

## DR. MATT THOMAS BRINGS DEVIL'S SLIDE HYDROLOGY/ GEOLOGY HOME TO US—SAT, FEB 2nd



If you are moved by the mysteries of Devil's Slide—don't let it all pass you by: stop and listen to **Dr. Matt Thomas** explain the seismic pressures and the interplay of water and rock; he will leave you with new ideas and more questions about the future of this dynamic formation. The programs starts at **3pm on Saturday, February 2nd.**

Dr. Thomas recently received his PhD from Stanford University in Geological and Environmental Sciences. As a graduate student he worked with Professor Keith Loague to unravel subsurface hydrologic response for the Devil's Slide problem. Previously he had worked for Lowry Assoc. and other firms investigating the cause of landslides. He has published several articles in Environmental and Engineering Geoscience and other professional Journals.

Matt grew up on the Peninsula. His first memories of Devil's Slide were sitting at home as a kid watching news reports about big rain and big road problems—the geology “bug” had been implanted, and he traveled to SoCal—UCLA, where he received his BS in Geology. He moved back to the Peninsula, to the Santa Cruz Mountains, and was accepted into the masters program at Stanford, where he received his MA in Civil



and Environmental Engineering, and later his PhD. He appeared here at our Visitor Center in a program set up by our Volunteer Programs Specialist, **Carla Schoof**, who put me in contact with him. (Rob Cala photo at left)

## LANCE MILLBRAND'S SLIPPERY SUBJECTS—FEBRUARY 28th

For 27 years, **Lance Millbrand** has been shooting wild animals, including marine life, for the thrill of it. He does not use a weapon; he clicks a camera, or more likely lately, he captures the movements of denizens of the forest on film while lying in a cold redwood stream clad in a wet suit. And who are these animals that captivate him for hours on end? Would they be the swift the brave? Or would they be the slimy and the plodding?: they are the **California Newt** and the rare **Calif long-toed salamander**. In his program starting at **3pm** in our VC, Lance will delve into the strange life of the Newt and bring in a small array of live salamanders!



Lance has been featured in *Bay Nature* magazine, has appeared before the S.F. Natural History Group, & has made films for nature centers as well as commercials for corporate entities. (mating newts photo by Millbrand)

## JORG & MIMI FLEIGE'S FLORA OF LAKES BERRYESSA AND HENNESEY

Lovers of native plants, members of the CNPS in Napa, **Jorg and Mimi Fleige** travel much of the North and East Bay areas in search of the beauty of the bloom, posting their trophies on their website. They will present Jorg's excellent photography of the flora of these lakes, supplying you with common and scientific names. Lovely views of the landscape of the area will also be featured.



Jorg graduated from UC Berkeley in Archaeology, with graduate work at Washington State. He has been an amateur/semi professional in photography since his high school years. Mimi was trained in horticulture. She was an executive at a horticulture company before retiring and has an extensive interest in California native plants. The couple has appeared here and at CNPS programs. (Pictured at the right is Jorg's photo of strange little **wand wirelettuce**, an atypical member of the sunflower family by Lake Berryessa.)



*Note: **Paul Donahue**, who was to present "Nature in Pacifica" on this date, was called away on an expedition.*

## ON THE TRAIL



**Ron Wilson** photographed this Great Horned Owl: “this guy flew past in the second meadow as you enter the [Weiler Ranch Road] & landed in trees on the creek side” at just about sunset on Sat. Nov, 9th. He or she watched Ron for quite a while.

**Katie Antista** saw a large **coyote** walking down Rosita Rd by the Creekside condos at 7:15pm Fri. the 7th of Nov/. She also saw what may have been the same coyote that **Laurie Nikitas** had seen at the top of the

hill by the entry road to SPVP.

During the last week of December, **Laurie Nikitas** was hot on the pungent trail of **fungus**—Enjoy her image of the strange, flower-like mushroom from the Hazelnut, right, & those she took photos of on page 4.



## JIM STEELE'S NATURE JOURNEY

I have often been accused of being a little boy stuck in an old man's body. And indeed my boyhood joy and fascination with nature has yet to wane. Nature was always awe-inspiring. It made me feel humble, without feeling small.

I grew up north of Boston, where extensive woodlands, streams and ponds were just a short walk from our home. I learned about plants while picking **wild blueberries** to sell to my neighbors, and spent countless hours catching **frogs** and **salamanders, snakes** and **turtles**. My most cherished presents were various Golden Book nature guides for birds, insects, amphibians and reptiles. They allowed me to give names to half of what I caught. My greatest thrill was capturing a 25-pound snapping turtle. With stegosaurus-like spikes on its tail, I was agog with how ancient it appeared.



My father was from Alabama, so each summer the family crammed into our Rambler station wagon for a non-stop 38-hour drive to Birmingham. But it was worth the ride. In addition to re-connecting with relatives, I was treated to a wide variety of new creatures. However, unlike Massachusetts, I was not allowed to capture snakes or hunt in ponds, as my parents

feared my untimely death from the bite of a water moccasin. But there was plenty more. The insects seemed bigger and brighter. The giant black Lubber Grasshopper and giant June Bugs intrigued me. What now seems like cruel country boy entertainment, I would tie a thread to a June Bug's hind femur, then fly them like a kite until they fell exhausted. At night my grandparents' backyard was filled with "lightnin' bugs" (fireflies). I would catch a jar full, then sit in a dark closet and just watch. My first dissection carved through the abdomen of the dead ones hoping to find their light source that maybe I could connect to a battery. But I was gravely disappointed finding only clueless bug guts.



During the day, their backyard was filled with a colorful array of birds. It was my first sighting of a Northern Cardinal, as they had not yet ranged into our section of Massachusetts. I was delighted further by spectacular Blue Grosbeaks, Indigo Buntings, various "yellow" warblers, and Summer Tanagers, I spent hours holding the end of a string, connected to a stick, that propped up a cardboard box, which hovered over scattered crumbs of bread. But try as I might, the box fell much too slowly and I never caught a bird. Little did I know, 20 years later I would be capturing birds for the US Forest Service and monitoring meadows of the Sierra Nevada.



Brutally cold & quiet Massachusetts' winters were relatively

devoid of life, other than a few **redpolls** and **chickadees** visiting our feeder. (Cornell U. photo of **Redpoll** at feeder) Often I followed **rabbit** and **squirrel** tracks through the fresh snow, until they disappeared. I watched in amazement as **gray squirrels** sought out acorns they had hidden months before, but were now buried beneath a foot of snow. Just how did they remember? The quiet winter amplified my appreciation for nature sounds, when the song of mating "spring peepers" and returning birds announced the return of warmer days. In synchrony with the growing crescendo of nature's chorus, tree buds burst from dormancy and empty canopies became green & full of life. With warmer days, I often slept out in our back yard, so I could watch the constellations move across the sky while counting the myriad of "cricket" sounds. But my main objective was to wake to the cacophony of the birds' dawn chorus. I could only recognize the Blue Jay and American Robin, but I could count 15 or more different songs. Sometimes they blended for a few fleeting minutes in such a rhythmical manner you could literally dance to their chorus. Neighbors thought sleeping outside with the mosquitos was odd, and they often asked if I had been locked out of the house. (A reasonable surmise, as I was not always well behaved.) (cont'd on pg 3)



## SPECIAL CAPE IVY BLITZ BY VOLUNTEERS

We had a special Trail Day on November 15th with the San Mateo County Parks Foundation folks, with the highlight being a \$10,000 grant/donation from REI to the Foundation! It was a very good turn-out -- folks from REI, the Boy Scouts, the Foundation, us regular SPVP volunteers and others. With so many people, we were able to split into 2 groups -- **Ranger Greg Escoto** took about half the group to do some trail work (drain dips, bench cutting, etc.) up on the Montara Mtn. Trail while the rest of us went with **Ranger Rob Cala** to dig out invasive Cape Weed in the meadow about half-way out the Weiler Ranch Rd. We all arrived back around noon to enjoy a nice lunch of pizza, spaghetti, salad, drinks & more in the Trout Farm picnic area. Thanks everyone for coming and hope to see you again! *Joseph Piro*



(Jim Steele's Nature Journey, continued)

Nonetheless my attraction to nature's sounds continued to evolve, and years later I would teach people how to recognize bird songs to help them survey bird populations.

I was blessed with an aptitude for math & science, but despite my love for biology & ecology, high school advisers encouraged me to become a mechanical engineer. But in 1969, after just a year in the engineering program at the U. of Mass., I dropped out. It was the height of the Vietnam war



and I feared I was destined to make weapons of destruction my whole career. Not sure what other career to pursue, I chose to hitchhike around the country, aiming to visit as many of the west's Nat'l Parks as I could. After backpacking in Yosemite, and hiking Muir

Woods & Point Reyes, Northern California became my most cherished space, and I eventually settled in San Francisco/Pacifica.

To understand nature better, I always imagined myself as a Native American living off the land, and read whatever I could about various tribal cultures. The Hopi were known as the



"people of peace" so I hitchhiked onto their Arizona reservation with the fantasy I could apprentice with a medicine man and learn their uses of native plants. Unfortunately many had lost their traditions, and despite

befriending 3 young Hopi who tried to connect me with elders on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mesa (ruins from the 2nd Mesa, which Jim might have explored pictured above) who still retained "the old ways", the elders weren't accepting strangers. Disappointed, I lingered in Santa Fe for a while but had a powerful dream that I should to return to San Francisco.

Back in San Francisco I realized I needed to choose a "career" path, or die an old hippie. I decided to first embark on a 4 day vision quest. I substituted a local sauna for the traditional sweat lodge, then hitchhiked to a hilltop near Mt Vision in Pt Reyes (**Michel Braxonthaler** photo of the Pt. from Mt. Vision-

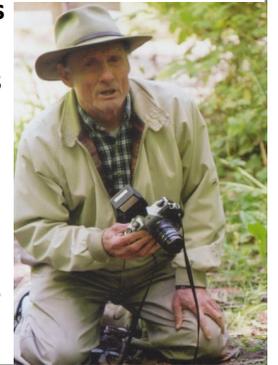


photo of the Pt. from Mt. Vision-at left). I brought only a bottle of water and a blanket. The idea of

a vision quest was to strip myself of old attachments in order to become more in touch with my "true" self. As I understood ancient vision quests, I was to speak to the wilderness, & when my voice resonated deeply, I would recognize my

sincere desires. First I had to encircle my campsite to make sure no one was watching, as upon hearing me they might think I was crazy. Convinced it was a private affair, I began speaking to my surroundings about what path I should follow. At first my voice sadly echoed back, sounding hollow like a Miss America contestant claiming she wants world peace. Eventually when I spoke of wanting to be a biologist, a liason between nature and humans, my words never felt so right. The next Mon. I enrolled in the biology program at San Francisco State U.

SF State was filled with many wonderful biologists, and I had the good fortune to learn from one of the best, an inspiring ecologist named **Dr. James Mackey** (now "Friends of SPVP" president:photo at right). Field trips with Dr. Mackey were a dream come true. Not only did he know the names of most plants, insects, frogs, snakes, lizards, birds etc., he would share identification tricks, a little bit about their behaviors & life history. (Continued in March)



#### CUTTING INTO THE FAMOUS VALLEY VIEW FLOOD ZONE

Our November 8th Trail was good -- nice folks, super weather and a nice little hike/work combo. **Istvan Puski, Ralph Larson**, newcomer **Nancy** and I worked with **Rangers Greg Escoto** and **Chris Furniss** doing drain dip and trimming work on the Valley View Trail. We started at the east end of the trail and worked our way all the way to the other end, scraping sediment out of existing dips (the dirt was too dry to successfully attempt making any new ones) and cutting back some coyote brush and whatnot. Good work though, as they say we may get some rain late next week (cross your fingers!). Seems there's the bonus Trail Day next weekend, so barring any unforeseen, I'll be there too. Hopefully we'll have OK weather though, as they say we're in for a cool-down and some rain later in the week.



**Katie Antista** saw a **bobcat** walking around and then flopping onto its back, exposing its bright, white belly. Sighting was at 3pm on Nov 18 at the 2nd field by Weiler Ranch Rd.



The “tarantula” at left was seen by Ron Wilson, who said, “They live underground most of the year, being nocturnal. In late summer & early fall males go wandering in search of mates. They often cross trails or roads. It was hard to identify at a species level, but it may be *Aphonopelma iodium* or *smithi*”

**Laurie Nikitas** found & photographed many mushrooms that had burst from the soil after the rains. On your left is a bracket fungus



“crowning the end of an old log”, which Laurie saw -on the Hazelnut Trail. Laurie found this rose petal- like, delicate fungus on



the Old San Pedro Rd (at right). Again at the center & below, she found these fungi in the eucalyptus forest at the top of the Hazelnut trail . Laurie also saw the trim little beauty on the Hazelnut, as well like gathering—to the



at right & below, as the umbrella- left & below.



**SHARRON WALKER TRANSFORMS TRAILSIDE STORE**

With the help of **Bevan Jones**, who constructed a divider next to our office, **Sharron Walker** (below) was able to position & stock shelves with a new diverse array of stuffed animals, puppets, pocket guides to SPVP, maps, posters, children’s books and toys as well as nature books. *Come on in & look!!*



**Judy Bacon** and **Shirley Drye** have joined her committee, which is dedicated to keeping a popular variety of items.

**JANUARY—FEBRUARY CALENDAR**

**JANUARY TRAIL DAY**

Saturday, January 10.....9am

**JANUARY BOARD MEETING**

Wednesday, January 14.....7pm

**JANUARY HABITAT RESTORATION DAY**

Saturday, January 17.....9am

**JORG AND MIMI FLEIGE’S FLOWERS OF 2 LAKES**

Saturday, January 17.....3pm

**MATT THOMAS’S HYDROLOGY & GEOL. of DEVIL’S SLIDE**

Saturday, February 7.....3pm

**FEBRUARY BOARD MEETING**

Wednesday, February 11.....7pm

**FEBRUARY TRAIL DAY**

Saturday, February 14.....9am

**FEBRUARY NATIVE PLANT DAY**

Saturday, February 21.....9am

**LANCE MILLBRAND’S NEWTS—film and live critters**

Saturday, February 28.....3pm

**MOTIVATED MUSCLE MOVING MOUNDS (of dirt)**

For our December 13th Trail Day, **Istvan Puski**, my brother **Erik Piro**, **Mike** & I, **Joseph Piro**, worked with **Rangers Greg Escoto** and **Chris Furniss** doing some serious bank-cutting on one of the switchbacks up from the start of the Montara Mtn. Trail (you know, the one near the big oak tree and it overlooks Rosita Rd. below?). It was pretty narrow and the rangers were having trouble turning it in their ATV, so we widened it by cutting and sloping the uphill bank back -- a good idea anyway because portions were pretty vertical and at risk of potentially collapsing anyway. After a lot of moving dirt around, that switchback is now in much better shape for the long-term. Happy holidays everyone!



**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 SPVP”:** President: **Jim Mackey**; Vice President & Editor: **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**