

## JOE MORLAN'S HUMMINGBIRDS



Joe Morlan will treat us to some fabulous photos of hummingbirds during his second appearance at our Visitor Center at **8pm on Saturday, August 13**. This presentation will include images of these nectar sippers from California, Belize, Costa Rica, Trinidad, and Ecuador. (photo of Costa's Hummingbird--Mark Chappell)

Mr. Morlan is a long-time California birder and teacher, who received the annual prestigious American Birding Association (ABA) Ludlow Griscom Award for 2010, an annual prize "given to individuals who have dramatically advanced the state of ornithological knowledge for a particular region.", joining such distinguished birding greats as **Roger Tory Peterson** and **Kenn Kaufman**.

Presently Joe is an instructor at San Francisco City college, where his classes are a favorite of accomplished birders. He launched, and has maintained, the Northern



**California Bird Box**, a telephone messaging system for alerting birders to rarities in the area. He extended these efforts with his superb website (<http://fog.ccsf.edu/~jmorlan/>) devoted to all aspects of birding across the state of California. And last but not least, Joe is a Pacifican!

(photo of Joseph Morlan from Monterey Birding website)

## CELEBRATION OF JEAN LEONARD'S LIFE

All of us on the board would love to see all of you who knew and cared about Jean Leonard at the celebration of her life barbeque. The event will take place on **Saturday, September 17, at 12 noon**. Expect a call from one of us to you, or call 355-7466 to tell us that you are coming and what side dish you would like to bring. Thank you.

## SOS at the VISITOR CENTER—call 355-7466

We need you to help keep the Visitor Center open to the public. **Doris Kelly**, our new chair of Visitor Center scheduling has been working hard to find people who will cover the center for 3 hours in the morning or afternoon on a Saturday or Sunday. Even those who want to be "last minute Joes" would be appreciated! But we especially value anyone who will agree at the very beginning of a month to take a particular time slot. And those like **Isabel Ebert, Steve Robinson, Lois Joseph, and Mike and**

**Miyoung Klein** are to be especially congratulated for taking a pre-arranged time slot throughout the year.



## SAVING WILDLIFE—a FAMILY PROGRAM

**Norman Gershenz**, the CEO and cofounder of the Center for Ecosystem Survival, and **Savenature.org**, will give us a family program on **Saturday, July 9, at 7:30pm**, called "Saving Wildlife".



Norm was affiliated with the San Francisco Zoo for more than 18 years as an educator, member of the animal care staff, fundraiser, and researcher. Norm has tracked black rhinos in Zimbabwe, chased orangutans (photo of baby orangutan from AfricanSafariJournals.org) in Borneo, & stalked the elusive platypus in Australia. .



Mr. Gershenz's organization has raised over 3 million dollars to save the rain forests and coral reef habitats around the world, to try to cut the losses of 50,000 rain forest species per year, so that half the Earth's species will not disappear in a few decades. SaveNature.Org also works with 2700 schools nationwide, asking children to become stewards for

the earth through the Adopt An Acre and Adopt a Reef program

Norm was given the coveted Terwilliger Environmental Prize last year for his outstanding work to save animals and plants around the world, and received the Conservation Award from the National Wildlife Foundation..

## ON THE TRAIL

On a Tuesday in early May, "**Josh**", a Park aide, saw a small **bobcat** wending its way down the Trout Farm Road at about 7:30am. He watched it for a couple of minutes, during which time it seemed unconcerned about getting a rude stare..



**Barbara Kempster** watched in amazement as two **blackbirds** dove repeatedly "into" a **Great Horned Owl**, stopping short of a collision. The Owl was perched close to the trunk of a **pine tree located** halfway between the upper & lower Trout Farm trails. A couple of **Scrub Jays** kept up a cacophony of squawking from the outside of the "owl's" branch. Unable to sleep through all this 4:30pm bedlam, the owl flew silently away. It was near the 12th of May. (photo of sleeping **Great Horned Owl** by Steve Thomas) (continued on p 4)



*The following article was written for Jean 6 years ago, but she felt it would be more appropriate to have it as an obituary. We find that it is important as a celebration of her wonderful life with the SPVP volunteers, now "the Friends of SPVP"*

### **THIS IS JEAN, OUR QUEEN—2005**

Our favorite volunteer is **Jean Leonard**, Jean serene., queen of the Visitor Center. She's waiting for you patiently; she will only suggest that she needs you for 3 hours one day in January. She is organized, she's consistent, she's amazing, she's the perfect kind of boss. On any Sunday you can see her brown vintage and slightly dented ford Pinto station wagon pulling up to the main park building, where she assists our public, the park lovers, on her work day.

Ms. Leonard is dedicated to San Pedro Valley Park, remembers a time of adequate county park budgets, when Rangers had time—Jesse tended an aquarium, Ranger Carol, turtles, a large gopher snake, lizards, and more. For more than 20 years Jean has welcomed families into see the games and books for children and the nature collection in the library, and to shop at the Trailside Store.

For over 20 years our lady has kept a chart of people "covering" the SPVP Visitor Center on weekends and holidays. For her steadfastness and competency she received the San Mateo County Parks award as "Volunteer of the year in 1998. **Cliff Richer** said at that time that, no, she should be declared "volunteer of the decade". Some days when no one was available to sit behind our counter I've told Jean: "Forget about it; it's not your responsibility; it can be closed for one day; you can't be perfect." Reliable people, especially a person who loves our park, do not listen to this kind of banter, and who is more reliable than our Visitor Center lady? Who loves the Park more?

One Christmas Jean started a project to trim our new tree—to give the Visitor Center a real holiday feel We had no ornaments, no lights, no tinsel, and little money. Whenever she thought of the perfect holiday tree she pictured strings of cranberries and popcorn, homemade hangings. With her usual gentle persuasion she had three of us piercing the white flowered kernels with needles, stringing them onto heavy thread, taping red plaid ribbon around pretzels, cutting pieces of felt to fashion polar bears, changing a shape and adding glitter for fish scales, and turning clothes pins into reindeer. Martha Stewart West.

Jean often leads our Christmas singing, calls lists of members for our potlucks, organizes the tables, cooks her "award winning" scalloped potatoes, New England baked beans (Jean's beans), and afterwards she spirits dishes

into the "kitchen" and battles the cup-sized sink to rinse coffee pots while others play.

Jean came to California from the rainy land of Oregon with her husband, Don, in the 40's. Don built their beautiful sitting room, overlooking the Pacific Ocean, & the solarium where one of her cats tried to snag goldfish She gave birth to her pride and joy, daughter, Linda, who eventually expanded the family further with three sons. She's lived in Pacifica in a home overlooking the cliffs, sand and waves since the early 50's, when a mountain lion used to eye new intruders to his hunting realm from the top of their street. She learned to hope for the sight of a bobcat when she "moved in" to the Park years later. The spotlighted member of the cat family these days, however, is now an abandoned fluff of Persian stealth, Grayson, who relishes long combing sessions, a luxurious pillow on Jean's bed, and Fancy-feast dinners, undoubtedly in disbelief at his good luck in landing this incredible mistress.

In the meantime, with her darling resting on her lap, I can hear her calling—rinnng, rinnng, rinnng, Pickup: "Helloo, Carolyn. (I know what's coming; it's that extra 'o') I have 4 openings in December; do you think you could cover.....???" Well, what can you say to the queen?

*In the next six years Jean was as steady and loyal as ever. She still brought the stuffing for the Christmas party in 2010, a little embarrassed that she couldn't get up and help us—she had just broken her wrist, but we reminded her that she had done most of the work for the party for over 20 years!*



*Somehow she always got to the Center on Sunday afternoon to pull more than her share of the load, finally taking Redi Wheels during the last year, never asking anyone to drive her.*

*She tended her garden well into her 90's, and nurtured Persian Cats: Missy, Grayson, her favorite: Holly, and finally Juliet. All were combed each day and felt the warmth of Jean's heated mattress and pillow every night.*

*Of course we miss her more than we can say.*

## A NATURALIST'S PERSPECTIVE

By **Jim Mackey**

July/Aug. 2011

**Walter Colquhoun** and **Fred Laughlin** often hike together in Pedro Park and enjoy watching the various critters that can be seen here. Late one morning this May they were crossing the lower parking lot when a **bobcat** appeared at the bridge – with a **rabbit** in its mouth! The bobcat continued up to the Plaskon Trail, while Walt photographed it with



his Kodak. (**Walt** said that his camera has a 10x zoom lens but he did not think that he extended the zoom. However he cropped the photos with his printer.) I asked Walt how he was able to make such a great observation, and he replied that, unlike some visitors to our Park, he doesn't run. I also asked Walt if the rabbit was kicking, and he said no, it appeared to be lifeless.

I think that in Pedro Park rodents are a more important part of the diet of bobcats than rabbits or birds. These cats are often seen stalking **mice** or **gophers** by the Weiler Road, the horse-shoe pits and the Walnut Grove picnic areas. I once watched one, in mid-day one weekend, poised by a gopher mound on the lawn in front of the Visitor Center!

Unlike **jack rabbits**, which are born well-furred and can hop within hours, **cottontails** (including **brush rabbits**) are born blind and nearly naked. Why aren't more of them found by our bobcats, coyotes, foxes and gopher snakes? The mother brush rabbit makes a nest of grass and her fur (as in photo at left) that is hidden in thick brush; and the bunnies are adept at "freezing" – remaining motionless when confronted by an enemy. I have never seen very small rabbits out



feeding with adults. Thanks to the mammalian trait of mothers nursing their young, they don't have to leave the vicinity of the nest to obtain food.

On June 4 I studied the nest that I had seen a male **Lesser Goldfinch** visit on May 21. It was about 6 feet above the sidewalk in a **coyotebrush** in front of the Visitor Center. The nest was empty and it did not have a rim of excrement so I believe that the nesting failed. (Harrison, in his "A Field Guide to Western Bird Nests," says that a rim of excrement, deposited by young, is diagnostic of all goldfinches. Incidentally, we have a used copy of this guide for sale and another in our library in the Visitor Center.) (Alan D. Wilson photo of male lesser Goldfinch)



This spring was a bit dark, damp and dreary, with few butterflies and dragonflies to provide flashes of color. However in the first week of June I noticed a red spot back in the shade by the Upper Trout Farm Trail, and it turned out to be a beautiful red columbine! There were also splashes of red around a couple of the tables in the Trout Farm Picnic Area that were provided by the bizarre octopus stinkhorn fungi. (Jim Mackey photo) [see "On the Trail"]



Poor Jim's Almanac. Baby fence lizards should hatch and appear in early August. Hopefully, for them and us, the sun may appear.



## "TALL" FOLKS GET A BREAK ON THE TROUT FARM

By **Joseph Piro**

The May 14th Trail Day started with an unusually cool, grey sky, but that didn't deter **Istvan Puski**, **Bing Huey**, "**Bill**" and **me** from tackling a little trail work. Ranger **Doug Heisinger** suggested we hike the Brooks Falls/ Trout Farm loop and trim back anything hanging low overhead or out into the trail, so with a few loppers and handsaws (and a McLeod I took along for good measure), that's what we did. Walk tall -- you've got plenty of headroom now on that nice little loop.

**JOSEPH AND ISTVAN WORK ON RUNNING DAY** It was just **me** and **Istvan Puski** for the unseasonably cool, grey-sky June 11th Trail Day. Since we hadn't worked up there for a while, we decided to grab some tools and head up the near end of the Valley View Trail. We made it up to the top of the ridge, along the way cutting back a few low-hanging **eucalyptus** branches and quite a bit of overgrown **coyote brush** and doing some minor trail repair like filling in some erosion channels running down the center of the trail.

Even though it was just the two of us for Trail Day, there were sure plenty of people in the Park with that fundraiser run they had for the schools. As Istvan and I were locking our bikes in front of the Visitor's Center around 9, **Sara Shaw** stopped by and told us she was doing the run, otherwise she would have joined us too. (Joseph Piro photo of Istvan)



**ON THE TRAIL** (continued )

On June 9, at 4:30pm, your editor, **Carolyn Pankow**, saw a showy, 3' long **gopher snake** with half its body on the Weiler Ranch Road and half in the grass of the field. The reptile was near the opposite side of the north-west Valley View entrance. He lay there until I touched him!

On so many cloudy days I had looked for snakes at the side of the road where I had seen them several times before in late spring—finally! It was a mild, overcast day. (drawing from rightpet.com website)

**Ranger Jonel Ishida** was our first known person to see 2 newborn **fawns** with Mom. They were in the grass above the Weiler Service Road; it was Friday, May 27. (fawns, in picture are white-tailed not mule deer—they are from the greatlakebow hunters website)

**Columbines**- all in their scarlet



dress, were seen by **Katie Antista** in late May at the side of the Weiler Ranch road, just past the southeastern entrance to the Valley View trail. (Matt Blakeley Smith photo of our red columbine)

**Katie** saw a “mess” of the alluring **octopus stinkhorn fungus** in the Trout Farm picnic area on Sunday, June, 5. She reported that the black, gooey substance that attracts spore “gathering” flies had oozed out a bit.



**THE LADY THAT NEVER QUITS**

Our thanks go to **Catherine Antista** for putting in four and one half hours weeding the Native Sun Garden this last week. *We appreciate all of you that volunteer in any way!* Consider your options: Visitor Center desk, Trail Work, Native Plant Restoration, Phone Calling for Events, Setting up a Web Site for us, and the list goes on.....



**FACTOID**

Even though **hummingbirds** are small in size (weight similar to a penny), they have large appetites. Hummingbirds consume between 3.14 and 7.6 calories a day. That may not seem like much, but if humans (who may eat 3,500 calories a day) had the metabolism of a hummingbird, they would have to consume approximately 155,000 calories a day. That's about 77 times as much as most humans eat! (info from San Diego Zoo website) (photo of **Anna's Hummingbird** male by **Tony Marple**)

**JULY—AUGUST CALENDAR**

- JULY TRAIL DAY**  
Saturday, July 9.....9am
- NORM GERSHENZ'S "SAVING WILDLIFE"**  
Saturday, July 9.....7:30pm
- JULY GENERAL MEETING**  
Wednesday, July 13.....7pm
- JULY HABITAT RESTORATION DAY**  
Saturday, July 16.....9am
- AUGUST GENERAL MEETING**  
Wednesday, August 10.....7pm
- AUGUST TRAIL DAY**  
Saturday, August 13.....9am
- JEAN LEONARD'S LIFE CELEBRATION DAY**  
Saturday, Sept 17.....12noon
- JOE MORLAN'S HUMMINGBIRDS**  
Saturday, August 13.....8pm
- HABITAT RESTORATION DAY**  
Saturday, August 20.....9am

*For all events meet at the Visitor Center*  
Watch for Joe Morlan's "Hummingbirds" and Al Jaramillo's "Bird Migration" later this summer.

**ROBERT'S ROAD RAVENS**

By **Jack Dodson**

This year I observed (my first time ever) a mated pair of ravens build their nest, lay eggs, hatch them and feed, protect and nurture there three offspring baby ravens. I saw the little nippers when their heads just bobbed, all skittled skin heads too big and as ugly & naked as a vulture's. Amidst frantic and constant vigilance from their raven parents, the three chicks became silly young birds, all flapping at on the rim of the nest, as if to fledge. From start to finish this all this took almost four months.

Finally one day they were together on a branch of a Monterey cypress. Outside the nest they were shoulder to shoulder sitting silently and looking back at their former nest, now a twiggy sort of abandoned prison. They seemed to thinking the same thought, incredulous that such a tangle of twigs was ever their home. Was it a dream, a nightmare. One thing certain, they never went back. Ever.

So somewhere there's a bird in a tree living in its time & space, Listening to subtle variations of life while examining its toes.

*(All this happened for Jack from his perch looking down from Robert's Road)* (photo of baby Ravens in a nest by **Enco Murtaniaki**)

