

LAIR of the "LION" with CHRIS WILMERS

Chris Wilmers, assistant professor of environmental studies at the University of California at Santa Cruz, will speak on our local big cat at our Visitor Center on the evening of **Saturday, October 2, at 8pm**. Chris is the



lead researcher on the Bay Area Puma Project, which is studying the **mountain lions** of the Santa Cruz Mountains—from San Francisco County to northern Monterey Co. (Fawnskin Flyer photo)

Chris is especially interested in the effect of predators on herbivore populations. His studies investigate the most likely number of these carnivores in our mountains, the male/female ratio, ages, conditions, size & behavior of the pumas. The lions are tracked with new, sophisticated telemetry collars that can tell not only the location, but also the speed of the pumas, whether it is stalking prey, or even if it's rolling over "in the grass"!

Dr. Wilmers received a B.A. in Physics with Thesis Honors at Wesleyan University, CT & a PhD in Environ. Science, Policy & Management from UC Berkeley in 2004 & was a post-doctoral fellow at Davis from 2005 to 2006.

TRAIL DAY BARBECUE OCT 9 AT NOON

We'll see you that **Saturday**, when the fumes of roasting franks & burgers will be wafting from grill. Everyone will bring salads, desserts, or whatever tempts your tastebuds, & will have a chance to enjoy each other's company before the cold, rainy season seizes us! Bon appétit!



(clipartpal.com) **Jean & Carolyn** will call you.

Polish dogs for trail workers!!!

BUTTERFLIES AND BULLDOZERS on Fri. Oct. 29

On **Friday, October 29, at 7:30pm**, **Steve and Ann Dunsky** will present a film, "Butterflies & Bulldozers", on the story of the struggle for San Bruno Mt. The dynamic presenters are the filmmakers of this feature film, which tells with a non-prejudicial voice of, "the dilemma of human growth versus habitat preservation, of property rights versus the rights of other species" in the area of this island of diversity. (photo of **Mission Blue Butterfly** on lupine by **Keith**)

On this mountain in the midst of a growing urban/suburban area our country's first Habitat Conservation Plan, (an agreement that private landowners develop to manage endangered species on their property), there has been a test to see whether this surviving slice of nature in the SF area



(Continued on page 2)

TOM EVANS' WEATHER OF THE CENTRAL CALIF. COAST

At **8pm on September 11**, before our rainy season commences, weather forecaster, **Tom Evans**, of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, will present a program on the uncooperative and inclement weather of our Central Calif. Coast.

In his forthcoming program Evans will likely recount the local dramas of our area—the last tornado—in So. SF in 2005, the costliest weather event in SM County—a severe storm in 2001, a 5 in. rainfall in one day



in Pacifica, and many more blockbusters. But he adds that the commonplace weather can be the most difficult: "[The greatest] challenge of forecasting along the coast is the low clouds, also called the marine layer. So much



depends on the cloud cover. If you get it right you are a hero, if you get it wrong you look like a fool.... My skin has thickened greatly since I began forecasting coastal stratus!"

Tom is the Warning Coordination Meteorologist for the San Francisco & Monterey Bay Area, Calif. National Weather Service Forecast Office, who along with other responsibilities, advises people as to the potential harm of serious storms and trends.

Tom was born & raised in Tucson, Arizona & received a BS degree in Atmospheric Science from the U. of AZ in 1993. He started with the Nat'l Weather Service in 1994. He served as a forecaster in offices located in Santa Maria, San Diego, & Monterey, CA; & in Tucson, AZ, before transferring to the SF & Monterey Areas in '08.

ON THE TRAIL

Long-time animal lover of Pacifica, **Toni Gamlin**, saw masses of swallows in back of the Park Mall in early July, and for the first time, **Barn Swallows**. (barn swallow from salmoncreekflorafauna.org)



Jim Mackey reports finding a large **Bobcat** in the shade in the South Walnut picnic area at 9:30am on July 17.

It was sitting up, perhaps relishing a recently caught **gopher** or pondering why his "slight of the paw" missed the diving rodent. Another observer saw a young cat twice in this area-7/18.

LAUREL HACKELMAN, OUR NEW RANGER

Laurel Hackleman won a strict competition of skills knowledge and experience, to be lauded as our new ranger at San Pedro Park and Region I of the S.M. Co. Parks system. Your first glance at this young woman might give you the impression that she is gentle, feminine & perhaps not what you expected to find in this physically demanding job, However you will have to reserve judgment.

Laurel is competently athletic; her natural physical and mental/emotional prowess were certainly honed in part by her father, who whisked her away to the Sierra Nevada Mountains as early as 5 years old to go on long and steep back packing trips.—one



was 20 miles long! She, her brother, and her dad trekked into such places as the country just outside of Yosemite National Park and Sword Lake (Rebecca Sowards-Emmerd photo of Sword Lake).

And don't mess around with Laurel by throwing a soda can into the garbage—her Mother is decidedly “green” & would never cotton to having any family member toss a piece of paper casually into the trash; Laurel carries the torch for Mom. You will see that she soon combined the teachings of this conscientious Mom *and* nature-loving Dad during her early college years.

After Laurel began her courses at Sonoma State University, which included a minor in Environmental Sciences, she became a docent/volunteer at the college's Fairfield Osbourne Preserve in Penngrove. “During my internship, I hiked with 3-5th graders educating and familiarizing them with the world around them. Many of these students had never been on a hike in their lives!” Yet their most memorable and “Eureka” moment on these adventures was when they went on a 1/4 mile solo walk, with a teacher at the “start” line and Laurel at the finish. They were bursting to tell her what they had seen and heard....

Laurel Hackleman and Carolyn Pankow

(to be continued)

(“*Butterflies and Bulldozers*” continued from page 1) can keep its multitude of species of native plants, butterflies, and other creatures, and yet respond to a human population that wants to live in this scenic view area.

The Dunksys have been working together ever since they met while obtaining their Master's in Film Art from UCLA. Since that time they have made innumerable films & videos on conservation issues. Their feature-length documentary, “The Greatest Good”, a history of the US Forest Service, has appeared not only on PBS in the United States, but internationally.

JOIN THE TRAIL DAY STALWARTS!!

Sprucin' Up, and Getting' Dirty

At 9am on our July 10th Trail Day, [initially] it was just me, **Joseph Piro**, and **Ralph Larson**. **Ranger David Vasquez** told me earlier in the week they had worked on the Montara Mtn. Trail with the trail machine and we could follow up on that, so we headed up there. We grabbed a hard rake, McLeod (photo to the right), pitchfork and handsaw and headed up via Brooks Falls Trail. As we reached the intersection, wow, what a difference! We started at the next bench after the intersection and worked our way back down. About half hour after we got there, **Istvan Puski** also arrived. We worked about 60' on either side of that bench, smoothing out the tractor tread marks, grooming the trail and cutting back more stuff. We then moved down to the bench at the intersection and cleaned up a bit around there. It was a lot of dry, dusty dirt-pushing and we only worked on a small section, but that trail is really great now.



Lumberjacks??

The August 14th Trail Day started under a cool grey sky. **Ivan Puski** and **I** went up Montara Mtn. Trail with **Ranger Laurel Hackleman** where we helped haul down a few stacks of old lumber from the small retaining walls and railings that were removed on the first few switch-backs. After that, we took a wheelbarrow back up and gathered a variety of plants -- some **ferns**, **sticky monkey flower**, etc. -- to transplant into the garden next to the Visitor's Center and one of the islands in the parking lot. Another young fellow and his mom went with **Ranger David Vasquez** to work on the east end of Hazelnut Trail.



Joseph Piro

Joseph Piro

FACTOIDS

Stinging Nettle, *Urtica dioica*, known for its painful contact effects on the skin, might remind those of us who have experienced it, of a series of ant bites. Small wonder, as the toxin or irritant in this plant is a formic acid, a chemical that some ants use to zap you! You must crush the brittle, hollow hairs on the leaves of the plant in order to release this formidable “formula”. (source is “Gardenspace”)

Stinging nettle is said to “follow man”. Why? They covet and need nitrogen and with all our refuse, and “soiled earth”, we supply plenty of this life-giving chemical for them.

(photo of *Urtica dioica* from Planet Botanic ws.)

Read more about this amazing plant in our Sept. Oct. '06 issue of “The Friends of San Pedro Valley Park”



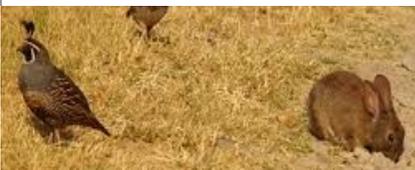
A NATURALIST'S PERSPECTIVE

By **Jim Mackey**

Sept./Oct. 2010

Rabbits and quail are abundant all year in Pedro Park and occur wherever grassland borders scrub communities. This includes all of the lowland areas and the Valley View Trail. Unlike the **deer** and **great horned owls**, they don't move in and out of the Park. Also the **quail** and **rabbits** provide endearing sights along the Weiler Ranch Road for the many hikers, especially the quail, which occur in obvious families. The chicks feed busily on the ground around their mother, while the father, perched above, resolutely maintains a lookout for enemies. If we were to select an iconic mammal and bird for our Park, I would nominate the brush rabbit and California quail.

Recently, **Volunteer Will Trout** told me that the quail and rabbits tended to occur together. This reminded me of an "On the Trail" report in the Park's Newsletter of Sept. 2003. **Volunteers Pankow, Antista, and Short** were hiking on the Valley View Trail



on Aug. 4 and came upon a pair of quail with 16 juveniles. A brush rabbit was also within inches of the quail, and the observers wondered if it could have been a "lookout" for the group. Of course, some common enemies might be detected more quickly by either the quail or the rabbit, so individuals of both species are probably safer when in a mixed group. (Kim Cabrera photo of brush rabbit with quail)

The rabbit probably has a better sense of hearing than the quail and certainly has a keener sense of smell. But the quail's vision is higher resolution and distinguishes colors across the visual spectrum, while the rabbit is red-green colorblind. Rabbits are probably more vulnerable to **coyotes, foxes, bobcats** and **Red-tailed Hawks**, while quail are more threatened by **Cooper's Hawks**. Both rabbits and quail have been hunted by humans for thousands of years. In his book, "The California Quail," **A. S. Leopold** describes the hunting of quail by Indians. He also reports that in 1867 quail occurred in the thousands between Half Moon Bay & San Gregorio. Women & children trapped them, while market hunters shot them and shipped them to S.F. I can report that both species along the Weiler Ranch Rd. have become habituated (lost the fear) of hikers, but, alas, not of photographers with tripods.



(jbparadise.com image)



Of course **brush rabbits** and **California quail** tend to occur together because of the coincidence of their preferring the same habitat. Our Park's only species of rabbit is a **cottontail** (*Sylvilagus bachmani*), which is aptly named as a brush rabbit. (It's unfortunate that the only specimen of a rabbit in the Visitor Center is a **jack rabbit**.) Why don't baby bunnies forage with their parents, as quail do? Because they are born helpless, so their mothers nurse them in their nests, whereas the quail hatchlings are precocial and athletic.

Poor Jim's Almanac. **Asters** are autumn flowers in our Park and in crossword puzzles. Look for our violet-colored **California aster** along the Weiler Ranch Road. And if you see a rabbit carrying a basket of flowers, it could be the ... Aster Bunny!(Sorry)

(Aster photo—[CA and W. Wildflower index](#))



ALIENS: THE GOOD AND THE BAD

Let's make it simple: the good were the **angel's trumpet**, non-invasive aliens, that may well have been planted by a previous artichoke farmer; the bad were the **eucalyptus trees**, that will take any space they can grab from the natives & produce plenty of offspring, defying native & non-native alike to enter into "their" territory.

Jim Mackey and **Istvan Puski** extricated and sawed "off" many of the Australian interlopers at the E. end of the Valley View, some of which reached 20' high. Then they dove into a difficult job—pulling out **cape ivy, poison hemlock** (oh-oh, more bad) and the natives: **Calif. blackberry** and **stinging nettle** that had overgrown the beautiful, "historic" **angel's trumpet**. Jim felt it ironic that we had to destroy some natives to save our lovely import. Thank you men for some especially hard labor, which added sparkle to our Park. (John Gosden photo of angel's trumpet)



SOS!!: Since **Jim Pommier** has been somewhat disabled, the "Friends" now especially need more volunteers for the habitat restoration. We hope you can make it to the September 21 (9am) work day of this group!

COASTAL PRAIRIE TERRACE—August 21st

This area of grassland just above the entrance road to the Park is a refuge for **Pacific Coast reed grass**, a native perennial bunch grass that has been "attacked" by **oak** and **Monterey Pine** seedlings. **Jim Mackey** and **Istvan Puski** made a heroic effort to restore one of the "last stands" of this grass, by plucking and yanking out these two species plus the obnoxious **French broom**, & yes, **sweet peas**. While straining their muscles in this chore they took a gander at few clumps of some lovely, pink **Clarkias** (photo of one at rt.)





ON THE TRAIL

(continued)

August sightings by Laurie Nikitas: "I have noticed...on the nicer days, lots of **grasshoppers** on upper Hazelnut, more **rabbits** than ever (by far) & more **chipmunks** (by a bit)" Laurie also sighted a lovely **Rein Orchid**; her photo is at left.



TALE OF ONE CITY: PEERING INTO PACIFICA

By Jack Dodson

The S. M. Co. geologist, **Jean DeMouthe**, traveled to Pac. for a memorable 'Friends' program on July 10 & showed images to illustrate the S.M. coast & its geological uncertainties:

Pacifica is a scenic outpost along the San Andreas fault as it slips and slides out to sea. Our city has the distinction of being on the Pacific tectonic plate (named, of course, after Pacifica). Every square inch of Pacifica bears this scar. Broken and faulted earth has created our hills, valleys and beaches. Dr. DeMouthe provided both history, science and inspiration in showing the Mussel Rock exposure of the most infamous American fault, the San Andreas. On Pacifica's northern edge one can walk down the large landslide caused by this great rupture of rocks. Looking up the landslide you see where Daly City tried to dump its trash. Nine disparate communities rebelled & voted for incorporation in 1957, defeating the landfill & creating the city of Pacifica. We wouldn't take it anymore.

Jean showed us an aerial view of Devil's Slide on Pacifica's south border. The slide isn't so large in size but, like so much of coastal Pacifica, it's "toe" is constantly eroding due to the pounding of the Pac. Ocean. There is no stability for Devil's slide and precious little for the rest of Pacifica. The failure along Esplanade shows that we're steadily sliding into an all consuming ocean. But there is a future for Pac. If we aren't subducted under the N. Am. plate, we'll be sailing up to Crescent City in time. We're bringing with us So. CA & Hollywood for entertainment. It will probably be a bumpy ride & may take a few million years.



SEPTEMBER—OCTOBER CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, September 8.....7pm

SEPTEMBER TRAIL DAY

Saturday, September 11.....9am

EVANS: WEATHER of CENTRAL CALIF. COAST

Saturday, September 11.....8pm

HABITAT RESTORATION DAY

Saturday, September 18.....9am

CHRIS WILMERS' MOUNTAIN LIONS

Saturday, October 2.....8pm

OCTOBER TRAIL DAY (Volunteer on the 9th!)

Saturday, October 9.....9am

AUTUMN "FRIENDS" BARBEQUE

Saturday, October 9.....12 noon

OCTOBER GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, October 13.....7pm

OCTOBER HABITAT RESTORATION DAY

Saturday, October 16.....9am

STEVE & ANN DUNSKEY: BUTTERFLIES & BLDZR

Friday, October 277:30pm

For all events meet at the Visitor Center

Coming events:

*Holiday Party: Christmas, Channakah, Kwanza, etc.
Wednesday, December 8*

THIS AWFUL AUGUST

by Laurie Nikitas

Bet you didn't expect to see this in August, right? This is not SPVP, but Old San Pedro Rd on a day when the entire valley was a drippy mess. I saw 92 **banana slugs** today.[Aug 11] I looked at my records & in five years I've seen a **TOTAL** of 93 slugs in August--including today's count. All banana slugs of every size and age. The oddest thing besides the extreme numbers was that so many of them were exhibiting **greater acrobatic** ability (slug photo by Laurie Nikitas) than I have ever seen before. They were crawling on plants, spanning from twig to twig, clinging to swaying grasses. Nearly absent this year are **snakes, lizards, butterflies & dragonflies**. Numbers are way down. The butterflies had a lousy spring with all the late rain and strong winds, and now they are plagued by those winds and the fog and cold. But it certainly seems to be a bumper year for slugs!!



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

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

President, **Shirley Drye**; Vice President, **Carolyn Pankow**; Secretary, **Jim Mackey**; Treasurer, **Jane Turrel**; members at large, **Jean Leonard, Istvan Puski, and Will Trout**; visitor center staffing, **Jean Leonard**; Habitat Restoration Leader, **Jim Pommier**; Trail Leader, **Joseph Piro**; Membership, **Catherine Antista**; Pgms, **Carolyn Pankow**; Trailside Store, **Jane Turrel**.