

## PLANTS OF THE SAN MATEO COUNTY COAST with TONI CORELLI



We appreciate so much Toni's knowledge of the flora of our area, and the talk she gave us highlighting the plants of San Pedro Valley Park, that we have invited her back to speak to us about our coastal plants on **Saturday, April 21, at 7:30pm.**

There are at least 600 species of plants in the acreage along the 71 miles of the San Mateo County Coast. Much of it has been set aside as public lands and state beaches, and much of it is a target and effort for preservation by volunteers, who

are collaborating with the State Parks system. Toni is just the expert to bring alive the beauty of this flora & the effort to save it. (drawing of seaside daisy from Toni's latest book)

Ms. Corelli is a botanist, environmental consultant, & longtime member of the California Native Plant Society. She is the author of "the Flora of Edgewood Park", "the Rare and Endangered Plants of San Mateo & Santa Clara County", & more recently the book "Plants & Plant Communities of the San Mateo Coast" written in collaboration with



Avis Boutell and Nancy Frost. (photo of Toni from "www.Stanford.edu")

## CALIFORNIA WILD-LIVE- for KIDS

The elusive **grey fox**, the **Great Horned Owl**, the **Red-tailed Hawk**, the **opossum**, and the spine-studded little **porcupine** of our Sierras will delight children in our Visitor Center at **1pm on Tuesday, April 10**, the second day of Pacifica School District's Easter Vacation. So spread the word to neighbor children and bring your family youngsters. Wildlife Associates of Half Moon Bay presents the program, and the San Mateo County Parks Foundation sponsors this sterling event.

(photo of Virginia opossum, our transplant, is by **Alden M. Johnson** of the Cal. Acad. of Sciences.)



## VISITOR CENTER IN TROUBLE

Plain & simple: we need more volunteers at our Visitor Center desk. And *HOW* we need them! Call **Jane Turrel** at 738-8319 for details. Thanks for any time you can give.

**EARTH DAY BARBEQUE IS ON TRAIL DAY, SATURDAY, APRIL 14 at NOON.**—We will be calling you to invite you a week before.

## MARK HYLKEMA THE OHLONE AND CALIFORNIA INDIANS

**Mark Hylkema**, California State Parks Archaeologist, will give a talk about European contact with local Indians called "First People Meet Second People: Ohlone Indians and Early Spanish Explorations of the San Francisco Peninsula". His program is scheduled for Sat., March 17, at 7:30pm. (sketch of Ohlones --"oaklandhistory.com")



The ways of native **Indian** tribes in Calif. evolved over a period of more than 12, 000 yrs, each area developing its own distinct tribes. In the Bay Area, the Spanish found that there were well defined boundaries & customs separating the San Mateo Co. Indian tribes. The natives of our coastal areas, who relied on the bounty of the ocean, were not as complex socially as the aborigines of the Bay side of our Peninsula.

This is an exciting & informative program: imagine yourself living, perhaps, 1000 yrs ago, surviving as a native dependent upon the resources of our coast & brush land & facing an environment fraught with natural challenges and danger.

Mark Hylkema is a State archaeologist with an MA & RPA & has 31 years of experience in Calif. archaeology & Native American culture. He has interacted with many different tribal communities, particularly in central and Northern California and did his graduate research on the archaeology of the San Mateo & Santa Cruz Co coast. Mark has directed excavations throughout the greater San Francisco and Monterey Bay areas & also teaches Anthropology at Foothill College. Mark has taught undergraduate & graduate classes at several Universities.. A native of Mountain View, he currently resides in Sunnyvale. (photo of Mark from "morning forum.com")



## ON THE TRAIL

**John Murphy** of the Pacifica Land Trust, saw, on and about the 20th of January, at 2 in the afternoon, a **grey fox** "galloping" in urgent strides, from the hill opposite the South Walnut picnic area to that lower destination.. Of course, there was some red coloration on his sleek fur, but it was grey in the main, indisputably our fella.

(On the Trail continued on page 4)



### A Brief Autobiography

by Laurie Nikitas

I was born in Geneva, New York, a small town on Seneca Lake in the Finger Lakes region. We lived in a raw, new development on the edge of town, where fields and woods survived all around. My brother and I, accompanied by our faithful **dog, Reginald**, spent every second we could in the woods. We knew every bush, tree and turn in the creek. (Laurie and Reginald at left)



We “adopted” **turtles**, nursed injured **birds**, and successfully raised and released an orphaned **squirrel**. For some strange reason, we were fascinated by **toads**, and every summer collected some from the window well of our basement. We fussed over our captives, watering them and catching insects for them. I read everything I could about animals and always knew I wanted to work with them, somehow. But it was the ‘50s. I was told girls were not strong enough to be veterinarians, and zoos did not employ women. Teaching and nursing were accepted occupations.

So I went to SUNY Geneseo, [the State University of New York at Geneseo] and earned degrees in English and Secondary Education. I taught middle school for a year before my ex and I fled the Northeast for California. On that hot summer morning when we packed our two **cats** & a big suitcase into our VW Bug, we had never been west of Buffalo. There



were no teaching jobs here in 1972, so I turned to office work for a few years. By the time I’d had enough of that, the world had changed. Zoos were hiring women, so I started working toward that by volunteering at the Randall Jr. Museum (pictured above)

on Saturdays, and attending City College at night. Eventually a job opened up at the museum, so I was able to ditch clerical work and enroll at SF State. On the way to my Biology degree, I took Herpetology, taught by **Dr. Jim Mackey**, a professor I never forgot, someone I feel honored to have known these many years later.

After graduation I took a job with the Bronx Zoo, where I was the first woman ever hired in the reptile department. We had 1,000 animals in our care, from dime-sized **frogs** to 1/2 ton **crocodiles**, from placid **turtles** to deadly **King Cobras**. (King Cobra to left, snagged from a Blog)



Among other duties, I was in charge of the nursery, where I had dozens of infant snakes. **Spitting Cobras** would squirt venom at me from their barely pipped eggs, and newborn **anacondas** would launch themselves at me, toothy mouths agape.

My favorites there were the **Giant Aldabron Tortoises**, teenager specimens similar to Galapagos Tortoises and weighing 300 pounds. (photo of giant aldebra tortoise from redbubble w.s.)



While I loved the Bronx Zoo, I loved San Francisco more, so I returned here after a year and a half. Once again I did clerical work while awaiting a zoo job. Those years were certainly not wasted. I met and married Craig, and had our two children. I also spent Sundays subbing for the reptile and **dolphin** keepers at Steinhart Aquarium at the California Academy of Sciences. My toddler daughter would come to “help,” kissing the limp **mackerel** before tossing them to the delighted dolphins and **seals**. She also made friends with **Ursula the penguin**. She thought every kid got to do such things, and hanging out in the aquarium after hours was just another Sunday. Below is a photo of our daughter, **Eleni**, with **Ursula**, who was a **Black-footed Penguin**, a temperate-zone species from South Africa. (greatly resembling the **Magellanic Penguin** of Tierra del Fuego. Both species are colloquially called "Jackass Penguins" because of their braying sound)(Next Issue: Laurie at the San Francisco Zoo & in SPVP).



### FACTOID

Along the Plaskon Nature Trail or in the patio at the rear of the Visitor Center, you may have heard the longest melodic bird song of SPVP. The voice belongs to the **Winter Wren**. Per unit weight, this wren delivers its song with 10 times more power than a crowing rooster.

It might interest you also to know that the Winter Wrens in western North America have more complex songs than eastern Winter Wrens. The western songs have about 36 notes per second on average, while the eastern songs have 16 notes per second. Is it time for you to get out there and listen for this little champion?

(info from the Cornell lab of Birds. Photo of Winter Wren by Adam Bender)



## A NATURALIST'S PERSPECTIVE

By Jim Mackey

March/April 2012

Green exercise. Joyce and I subscribe to the U.C. Berkeley Wellness Letter, which has a lot of advice about various medicines and foods. In December 2010 however, the editorial, by **Dr. John Swartzberg**, was titled "Green Exercise: a Walk in the Woods." Dr. Swartzberg exercises year-round at a gym or running in his neighborhood, but he



feels more recharged, physically and mentally, after his annual backpacking trip in the Sierra Nevada. Dr. Swartzberg recognizes that being out of the range of cell phones and email probably contributes to this, but he believes that a more important factor is simply

being out in nature.

Some researchers are trying to measure the physiological and psychological effects of walking in a forest, in mountains, or by the sea, compared with walking in a city. The Japanese have coined a term, "Shinrin-yoku," which translates to "forest bathing." They have found that walking in forests is more effective than in cities in lowering blood pressure and heart rate as well as improving immune function for a few hours to a few days later. They even suggest that airborne chemicals emitted by plants may contribute to these effects. (Oh oh, that seems like a little too much.) But I do enjoy the aroma when I scuff through wet leaves of bluegum eucalyptus. (My Mother also liked the scent, which reminded her of red grapes.) And when I hike on our Valley View Trail I usually break off a small sprig of California sagebrush and crush it, then enjoy its bracing aroma as I continue along the trail. I regret that our Park lacks California bay, which produces, arguably, the most pleasant aroma of all.



Lastly, who doesn't appreciate the scent of a live Christmas tree?

For me, a hike in Pedro Park is a chance not only to explore a world of plants and wildlife but also to escape a world of almost continual interactions with people. How can I back out of a space in the Linda Mar parking lot when two huge SUV's on either side block my view? Is the person by the door at the Safeway collecting signatures on a petition? There's a good friend – but do I have time to talk? Why did the lady let her dog plunge into the mouth of Pedro Creek before I could identify the gulls that were bathing

there? All of the above interactions are stressful, requiring the secretions of hormones, including cortisone and adrenalin. Some stress is more healthful than none, but there can be so much stress that it is debilitating. Thus in the fourth (high) year of the lemmings' cycle of population density, the animals that engage in a fatal mass emigration are found to have hypertrophied adrenal cortices. (Dum-de-dum-dum.) (photo of two lemmings from the net)



Poor Jim's Almanac. See what the convergence of warming and moisture, plus increasing day length can do. Check out the **trilliums** on the Plaskon and the **adder's tongues** and **Douglas irises** on the Hazelnut Trail. Welcome the returning **Wilson's warblers** and **black-headed grosbeaks**, (photo by Paul Higgins) and re-learn their songs.



## COME HAIL OR HIGH WATER—

The Drain Dips are Ready

By Joseph Piro



*"The Hale and Hearty Team" photo by Joseph Piro*

Despite its being a cool, grey morning with light off-and-on drizzle, we had a big turn-out for our February 11th Trail Day. Among the folks that joined us today were **Istvan Puski, Sara Shaw, Bing Huey, Laurie, Colleen, Conrad, Daniel, Brian, Bob** and **Mayleen** (including myself, I think I got everyone!). Along with **Rangers David Vasquez** and **Martin King**, we all headed up the Brooks Falls Trail to continue doing some bank-cutting work as well as dig a few new drain dips. With so many people, we really got a lot done! Afterwards, we all enjoyed a BBQ lunch on the back patio of the Visitor's Center. [due to Ranger David's grant from the San Mateo Co. Parks Foundation.]

**ON THE TRAIL-Sightings**

On January 28th, **Ken Himes** of the California Native Plant Society, complimented our **silk tassel bushes, *Garrya eliptica***, (at left-UC Sonoma photo) calling them “superb”.. This time of the year many of our distinctive shrubs are in bloom, including both our **manzanitas**, and our **pink flowering currant**, which has been blooming since October, showing off its tear-drop clusters of colorful blossoms; 2 especially luscious shrubs are in our native sun garden area. (Calif. Floral Gdn photo)



**Linda Roy** and a group of native plant gardeners reported seeing the following in bloom on the Hazelnut Trail: **pitcher sage** (pictured at left), **hound’s tongue**, & **fetid adder’s tongue**, to name a few of their observations. Their hike was on Saturday, Feb. 26.



**Katie Antista** reported seeing lovely royal blue **violets** in the shade at the western beginning of the Hazelnut under some live oak trees. A few days earlier she had noticed their leaves. (*Viola adunca* from westernwildflower.com.)



A large **Red-tailed Hawk** zoomed down from a California live **oak tree** near the entry kiosk, plucking a grey rodent from the ground on the morning of Thursday, Feb. 23rd. Thanks, **Katie**.



**Barbara Kempster** saw 2 **Cooper’s Hawks**, pursuing the much larger **Red-tailed Hawk** on the service road

near the rangers’ shop. It was near 12 on Feb 18. Motive? (Lloyd Spitalnik photo of Cooper’s Hawk)



**Barbara** made the only reporting of a **bobcat**, this one in the middle of the So. Walnut, who gradually moved under a tree— on a cool, foggy day in the first week of Feb at 4pm.



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

**MARCH—APRIL CALENDAR**

- MARCH TRAIL DAYS**
  - Saturday, March 10.....9am**
  - MARCH GENERAL MEETING**
  - Wednesday, March 14.....7pm**
  - MARCH HABITAT RESTORATION**
  - Saturday, March 17.....9am**
  - MARK HYLEKEMA’S CALIFORNIA INDIANS**
  - Saturday, March 17.....7:30**
  - WILDLIFE ASSOCIATES; CALIFORNIA WILD**
  - Tuesday, April 10.....1pm**
  - APRIL GENERAL MEETING**
  - Wednesday, April 11.....7pm**
  - APRIL TRAIL DAY**
  - Saturday, April 14.....9am**
  - “EARTH DAY” BARBEQUE**
  - Saturday, April 14.....12noon**
  - APRIL HABITAT RESTORATION DAY**
  - Saturday, April 21.....9am**
  - TONI CORELLI’S PLANTS of SAN MAT. CO. COAST**
  - Saturday, April 21.....7:30pm**
- For all events, meet at the Visitor Center*

**NEWS BRIEFS**

**Matt Auda-Capel** is a new “permanent ranger for San Pedro Valley Park. Welcome, Matt! More about him later.

**Ranger Jonel Ishida & Ranger Doug Heisinger** have retired as rangers from SPVP.. They have been loyal supporters to the volunteers, & have remained loyal & encouraging to us during some difficult changes. We will miss their help and guidance and all the talks we’ve had with them over the years, not to mention how hard they have worked to maintain this spectacular park. More later on these two, but the word is both will be involved in fishing. ???

**HACKING AT THE HAZELNUT**

*By Joseph Piro*

Happy New Year everyone! **Istvan Puski** and I kicked off the first **Trail Day of 2012 on January 14th** by heading up the Hazelnut Trail behind the Visitor's Center and working our way up to the bench by the eucalyptus grove. Along the way we cleaned out some drain dips, dug a few new ones, trimmed back some overgrown bushes and cut down some low-hanging branches. Things look pretty good though, so try and get out and enjoy our trails!

**HABITAT RESTORATION**

**Istvan Puski** led **Christine Guzman** and **Sara Shaw** on the Feb. habitat restoration day, pulling many an alien. Thanks!

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

President, **Jim Mackey**; Vice President, **Carolyn Pankow**; Secretary, **Shirley Drye**; Treasurer, **Jane Turrel**; members at large, **Istvan Puski**; *Visitor Center staffing-open*. Interim VC staffer is **Jane Turrel**, thank you!; Habitat Restoration Leader, **Istvan Puski**; Trail Leader, **Joseph Piro**; Membership, **Catherine Antista**; Programs, **Carolyn Pankow**; Trailside Store, **Jane Turrel**.