

“STAR”, PETER PYLE, TO SPEAK in FEBRUARY ON GREAT WHITES and ALBATROSSES



The star character in the non-fiction science winner, The Devil’s Teeth, by **Susan Casey**, is our **7:30pm., Saturday, February 6**, speaker. After having read this remarkable book on the

Great White Sharks that course the Farallon Island area, I luckily spotted a program in the City featuring this charismatic man, attended it, and finally hooked Calif. Acad. of Sci. wildlife biologist, **Peter Pyle**. I had intended to ask him to speak only on the Great White Sharks, but was convinced that his fascinating current studies of the pelagic **Albatrosses** would be additionally compelling to our audience, and he has offered to speak to us on their and others’ transpacific migrations as well as some of the habits of the legendary aforementioned razor-toothed predators. (network round table photo of Great White)



Pyle worked as a Farallon Island Biologist for the Point Reyes Bird Observatory for 24 years, studying bird, bat, and butterfly migration as well as the habits of the Great White

Shark. (albatross photo from network blog)

BUTTERFLIES AND NATIVE PLANTS With HEIDI RAND AND GEORGE McCRAE

George McRae and **Heidi Rand** will be our presenters on **Saturday, February 13, at 7:30pm.** “Creating and protecting local habitats for butterflies, birds and other wildlife” is the title of their talk. They will show, in particular, what plants to include for both butterfly larval host plants and nectar or pollen sources, depicting the story with beautiful photos.

George is a passionate gardener / naturalist; He is foremost an advocate for natural places and creatures, including butterflies and birds, animals, plants. The work George has done in his garden to attract wildlife and restore habitat resulted in designation of his yard as a Certified Wildlife Habitat by the National Wildlife Federation.

Heidi is a self-taught photographer & artist, dedicated to creating original unique artwork from her nature photographs.

Both of our presenters give popular shows for the California Native Plant Society. (Anise Swallowtail photo from Picsearch.com)



“HEAD FROG” PRESENTS CHILDREN’S PROGRAM on AFTERNOON of JANUARY 23th

Chris Giorni of Tree Frog Treks, with his “creepy” wild critters, will be our featured presenter on **Saturday, January 23, at 1pm.** This program is primarily for youngsters, who will be seated first, but no one will be turned away at the door if space is available, espe-



cially not the featured native animals like the rattle snake-eating **California King Snake** (Artwork donated by **John Muir Laws**, copyright 2009 all rights reserved), non-natives like the **Red-eared Slider Turtle**, & exotics like the **Burmese Python**. Children will see animals close-up & will be allowed to touch many of them.

Mr. Giorni, also known as “Chris Tree Frog”, has been active in education since 1989, teaching at the kindergarten through adult levels. He has studied **lizards** in the Dominican Republic, **coral reef fish** off Lizard Island in Australia, & amphibians & reptiles throughout California. He has worked with **Gary Fellars** on the Global Amphibian decline task force, studied San Francisco **garter snakes** in San Mateo County state parks, and is presently involved in local amphibian restoration projects. He is the founder and executive director of Tree Frog Treks. Giorni has a bachelors of science degree from UC Berkeley and a Masters in Biology from SFSU. (Red-eared slider turtle frm gotpetsonline) Thanks to the S.M. Co Parks Foundation for making this program available to us.

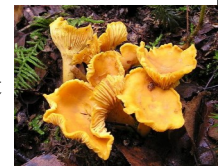


ON THE TRAIL



One of our amateur but talented wildlife observers spotted a tan and grey **coyote** with a scraggly tail just above the Service Road below the houses on November 18th, 2009. (Chuck Woodbury photo)

Large yellow, scalloped **Chanterelle mushroom** was sighted on the Trout Farm Trail by **Katie Antista** in the last week of November. (SF Examiner photo)



Mountain Lion sighting on Weiler Ranch Road on hill opposite front entrance to service road at 7:45am—blood on “muzzle”; then 2 bucks were seen—nearby? **Jessica** & trail regular, **Barbara K.** (continued on p. 4)

BUCKS—NIGHTTIME ENCOUNTER

The night of **Jim Mackey's** November 7 show at the visitor center was memorable. For me the memory includes my return back to my car through the park, flashlight in hand. I took a nocturnal walk in the park by leaving my car in St. Peter's parking lot. I walked Weiler road to the horseshoe section and turned right through the Walnut Grove picnic area, over the Brook's creek bridge and along the meadow to the Visitor Center. But it was my way back that I remember the most.

The moonlight (Weiler Ranch photo) was hidden in the overhang of the high **eucalyptus trees** on Weiler road as I removed my flashlight. Before I could turn it on I was surprised by a sound on the trail ahead. Even in the dark and



by silhouette I saw a large shape only twenty feet in front of me and on the trail. I made out the large animal as a **deer**, likely a **buck**. Its neck was swollen and I saw the antlers. It seems that during the mating season for our black tail deer I had stumbled upon Big Daddy

buck, probably the victor of this year's rut. I didn't dare turn on my flashlight. I had no plan and no exit strategy so I didn't dare shine my light on him.

(buck from animals. desktopnexus)



Big Daddy was facing me and not retreating. I was facing him and not advancing. A rustle about fifty feet up the hill proved to be a doe, clearly a player in the piece. With respect and some fear I walked slowly on the opposite side of Weiler road while never taking my eyes off the **big stag** staring back at me. I could feel the violence in that veteran fighter, a real danger if he thought I might be a



rival. Without retreating he watched me as I walked with measured steps past him, keeping a my eyes averted but very much aware of Big Daddy. (animal photo archive photo)

I could feel his eyes on me as I walked away. But when I finally looked behind me he wasn't there. I remembered my last encounter with a stag, the surprising beginning of Jim Mackey's

'Friends' show in Nov. 2008.

But this was a year later, and saying he wanted to show us some wild animals that we wouldn't see in Costa Rica, he began his 2009 presentation with photographs of a hike he and his wife, Joyce, took during the tule elk rut last October in



Pt.Reyes. He also showed pictures of an elk stag cleaning his antlers on a coyote bush, as well as the shredded bark of a low hanging willow in San Pedro Park which he suggested might be the work of one of our park bucks removing the velvet from his antlers.

Every September or October the rival bucks come down from the hills to mate with females, prepared to fight for the prize. In the world of stags size is everything. Only the bigger can hope to defeat the "biggest". Since gestation time for our mule deer is about seven months September and October is their time to mate. Their offspring (often in pairs) will be born in April or May. Fawns must be on their feet soon and able to run after only a week. They'll live with their mothers, aunts, brothers and sisters in matriarchal tribes for a year or more. During that time Big Daddy buck is nowhere to be seen in our park's valleys. Perhaps he and his stag friends are, as Jim and Joyce Mackey, taking an eco-tour of Costa Rica. But don't worry; they will all come back to Pacifica. **Jack Dodson**

BACK to the BASICS with a STRONG TEAM

Sometimes it's all about friendship, about cementing old relationships, and sometimes it's about meeting new people, and it's definitely about loving our Park, wanting to see the animals thriving on the native plants as they have for eons. And I think we had that combination of circumstances coming together on a Saturday in November.

Head Habitat Restoration Hero, **Jim Pommier**, was probably a bit flabbergasted to see **Istvan Puski, Jim Mackey, Barbara Kempster, Sara Shaw, Aidan Metzger, Evan Kersten, Julio Pak(sp)**, show up to cut and pull **eucalyptus, cotoneaster, and Pampas grass** on the eastern, uphill side of the Weiler Ranch Road, just "south" of the near Valley View entrance. Kudos to all of you! (photo from gardenseeker.com) But only **Jim Pommier and Sara Shaw** showed up in Dec. to take out 3 large Pampas Grass plants on the W. Valley View. One of the plants had a 6 foot diameter, and plumes reaching 1' high.



A NATURALIST'S PERSPECTIVE

By Jim Mackey

Species diversity in the tropics I reported recently about the astonishing numbers of species of animals and plants in the tiny Central American country of Costa Rica.



There are about 850 **birds** (including some 60 **hummingbirds**), 100 **bats**, 1500 **butterflies** and 15,000 **moths**! I followed a Costa Rican naturalist

around for a few days and learned quickly to admire his mastery of such a great array of living things. (hummer picture from Flickr)

Many factors have been proposed to explain why species diversity in the tropics is so much greater than in the North Temperate Zone. Here I will just mention that the latter was visited by continental glaciers recently, and the colder climate selected for species of very large mammals (e.g. **saber-tooth cats** and **mastodons**). The subsequent warming contributed to the extinction of these forms, thus reducing the species diversity. Also, tropical rain forests differ from northern forests in having much reduced seasonality, allowing for year-around productivity. Various fruits are available all year, which has selected for many species of frugivores, like **parrots** and **toucans**. Contrast this with Pedro Park, where we have a “season for Dessert” in autumn when a few omnivores, like **foxes** and **robins**, eat fruit.

Preservation of diversity. Many humans may be inclined to prevent the extinction of a form of life due to a deep-seated persuasion rather than a reasoned argument. Such a person was **Joseph Wood Krutch**, who also wrote an essay titled, “Resurrection of the Peepers.” He was rejoicing upon hearing, in spring—after a long, cold winter—the first peeps of some tiny **tree frogs**. Krutch saw this as not only a victory of the frogs over the deadly force of the winter weather, but as a win for all forms of life, including us, against the non-living environment. Edward O. Wilson has named this attitude “biophilia” and written a book with this word -title that is subtitled: “The human bond with other species.” (tree frog photo—“orbiting frog” w.s.)



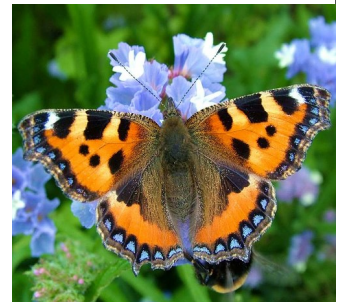
Professor Wilson cites the case of humans using **dogs** as surrogate children as a case in point. However his examples of biophilia include an innate fear of **snakes**, so the definition of biophilia is broader than “bonding” and might well be “fascination” with other species.

When we think of how vital a familiarity with nature was to our hunter-gatherer ancestors we should not be surprised if selection has provided us with a curiosity and fascination with nature. Wilson and other naturalists (dare I to include myself?) can recount formative experiences in nature that occurred to them between the ages of about 5 to 12 and started them on careers as naturalists. The power of such an experience radiates from the expression on my son's face in a treasured photo of him holding a toad. (Incidentally the toad was found in our yard, in Park Pacifica in 1972, and may have been the last toad in Pacifica.)



Today there is concern that few children have an opportunity to encounter nature. This concern has been expressed by **Richard Louv** in his book: “Last Child in the Woods.” Here he describes what he calls “nature deficit disorder.” Fortunately, However, there are reasons for optimism. In 2007 **Gov. Schwarzenegger** endorsed a “Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights”. The 10 rights include “camp under the stars” and “explore nature.” Also encouraging are programs of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, which engage 30,000 school-age children in outdoor and environmental programs in the Park every year, many of them ethnic minorities from the inner city.

Poor Jim's Almanac. Winter is the season for the **resurrection of Pacifica's tree frogs**. You might hear a nightly chorus of their “rib-bits” in the marsh next to the Community Center's parking lot. Will we be visited by **varied thrushes** or **tortoise-shell butterflies**? When will the first **trillium** bloom? (tortoise shell butterfly photo from Flickr)



TRAIL CREW TRIMS AND “DIPS” IN NOVEMBER

Under a grey and occasionally drippy sky, **Jim Pommier, Carol Martinez, Istvan Puski, and I** set off up the Hazelnut Trail behind the Visitor's Center for November's Trail Day. Jim and Carol did a lot of trimming of vegetation hanging over or onto the trail, while Istvan and I cleaned out lots of rain dips and dug a few new ones—good thing because plenty of rain fell—the trail crew was rained out in December!

Joseph Piro

ON THE TRAIL (continued)

In early November **Ray Trabucco** saw a **bobcat** catch a **gopher** at the South Walnut picnic area. He managed to calmly and smoothly get up close to “him”, so that he could get a ring-side seat of the *Lynx rufus* eating the underground herbivore. He was a mere 15 feet away from the cat at most. Ray feels that it was the same one that he’d seen in early October, catching another buck-



toothed creature and then coming back to finish it off the second day, when he could hear the gopher’s bones crunch. Trabucco estimated that it took the bobcat 20 minutes to finish it off that first time, after which the feline groomed himself thoroughly. (gopher, Garden Counsel. Ws)

Also from **Ray Trabucco**—Ray says to hunt for **Redwood Rooters** under redwood trees only. They are called the “longest rooting mushrooms in the world due to their long stipe (“stem”).



HOLIDAY/CHRISTMAS PARTY RULED!

Plenty of hot dishes for a *cold* evening with 35 stalwart souls. Some highlights: **Ron Maykel** played a droll Santa Claus; **Mila Stroganoff** made the prime 2nd steal of a stainless steel water bottle during the gift-exchange game. **Sharon Walker’s** scenic Pacifica calendar was donated to all. The **Biglers** cooked & brought their 2 delicious potato dishes despite a last minute cancellation. **Ed & Joy Decker** cooked the tasty “Friends” offering of ham and turkey, **Jean Leonard** was applauded as the director of the Xmas party team of Jean & **Carolyn P.**

NEWS BRIEFS

Sara Shaw, one of our most valued “Friends” members, will be moving to Pomona, Southern California, for a year, as she will be learning some special blood laboratory techniques from the Red Cross, working for them as she goes. Her habitat restoration buddies and all of us will miss her!

Look at the new paint job inside if you haven’t been in The Visitor Center recently.

JANUARY—FEBRUARY CALENDAR

JANUARY TRAIL DAY
Saturday, January 9.....8am
JANUARY GENERAL MEETING
Wednesday, January 13.....7pm
JANUARY HABITAT RESTORATION DAY
Saturday, January 16.....9am
CHRIS GIORNI’S AMPHIBIANS and REPTILES
Saturday, January 23.....1pm
PETER PYLE’S ALBATROSSES, GW SHARKS
Saturday, February 6.....7:30pm
FEBRUARY GENERAL MEETING
Wednesday, February 10.....7pm
FEBRUARY TRAIL DAY
Saturday, February 13.....8am
HEIDI AND GEORGE’s Native Plants & Butterflies
Saturday, February 13.....7:30pm
HABITAT RESTORATION DAY
Saturday, February 20.....9am
For all events, meet at the Visitor Center

COMING ATTRACTIONS:

- April:*
- 1. Fri., Ap. 9 at 1pm—Wildlife Associates: Predators and their Prey—esp for kids: little and big!*
 - 2. Fri., Ap. 23 at 7:30pm—Flowers of Montara Mt with Toni Corelli*
 - 3. Sat., Ap. 24 at 9am—Brooks Creek loop flower hike with Toni Corelli*

FACI/OID

Great Blue Herons (Flicker image) are sometimes seen on our grassy areas eating **gophers**, and, of course, they eat fish and may actually be a boon to fish hatcheries, perhaps to our old Trout Farm’s ponds back in the 50’s, as they will eat sick fish. They have been known to choke as they try to swallow a very large prey, so watch out, fellows, for those really large gophers at the S. Walnut picnic ground and at other grassy areas in SPVP.



I saw a Great Blue Heron standing
Sunk in the battered Wings
He wore as a hunchback’s coat
(from the “Great Blue Heron” by Carolyn Kizer)

Questions or letters to the editor? —email: carolynjunepankow@yahoo.com or write **Carolyn Pankow**, “Friends of San Pedro Valley Park”, 600 Pacifica, CA 94044. The editor is the writer of all uncredited features.

The Leaders of “the Friends of San Pedro Valley Park”:

President, **Carolyn Pankow**; Vice President, **Shirley Drye**; Secretary, **Jim Mackey** ; Treasurer, **Jane Turrel** ; members at large, **Jean Leonard** and **Istvan Puski**; visitor center staffing, **Jean Leonard**; Habitat Restoration Day Leader, **Jim Pommier** ; Interim Trail Day Leader, **Joseph Piro**; Membership chair, **Catherine Antista**; Program chair, **Carolyn Pankow**;