

# the FRIENDS of SAN PEDRO VALLEY PARK

## GIANT LEATHERBACK TURTLES

These magnificent specimens, who can often be seen as close as 3 miles off the Pacifica shore, are the largest of the **sea turtles**. On **June 20, at 8pm**, we are privileged to have **Scott Benson**, chief scientist for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's leatherback survey mission, and intrepid follower of this ancient beast, showing us why they are

his passion. One particularly interesting part of the program will be when he shows his short film of these jellyfish-consumers, close-up and personal, eating the **sea nettles** of our coastal waters—the question is, why eat a jelly, who seems to be mostly a bag of water?? And what about the defense of its stinging cells? (photo of leatherback-fisheries&oceans of Canada) website)



## GOOD MORNING TO YOU, SONGBIRDS, with Mr. STEELE

On Saturday, May 9th, at 8am, during his 5th bird song hike, **Jim Steele** of Pacifica, will be listening with you for the “Sparrow in the Treetop”. (image of Song Sparrow from the Audubon-certified clock sold by {asseenontv.com}) and other phenomena. Paramount to success is also finding the bird through binoculars, & you guessed it, Jim will also play some of the spirited songs that challenge other males into a musical, though aggressive, response.



Lifetime “Friends” member, **Pegge Fields**, knows that she can hear and recognize birds better than she can identify them through binoculars, and I imagine that is the same for many of us, especially women, whose sensitivity to high pitches is greater than that of older men. So come along and find a new way to get closer to nature with Jim Steele. Mr. Steele is the director of the SFSU Sierra Field Campus by Yuba Pass, where he teaches classes in bird identification. He is a protégé of that late renowned human imitator of avians, **Luis Baptista** of the California Academy of Sciences.

### After Hearing Eve

*Moreover, her voice upon their voices crossed  
Had now persisted in the woods so long  
That probably it never would be lost  
Never again would birds' song be the same  
And to do that to birds was why she came*  
From Robert Frost's “Never Again Would Birds' Song ....”  
(+her voice—like Bewick's Wren or like the Winter Wren?)

## PETER ROOPNARINE – GLOBAL WARMING

Expect a treat from this brilliant man on **Saturday, May 30, at 8pm**. Don't expect the usual treatise on this all too familiar present problem. Peter is a researcher who will grace us especially with his knowledge of creatures of the ocean and what they can tell us about their extinction when water temperatures on this Earth skyrocketed or plummeted in the past. And Peter is a communicator!



“Peter is presently the Curator of Paleontology and Geology at the California Academy of Sciences. His research interests cover a rambling array of topics, including life in extreme environments, mechanisms and dynamics of extinction in paleo food webs, recovery from mass extinction, and quantification and patterns and rates of evolution from the fossil record. He grew up in Jamaica and Trinidad, and has also lived in Canada and more states in the USA than he cares to remember. He has been at the California Academy of Sciences since 1999.”

Hobbies include the martial arts & the rearing & education of, & field trips with his young daughter, **Rhiannon**.

## ON THE TRAIL-Sightings

On March 26, at about 1pm, **Laurie Nikitas** sighted a **California Racer, Coluber constrictor**, on the Weiler Ranch Road, about 100 feet east of the east entry to the Valley View trail. This is the first reported sighting to “The Friends of San Pedro Valley Park”. She reported that it darted back into the grass and brush upon sensing her presence.



(photo of racer is from herpjournal.com)



On Saturday, March 7, at about 2pm, **Marc Sugars** sighted 2 **Steelhead Trout** in San Pedro Creek by the large Weiler Ranch Bridge. He estimates their length was between 7—8 inches. On April 12, **Nancy Jewett** saw one of similar size just off the Trout Farm. (Steelhead photo from Umatillo website)

What was a **Koi** doing in our creek near the Adobe? **Ranger Doug**

**Heisinger**, who is known for his fishing expertise had to settle for photographing this “escaped” solid orange specimen. (photo-Living Cincinnati website) (cont'd on page 4)



## **PLANT OF SPRING: *Angelica Hendersonii***

**Research by Philip Posk**



**Philip**, one of the Friends of San Pedro Valley Park, who was featured in the Mar/Ap bulletin as one of our trusty volunteers, has become quite interested in this *Angelica* of our native sun garden, which is one of the *Angelica* species currently being investigated for further medicinal use.

Maybe two of our greatest lovers of the Indians of this area: **Shirley Drye** and **Christine Thatcher**, could tell you how the **Ohlone** dried and preserved the leaves and seeds of this miracle “pharmacological” plant, but it is certain that the Indians did rely on this plant for maintaining their health.

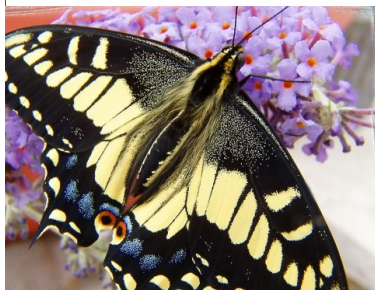
When no Rite Aid or Walgreens graced our fair town, no concrete buildings, when Lake Mathilda flooded the spot of the Linda Mar Shopping Center & indigenous people ruled, this plant was a major shopping stop along the trails. Acid indigestion or nausea? Go gather some *Angelica* seeds or look in that storage basket over there. Headache? Burn up a little *Angelica* root & inhale; wait for soothing effects, or you might heat up the leaves & apply them externally for skin disorders or irritations.

“For *Angelica* in general, main constituents [which cause them to be so curative] are volatile oils, valeric acid, angelic acid, angelicin, safrole, scopoletin, linoleic acid, and coumarin. These are chemicals that have many and varied uses in the human body.” Linoleic acid is presently being used for acne, for instance.

“Young leaves taste like licorice that add sweetness to tart fruits and the stems can be eaten like celery”, however due to its copy-cat appearance to the infamous **poison hemlock**, I don't believe Philip would try to hand out samples.

And the larval stage of the **Anise Swallowtail Butterfly** loves to eat its spicy leaves. So it really is the “Angel” that many people futilely supposed might be used to cure the plague or Black Death—our *Angelica Hendersonii*, plant with many secrets, plant of many cures, and a nutritious plant at that.

(To obtain the full text of Philip's writing on this and other *Angelicas* and their plant family, ask the volunteer at the Vis. Cntr. desk.) (Thank you, **Heidi Rand**, for use of photo of **Anise Swallowtail**)



## **GOOD RIDDENCE CAPE IVY, PAMPAS GRASS**

Alas, it's only “hasta la vista”—’till I see you again—which if **Jim Pommier**, **Alan Ernat** & **Sara Shaw** have their way, will not be under the **Calif. live oak** trees at the west end of the Hazelnut. They left a huge pile of dead leaves and ruined stems for the rangers to carry away, & restored an area to the natives on the 1st day of spring. On Sat, Ap. 18 a group of 4 men, **Alan Ernat**, **Jim Mackey**, **Pommier**, & **Istvan Pushki** yanked out **Pampas grass** on the MM trail. Alan recognized the **Tortoise Shell Beetles** that eat **Euc** leaves, & saw some nibbled blades; one would hope for a Pampas Grass aphid!



## **MATTOCK, McLOED and MEN**

At the March 14th Trail Day, **Ranger Doug** gave me, **Ed Decker** & **Jim Pommier** a ride in the truck out to the far end of the Valley View where we went to work on some switchbacks that were suffering some erosion & poor water handling. With a McLeod, mattock & rake we tackled 3 or 4 switchbacks, cleaning out or creating a small ditch along the inside edge of the trail against the hillside & then gently reworking the trail surface so it sloped inward toward it. Now, instead of flowing down the center of the trail around the bend, water should now channel off the turn. And it was perfect timing because the following day it rained a little!

*Joseph Piro*

## **TRAIL DAY, EARTH DAY**

We had a good turnout for our combined regular Trail Day and Earth Day celebration at SPVP on April 11th. **Ed Decker**, **Jim Pommier**, **Sara Shaw**, **Gene Chasey**, **Ralph** & **Sandy Larson** & myself arrived bright & early at the Visitor's Center. Everyone except Ed, who manned the VC, grabbed tools and followed **Ranger Doug** up to the morning's project -- installing timber steps up the short slope to the bench up off the trail looking west out of the eucalyptus forest on the Montara Mtn. Trail. With so many people on hand and Doug's guidance, installation went quick and smooth and the steps are a great improvement in both ease of access and safety. At noon, we, **Art**, **Pat Armstrong** & his daughter enjoyed the BBQ potluck on the patio. (J. Piro photo of completed job & workers)

*Joseph Piro*

(To see *Joseph's* photo set of the entire “operation” see the main bulletin board in the Visitor Center)







## **A NATURALIST'S PERSPECTIVE**

**By Jim Mackey**

**May & June 2009**

**Global cooling?** On March 16, 2008 I photographed three majestic, purple, **giant trilliums** (*Trillium chloropetalum*) (photo **Jim Mackey**) in

our Native Plant Shade Garden (located in the patio behind the Visitor Center). This year three similar plants (of the same rare color-phase) appeared on April 4. Happily, they were still present on April 11 to show to visitors on our Earth Day. But as regards to a global change in temperature, these observations are obviously too limited to make any conclusions. This is born out by my having found the first white giant trillium of '08 on February 4, on the Plaskon, & the 1st one of '09 on Feb. 7

**Phenology** is a study of the timing of seasonal, biological events, such as the flowering of plants and the migration of birds. People in Europe have been recording phenological data for centuries, and, in 1957 established the International Phenology Garden Network. These gardens are distributed across Europe & are planted with cloned specimens (to control the effects of genetic variation) of the same 16 species of trees and shrubs. In the United States, the USA National Phenology Network has been monitoring native plant species (see [www.uwm.edu/Dept/Geography/npn](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/Geography/npn)). So there is a mass of phenological data, much of which was analyzed by **Parmesan & Yohe** in an article in the journal Nature in 2003. **Sullivan & Eaton** summarized this analysis in the S.F. Chronicle of Feb. 27, '08: In a group of 172 species of plants, birds, butterflies & amphibians there was "an average shift toward earlier spring timing of 2.3 days/ decade."

Project Budburst is an effort to involve the public in obtaining more phenological data. (See [www.windows.ucar.edu/citizen-science/budburst](http://www.windows.ucar.edu/citizen-science/budburst)). This site provides downloadable identification guides and teaching materials. Hopefully, many schools will participate. The National Audubon Society has involved the public, for many years, in obtaining census data on birds. Early this year they released a report that analyzed their annual Christmas bird counts from 1966 to 2005. It reveals that more than half of the 305 species in the 48 States have extended their winter ranges about 35 miles to the north. This northerly shift over such a large area of so many different kinds of birds seems best explained by global warming.

**Calendar vs weather migrants.** Some species of birds (e.g. cliff swallows) tend to arrive at their northern breeding sites at about the same date each spring. ([aviary.com](http://aviary.com)) These "calendar migrants" are probably responding to day length (photoperiod) as a cue to migrate. For **cliff swallows** that arrive in early April in our area, they are almost sure to be greeted by swarms



of their insect-food. . But other species (e.g. migratory **robins**) arrive on widely varying dates. These "weather migrants" may be responding to temperature as a cue to migrate. Some food chains already appear to have been disrupted by global warming because one link, e.g. an insect, may have adjusted to the change, whereas its avian predator may be cued by day length so has not made the adjustment. (See D. Grossman, "Spring Forward" in Scientific American, Jan. 2004.)



**Poor Jim's Almanac.** Watch for **fence lizards** bobbing behavior as they begin breeding!



## **EARTH DAY EXPLORATIONS—by J. Mackey**

On April 11 at 10:30 a.m., about 20 people, including the former and present coordinators of volunteers at our County parks (**Nick Ramirez & Carla Schoof**, resp. (**Rose de Leon** shot of **Carla & Nick**), trooped to WR Rd, where **Judy Spitler**, following her bird hike, had trained a scope on an **Anna's hummingbird** nest with 2 nestlings. On a cold and windy day we had to settle for a fine photo of **fence lizards** that **Jane Turrel** had very recently taken. Next we visited our Shade Garden, in the patio behind the Visitor Center. **Jim Pommier** snipped off a **poison oak** plant in the nick of time so that we were able to inspect the stately **giant trilliums** there. Next we visited the Sun Garden and focused on the **Pacific reedgrass** - an actual native! Then we walked under the **lace lichens** in the old **oak** and up the Hazelnut Trail, where we immediately saw **adder's tongues** that had extended their **slink pods** as lures for



**ants**. At the first meadow there were several **mission bell lilies** in bloom as well as dozens of **Coast iris**! We then retreated back to the Plaskon Trail and saw several of the more common **white giant trilliums**. Our hike ended at an active **honeybee** hive in a **eucalyptus** by the North Walnut Picnic Area. It was noon and we had to hurry back to join over 30 others for **Ed & Joy Decker** hamburgers, & creative green salads by **Sandy Larsen, Julie Thomas, & Nancy Jewett**. Yes, time to chow down, as did **Art Armstrong**, on **Shirley's** potato salad, **Carolyn's** corn casserole, & **Jean's** baked beans.

## ON THE TRAIL-Sightings (Continued)

Marc Sugars photographed the impressive **Pacific Giant Salamander** in our Park, so here it is, that first SPVP photo of the critter, taken as it wended his way across the Trout Farm Trail towards San Pedro Creek. Notice the flat swimming tail.



Ray Trabucco and Ranger, David Vasquez, have been following the movements of a resident pair of **Cooper's Hawks**. On March 23, Ray saw one fly from their nest in an oak on the hill at the w. end of the Hazelnut to the euc forest across the way—gathering nesting materials?(Thank you, **Lloyd Spitalnik** for your "I spy" photo of this flyer)



"The return of the coyote" On

Sun., Ap. 12, at about 1:30, **Grace Yu** and her son, **Albert**, saw a coyote racing down from the Valley View Trail to the east intersection with the Weiler Ranch Rd. (internet blog photo, photographer unknown)



## MAY—JUNE CALENDAR

### MAY TRAIL DAY

Saturday, May 9.....8am

### JIM STEELE BIRD SONG HIKE

Saturday, May 9.....8am

### MAY GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, May 13.....7pm

### MAY NATIVE PLANT DAY

Saturday, May 16.....9am

### PETER ROOPNARINE'S GLOBAL WARMING

Saturday, May 30.....8pm

### JUNE GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, June 10.....7pm

### JUNE TRAIL DAY

Saturday, June 13.....8am

### JUNE NATIVE PLANT DAY

Saturday, June 20.....9am

### LEATHERBACK TURTLE- SCOTT BENSON

Saturday, June 20.....8pm

*For all events meet at the Visitor Center*

On Saturday, Ap. 18, at 2:15pm, several hikers & **Ranger Jonel**, said they heard the loudest **coyote** howling they had ever heard coming from the WRR area (City of Bellevue photo)



**Ray Trabucco** photographed a beautifully mottled **coyote pup** in the 3rd. field of the WRR in early Ap.

**Katie Antista** sighted a **Monarch butterfly** on the upper Trout Farm Rd. on April 19th. (image from internet blog)



## Children, Mammals, & Bird Met at our VC on April 7th

The 25 youngsters seemed to respond most favorably to the **S.A. porcupine**, who had a great squeal and armaments too. But we loved the **Arctic Lynx**, **Coatimundi** and the **Kite** also! Thanks to photographer, **David Hinds**, & to **Jim Mackey**, **Phil Posk** & **Fred Laughlin** for your help, & good to see our own **Hulda Williams** there!

**Questions or letters to the editor?** New email: carolynjunepankow@yahoo.com or Carolyn Pankow, "Friends of San Pedro Valley Park", 600 Pacifica, CA 94044. Writer of this newsletter is your editor, unless otherwise indicated.

## The Volunteers:

**Carolyn Pankow**, President; **Open**, Vice President, **Shirley Drye**, Secretary; **Jane Turrel**, interim Treasurer; **Jean Leonard**, **Jim Mackey**, members at large; **Jean Leonard**, visitor center; **Jim Pommier**, alien plant removal; **Joseph Piro**, Interim Trails; **Kate Antista**, Membership chair, **Carolyn Pankow**, Program chair; **Open**: Trailside store manager.