

SAN PEDRO CREEK WATERSHED: 20 YEARS OF RESEARCH

On **January 13, at 3pm**, **Jerry Davis**, Professor of Geography and Environmental Science at San Francisco State University, will appear at our Visitor Center. Jerry is a former president of the San Pedro Creek Watershed Coalition.



As an academic, he specializes in biogeomorphology, and his research looks at the closely interlinked systems that inter-

play in the watershed: its geology, landforms, soils, and biotic environments, as well as human impacts on the creek and its hillslopes. These systems interact in multiple ways – there have also been significant impacts of the natural and built landscape on its residents, including landslides taking out homes and backyards being undercut by slope failures and bank erosion.

Along with students and other faculty at San Francisco State University and members of the watershed coalition, Jerry has been studying this creek and its watershed for about 20 years. We've learned quite a lot about how the creek and its habitats work, and how they relate to the natural and human environment they reside in. But there's still a lot to learn. It's time to take a look at where we are now, and what we still need to do to understand and restore some of its ecological functions, and in general to learn how we can best live with this unique and important landscape.

Community Input to Build a Resilient San Pedro Creek

On **Saturday, February 24, 2018 from 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm** the San Pedro Creek watershed Coalition (SPCWC) will be seeking input on its revised 2017 Work Plan from citizens at a meeting at the Visitor Center in SPVP.



The Board of Directors of the Coalition is inviting you to meet and discuss the progress made since 1999 when the organization formed and to help chart future directions for the creek and watershed.

The SPCWC needs your input and involvement to be an effective group that provides leadership in protecting the water quality, habitat, fish and wildlife, and property alongside and associated with this important coastal stream.

JIM STEELE IS OUR NEW PROGRAM CHAIR

After 15 yrs of planning our Sat. pm programs, **Carolyn Pankow** has passed the baton to **Jim Steele**, who has started with a multi-perspective series on our life-giving creek. He has plans for some combination talks/programs on ferns & on our ecosystems. Jim also wants to highlight various areas of scientific research for his "maiden voyage".



5 fingered fern

Our Pretty Holiday Party

Many contributed to the success of our sparkling celebration of the winter solstice, but none more than **Jennifer Alpaugh**, who hand-made decorations for our reusable tree. **Rob Hughes** played a fine flute as we sang; **Judy Bacon, Sharron Walker, Carol Martinez, Skeeter, Mila Stroganoff, Jim Steele & Jennifer** organized & worked, and **YOU** cooked superbly. Thanks for joining us!



ON THE TRAIL

You may be ragged and worn, but you are still a site for sore eyes. Thanks, **Buckeye**, for hanging on for **Ron Wilson's** photo on Nov. 14 at 1:30pm.

"Tattered and torn from probable bird attacks (unsuccessful except for the nicks from the hind wings). Seems the eye spots are serving at least one purpose, to have predators attack the wrong end of the specimen allowing escape and



another day to feed—on the Weiler Ranch Rd."



Bing Huey found and photographed this amazing **cup fungus** during the December 17th bio-blitz. (On the Trail on page 4.)

INTO NATURE WITH RANGER, BONNIE MACCURDY– PART 2

In the 90's I decided to start a horse drawn carriage service so I built my carriage and had a great time running my own business and educating the public about draft horses. The animal I spend most time with now is my **Percheron draft horse, Jack**, who pulls a carriage and is being trained to be a riding horse too. I used to teach people with disabilities to drive carriages using this horse. He's a real sweetheart.



For many years in a row I spent several weeks twice a year traveling to the Gulf of California to dive in the beautiful ocean there near Bahia de Los Angeles. I have an extensive library to help me identify the **fish** and other living things in those interesting waters. I am super excited to be back working at a district that involves such special places as Fitzgerald Marine Reserve. I enjoy pointing out what is living in our tide pools to any interested persons and showing off the fossils that occur naturally on our beaches. In the last three years I have taken to identifying fungi and look forward to seeing what is fruiting in the coastal areas after a nice rain. (above-fragmented fossil bivalves of Fitzgerald from UC Museum of Paleontology photo).



I have a wonderfully supportive partner, **Randy**, who doesn't mind all my creative outlets. We are planning a wedding for next June. He is an avid skier so this winter might involve some snow fun. Our wedding will be outdoors, featuring hand made things out of recycled wood made by me, and my horse and carriage will provide fun wedding transportation.

I am delighted to get to be a ranger for the County of San Mateo in District IV and look forward to meeting all our wonderful volunteers and park users. If you see me around please introduce yourself & teach me the plants and animals that live in this lovely area! I saw the greenest **fence lizards** on the Brooks Trail recently and I am hoping to hike there again and get a photo soon. Cheers, especially with an IPA! [Irish Pale Ale] (at left: **Bonnie** teaching Park safety at Ortega School)



FIRST TIME THRILL, WORK, in SPVP for FATHER-SON TEAM

By Joseph Piro

We had 2 new-comers for our November 11th Trail Day -- **Matt Wills** and his son **Vincent**. Since neither had been to SPVP before, **Istvan Puski** and I thought we'd take them up



the scenic Old Trout Farm/Brooks Falls loop. Along the way we checked the footbridge by the old foundation, cleaned out several drain dips and cut back several low-hanging branches. We turned around at the intersection of the Brooks Falls and Montara Mtn. Trails after taking a few minutes to enjoy the view and chat with several hikers passing by. Meeting some new people and doing some good work certainly makes for a good time!

THREE CRAZY RAIN WALKERS

Katie Antista, your editor, and my 13 year old granddaughter, **Matilda**, launched ourselves into the welcome rain-storm at 1pm, on November 26, on the Weiler Ranch Rd. Our hopes to see animals seemed dashed when a driving rain hit us as the wind picked up at the outset, though Katie managed to point out a "pretty in pink" full-blooming **wild currant** bush. At the last greening field, Katie & Matilda sighted a stalwart **deer** munching at the left side of the trail near the 3/4 mi. marker; no, there was a trio, perhaps a mother with her likely 5 month old twins. They trusted us to pass them peacefully, and maybe they were hoping any **pumas** were sheltering deep within the brush & far away.



Then, two very large & hairy scats slammed dramatically into my Senior view; since they were missing any small bones, we felt the predator had dined on the flesh of a large mammal, perhaps a **mt. lion** had bagged & consumed a deer? Katie knew that **Laurie Nikitas** had recently spotted a cougar at this spot, close to the eastern outlet of the Hazelnut Trail. (**Bing Huey** photo WWR: Dec. 17, looks like same deer family we saw in late Nov!) (see page 3)

A NATURALIST'S PERSPECTIVE by Jim Mackey

Jan./Feb. 2018

The frog that refused to die. **Toni Gamlin** works in the office of my dentist, **Dr. Kobori**, in the Park Mall Shopping Center. Toni phoned me, on the morning of Nov. 16, 2017, and reported that



a **red-legged frog** had been on a fence there for a couple of hours. I joined her, glad that the light rain of the last couple of days had abated. Sure enough! There was a beautiful, big (5 inch) frog sitting in a loop of wire of a chain-link fence about 3

feet above the ground (see photo). How did it get there? Toni was afraid that it might be sick or injured, but I noticed its bright yellow eyes and steady breathing movements of its throat. Then the frog did what frogs do so well and took one mighty leap into the abandoned garden below! A genuine, living, leaping FROG!

I grew up in Ohio listening for Spring Peepers to arise from hibernation and announce that spring had come. At the U. of Oregon, **Joyce** and I lived in the married students' housing, which was aptly named the Amazon project after the creek that ran through it and harbored **chorus frogs**. So I doubt



that a world without frogs would be a healthy place. When Joyce and I moved to San Francisco in 1957 there was no tract-housing along Rte. 35 in Daly City. Instead there were large, year-around ponds, that were inhabited by red-legged frogs. Such habitat loss across the State has decimated this species (**Rana aurora**) and led to it being listed as endangered. This is quite a drop from Mark Twain's time when it was the species featured in jumping frog contests, and the source of frog legs for human consumption.

I wonder if the frog that Toni showed me could have come from the year-around pond on Shamrock Ranch (in Linda Mar). Individual red-legged frogs are known to have moved as far as 2 miles overland. Or could Toni's frog have come from farther upstream in San Pedro Creek? In late July of 2002 I observed the creek for several days from the new steel bridge on the Weiler Ranch Road. There was an adult red-legged frog at the water's edge, a **Pacific giant salamander** in a pool, trout fingerlings, & a lot of insects - including **caddisfly larvae**. (Photos by **J. Mackey**)

Habitat destruction may have also cost us our **toads**. Our son found a toad (*Bufo boreas*) in our backyard in 1972 (see photo) - none since. Could placing Oddstad Blvd. over the North Fork of San Pedro Creek



be responsible? Actually I think that we may have lost toads to the worldwide **chitrid fungus**. **Chorus frogs** (*Pseudacris regilla*) only require a small, seasonal pool in which to spawn. We once had one by Oddstad Blvd. that was a source of tadpoles for our children, and we could listen to the breck-eck of many frogs (see photo of male with vocal sac). But the construction of Pacific Oaks Apartments eliminated the pool. So I lost the frogs, but I gained by my Mother-in-Law moving into Pacific Oaks.

("Three Crazy" Rain Walkers—continued from page 2) Matilda was delighted by the slime-slow glide of a yellow **banana slug**, probably scooting to safety, as it's their habit to climb to escape pools of water that could slosh into their large side breathing holes, & a lacy, tiny variegated **spider** on plant at the turnaround, this one sprinting around to avoid probing fingers, rain be damned; I suspect easily-flooded spider "book" lungs were absent in this species. (**Sharron Walker** photo)



Katie was fascinated by the beauty of droplets dabbled onto branches by the storm; some with old berries had ones like Xmas ornaments. **Sparrows** were foraging, one had a lengthy **worm** in its bill. A **Black-Headed Phoebe** flew from his perch & back, snagging insects". Now that the rain had subsided, the feathered creatures lost no time feeding, & we lost no time shedding our rain-heavy gear upon reaching home! (*How we miss that rainy day!*)

SPVP FRIENDS PART OF 60 YR PACIFICA CELEBRATION



Sharron Walker and **Bevan Jones** manned a table for the community outreach that was part of the festive show. Sharron had info on Lyme disease and tick removers, as well as an ongoing slide show of SPVP and Devil's Slide. Surprisingly most adults wanted to pet **Foxy**, highlighting their fascination for the wild wonder of their home park.

ON THE TRAIL (continued)

Ron Wilson: "I thought the butterflies were pretty well finished in the park for the next month or two (depending on weather) but encountered this female *Vanessa atalanta*, possibly laying eggs on a series of bushes at the end of the Weiler/Hazelnut trail area where I am trying to convince the Park service to plant **Milkweed** for the **Monarchs**. Around noon on the 24th in the area where the park recently mowed down the last of the fall **thistles** and where 3 of the species of *Vanessa* hang out in late summer (*anabella*, *cardui* and *virginiensis*). We have a total of 4 recorded *Vanessas* in this one location alone. Pretty neat. All seem to frequent the thistles and apparently some lay their eggs in the vicinity as well."



Laurie Nikitas couldn't resist a getting a shot of **Witch's butter** on a downed log, 1 & 1/2 mile up Hazelnut on Dec 1. Lucky for us that her camera was out before the Big Dry.



Laurie couldn't identify this lovely display of a "family" of mushrooms one and a half miles up the W. end of the Hazelnut, also sighted Dec. 1. Can you?



COMBATANTS IN THE CAPEWEED WAR in NOV. & DEC.

Plain and simple: this attractive **Asteraceae** from South Africa can lay waste to expansive swaths of native plants. **Istvan Puski** and his troops: Rangers **Bonnie MacCurdy**, **Greg Escoto**, **Matthew Tolmasoff**, **Tommy Hart**, and new volunteers: **Julia Richardson**, **Meddy Andaya** and **Angel Medueno**, dug out these invaders & other bad actors with a vengeance!



DON'T FOOL WITH MOTHER NATURE!

In the last few decades, a huge number of species have been lost world-wide. I'm concerned for the extinction of creatures like these **wood ants**, who protect their colonies from disease by manufacturing an antibiotic using tree resin and poison from their own bodies—animal pharmacology at work. How might they add to our medical research? How will they and other species be affected by climate change? (Science: 3/14/17)



CALENDAR

- JANUARY TRAIL DAY**
Saturday, January 13.....9am
 - JERRY DAVIS TALK ON CREEK AND WATERSHED**
Saturday, January 13.....3pm
 - JANUARY FRIENDS OF SPVP BOARD MEETING**
Tuesday, January 16.....7pm
 - JANUARY HABITAT RESTORATION DAY**
Saturday, January 20.....9am
 - FEBRUARY TRAIL DAY**
Saturday, February 10.....9am
 - FEBRUARY FRIENDS OF SPVP BOARD MEETING**
Tuesday, February 13.....7pm
 - FEBRUARY HABITAT RESTORATION DAY**
Saturday, February 17.....9am
 - FEBRUARY COMMUNITY MTG ON SAN PEDRO CREEK**
Saturday, Feb 24.....2-4pm
- For all events, except for mtgs, meet at Visitor Center.

DEC. 17 SPVP MUSHROOM BIOBLITZ BIG SUCCESS

Despite lack of rain **J.R. Blair** and 35 participants found and identified 30 kinds of mushrooms in SPVP; among them were "green corn mushroom", "deer mushroom", "sulfur tuft", "candy cap mushroom"(at right), and a poisonous *Amanita*.



Robert Butterfield

(This photo is not from SPVP. See page 7)

"PROGRESS"—SWITCH-BACKS WIDENED ON MONTARA

By Joseph Piro

For our last Trail Day of 2017 on December 9th, **Istvan Puski** and I joined a good turn-out of the Park crew --



Greg Escoto, **Matthew Tolmasoff**, **Bonnie Maccurdy** and **Tommy Hart**. After enjoying some time chatting around the Christmas tree in the lobby (there are 2 in the VC this year), we headed

about a quarter mile up the Montara Mtn. to widen a particularly tight switchback so the little Kubota 4x4 ATVs would have a better time swinging it. We mostly bench-cut the uphill side of the switchback and used the dirt to widen the lower part of the bend. It should be better for everyone now! Happy holidays to all and best wishes for a New Year filled with good health, happiness & success & more time on the trails! Cheers!



The Leaders of "the Friends of SPVP": President: **Jim Steele**; Vice President & Editor of this newsletter: **Carolyn Pankow**; Secretary: **Judy Bacon**; Treasurer: **Bing Huey**; Visitor Center Desk and Staffing: **Mila Stroganoff**; Habitat Restoration leader: **Istvan Puski**; Trail Leader: **Joseph Piro**; Membership: **Jim Steele**; Programs: **Jim Steele**; Trailside Store Manager: **Sharron Walker**; Membership miscellany, mobile display board: **Katie Antista**. **WEB SITE:** friendsofsanpedrovalleypark.org

“Even Turkeys get tired of annoying family members.” (on the Weiler) by Ron Wilson 10/29



Turkey in willows, WRR, by Ron Wilson 10/29



A Bing Huey Nature Collection from SPVP

Yellow Jacket, scavenging in Spider Web; 9/17, Valley View



Beetle using Coyote Blossom; 9/24, Hazelnut



Dried Ceanothus Blossoms Frame for Web 9/17, V.V.



Observing the Fruit of their labor: Blair Mushroom Bioblitz-



Sharron Walker

Detail Jennifer Alpaugh Tree Decorations



Roving Reporter

Holiday Party with M.C. Jim Steele



Sharron Walker

Laurie Nikitas & Bing Huey: Mushrooms of SPVP's Hazelnut Trail in Dec. 1, 3



Laurie



Laurie

A poisonous *Amanita*



Laurie

Colors inside grazed bolete mushroom; 12/3, Brooks Creek



Bing

Jennifer Alpaugh's Holiday Artistry



Sharron Walker