

the FRIENDS of SAN PEDRO VALLEY PARK

WILDLIFE ASSOCIATES –LIVE FOR KIDS!

Wildlife Associates of Half Moon Bay will bring a **Canadian Lynx**, a **Snowy Owl**, a **Coatimundi**, and a **Coendu**, a **Porcupine** like guy with a prehensile tail, to our Visitor Center on **Tuesday, April 7, at 1pm.**

As the handler introduces the children (ages 5-12) and parents to these critters, she will help all to discover their endangered habitats, their unique adaptations, their strategies for survival, and the way they help keep life in their ecosystems healthy. Maybe you and your child can guess what the counterpart for each of those above animals is in our Park! *_(Paul Leverington photo of Snowy Owl)*



FLOWERS OF PT. REYES

On **March 21st**, in the Visitor Center, **Jorg and Mimi Fleige** will present a slide show program “the Flowers of Point Reyes” at **7:30pm**. At left is Jorg’s photo of **beach pea**, relative of our **chaparral pea**. In their presentation you can also view plants like **foot-**

steps of spring, that are the same species as those in our Park. Along with the showy flowers, Mr. Fleige will treat you to trail views & surroundings where you can find the plants on a “field trip”. *(Jorg Fleige flower photos)*



Jorg and Mimi are graduates of Sonoma State, where he majored in Archaeology and she in Psychology and Horticulture. Mimi managed retail plant nurseries for Consumers Cooperative of Berkeley and the Sloat Garden Center; subsequently, the Fleiges founded a popular organic horticultural business. They later became active in the California Native Plant Society & the California Horticultural Society & became involved in photography (Jorg) & botanical classification (Mimi) for the Solano Land Trust. Enter : www.westernwildflower.com for photos of some of their suggested field trips, & trip along with them on Mar.21.

EARTH DAY TRAIL DETAIL, Barbeque, HIKES

All members of the “Friends of San Pedro Valley Park” are invited to our celebration of Earth Day on **Sat., April 11**. Our volunteer coordinator, **Carla Schoof**, has plans to welcome trail workers from other County parks to join our group at 8am, led by Joseph Piro. **Jean’s** team will be calling you (or call Jean at 359-7485) to see if you can come to our frankfurter & hamburger roast at **12 noon** and bring a side dish to share. **Judy Spitler** will start off the celebration with a **9am** bird hike. **Jim Mackey** will then lead a general nature hike at **10:30am**. *(This design contains artwork that is © 2006-2008 FunDraw.Com.)*



ON THE TRAIL-Sightings

Jim Pommier made a unique observation of a **deer** on a hill above the Weiler Ranch Rd. just this side of the bridge. The blue patch that he noticed on its shoulder turned out to be a **California Scrub Jay**, who was pecking at the ungulate’s skin before advancing to the neck and then top of the head to garner fresh parasites, which very likely were **ticks**. **Jim Mackey** would say “shades of Africa in Pacifica” *(Theo Allofs photo of female Impala with Red-beaked Oxpecker gleaning parasites from its skin.*



On Dec. 29, **Jennifer Alpaugh**, “Friends” member, saw a large **Coyote** 20 ft. ahead of her by the Valley View trail at about 10am. He bounded across the trail, heading downhill, but kept stopping to look at her. At about 10:15am, Feb 3, she saw a **Coyote** cross the Weiler Ranch Road in the first large field. He

ran across the road into a brushy area. *(photo by Scott Butner of Kennewick, WA)*

(Continued on p 4)



ZOO VET in APRIL

Dr. Freeland Dunker will speak at our Visitor Center on **Saturday, Ap.18, at 8pm**. His talk will cover the veterinary care of wild animals in zoos & aquatic parks. *(photo of*



Gemsbok (Oryx) is by **Garvin and Karen Snell**, copyright 2004) **Dunker** has been the staff vet. for the Steinhart Aquarium since last year, but his work after graduating from Veterinarian School at UC Davis, was 8 yrs of equine & general animal care. While carrying on a private practice in Escondido, he worked on the hoof stock collection at the San Diego Zoo & at the Wild Animal Park. Before transferring to the SF Zoo, where he was the Senior Vet, he had training with exotic animals in So. Carolina. At present Dr. Dunker is the veterinarian for the California Academy of Sciences. He also does relief work at the Marine Mammal Center.

SOS from JEAN LEONARD: WE NEED NEW PEOPLE TO MAN OUR VISITOR CENTER FOR 3 HOURS ON A SAT. OR SUN. APPLY AT 359-7485, Jean Leonard. No College degree needed

COYOTE LOVE

By Jack Dodson

"Perhaps I was thinking about Melissa Peabody's 'San Francisco - Still Wild at Heart' video program from last Saturday when I took particular notice of a large dog at the trailhead to the G.G.N.R.A. entrance at the end of Fassler Avenue. I saw no one with the dog, yet people always accompany dogs on their walks in that chaparral wilderness. So I looked through my binoculars (always handy at the kitchen window) to see. On closer look I saw what I knew, not from Melissa's San Francisco, but from Big Bear Valley in the San Bernardino Mountains, to be a fine adult specimen of a **Coyote** in full winter "plumage". Their thick, rich fur makes them look bigger too. Then I saw another larger but equally handsome Coyote following behind.



The bigger one was staying close behind the other coyote, and seemed hesitant but hell bent on pursuing the one in front. They looked like the Coyote version of a Hollywood couple at the Academy Awards. If only I had had a camera! (Coyote pair from Trail-

wood film's "Song Dog")

But with my binoculars I kept a close eye on this unusual sight, and it occurred to me that the smaller one being followed was likely a female, and the larger one following close behind a male coyote. It's that time of year already, January 21, when love is in the air for much of our wild-life. As the two coyotes trotted casually across the service road and up a hill, I noticed the female in front stopped and looked back behind her. The male stopped respectfully too, and they looked at each other. The female gave no hint of displeasure at the male, who probably returned the look. I think she may have winked at him. Anyway, off they ambled together into the brush to continue their courtship which, unlike our **deer**, usually involves the male coyote staying with the female as a mated couple through copulation, gestation, and the raising of their pups. [Ed.: Coyotes mate for life.] (coyote mom and pup from: coyotelearningzone.com)



Looks like more coyotes for our city, not to be outdone by the sole coyote on Melissa's Bernal Heights hill. All things considered, I think I prefer Pacifica's 'Wild at Heart' coyotes to San Francisco's. Ours are luckier, getting to stay in a large & natural area, & with so many tasty wild varmints to eat they have no need to prey on our pets or walk across the Golden Gate Bridge from Marin County to get here. I expect it's easier for a coyote to get a date or even a mate in Pacifica, & reproduce their locally grown genetic

generations of coyotes which are, in Pacifica, no threatened species. Come to think of it (for the overflow crowd at Melissa's video show) maybe the San Francisco coyotes are the rejects from their respective packs in Marin County, who for some reason, have not made inroads into the better habitats to the south.

FACTOID

Leslie Saul, insect expert, gave a talk recently at the J. Randle museum; it was there that she showed a group of maybe 6 **Bumble Bees** huddling together on the same blossom, telling us that this large Hymenopteran likes the company and warmth of other like bees if it cannot make it back to its hive of only 100 bees by the time cold sets in. But there's variety in behavior and nuance in bees as well as in ourselves.



(photo: bumblebee.org)

BUMBLEBEES

The foraging bee that doesn't make it back to the hive and companion warmth fastens to a leaf. Bumbling-bees?

Or does the nectar so distract that it forgets the cells called home?

The lapse is a cause for concern the entomologist reports—

because its tiny body slows to the stillness of dew.

Is that quiescence

or acquiescence?

Or simple stupidity one always forgets a day later?

Kimiko Hahn

NOMINATIONS FOR OFFICERS in MARCH

At the March meeting of the Friends of SPVP the nominating committee will present its slate of suggested officers. At that time you are welcome to nominate a person that you also feel would represent our organization well.. The election will be at the April general meeting and installation of officers in May.



NATIVE PLANTS SEEK SPACE

January's third Saturday—**Jane Turrel, Jim Pommier & Jim Mackey** ruined the octuplet plus sets of young **eucalyptus** shoots their parents had spawned. Mackey punished one such elder by slashing off a large limb. And no "pompous" grass was spared. In February **Jane** pleaded for a rescue from **Cape ivy** death by strangulation of the **trumpet flowers** near the horseshoe bridge. The **Jims** spent hours on this rescue attempt. **Jim Pommier** had already trimmed the entire Hazelnut trail of **blackberry vines**, picked up previously weed-whacked limbs, & stripped **Cape ivy** from the East end on February trail day! Mighty man!



A NATURALIST'S PERSPECTIVE

By Jim Mackey

March & April 2009

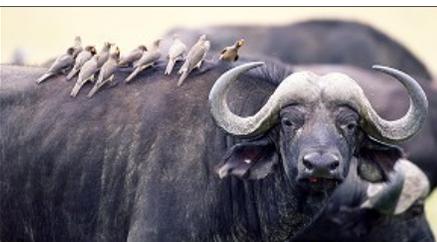
The season for dessert for our birds is winter. Plants such as **toyon**, **pyracantha** and the **cotoneasters** may be loaded with red berries in autumn, but most of these are still hanging on the shrubs two or more months later when they are



finally attacked by flocks of such birds as robins and cedar waxwings. This reminds me of an effort that the **Ohio Division of Wildlife** made years ago to induce farmers to plant multi-flora rose along their fence rows. It was thought that the birds did not like the red berries so they would avoid eating them until they were desperate – near the end of winter, when no other food was available. (Jim Mackey photo of Robin and Cedar Waxwing on cotoneaster)

Ron Sullivan and **Joe Eaton** shed some light on this subject in their column in the **S.F. Chronicle** on Dec. 19, 2007: “**Toyon berries** provide winter color, **bird food**.” These berries contain **cyanide** when they are green but as they ripen the poison moves to the seeds. (I assume that this is also true of other shrubs in the rose family, including the cotoneasters.) Native Californians differed in their method of processing these berries. The **Pomos** north of the Bay, like the birds, left the berries on the bush for months, but then they wilted the berries in hot ashes before eating them. So native Californians may not have aided toyons in dispersing their seeds, but birds certainly do! This is even more evident for cotoneasters, which, aided by birds, spring up aggressively in our Park. This has led to debates among our volunteers who are attempting to control alien plants. If a **cotoneaster** is growing where there are no toyons, should its values as browse for **deer**, food for birds, and beauty save its life? (It is awesome to be a volunteer and have the power to make a life-or-death decision about another living being.)

Cleaning symbiosis. **Jim Pommier** recently spotted a **Scrub Jay** that was standing on the back of a **deer** (see “On the Trail” in this issue). Jim had the patience to watch while the jay moved forward until it reached the deer’s head – without evoking any noticeable reaction from the deer. This reminded me of the aptly named **oxpeckers** – which I saw feeding on **buffalo** in Africa. (photo of Oxpeckers on spoiled Buffalo from the Epoch Times) I wanted to know if this type of behavior had been reported



for scrub jays so I consulted the encyclopedic “**The Birders Handbook**.” (Copies are, inexplicably, still available in our “Trailside Store” – for less than \$20; don’t forget to ask for your 10% member’s discount.) On pg. 404, under “Scrub Jay”, it says: “Perch on deer and remove ticks.” (I rest my case.) (CA Scrub Jay from Flicker)



Poor Jim’s Almanac. Now is the season to burn up film and shoe soles. Don’t miss the Hazelnut Trail in March for **trilliums**, **adder’s tongues** and **mission bell lilies**. (mission bells photo from U. of B.C. Botanical Garden photos) In April our neotropical migrant birds (including **Wilson’s Warblers** and **Black-headed Grosbeaks**) will have returned and be singing in the



willows. Why not keep a field notebook & record the dates of your observations? (amended **Miriam Ellis** sketch of **Wilson’s Warbler** at right)



WINNIE ALDRICH—STAR AT THE CENTER

For 8 years **Winnie Aldrich** drove down from Daly City in her aging car and faithfully manned the Visitor Center desk, often working a double shift. She feels a great regret that she can no longer travel the winding Coast Highway with its persistent fog & mist to reach her favorite trails, and the people she enjoys.

Winnie fell in love with nature during the long family vacations down at her parents summer home at Brookdale in the Santa Cruz Mountains by the San Lorenzo River. Later in life she joined the Contra Costa hiking club, but one day was walking in the our park when she met **Fred Laughlin**, who told her about the Visitor Center desk and its director, **Jean Leonard**, who promptly placed Winona on the schedule.

Maybe serving as a kindergarten and first grade teacher for 35 years, made her especially oriented toward showing patience and attention to everyone who passed by or visited her desk. Nothing like a valuable social gem at our Visitor Center. We can still use more like her!

ON THE TRAIL-Sightings (Continued)

Laurie Nikitas sighted a Northern Alligator Lizard



(www.wildherps.com) on the west end of the Hazel-nut trail. As it sunned itself on the dirt, she noticed that the body and *original* tail of this huge specimen were a

16”combined length . **Jim Mackey** says that this is the first confirmed sighting in our park, though the **Southern Alligator Lizard** has been seen on more than one occasion.

An **Arboreal Salamander, *Aneides lugubris***, (photo

courtesy of Gary Nafis) visited a folded over doormat at **Carolyn Pankow’s** house on

Big Bend Drive; the discovery was made, in part, by

Matilda Pankow, who was thrilled to run her finger

along his head. Not appreciative of this move, he wiggled off Grandma’s hand onto the soil and plants below. Keep a lookout for one in the Park, please! A photo would be great.



Mountain Lion news is buzzing lately. The latest observation was reported to interim treasurer, **Jane Turrel**, after she heard a pounding at the V.C. door on Feb. 20, just after 12 noon. A man reported a sitting Mountain Lion in the field by the Weiler

Ranch Rd. that is near the far end of the VV Trail. When the lion turned around its long tail was visible, and had it turned

back it would have noticed our gentleman’s backside also. I think it’s most likely this is a young cougar, who is

probably staking out its territory. No actions of the mountain lions seen in our

park have been at all aggressive, most of their reaction to humans has been to avoid us. (Cal Poly photo of Cougar)



In December, 2008, several visitors to the Park sighted the grandest of all amphibians in California, the **Pacific Giant Salamander, *Dicamptodon tenebrosus***, just off the far end of the lower Trout Farm trail. I suspect “he” was looking for a **rodent** as was the fellow in the

photo at left. (photo-www.wodsa.com//golf/giant)

These critters can reach an overall length of 13 inches. Maybe “he” will return when the rains do. Thank you, loyal Visitor Center staffer, **Paula**

Martin, for your report.



photo at left. (photo-www.wodsa.com//golf/giant)

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MARCH—APRIL CALENDAR

MARCH GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, March 11.....7pm

MARCH TRAIL DAY

Saturday, March 14.....8am

MARCH NATIVE PLANT DAY

Saturday, March 21.....9am

FLOWERS OF PT. REYES: JORG & MIMI FLEIGE

Saturday, March 21.....7:30pm

THIS LIVING EARTH-LIVE ANIMALS for KIDS!

Tuesday, April 7.....1pm

APRIL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, April 8.....7pm

APRIL TRAIL DAY

Saturday, April 11.....8am

“EARTH DAY” NATURE HIKES; BARBEQUE

Saturday, April 11...9am, 10:30am, & 12 noon

APRIL NATIVE PLANT DAY

Saturday, April 18.....9am

FREELAND DUNKER—“ZOO” VET

Saturday, April 188pm

For all events, meet at the Visitor Center

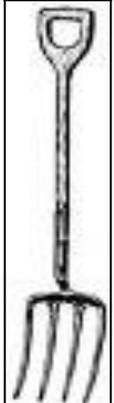
MUSCLE-MEN (and one woman) ON the MONTARA

We started 2009 with a very good Trail Day -- lots of people and a good project done. Bright and early we had **Hal Jorgenson, Ed Decker, Jim Pommier, Jane Turrel, Sammy and Richard Boyden** and **myself** ready to go. With so many people, I

thought we could easily tackle a project we identified last month -- namely cutting back the brush that was narrowing the trail a few switchbacks up on Montara Mtn. Trail. Hal and **Ranger Doug**

helped me round up the tools -- a blade cutter with a nice, freshly sharpened blade, safety gear and plenty of rakes and pitchforks. I ran the brush cutter and everyone helped pitch in cleaning up, and

after a few short hours we had both sides of the trail on a lengthy couple-hundred foot stretch leading up to and after the 3rd switchback well cut back. It definitely helped open up the trail and should be good for a while. A good start to the year indeed! ~**Joseph Piro**



NEWS BRIEFS

Ranger Jonel Ishida reminds us that we are not to sample the Park **berries** so important to the survival of the wildlife, but her special concern has been for the numbers of people “harvesting” **mushrooms** lately, which is against the law.

Shirley Drye now has a new knee thanks to docs & nurses at Kaiser. Before the surgery she made a trip in the Rangers’ truck to gather a few **soap plants** on the Valley View for “demo brushes”, so we know nothing will stop her from doing the whole Valley View when they unleash her..