

GLENN KEATOR

On Friday, May 6, at 7:30pm one of the Bay Area's premiere field botanists, **Dr. Glenn Keator**, will speak on the subject of one of his recent, most informative books, The Life of an Oak: An Intimate Portrait. He will slant the talk towards our local Bay Area oaks but hopes to cover a variety of issues on oaks including a bit on Sudden Oak Death Syndrome. He will include the ecological importance of oaks, identification and classification, and adaptations.

Glenn is a real communicator and teacher. He is an instructor at several local institutions including Merritt College, San Francisco Botanical Gardens, Regional Parks Botanical Gardens, College of Marin, etc.

Glenn was brought up in the Bay Area. He is the author of several other books, including: Designing California Native Gardens, and a series of California pocket guide books. Glenn has led many botanizing field trips on the W.Coast & to Hawaii) (*Q. agrifolia* from Stanford w.s.)



Fig. 106. Quercus agrifolia (Oak). (From: Paul, C. N.)

JEAN LEONARD

Sadly, on April 12, Jean Leonard, our most respected and loved member of the "Friends", passed away. We will have an article about her in the July/August Bulletin, and an event will be announced so that we can celebrate her life together.

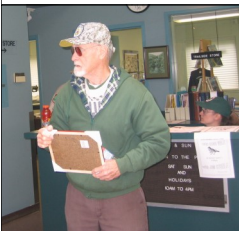
JIM STEELE'S BIRD SONG WALK

Jim Steele's 7th bird song walk will be on Saturday, May 21 at 8pm. No fair, most feathered friends are early birds! Mr. Steele will bring his recordings of breeding males to challenge our fellows, and so that you can hear the melodic boasts in response.. Bring binoculars! (Song Sparrow photo)



SHORT ON LEADERS, VOLUNTEERS

Please come and join us for our general meeting in May. We can use your ideas, AND we need to keep our organization going! It depends on you. There are only 5 of us now on the board, leading an organization of over 80 people! If you like keeping the Visitor Center open, walking clear, pristine trails, and attending our programs, please help us out. (photo of vol., **Fred Loughlin**)



TINKERING WITH EDEN IN AMERICA

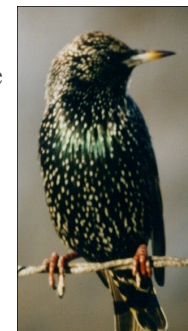
Kim Todd, a woman of remarkable talent and education, will be speaking on the introduction of exotic plants and animals to this country on **Wednesday, June 29, at 7:30pm**. Kim has researched the impact of such alien creatures as the **Brown Trout, Pigeons and Starlings** on our environment. Her book on this subject, "Tinkering with Eden", received 2 notable awards and was one of Booklist's Top Ten Science/ Technical Books for 2001.



Recently Kim has written an intriguing new book, Chrysalis, Maria Sibylla Merian & the Secrets of Metamorphosis about a "pioneering explorer-naturalist" early 18th century woman who studied insect metamorphosis in Africa. The New Yorker called the book, a "spellbinding biography".

She has written for "California Wild" and "Orion" and other magazines, and has taught environmental and nature writing at the University of Montana & the UCSC extension. She currently teaches at Penn State, The Behrend College. Todd is a senior fellow with the Environmental Leadership Program.

Ms Todd has given talks at such venues as the Harvard Museum of Natural History. She holds an MFA in creative non-fiction and an MA in environmental studies from the University of Montana, as well as a B.A. in Eng. from Yale. (Starling-Columbia.edu.com)



ON THE TRAIL



Several people, including **Jim Steele** and **Beth Field**, saw and/or heard what has turned out to be 3 wild tom **turkeys**, on either side of the Weiler Ranch Road. They were heard gobbling away by Beth at 6pm Friday, March 19. While having such turkeys in our Park may be an exciting event, it's "lucky" the 3 were toms, as it would not be good for the park if they ever found a female! (photo of one of the Park's turkeys by **Will Trout**)

March 27, mid day, a **Red Shouldered Hawk** pair were caught in a mating mode by voyeur, **Toni Gamlin**. The devoted pair was in a tree opposite the Rosita apartments when Toni first noticed a wing flapping upward and then took a closer look. (drawing of **Red-shouldered Hawk male** provided through the generosity of artist, **Jack Laws**) (Continued on p. 4) (**On the Trail** continued on page 4)



WILDLIFE IN MY LIFE: TO KILL OR TO LOVE

By Jack Dodson

As I read **Jane Turrel's** story of her childhood in Pennsylvania I was impressed by her statement that her



"parents were great nature lovers" who helped her "investigate the **local flora and fauna** together". Other than her description of her parents it could have been my childhood in Houston, Texas. We had pets, woods and bayous, **wild grapevines** and **poison ivy**, and our house was carved from a **natural landscape** as bucolic as Jane's. Our subdivision included original **oak trees**, mature deciduous **red oaks, water oaks, pin oaks** and **white oaks**. Indigenous wildlife abounded in the woods nearby and even on our property. There were summer days of wonder when if I watched a stick on the muddy bank of a bayou long

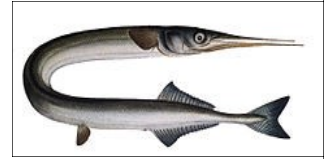
enough it would turn into a snake, slither down to the murky bayou and ripple away on the surface of the water. We had three poisonous kinds of snakes: **water moccasins, copperheads** and **coral snakes**. The latter two were visitors to our lawns and gardens, as were harmless **green grass** and **tree snakes, garters** and the hapless **hognose snake**, which resembled the **copperhead** and was usually killed on sight.

Unlike Jane's parents, mine were not "nature lovers" who advocated for wildlife. They never counseled me or my two brothers to respect and protect wild animals and plants. When I was nine my father gave me what I wanted for Christmas, a Remington pump BB rifle. Though he taught me good posture and how to "walk like an Indian" he gave me no more advice than never to shoot my rifle in the direction of people and houses. Whatever his intention, I took this to mean I was free to shoot wildlife in the woods or bayou. Somehow I "bush meat" was hard to get and not always a gastronomic success. I began to look for other targets.



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I thought this was okay, especially as long as I ate what I killed. I have a photograph of me holding a **swamp rabbit** (much larger than our local bunnies), which I cleaned and cooked. It was better than chicken. There were **soft shell turtles, bull frog legs** and (once) insects. They were, at the very least, edible. I caught a large **gar fish** in the bayou and dragged it home. I remember hacking it with an axe to get to the meat. I recall the impression of seeing sparks fly from its hard scales. The white fillets were large but tasted of the brackish bayou from which it came. (garfish photo-Wikipedia)



Following my father's dictum I felt free to shoot wild birds. **Mockingbirds, blue jays** and **cardinals** were off limits because they lived near residences. Less flashy in color were the fleet wild birds that lived in the thick underbrush of the woods. They were small, dapper creatures like **sparrows, spotted thrushes, hermit thrushes** and **brown thrashers** (photo of thrasher below). Camouflaged and wary they darted about in small flocks disappearing easily the the bush. They were more heard than seen and they challenged my skill as a marksman. But it was my success with them that ruined my career as a wildlife game hunter.

Killing for sport was not the same as hunting for food. As all sport hunters I felt obligated to claim a trophy for every kill. So I had to retrieve each bird, crawling in low dense thickets. With my ninth kill it happened. Call it a miracle, a transcendent moment or disgust. It was a **Brown Thrasher** (photo of thrasher by Charles Tysinger) and after shooting it I held it in my hand. I saw a spot of bright red blood on its breast. I held a once vibrant, living bird (no one knows this better than its most avid hunter) but it was now inert and terribly silent. Its bright eyes were closed forever. This seemed all wrong to me. I felt not the bird's pain but my own as I realized that this bird would no longer be a part of my life. Without a philosophical thought or moral education I felt the terrible loss and waste of that wild bird, and the others that I had killed before. My life as a wildlife hunter came to an end then and there.



I crossed from hunter to wildlife lover. These wild animals and plants have it hard enough without our adding to their problems. Every day and always I try to learn how to live with wildlife. I've replaced the simple destruction of hunting animals with the complications of loving them. Today I returned from my garage a healthy **baby garter snake** (US Fish and Wildlife photo) to where it belonged. It was an exhilarating experience, better than killing.



A NATURALIST'S PERSPECTIVE

By Jim Mackey

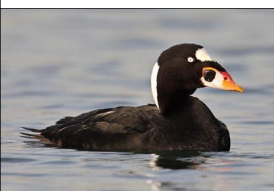
May – June 2011

Last April 16, at 12:30, my Brother, Daughter, Son, his Wife and I got sandwiches at the Upper Crust Deli and took them to Pedro Park. We selected a table in the Trout Farm Picnic Area and sat down to lunch and watch and listen for birds. This was a stop on our annual, full-day census of birds that had begun at the Cliff House, in San Francisco, went to Golden Gate Park and Lake Merced, and would continue to Arastradero Preserve, in Palo Alto, to Shoreline, in Mountain View, and end

at the Palo Alto Baylands. Finally we would enjoy a celebratory dinner at Harry's Hofbrau, in Foster City, where we tallied up our list. This year the total was 98 species. (one of the common birds at SPVP; **Wilson's Warbler**, photo by Peter LaTourrette)

We were a trifle disappointed not to have recorded at least 100. In the 28 consecutive years that we have conducted this Bay Area census, our totals have varied from 95 to 130. We have only failed to reach 100 six times, and five of these have occurred over the last five years. Could we blame global warming? Or maybe some kind of cooling of some of our birders? I seem to hear the birds singing less, and I fumble to select the proper set of three pairs of prescription glasses.

But when I retired to bed on April 16 and closed my eyes I did not feel disappointed. I visualized highlights of the day's observations, smelled the sea



air and looked down through the spray as the breakers boomed and immediately the **Surf Scoters** (photo of Surf Scoter from University of Santa Cruz website) bobbed back up. The two **Black Oystercatchers** (photo below from PRBO Conservation Science website) called

loudly to each other as they flew from one seastack to another. Why are their beaks such a striking red, while the beaks of male **Ruddy Ducks**, now in nuptial plumage, are bright blue? How did the exotic **Black Skimmers** get to the Bay Area several years ago? I was tired after a long active day, but I could not fall asleep. But I did not mind.



Addendum. Anyone who is motivated to census birds should consider joining an organized group. The Audubon Society has organized Christmas bird counts for

over a century that have produced valuable data

on the diversity and abundance of birds. In San Mateo County we have the Sequoia chapter of the Audubon Society: www.sequoia-audubon.org.

Poor Jim's Almanac: Our Park's avian chorus should be in full force when the last returning members, our **Swainson's Thrushes**, (Roland Jordahl photo of this thrush) begin singing in early May. We may first hear their call-notes a couple of weeks earlier, followed by their flute-



like songs. Also I will be listening especially for the "What peeves you?" call of **Olive-sided Flycatchers**. And watch **fence lizards** for their push-up displays of their blue bellies. (photo by Will Elder, NPS)

SHARRON WALKER AND BEVIN FIGHT GARDEN WEEDS

For part of their Earth Day celebration, this determined pair went to work pulling the obnoxious and invasive **sheep sorrel, grasses**, and various other pests in our beautiful Native Sun Garden. They delighted in working around the royal blue of the **Douglas irises**, the blooming **star flowers** (see last issue of "the Friends", pink **wood mint**, & **blue-eyed grass**. Thank you to **Sharron** and **Bevin** for donating some volunteer time to "The Friends of SPVP!"

Then Sharron and Bevin were out again on Sunday, May 1 doing a little "May Day" work in the same garden. **Thanks to all those members of the "Friends" who give volunteer time for to and for the Park!**

DRENCHING RAINS CLOG DRAINS

By Joseph Piro

It was only **me** and **Sam Keul** (someone new!) for our March 12th Trail Day. Rangers **Scott Lombardi** and **Martin King** were taking another group to work up on the Montara Mtn. Trail, so Sam and I headed up the Hazelnut Trail behind the Visitor's Center to scope things out and see what we could do. We ended up raking off several sections of trail covered with eucalyptus leaves, building a few new drain dips & digging dirt out of a drainage pipe running under a switchback that was pretty plugged up. We turned

around just before the eucalyptus forest at the top of the ridge & generally things look good. To the right is a picture of Sam at work on a drain dip. (photo by **Joseph Piro**)



ON THE TRAIL (continued)

Time for a look at **Judy Spitler's** avian observations. "On April 9, the day of our barbeque, I heard a **Great Horned Owl** hooting on the upper Brooks Trail, and saw the following migrants: **Yellowrump Warblers: Myrtle and Audubon.** Also, on the 11th I saw my first-of- the-year **Warbling Vireo (passing through).** A **California Thrasher** was singing on Weiler Ranch Road and I spied a **Common Yellowthroat** (Thayerbirding.com photo). This is the first time I've seen a Yellowthroat in the park; **Cliff Richer** saw one years ago".



"On Tues. Ap.19, I saw a **Brown Creeper** (juniorslayout.com) in our park, and a **Rufous Hummingbird**" (photography-on-



the.net/forum [a hummingbird that, unlike our Anna's Hummingbird, is a migrant].



HUMMINGBIRDS

*Shunt and plum bob, a whirring top
That keeps touching down on its pivot
Wings, the book says, like blurry gauze
The long, thin, nectar-threading bill
Of a bird that backs off only to start again
From its still point in midair
High in the Altiplano, its wings spread
Hundreds of feet across, a hummingbird
Flies among the sky-faced drawings
The Nazca paced off on their tarmac.*

*Walk me through something like that.
From a poem by Robert Gibb*

FACTOID

Most of us know that our honeybee friends do waggle dances to guide them to productive flowers, but few know that when bees are sleep-deprived they communicate poorly, causing their fellow workers to shoot a bit off the target, thus arriving a bit tardy to the most bountiful blossoms (photo wired.co.uk) (info from wired ws plus Audubon mag).



MAY—JUNE CALENDAR

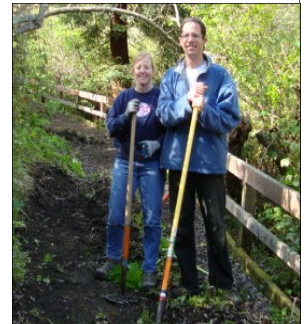
- GLENN KEATOR'S "THE LIFE OF AN OAK"**
Friday, May 6.....7:30pm
- MAY GENERAL MEETING**
Wednesday, May 11.....7pm
- MAY TRAIL DAY**
Saturday, May 14.....9am
- JIM STEELE'S SPRING SONGS HIKE**
Saturday, May 21.....8am
- MAY HABITAT RESTORATION**
Saturday, May 21.....9am
- JUNE GENERAL MEETING**
Wednesday, June 8.....7pm
- JUNE TRAIL DAY**
Saturday, June 11.....9am
- JUNE HABITAT RESTORATION**
Saturday, June 18.....9am
- KIM TODD'S—TINKERING WITH EDEN**
Wednesday, June 29.....7:30pm

*For all events meet at the Visitor Center
In July, August: Hummingbirds-Joe Morlan; Bird Migration-Al Jaramillo*

HIGH NOON on OUR EARTH DAY

By Joseph Piro

It was just **Ranger Laurel Hackleman, Sarah Shaw and I** for the April 9th Trail Day, & the three of us worked on a pretty straightforward little project -- widening the Plaskon Nature Trail behind the Visitor's Center from the new bridge to the start of the Hazelnut Trail. Since the handrail runs along the one side of the trail, this meant cutting back into the opposite hillside side and raking the dirt out onto the trail surface. By high noon we had everything done and that couple-hundred-foot stretch of trail looks great. We then enjoyed the volunteer potluck BBQ lunch on the back patio. Certainly a good day. [**Joseph** worked at the BBQ! He turned the burgers & franks & supped on the great **Jean Leonard** beans, salads & desserts. too]



FESTIVE FLOCK of Homo Sapiens

Gathering at the Barbeque were **Carol Martinez, "Skeeter"**, our president, **Shirley Drye**, who asked for more volunteers for "the Friends", **Jane Turrel, Istvan Puski, Chris Thatcher, Betty Parent** with 3 friends, **Jim Mackey, Judy Spitler, Isabel Ebert, Steve Roberts, Laurie** and **Craig Nikitas, Sharron Walker and Bevin, Mila** and **Adrian Stroganoff, Sara Shaw, & Carolyn Pankow.**

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

The Leaders of "the Friends of San Pedro Valley Park":

President, **Shirley Drye**; Vice President, **Carolyn Pankow**; Secretary, **Jim Mackey** ; Treasurer, **Jane Turrel** ; members at large, **Jean Leonard** and **Istvan Puski**; visitor center staffing, **by committee & with Doris Kelly**; Habitat Restoration Leader, **OPEN**; Trail Leader, **Joseph Piro**; Membership, **Catherine Antista**; Pgms, **Carolyn Pankow**; Trailside Store, **Jane Turrel** . . .