

# the FRIENDS of SAN PEDRO VALLEY PARK

## GENIEVIVE DEL MUNDO-MARINE INVADERS

Come to the Visitor Center at **7:30pm on Saturday October 10**, to hear a communicator with clarity and a great sense of humor, speak on the enigmatic **Tunicates** and the havoc they have wrought in our bays; the actual title of her talk is “Harbor-hopping; How Tunicates Catch a Ride”.



© Janna Nichols

**Ms. Del Mundo**, hails from the Philippines; upon coming to the US in 1989, she settled in Daly City. Since she has always been a real animal lover, it's not too surprising that as a young woman, she volunteered for the Marine Mammal Center; where she found her passion in devoting her studies to helping & protecting the marine environment.

Later, she received a BA in Marine Zool. from UCSC and an award from the UCSC Minority Health International Research Program. She was sent to New Zealand, where she worked on the genetic sexing of **Chinook salmon**, and a field project on New Zealand **fur seals**. Her motivation & enthusiasm to pursue graduate school continued to grow and in 2006, she was awarded a full scholarship by the MHIRT program to the University of Canterbury in New Zealand, where she focused on how shipping was affecting the population of a native NZ sea tunicate, & received her MSc. Her main goals are to teach Biology at a local community college & to start a program



involving students' research opportunities in her home country of the Philippines. (NZ fur seal image is from “sealimages.com”).

## FRIENDS TRAIL DAY BARBEQUE

On **Sat, Sept. 12th at 12 noon**, we will fire up the Charcoal for an “end of summer” barbeque. Bring on the Hot Dogs and Burgers—ahh, the aroma! —yummy potato salad, baked beans, greens, all the fixin's, terrific desserts, and you are in only in charge of bringing your favorite dish—no greenbacks, just you and a guest if you wish. Trail workers will be especially feted, as new trail workers who work the 3 hour stint will be fed, no questions asked.



We will be calling all of you to participate in this gala affair. (cartoon from free clip art @sillyart.com) If you wish to call us, contact **Jean Leonard** 359-7485.

## JODI McGRAW on the SANDHILLS of SANTA CRUZ

Join ecologist **Jodi McGraw** as she takes us on a virtual tour of the Santa Cruz Sandhills at **8pm on Sat. Sept. 12**.

Packed with photographs of the unique community and species, such as the indigenous **Kangaroo Rat** (see photo below), her presentation will explore the amazing diversity and fascinating ecology of this extraordinary area. It will also highlight key efforts to protect and manage the critically endangered system.



Jodi McGraw is a conservation ecologist whose dissertation research at UC Berkeley examined the endangered species and communities of this nutrient-poor soil type near Santa Cruz. Jodi began research in the Sandhills in 1993, as an undergraduate at UC Santa Cruz. Presently, she serves as a consulting biologist on a variety of conservation projects in central coastal California, many of which endeavor to preserve and manage this rich habitat.

Jodi is also president of the Sandhills Alliance for Natural Diversity (S.A.N.D.), a local conservation organization dedicated to preserving our rare & unique habitat through scientific research, public education, & integrated land use planning. More



information about SAND & this diverse area can be found at [www.santacruzsandhills.com](http://www.santacruzsandhills.com).

## ON THE TRAIL-Sightings

In mid July, trail regular, **Barbara Kempster** and grandson, **Ryan**, sighted a grey wasp's nest 1/3 of the way up the Hazelnut trail from the east side. It was located at 3' high from the trail base.



(photo by the Ragens.com)

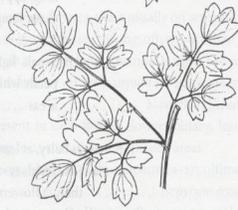


In early July, **Ray Trabucco** saw a **Cooper's Hawk** being harassed by a **Red-tailed** & then a **Red-shouldered Hawk**. Each one tried to get near the Cooper's nest in order to draw it away. The nest is on a **Coast live oak tree** (*Quercus agrifolia*), above the beginning of the w. Hazelnut trail. The activity came down at about 4 in the afternoon. (On the Trail contin-

ued—p. 4)

## OUR LATE SUMMER PLANT—MEADOWRUE

Getting to know someone when you already know their family makes you feel a bit more secure and gives you more insight into who they are, especially when that person, animal, or plant is a bit mysterious, a bit of a recluse.



If you go to some of the shadier areas near the “north” Valley View entrance and the Weiler Ranch, you can find this charming, lacy-leaved “hider”, meadow rue, or *Thalictrum fendleri polycarpum*, a plant that has remained “unknown” & puzzling to some. Why the ‘rue’ in the name, an indication that it might make you regret that you had a “run-in” with this lovely plant?

So going back to our original idea, what if we find, as is true, that our plant is in the same family (buttercup family) as that loveliest of flowers, the nodding **columbine**; the shiny-leaved **buttercup**; the radiant **larkspur** ([www.flowers.cs.com](http://www.flowers.cs.com)) of our Valley View Trail? So what can we glean from knowing this about our meadow rue? Turns out that the larkspur is a seriously poisonous plant, in as “*Do not hand one to baby to play with*”. Check out this web site: <http://www.midtownanimalclinic.com/poisonous%20plants.htm>



and you will find that meadow rue, like buttercup and columbine are only mildly toxic, being harmful only in large quantities. Since we are not grazing herbivores like the unsuspecting cow, we should not rue their presence in the meadow, nor do the birds of our park who feast on the seeds of its female plants.

## JEAN LEONARD AND THE VISITOR CENTER

One of my favorite nonagerians, not to mention favorite people, is our Visitor Center Staffing Director, **Mrs. Jean Leonard**, who hails from Oregon many years ago now, and has a love of nature in that state and ours. Thus, when she reached 70, having just lost her husband, she perched herself on our lead chair at the then new Visitor Center of San Pedro Valley Park. Since that time she has inspired many to help keep our museum, library and Trailside Store open on weekends and holidays. But people being as busy as they are, or suffering that last minute malady, sometimes need others to pick up the slack. No one is calling you a “slacker”; we all have too much to keep us busy, but maybe you could call up Jean & place yourself on a list of those willing to step in, at least in an emergency. Jean or **Chris Thatcher** would love to train you, & we would love to have you among our active “Friends”—the once “Volunteers”. Thank you for giving of yourself.

Sincerely, Your Editor

## TROUBLE ON THE TRAIL

We’re talking **BIG** trouble here. With trail hero, **Hal Jorgensen**, permanently off the trail group, with **Ed Decker** still in physical therapy for his knee operation, we have only **Jim Pommier** and **Joseph Piro** manning the trails. We are hoping to see some new and enthusiastic volunteers surface on the **Barbeque Trail Day** on September 12, and just maybe that includes YOU???



On the second Saturday in July, **Joseph** and **Jim** worked on cutting overhangs on the Hazelnut Trail, encroachers from above that might smack you or a runner in the face...but in Aug. Jim Pommier was the lone show-up, so he did a survey of the rest of the Hazelnut, identifying sites for future projects; one little detail—we will need new men and women for those jobs!

## NEWS BRIEFS

**SPVP sign** planned for southbound Coast Hwy 1. First **Rangers Jonel Ishida** and **David Vasquez** removed stickers from the northbound sign for our Park; then regional ranger, **Scott Lombardi** agreed to place a sign on the beach side of the hwy, since as it is now, visitors from SF and all places north have no hint that we are here as they cruise southward!

**S. M. Co. Parks & Rec. Director, David Holland**, manned the barbeque for an appreciation picnic for the members of “**Student Conservation Associates**”, who were this time teenage trail volunteers from Jefferson High School, Daly City. **Ranger David Vasquez** said that they not only did a superior job clearing the east end of the Hazelnut Trail, but that “they were great kids, who had a superior work ethic”. Many seemed to be enthralled with what they were doing, calling themselves “green”, which did NOT have the old meaning of “inexperienced”.

## FACTOID

“Sometimes **male garter snakes** produce both male and female pheromones [scents]. During mating season, this fact fools other males into attempting to mate with these “she-males”. *She-males have been shown to garner more copulations than normal males* in the mating balls that form at the den when females emerge into the mating melee (source—

Wikipedia, checked by our science expert, **Jim Mackey**) **Jim Mackey** (photo is of a typical “mating ball of garter snakes)



## A NATURALIST'S PERSPECTIVE

By Jim Mackey

**One day on the Valley View Trail.** My hike began auspiciously last July 13, when I started up the Weiler Ranch Road and immediately spotted a **doe** with a large, still-spotted **fawn**. I wanted to photograph the two together but the fawn had become fairly independent and continually strayed away from its mother.

The rare sunny day put me in good spirits as I started up the Valley View Trail. Soon I encountered two **buckeye butterflies** that were chasing each other back and forth around me. I remembered that male buckeye butterflies perch on the ground and defend stretches of trails against each other. These are potential encounter sites that also attract virgin females. When I read the fine summary of “courtship and territoriality” in **Shapiro and Manolis’** “Field Guide to Butterflies of the San



Francisco Bay and Sacramento Valley Regions” (which is available at our Trailside Store), I was surprised to learn that butterflies exhibit complex innate behaviors similar to birds. How many genes and nerve cells are necessary to perform these behaviors? I remember that a nerve cell fiber cannot be miniaturized indefinitely because it must be large enough to accommodate such ions as chloride, sodium and potassium; so how can the tiny brain of a butterfly contain enough nerve cells?

I continued on up the Valley View Trail and soon noticed something moving in the leaf litter. It was a large, blue-black wasp with orange wings—a **tarantula hawk**! The wasp ran from place to place and appeared to be looking for something under twigs and in shallow holes in the ground. I was disappointed that no spider popped up to confront the wasp. But my thoughts were disturbed by some clucking sounds coming from a thicket. I scanned the



tops of the shrubs, and, sure enough, there was a male quail on look-out for his family of chicks.

At the first bench, I sat and focused on the awesome view—not only of the valley but of Mount Montara and, away to the west, of Linda Mar and a small piece of ocean. I was heeding a warning from **Walt Whitman** that in order to gain maximum enjoyment from nature, “You must not know too much, or be too precise or scientific about birds and trees and flowers...” Actually I do not think that you can know too much, but that the acquisition of knowledge is so absorbing that you need to take breaks from it and focus on the aesthetics of the scene.

But upon returning down the trail my attention was brought back to earth by two canid (**coyote** or **fox**) scats. (scat photos by **James Mackey**) One, composed of **rodent** hair, had a normal, twisted, pinched form, while its neighbor (probably from the same animal—now experiencing diarrhea) was an amorphous blob with large seeds. I examined one of these with a hand lens and found that it was a “stone” (as featured by apricots, plums and cherries) that had some reddish, shriveled flesh clinging to it. So I went to the bridge between the horseshoe courts and the Walnut



Picnic Areas and looked at the non-native **plum trees**. There were ripening plums on the trees, a few ripe, red plums on the ground and pieces of dried plums stuck to the railing. I examined stone from one of the plums, and it was identical to the one from the scat. EUREKA!

Poor Jim’s Almanac. ‘Tis the season for big, black-and yellow **Argiope spiders** on orb webs, for skunks to excavate hornet nests, and for the fiery foliage of **poison oak**.

(image of “**garden spider**” is from Romney Pest Control—“Whose the pest, Mr. Romney?”)



## PATHWAYS THROUGH THE NATIVES: YOUR HABITAT RESTORATION GROUP

On July 18, **Jim Mackey** and **Jim Pommier** widened the overgrown trail in the native shade garden, this often forgotten mini pathway in our patio garden, designed and planted by lifetime “Friends” member **Pegge Fields**. Not to be outdone, **Katie Antista** sculpted out parts of the native sun garden access strip, so that all can now get a better close-up look at in full summer bloom of the **coyote mint** and **goldenrod**. (Courtesy of “Trish” at © [Wildscaping.com](http://Wildscaping.com))



In August the “**two Jims**”, **Istvan Pushki**, and **Sara Shaw** shot up the Weiler Ranch Road, stopping only to remove a few Euc shoots on the way. Then came the big, long-awaited job: removing enough brush from the bottom to the top by the Weiler Ranch Bridge so that “explorers” can now see the creek below. And, yes, there will still be plenty of shade and coolness left for the **steelhead trout** to hide from your view when you get too invasive.

**ON THE TRAIL-Sightings**

Two miles from our park, at **Rockaway Beach**, "Friends" member, **Pat Robinson** had a real thrill watching **cormorants** and **Brown Pelicans** go for schools of fish (anchovies) off the coast. Monday, Aug. 3, at 10 am; she first noticed them farther out, and as they came in closer, she estimated that there might have been close to **60 cormorants**; then at least **2 seals** were jumping out of the water, apparently grabbing the scaled swimmers that had ventured into our waters. (cormorant photo from Vancouverislandbirds.com)



**Ray Trabucco** was proud to show me a photo of a lurking and spying **Great Blue Heron** on the N. Plaskon Nature Trail bridge railing —seen at 4pm on Wednesday, August 5. Did he find any Steelhead? (Great Blue Heron head courtesy of **John Harvey**)



**Ranger Jonel Ishida** sighted a young **coyote** along WRR on July 31, & a tiny **bobcat** at the Horseshoe pits at 6:30pm on August 22.

**HULDAH WILLIAMS: STERLING "FRIENDS" MEMBER AND VOLUNTEER**

Her blue eyes are not what I see first, nor her determined stance and walk; what I see first is the depth of what I and possibly you, know is inside this 96 year-old woman. I have come to Pacific Oaks to interview Huldah Williams, not only about her time working as a park volunteer but also about her background, her first interest in nature, the turns her life has taken, and then, finally, how she was lured into the Park.

Huldah was born into a poor family of 9 children in Jersey City, across the river from New York in the year 1913, the year income tax began & that the Grand Central Station opened in New York City. Her mother boiled their clothes clean over a coal fire, & the family relied on an ice box for refrigeration. Her main foray into nature in childhood was in toying with **fiddler crabs** and tangling with the **jellyfish** of the Staten Is. seashore, where the family had spent much of each summer in a small bungalow. So, not surprisingly, when she first went "into to the wild" at the age of 12, when she

**SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER CALENDAR**

- SEPTEMBER GENERAL MEETING**  
Wednesday, September 9.....7pm
  - SEPTEMBER TRAIL DAY**  
Saturday, September 12.....8am
  - TRAIL DAY BARBEQUE**  
Saturday, September 12.....12noon
  - JODY McGRAW'S SANDHILLS of SANTA CRUZ**  
Saturday, September 12.....8pm
  - SEPTEMBER HABITAT RESTORATION DAY**  
Saturday, September 19.....9am
  - OCTOBER TRAIL DAY**  
Saturday, October 10.....8am
  - GENIEVIVE DEL MUNDO: HARBOR HOPPING**  
Saturday, October 10.....7:30pm
  - OCTOBER GENERAL MEETING**  
Wednesday, October 14.....7pm
  - OCTOBER HABITAT RESTORATION DAY**  
Saturday, October 17.....9am
- For all events meet at the Visitor Center*  
\*On November 7—Jim Mackey's "A Pacifica Naturalist in Costa Rica"\* at 7:30pm\*

was taken up to the Palisades on the Hudson River and was introduced to the breathtaking spread of white dogwood flowers covering the hillsides, a new love was formed. Then, when she was 16, her older sister, Gertrude, escorted her from their New Jersey home up to Mt. Holyoke College in Massachusetts, a journey taken in the autumn, through the fullness of eastern fall foliage in the Adirondacks—a thrilling "first".

In those days there was no compulsory high school, but Huldah took a commercial course there which led her to working in an insurance company office in New York City for several years and led her to explore the beauty of Central Park. (Nov-Dec: *Huldah's marriages & career*) (Nov-Dec: Huldah's marriages and career)

**SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY to SAN PEDRO PARK**

**Jerry Pelkovich** and **Elaine Weber** were married in the Walnut Grove in 1989. And directly from our guest book at the Visitor Center: "We came back for a visit to show our sons where we became one. I grew up hiking these hills and love to come back every chance we get." (Aug., '09) *Elaine Pelkovich*



**Questions or letters to the editor? New email:** carolynjunepankow@yahoo.com or **Carolyn Pankow**, "Friends of San Pedro Valley Park", 600 Pacifica, CA 94044. The editor is the writer of all uncredited features.

The Leaders of "the Friends of San Pedro Valley Park":

President, **Carolyn Pankow**; Vice President, **Shirley Drye**; Secretary, **Jim Mackey**; Treasurer, **Jane Turrel**; members at large, **Jean Leonard** and **Istvan Puski**; visitor center staffing, **Jean Leonard**; Habitat Restoration Day Leader, **Jim Pommier**; Interim Trail Day Leader, **Joseph Piro**; Membership chair, **Catherine Antista**; Program chair, **Carolyn Pankow**; Trailside Store Manager, **Paula Martin**