apt to darken when they emerge in the morning, so they can absorb the heat from the sun more readily. After about 1/2 hour their



body temp. may reach about 92F, so they may pale to avoid over-heating. This summer, for the first time, I saw a lizard actually gaping to dissipate heat! (see photo)

ON THE TRAIL continued)



Bing Huey also saw, and with and i.d. from an insect expert from bugguide.net, gave a partial classification to a **moth** from the genus **Mompha**, that highlights the truth and idea of biodiversity in nature and in our park, and also the tag given to many insects as being the jewels of the animal world. This is Bing's photo of the microlepidopteran

magnified. His original photo was crisp and sharp.

Ray Trabucco saw a **Belted Kingfisher** in the North Walnut picnic area on Oct. 24; it was flying from the creek area to one of the eucalyptuses.

Ray also sighted an **Acorn Woodpecker** (photo by **Stephen Ramirez**) twice in September. **These are the first sightings for the Park as far as we know.** It was seen near the Hazelnut Trail. One suspects that our huge abundance of acorns this year, which they pick right off a tree, drew him to our Park. (See article to rt)



Katie Antiista was amazed at the harvest of acorns the **California live oaks** have yielded this year. She and others have seen the **deer** scooping them up, & she saw several of our **grey squirrels** gathering them.

The photo above shows the gorgeous acorns of **Quercus agrifolia**, our California live oak. It is from "Flicker", photographer unknown. To the right, deer eat a crop of fallen acorns.



NOVEMBER—DECEMBER CALENDAR 2015

BOARD MEETING OF THE FRIENDS

Wednesday, November 11.....7pm

NOVEMBER TRAIL DAY

Saturday, November 14.....9am

BAT PROGRAM WITH CORKY QUIRK

Saturday, November 14.....3pm

NOVEMBER HABITAT RESTORATION DAY

Saturday, November 21.....9am

HOLIDAY PARTY

Wednesday, December 9.....6:30pm

DECEMBER TRAIL DAY

Saturday, December 12.....9am

DECEMBER HABITAT RESTORATION DAY

Saturday, December 19.....9am

For all events meet at the Visitor Center, except for the Board Meeting for which you need to call James Mackey at 355-2245

ACORN WOODPECKER AND OUR ACORNS

It's certainly no accident that **Ray Trabucco** saw an **Acorn Woodpecker** in SPVP at a time when our **Calif. live oaks** had an unusually large, healthy crop of acorns and when our usual abundant water source could have been a draw. These red-tops often fly a few miles to locate both the acorns and a good supply of water, especially if the species of oak tree they've been relying on puts out a miserable crop one year, or if they are in drought conditions. How perfect that they do not rely on a small foraging area or special kind of oak! Not only that, their favorite food is arguably **insects**, flying arthropods should be especially vigilant, but ants and beetles are enjoyable snacks.

Still, even though they do store insects, the larder of acorns is their insurance against starving during winter months. However, since our visiting woodpecker probably belongs to a species group which usually has a special storage territory, with a good supply of dead limbs being preferred, I don't think we can expect to find many of the classic crannies of nuts in the bark our trees. *Carolyn Pankow*

Sources: Cornell Bird Observatory and The U. of Calif. Oak Woodland Conserv. Workgroup: USDA.

The Leaders of "the Friends of SPVP": President: **Jim Mackey**; Vice President & Editor of this newsletter: **Carolyn Pankow**; Secretary: **Shirley Drye**; Interim Treasurer: **Bing Huey**; member at large: **Istvan Puski**; Visitor Center Staffing: **Mila Stroganoff**; Habitat Restoration leader: **Istvan Puski**; Trail Leader: **Joseph Piro**; Membership: **Jim Steele**; Programs: **Carolyn Pankow**; Trailside Store Team Manager: **Sharron Walker**; Mobile Display Board: **Katie Antista**. *Letters to the editor at: carolynjunepankow@yahoo.com*