

## FOR CHILDREN—RAIN FOREST PROGRAM

Wildlife Associates of Half Moon Bay will bring some intriguing and charismatic animals from the tropical rain forest to our Visitor Center on **Tuesday, April 19, at 1pm.**

Featured will be a **Kinkajou**, a **sloth**, a **Scarlet Macaw**, & an **ant-eater**. (Kinkajou photo by cafeexpress.com). The youngsters will learn about the habits of each creature, its relationship to others, and its place in the environment of the beleaguered rainforest.



Most if not all of Wildlife Associates' featured animals are rescues or those apprehended in the illegal pet trade. You should bring yourself and your children early for the best seating.

## STEVE EDWARDS & ICE AGE MEGA-MONSTERS

**Steve Edwards** of the East Bay Regional Parks will present a program on the ecology of the Ice Age Mega-fauna and their relationship to the native peoples of that time. The date & time are **8 o'clock Sat. evening, April 30.**

Steve has done PhD work in paleontology and studied archaeology, and ethnography, but his primary interest has been in botany and the related geology, especially that of the flourishing variety of plants on our serpentine soils. Nevertheless in this talk he will turn with burning curiosity to the subject of the giant mammals of the Pleistocene and early Holocene and the humans who hunted and were hunted by them. (cropped photo of Steve at Pinnacles from Bob Case's photo)



Edwards has been the director of the Regional Parks Botanic Garden since 1983, which, he says, "swept me away" as a boy and has always been a resident of the East Bay. Perhaps his appreciation of the beauty surrounding him came genetically from his mother who was a well know landscape artist. Steve is ready to save any threatened area in this part of California for the beauty of and diversity of its flowering plants. (photo of Mammoth from enchantedlearning.com)



## THE RACCOON LADY HERE IN EARLY MARCH

**Megan Isadore**, Raccoon lady of Sanuel Taylor State Park, will be at our Visitor Center on **Saturday, March 5, at 7:30pm.** Since she guided a field trip for some of our volunteers she has treated us to her whimsical and beautifully painted observations of animals in her park. Wisely, then, in Megan's own words: "Megan Isadore is a naturalist and wildlife rehabilitator. She spends her days and many a long night as Raccoon Team leader for Yggdrasil Urban Wildlife Rescue.



([yuwr.org](http://yuwr.org), [ranchoraccoon.org](http://ranchoraccoon.org)), & Lead Naturalist for the Salmon Protection Watershed Network, ([spawnusa.org](http://spawnusa.org)) (raccoon photo from kellyeskridge.com)

Megan grew up overseas, mainly in the Middle East and Asia, and returned to the US for high school. She studied English at the College of William and Mary, and shortly thereafter followed her nose to California, where she fell in love with the golden hills and the mighty Pacific.

Megan's first sense of her place in nature came with her family's occasional sojourns on Cape Cod (family home), where she got to run wild along the beaches, bays, marshes and cranberry bogs with her beloved dog, Missy.

(continued on page 4)

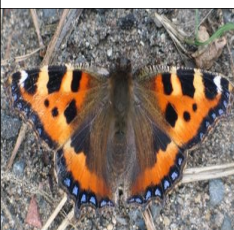
## SIZZLING BURGERS AND FRANKS!

Yes, Trail Day in April is our time for hauling out the barbeque again; in fact, it's **Sat. April 9 at 12 noon**, as the workers come down from the hills, exhausted & starving. And we will be there to honor them with volunteer-bought beef patties and supreme hot dogs. The salads and beans and desserts are from YOU! (free clipart—crazyws)



## ON THE TRAIL

Jan. 29, **Laurie Nikitas** found that the **giant trilliums** at the western end of the Hazelnut have buds & found one **Western trillium** flower, both "right on schedule." "There were lots of **Cynoglossum** [blue hound's tongue] sprouts today, & one flower. Can't beat those bulbs & tubers--they can survive so much. Nothing like packing tons of food." (photo-Montara Mt. ws.)



On our last hot day, Wednesday [Jan. 19th?], Laurie saw **butterflies**—**tortoise shell & Lorquin's admiral**, and even a **dragonfly** on old San Pedro Rd. (photo of tortoise shell butterfly from igougo.com) (continued on page 4)

## JANUARY TRAIL DAYS

By Joseph Piro

**Happy New Year!** We kicked off the first Trail Day of 2011 on January 8th with a big bunch of people -- Rangers **Scott Lombardi** and **Martin King**, **Istvan Puski**, **John Bartlott**, **Melinda Sarron**, **Christine Guzman**, **Alex Macaraig**, **Joel** and myself. And, like the last couple Trail Days of 2010, we continued work on the Hazelnut Trail behind the Visitor's Center. We made it up to the bend after the first bench up in the eucalyptus forest, along the way building a few new drain dips, knocking down the berm left on the sides of the trail from the trail machine work and generally helping smooth things out. Certainly a good start to the year!

## STARFLOWER—MARCH/APRIL PLANT

Everyone waits for the first unfurling of the thrilling **Trilium**. **Ray Trubucco** could not resist stalking the exciting and beautiful **globe lily** in our Park. The California Native Plant Society advertizes a hike to see the unusual & sleek **Fetid Adder's Tongue** on the Hazelnut Trail each year. Exultations of praise are heaped upon the purple-hued **Douglas Iris**. Yet the interest in the diminutive and pretty **Starflower** or **Trientalis latifolia**, (Rowena Hopkins photo) on a scale of 1-10 would probably be assigned a place between one & zero. Is its size the only problem?



What a plant lacks in great beauty of flower, eg the **coyote brush**, is sometimes made up for by the Indian lore related to it—starflowers may have been used in an eye wash; & a very close relative is called Indian Potato. An interloper plant, the **blue gum eucalyptus**, is given top rating in an article by our chief naturalist in this issue, in part for its **Great Horned Owl** nests. Our knowledge about **Phytophthora ramorum** or “sudden oak death”, SOD, makes us protective & hugely concerned about our **Calif. live oak**....

Few people ever hear that SOD seriously affects the uncharismatic little starflower. Few people know that this little beauty is pollinated by some of our **native bees**, that its seeds are sought out by **insects**, who then disperse them to other likely spots in the shade. Isn't the starflower useful to all those insects?

Its ability to spread profusely with its rhizomes, underground roots, allows it to occupy space that non-native weeds might covet—ground cover—not a shabby quality to have, but in starflower's case it's a little aggressive. As **Mike Vasey** relates in his Montara Mt. website: “But if you've already got **Anagallis arvensis** (**Scarlet Pimpernel**), you might want to add **Trientalis latifolia** and let them fight it out”. Have you decided if this is a useful plant that deserves a few words in our newsletter?

## IS ANYONE HOME?

By Laurie Nikitas

[from an article written in October, 2009]

I had an interesting experience a few weeks ago. I was daydreaming along the Hazelnut when the “awake” part of my brain yelled out, “You're stepping on a **chipmunk**.” (chipmunk photo by Monte M. Taylor.) My foot was inches above a little guy whose brain similarly awoke and then scampered off in such a hurry that it somersaulted before disappearing into the brush.



It's always so surprising to come across oblivious animals like that. Once I ran into a **buck**, fully mature, sound asleep on the trail. His legs were tucked under his body and his head was up, but no one was home in those wide open eyes. It took considerable noise to waken him as I stood 6 feet away.

On another day, it was 2 **baby snakes** (**garter** and **gopher**), looking dead until I touched them. We always believe, I think, that wild animals are constantly alert and ever savvy, only to find that they, like us, day-dream and sleep deeply, completely vulnerable.

## NEWS BRIEFS

**Jean Leonard** as of Feb. 15, was at the Peninsula Hospital. She suffered a broken hip and now a stroke. Only time will tell how her rehabilitation will go. In the meantime **Shirley Drye** (359-2934) is taking over scheduling for the VC.

**Art Armstrong's** wife, **Pat**, says that he finally has his wheel chair accessible van—a little more freedom for Art.

## USED NATURE BOOKS

Don't forget that we could use **more nature books for our ongoing money generating book sale**. Times are hard and more speakers are requiring more money; thank you to all of you who have donated books so far, esp. the **Baldwins** of Pedro Point.

## FACTOID

Thank you Audubon Magazine, & especially **James Mackey**: “I remember that, years ago, someone reported that about 45 **Pygmy Nuthatches** spent a winter's night together in a cavity in a pine.” Apparently, this is common behavior for the tiny trunk-climbing bird when the temperature plummets. Pygmy Nuthatches do not appear on our bird list, but have been seen in the Park by such experienced bird-watchers as **Judy Spittle** and **James Mackey**. (Peter Latourrette photo)





A NATURALIST'S PERSPECTIVE

By Jim Mackey

March/April 2011

What are Pedro Park's iconic animals and plants? I have enjoyed selecting several species to nominate for this honor. Among mammals I considered the black-tailed deer, but rejected it because it is also indicative of the city. The bobcat would be a good choice, but I would prefer that an icon be more readily seen by visitors. So, as I stated in my column in Sept./Oct. 2010, my nominee is the brush rabbit! In that column I also indicated that my choice for a bird icon was the California quail. I mentioned how



the families of quail provide endearing sights for hikers.

My nominee for our iconic reptile is not the gopher snake, but the Western fence lizard! These little

critters say something about our moderate climate, as I have found them to be active in every month; and it is fun watching them flashing their blue bellies as they do push-ups toward each other. Our fish is the obvious choice of steelhead trout, while our mollusk is the equally obvious banana slug.

It was hard to choose from among our several species of butterflies, but I picked the one with the bold white stripes and the orange wing-tips: the Lorquin's admiral. (from greennature.com)



The satyr anglewing was runner-up. We owe the abundance of the former to the presence of our willows, while the latter oviposits on our abundant stinging nettles. The Pacific spiketail is not our most common dragonfly but it is very striking, with its long, black abdomen bearing a series of yellow spots. Also this species prefers small, wooded streams, which fits our Park.

A tree is sometimes defined as a woody plant with one main trunk that is at least 15 feet tall. There are several species in Pedro Park that barely meet this height requirement, so they might be considered to be borderline shrubs. These include the toyon, blue and red elderberry, and our wonderful chinquapin. However we have some undeniable trees, including the red alder and Monterey pine, but my runner-up for iconic tree is the Coast live oak – of which we have 20 – 30 specimens. (Sally & Andy Wasowski photo of coast live oak)



My winner, however, is the blue gum eucalyptus! Some visitors from the American Midwest are awed by the sizes of some of these trees. One by the upper parking lot had a great horned owl nest in it that was 120 feet above the ground! And I don't think that there is a danger that blue gum will disappear soon from the Park since they were planted more than a century ago and are obviously thriving.

The shrub is the dominant plant form in the Park. We have a rich diversity of shrubs that can be assigned to three communities. These species include the rare leatherwood and the endemic Montara manzanita.

However my favorite shrub is the red flowering currant. I think of it as the first wildflower of spring when I see its beautiful festoons of pink flowers in early November. The bees and Anna's hummingbirds appreciate it also. (photo of flowering currant from wildflowerswest.com)



It is especially difficult to pick an iconic herbaceous (non-woody) plant out of so many candidates but I nominate the Douglas iris as #3, the fetid adder's tongue as #2, and the giant trillium (dunngardens.org website) as #1! All three can be seen along the Hazelnut Trail in spring. My iconic grass is our example of a native perennial bunch grass: the Pacific reed grass (Arvind Kumar photo), while my fern is the lady fern, whose fronds on specimens



along the south fork of Pedro Creek exceed 4 feet in length. There is, indeed, a "fungus among us" in late spring when the red, tentacled, foul-smelling octopus stinkhorns protrude up among the picnic tables in the Trout Farm Picnic Area.



Poor Jim's Almanac: The warmth and moisture will combine with the lengthening days to produce an explosion of wildflowers. Don't miss the giant trilliums along the Plaskon and Hazelnut Trails. Neotropical bird migrants will be returning and we will be hearing the "chi chi chet chet" of bright yellow Wilson's warblers in the willows. (Thanks to Peter Latourrette for Wilson's Warbler photo)



"As if sunshine  
fell down on a branch,  
then gathered itself together  
for one solid moment,  
the warbler brightens spring"

Jane Yolen

**ON THE TRAIL** (continued )

On Jan. 22, just after noon, as **Istvan Puski** sat on the first WWR bench, he was amazed to see a (Red-tailed?) **hawk** crash down onto a **brush rabbit**, hear the squeal-screams and watch the hawk fly back to an over-hanging **willow** before starting his meal.

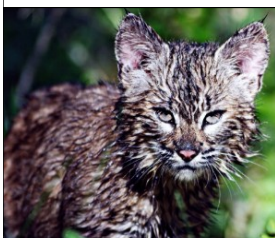


{photo from riverpartners.org}

On Wednesday, January 26, **Barbara Kempster** thought she heard a **baby hawk**, but it turned out to be a **Northern Flicker**. She saw this striking sight toward the beginning of the Weiler Ranch Road, across from a meadow. (pclink.com photo)



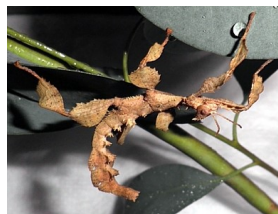
**Barbara's** favorite sighting was of a **bobcat** in the South Walnut, one who looked to be on the watch for **gophers**, as he waited in the rain. Our intrepid feline stayed through the California "downpour" that came, shaking "his" head like a wet puppy every so often. Finally



Barbara's intense interest likely caused the sodden fellow to leave his hunting grounds, but after one last shake. It was about noontime on Sun., Jan. 30.(westmad. Com photo)

**AND CHILDREN HELD THEM!**

Large female walking sticks were a prime feature of our Sat. Feb. 5th, children's program A woman shrieked when I inadvertently positioned a "stick" near her hair, but almost all the children chose not only to pet them, but to hold them in their hands despite their prickliness. (walking stick from whisper of wolf.com)



We had 50 children & 35 adults who were fascinated by **Ilena Takahashi's** down-to-earth, yet informative presentation. It didn't really matter if the **hissing cockroach** "forgot" to hiss, & I think that



saburchil.com)

for some, it gave a better name to cockroaches to see this lovely fella. Never had the mostly Californians seen the likes of the large **lubber grasshopper**, or the huge body of the **snake-like millipede**, whose tiny mites wandered over his body scavenging minute pieces of garbage as we held him. (giant millipede-

**MARCH—APRIL CALENDAR**

**MEGAN ISADORE, THE RACCOON LADY**

Saturday, March 5.....7:30pm

**MARCH GENERAL MEETING**

Wednesday, March 9.....6pm

**MARCH TRAIL DAY**

Saturday, March 12.....9am

**MARCH HABITAT RESTORATION**

Saturday, March 19.....9am

**APRIL TRAIL DAY**

Saturday, April 9.....9am

**APRIL GENERAL MEETING**

Wednesday, April 13.....7pm

**WILDLIFE OF RAIN FOREST for CHILDREN**

Tuesday, April 19.....1pm

**STEVE EDWARDS' ICE AGE MEGAFUNA**

Saturday, April 30.....8pm

*For all events meet at the Visitor Center*

**Coming events:**

*Kim Todd—author of "Tinkering with Eden" in June*

**(Megan Isadore—continued from page one)**

Then there was a long hiatus when she spent way too much time in classrooms, offices, and cities followed by splendid release to West Marin. At last she was free to begin 11 years of concentrated nature and wildlife study in the field, through reading and the occasional class. [Now she is firmly entrenched studying the **salmon** and **steelhead** of Marin county's streams, as well as its other organisms.]

In her spare time she runs a humane wildlife exclusion business, Good Riddance! Wildlife Exclusions, and writes a weekly nature blog. In her other spare time, she loves to travel, cook, and paint. And garden!"

**IVAN, JOSEPH AND THE WASHOUTS**

**By Joseph Piro**

It was just me and **Istvan Puski** for the February 12th Trail Day. **Ranger Laurel Hackleman** was working with another crew, so she suggested we head up the east end of the Hazelnut Trail to clear a small slide that came down onto the trail. So Ivan and I rounded up some tools and walked out Weiler Ranch & luckily found our work not too far up the trail. After digging & spreading that one out, we found another small slide a little further up, so we cleared that as well and even transplanted some little plants on the bare slope -- hopefully they'll help stabilize it. (Joseph Piro photo of Istvan at work on



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** and **Istvan Puski**; visitor center staffing, **Jean Leonard**; Habitat Restoration Leader, **OPEN**; Trail Leader, **Joseph Piro**; Membership, **Catherine Antista**; Pgms, **Carolyn Pankow**; Store, **Jane Turrel, Susan Marie Hagen**. Editor, **C. Pankow**