

JOIN SAN PEDRO VALLEY PARK'S BIOBLITZ!

Please join the growing number of valuable citizen-scientists at San Pedro Valley Park's kick-off Bio-Blitz



September 26th. Meet at the Visitor Center as we begin at 8:30 AM, and stay as long as you wish. We will end at 2 PM.

A Bio-Blitz is an intensive one-day study of biodiversity in a specific

location, bringing scientists and volunteer citizen-scientists together. Together, we look for snails, birds, salamanders, frogs, butterflies, spiders, flowers and everything else we can find!

Last year San Mateo County Parks hosted our first BioBlitz at Memorial Park in the redwood forest. Together over 60 citizen scientists made over 1000 observations on iNaturalist and recorded 220 species. April 2015 we had our second BioBlitz at Coyote Point Park in San Mateo. Over 50 citizen scientists explored this small park overlooking the San Francisco Bay and so far we have received over 430 observations and recorded 205 species. Through BioBlitz events we increase knowledge of the species within our park and this helps us better manage our parks and educate those that visit these special places!

Of course, we can not inventory every species in just one day, or just one year, but this kick-off event will introduce you to the tools that will allow you to easily record and report any future observations whenever you hike the park throughout the years. You do not need to identify a species yourself. Our kick-off Bio-Blitz will group you with naturalist experts from Friends of San Pedro Valley, Sequoia Audubon Society, California Native Plant Society, San Francisco Mycological Society, and the California Academy of Sciences! But when you are not with an expert, you simply take a picture, with your phone or camera, & email it to iNaturalist. Within a reasonable time, on-line experts will identify the species in your picture. (Continued on page 2)

SUMMER TRAIL DAY BARBEQUE IN JEOPARDY

Our barbeque coordinating volunteer has been called away to Chile for undetermined amount of time. Therefore you will be notified by phone, if indeed there will be a barbeque on September 12—at noon on that trail day. In the meantime, consider offering to help by calling either our president, **Jim Mackey** at 355-2245 or our secretary, **Shirley Drye** at 359-2934

ON THE TRAIL

Barbara Kempster, tried to talk an entangled **mule deer-buck** out of his problem on the Plaskon Nature Trail. On Sunday, July 19 she saw him entangled in various “vines” and pulling frantically to loosen himself. After several minutes he did come free, decorated with the “fruits’ of his encounter. (internet photo)



Bing Huey got a great photo of this (probably) **Pacific spiketail dragonfly** Sunday, 26 July 2015, along the Hazelnut Trail. Yes, it does have blue eyes. Now look at Ron Wilson's photo of another dragonfly at SPVP on page 4.



Ron Wilson found this ***Hyalophora euryalus*** male's beautiful body July 6th, after its “printing” impact against a Visitor Center window.



PRIM AND PRETTY PLASKON

By Joseph Piro



Ranger **Matt Auda-Capel**, **Istvan Puski** and I gave the Plaskon Nature Trail a nice spruce-up for our July 11th Trail Day. Istvan and I started off by using loppers and pole saws to trim back lots of low, overhanging branches around and over the bridge on the Trout Farm side of the trail. Meanwhile, Matt ran the power hedge trimmer on much of the rest of the trail, so then we helped clear all that out -- good thing for the big wheelbarrow! With the new handrail that was recently installed and our work today, this little creek-side trail is in good shape -- enjoy!



FACTOID

Scientists studying the flight of **bats** discovered that the remarkably agile fliers feel their way through the air. Their wings are equipped with touch sensors so sensitive they can detect small changes in airflow.

Many of the sensors are located at the base of the fine hairs that cover a bat's wings. (This article is from Johns Hopkins Magazine, summer 2015) (internet photo of bat)



SMOOTH AND TRIM ON THE PLASKON

By Joseph Piro

For our August 8th Trail Day, new-comers **Vivianne Hiniart**, **Lucia Riedemann** and **Carlo Parra** joined **Istvan Puski** and I to work with Ranger **Kevin O'Brian** and Park Aide **Steven Clinton** on putting down new base rock to fill in a gap that ran along the base-board of the new railing along the entire length of the Plaskon Nature Trail. With wheelbarrows, shovels and rakes we spread out the new rock. Next up will be a finishing layer of finer material, but already this wonderful little trail is in better shape! Enjoy!



Bioblitz, continued

At the beginning of the Bio-Blitz we will introduce you to the iNaturalist app and help you download it to your phone. During the Bio-Blitz group leaders will assist people with the app if they have any further questions. At the end of the blitz people will gather together at the Visitors Center, upload their observations, view the database created by all our observations, and discuss our experience.

Because many species only become "visible" during different seasons, SPVP will sponsor future blitzes throughout the year. We hope this kick off event will give you the skills to comfortably join any future events, or organize friends to engage in your own. We especially encourage teachers to join us, so they can create their own Bio-Blitz for their students. Bio-Blitzes make students better observers, gives them a purpose, and connects them with experts, making iNaturalist a tremendous teaching resource.

Your participation will help us to better understand our natural ecosystems their marvelous biodiversity, and thus make us wiser environmental stewards.
Thank you: **Jim Steele** and **Katherine Wright**

A NATURALIST'S PERSPECTIVE
by Jim Mackey

Sept./Oct. 2015

A lizard's tale. (Pun courtesy of **Jim Mackey Jr.**)

Last April 27 I was walking east on the Weiler



Ranch Rd., by the first meadow, when I noticed a snake on the wooden platform over the second culvert! I was focusing my camera on the common racer

when it disappeared from my view finder. I looked up and saw that it had struck at a fence lizard, which I had not noticed. They both shot across the platform and disappeared into the weedy ditch below. (I remembered that this snake is called a "racer" for good reason, and that another name for



fence lizards is "swifts".) I waited for about 10 minutes, when the lizard poked his head and body up through a crack in the platform. (N. Tamura photo of W.

fence lizard head above)

On June 16 I was again on the Weiler Rd. and spotted a same-sized male fence lizard on the same platform. But he had a short, black, spike-like stump of a tail - apparently regenerating after the loss of the



original tail (see photo). I continued to see him on latter dates - most recently on Aug. 10.

Fence lizards have a fracture plane in each tail vertebra, so the tail can break off at any point. Most breaks are closer to the tip than in our lizard, and about 30 percent of the fence lizards that I have watched in the Park this year have regenerated tails.

Fence lizards (*Sceloporus* spp.) are also called blue-bellied lizards. Indians in the Mt. Lassen area admired them because of this trait. On June 12, I found a male on the side of the board wall at the western trailhead of the Valley View Trail. I could see some of the blue on his abdomen (see photo at right). Another male characteristic is seen in his wide tail base, which



harbors his two inverted copulatory organs - i.e. hemipenes. Male lizards display by nodding their heads or doing pushups (as in photo above) while laterally flattening their bodies. These displays, like bird song, have dual functions of warning other males to stay out of their territories and attracting females. This Aug. 13 I saw two hatchling (two inches total length each) fence lizards that did pushups toward each other, culminating in a chase.

Last July 24 was particularly productive near the west end of the Valley View Trail. I sat on the bank and watched a brown female fence lizard that had a regenerated tail tip. She climbed up to the tip of a prong on a fallen branch - a great look-out - and did a few push-ups. A dark gray male, with blue spots on his back, responded with push-ups, on a branch on the ground about 10 feet away. He advanced to three feet of her, but the female came off of the prong and ran across the trail and about 20 feet up the bank. Then I noticed something



move from under me that slithered, with blue tail, across the trail - a Western skink! (internet photo above) (I have only two records of skinks in the Park: one by **Carolyn Pankow** on the Brooks Creek Trail and one by me on the Mt. Montara Trail.) Next I saw a California towhee fluttering in the crotch of a eucalyptus. Another towhee mounted her and they copulated - twice!

ON THE TRAIL (continued)

Yes, a **grey fox kit** in the South Walnut! Thanks to **Katie Antista** for spying a diminutive grey fox with a skinny tail in the field on the evening of the 4th of July—6pm. Could this be one of a litter that an adult fox was catching gophers for? (See “On the Trail” in our last issue.) (internet photo of fox)



Ron Wilson couldn't resist a portrait photo of this brown-eyed beauty that he came upon (Don't the eyes of a Beyonce pale by comparison?) 1 mile up the Hazelnut Trail the second week of July..



SEPTEMBER—OCTOBER 2015 CALENDAR

- SEPTEMBER BOARD MEETING**
Wednesday, September 9.....6:30pm
 - SEPTEMBER TRAIL DAY**
Saturday, September 12.....9am
 - SUMMER BARBEQUE IS TENTATIVE; Wait for a call.**
Saturday, September 12.....12 noon
 - SEPTEMBER HABITAT RESTORATION DAY**
Saturday, September 19.....9am
 - BIOBLITZ FOR SAN PEDRO COUNTY PARK**
Saturday, September 26.....8:30am
 - OCTOBER TRAIL DAY**
Saturday, October 10.....9am
 - OCTOBER BOARD MEETING**
Wednesday, October 14.....6:30pm
 - OCTOBER HABITAT RESTORATION DAY**
Saturday, October 17.....9am
- For all these events, meet at the Visitor Center.*
Coming on November 14: Corky Quirk and her Live Bats!

FACTOID

In a controlled experiment at Washington State U. with neuroscientist **Jaak Panksepp** and colleagues, rats were found to prefer being tickled over being petted, though they do like the latter also. “While petting feels good to rats, tickling is a blast!”



(Source: “Pleasurable Kingdom” by **Peter Singer**—Sanchez library)

BING HUEY'S QUAIL MOM AND HER CHICKS

Bing saw & photographed this **California Quail** family on the east end of the Weiler Ranch Road on July 5, between 6 7 pm.



The Leaders of “the Friends of SPVP”: President: **Jim Mackey**; Vice President & Editor of this newsletter: **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**