

WE LOSE A GOOD FRIEND AND A GOOD MAN: BILL BIGLER

Bill Bigler just passed away, perhaps a week or two after I talked with him on the trail. Here is what **Kevin Mullin**, our assemblyman, had to say about Bill: "Many of you probably remember him as an active member of the Peninsula community. He was a dedicated educator, scientist, public policy advocate, and all around great person. He will be deeply missed." We Friends will miss his courage, his intellect, his humor, and his help working at the Visitor Center during his trial.



DAVID MCGUIRE: OUR LOCAL SHARKS & THEIR BITES

On **Saturday evening, May 10th, at 6pm, David McGuire** will present a program on local sharks and their danger to us. How safe or vulnerable are we as we step into our patch of the Pacific? David will help us make our decision, as he enlightens us on some details of shark behavior as presently understood. David will also tell us about shark tagging and conservation. (great white shark photo above)



David is a Research Associate of the Department of Aquatic Biology at the Cal Academy of Sciences, who is conducting a shark research program that includes population studies, movements and fisheries impacts. McGuire is the writer, producer and underwater cinematographer of several award winning documentaries focusing on sharks & has recently produced a new documentary on the Sharks of San Francisco Bay. He is the founder of the ocean health and shark conservation non-profit "Sea Stewards", David received his BA in Marine Biology from UCSB, did graduate research at Moss Landing Marine Lab, and then went on to obtain a masters of environmental health from UC Berkeley, where he worked in education and public health for over a decade. He hails from that creative nest and close neighbor of the sea, Topanga Canyon, in So Calif.



NISRINE MACHAKA'S—THE WILD-FLOWERS OF LEBANON— MAY 31

Mediterranean climates have a unique, summer drought-tolerant flora; this climate and flora are found in Lebanon, of course, and in Pacifica. Lebanon, like California, is a land bumpy with mountains and replete with a variety of environmentally distinct areas. And this tiny country, the size of Connecticut, is estimated to have 2,600 species of wild plants; California is also known for its great plant diversity, having fully 4200, possibly 5000 native species. When I saw that **Nisrine Machaka-Houri PhD**, the co-author of 2 field guides to the flowers of Lebanon, was delivering a slide presentation in San Francisco, I hoped that Coastsiders might also be intrigued.



Come to the Visitor Center on **Saturday, May 31, at 6pm** to see this beautiful display of wildflowers photographed by **Ahmad Hourri**, Nisrine's husband.

Nisrene has been doing post-Doc research at UCSB. She is a specialist in Biodiversity conservation & management, who has been studying & documenting Lebanese flora for the past 10 years.

ON THE TRAIL

Elated with the effects of the long-awaited rains on our park, **Bing Huey** took his camera up the Hazelnut trail on March 16th, discovering this winning combination: an **amanita** type **mushroom** posing with a **fetid adder's tongue**. Then he paused quite a long time to capture the exotic beauty of a



mission bells flower; here is one on the left.

He then captured a herald of spring, the **osoberry**, a member of the rose family, as seen to the right. (cont. on page 4)



NEWS BRIEFS

Thanks to **Katherine Wright**, county volunteer, who is the brains & effort behind the Plaskon Nature Trail "teaching boards", that highlight critters & flora, mostly of that path.

Jack Dodson, temporary Visitor Center scheduler, but worker for many years, who dynamically opened the world of SPVP to visitors, is moving on to Santa Rosa. He appreciated the dedication of all, esp. the newer VC volunteers: **Judy Field, Jim Steele, & Judy Bacon**. Keep in touch, Jack.

Welcome back to SPVP, Ranger 3, **David Vasquez!** David and all our rangers also work at nearby county parks.

INTO NATURE-PART II

by Carolyn Pankow



Two and one half months in Alaska, car-camping, was a dividing event in my life, as I hope you realize as you read. I will not complain about sleeping on hard ground the whole trip. (air mattresses purchased with green stamps went down the first night), but I had wanted to see an **Alaskan Brown Bear** so much that it hurt; instead, due especially to the long twilight in June and July, I had a chance to get to know the fascinating whine and bite of the tundra mosquito, learning that you do not trip into the “bush” for any urgent reason.

So thank you to the **moose** with their mouthfuls of dripping pond plant, the lumbering **porcupines** cavorting with trees, some creatures that I believed were **mountain goats**, and delicious fresh **water salmon**, given to us by poachers. (Hunger can weaken your resolve.) The wild beasts and birds fancied up our



days, even more than the ferry to Sitka Island and Ketchikan, where we spent a rainy night in a 3-walled CCC stone shelter complete with fireplace, reading Robert Services’ “the Cremation of Dan McGee”, The shooting of Dan Mc Grew, etc.

Less pleasantly, Alaska will always be connected to my first morning sickness in all its glory and the craving for the usually non-existent fruits and vegetables as we ate spam and “hard tack”. But in that freak year of rain in 1967, that had the 6 of us almost-hippies jostling for rights to the floor of the blue Chevy van, one of our better meals was actually watery spaghetti, cooked by the pregnant one as others perched dejectedly but expectantly under a tarp, trapped at Wonder Lake, the then, Mt. McKinley National Park.

We were stuck there 3? days, exploring a bit in the muskeg, listening to our friend, Sody, fingerpick “Freight Train” and other pieces on his guitar, and for Ella Muir and I, taking “stand in a tub” showers in the ladies’ restroom. An orange-suited, ax-bearing leader, Joe Wilcox, of an infamous ill-fated Expedition climb of the 20,322’ peak, stumbled into our camp



on the 2nd or 3rd day. Seven people on this expedition died in a terrific blizzard on the mountain, while we were bemoaning the fact that we were soggy and trapped by the washed out road. A couple of days later we were finally able to drive to a lodge for good hot coffee and conversation and the clouds parted; the vision of the huge enormity of the magnificent “Mt. Denali” the lives it had just claimed, the emotions we felt, will stick with all of us forever.

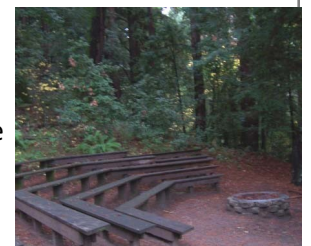


Later, in August, while we were making our penetratingly pungent wet-spruce way down the Al-Can hwy, constantly picking up hitchhikers, we heard that Fairbanks had been flooded & worried that the museum’s giant Alaskan brown bear, that had towered over us on our visit, had been damaged. After paying our dues on this road, we finally arrived in a land of pastures and cows and Ella, and I chopped and grated & cooked meat on the Coleman, serving heavenly tacos with fresh tomatoes and lettuce.



The only live bears I saw on my trip were the **black bears** of Yellowstone being fed watermelon by some tourists, though we did see some mighty bear cage traps (photo above) at Glacier National Park, as all were waiting for some dangerous, man-killers (actually, 2 women, who were tragically mauled and killed that August) to step in for a visit. **“Death lurked on the trails of Glacier National Park in the hot summer of 1967”**, So having braved Alaska’s wilderness, we opted out of hiking this park’s trails looking, for these “bruins” as we’d done in Southeast Alaska.

Back in the lower 48, I procured a job as a teacher-naturalist for the Marin County School District while doing a stint in homeless camping at Pantoll on Mt. Tam. I had a crash course in plants of the redwoods at Camp Redwood Glen (photo above), leading some great 10 year olds, like a little girl whiz on butterfly species, on discovery hikes. The night hike was obligatory for each group, &, as I predicted, I had to have one of my students guide me back to the cabins. Included in that foray was a circle of silence, punctuated by a “wounded **rabbit**” whistle, which was supposed to draw a **bobcat** in; later one of our former volunteers, avian expert, **Cliff Richer**, suggested that we had risked our scalps to a possible talon-spiked dive by a **Great Horned Owl**. Next?



*Coming attraction: Part of volunteer, **Sharron Walker’s**, adventurous life will appear in the July—August bulletin.)*

A NATURALIST'S PERSPECTIVE

By Jim Mackey

Spring flowers. One of my sisters and her husband, from Colorado, were here over March 29 and 30. They live above 7000 ft. in the Rockies so have a short but much appreciated summer. They take short courses focusing on wildflowers at the Rocky Mt. Biological Station. But they had not seen trilliums there so they requested that we look for them in our Park. We had offered to take them to the Calif. Acad. of Sciences but they said that they would prefer to visit San Pedro Park! So I was proud and delighted to show them several specimens of **giant**



trilliums, in full bloom, along the Plaskon Trail. Then we studied the **fetid adder's tongues** (Mary Hunter photo of fetid adder's tongue), which they thought were very exotic, on the Hazelnut Trail.

Further up, the meadow of blue **Douglas iris** evoked oohs and aahs.

Black squirrels. Back at the lower parking lot, my sister looked across the lot and asked what the tree



was that was covered with pink flowers (a redbud tree-Kerry Wilken photo). **Katie Antista** joined us and said that she makes a point of visiting the tree each year at about Easter. Katie also advised us to be on the lookout for **black squirrels**, which she had been seeing recently in the vicinity.

This reminded me of the black squirrel that I saw feeding on the blossoms of the **apple tree** in the Trout Farm Picnic area (reported in the May/June newsletter of 2010). We probably have three species of tree squirrels in Pedro Park, and the black squirrels are a color phase of one of these: the **Eastern grey squirrel**.



(This was discussed in the Nov./Dec. newsletter of 2011.) Black squirrels seem to be increasingly common across the U.S. and England - where they are especially common in industrial areas that have been found to harbor **moths** exhibiting industrial melanism.

Biogeographic Rules. Gloger's Rule was an early attempt to generalize about factors that favored the evolution of relatively dark animals. It identified

moisture as being directly related to the darkness of an animal. (e.g. Heavy precipitation produces shady forests which conceal dark **Stellar's jays**.)



Our **fence lizards** have a better system: they emerge from subterranean retreats in the morning - cold, sluggish and very dark. Their darkness facilitates basking in the sun, which allows them to heat up to an activity temperature of about 93F, at which time they become paler! Bergmann's Rule states that animals that generate most of their heat (birds and mammals) tend to be larger in colder regions than their relatives in warmer ones. (The largest bears and penguins are in polar regions.) It is reasoned that a large body has a relatively small surface compared to its bulk, so would lose heat less readily.

Poor Jim's Almanac. Try the Valley View Trail for **fence lizards**. I once watched a female here enlarging a horse's foot-print to accommodate her eggs. A warm, active male may show blue dorsal spots as well as the blue belly patches that he displays while doing push-ups toward rivals & mates. (John Scharpen photo shows fence lizard with egg at rear)



THE GARDENS GET A MAKE-OVER

By Joseph Piro

For our April 12th Trail Day, **Istvan Puski, Stanley** and I worked with Rangers **Cat Allen** and **Chris** to spruce up the Sun and Shade gardens around the Visitor's Center. Working on the Sun garden path, Istvan took care of the weeds, trimming plants and realigning pieces of the bender board while Cat and



I shuttled back and forth with the ATV and wheelbarrow spreading out the new decomposed granite surface material for the entire length. Stanley worked in the Shade garden by clearing lots of leaf litter and removing the rotted tree-rounds in the path, readying it for the new DG. Enjoy these little paths! (Joseph Piro photo)

Joseph Piro, our loyal trail maintenance leader, is also a great nature lover, and here is one beauty, the **giant trillium**, that he photographed while working on the East Hazelnut, so next spring don't just look for them on the Plaskon Nature Trail. **Istvan Puski** found two of these radiant show-offs while pulling **English ivy** from your editor's backyard!



Judy Spitler's at it again—looking for warblers, and she says that all of them are singing. The wintering **Yellow Rump Warblers** and **Townsend Warblers** were still here a of March 30. And the **Wilson's** and **Orange Crowned Warblers** have returned to nest. (Julio Molero photo of Townsend's Warbler above)



Laurie Nikitas was amazed at how fast a **western yellow-bellied racer** slid through the grass and brush up hill from the ditch on the Weiler Ranch Road. It was olive green and about 2 feet long, but she says she's seen much bigger ones in SPVP. It was about 12 noon on the 4th of April.

Our keen observer, **Barbara Kempster**, has seen a **bobcat** in the South Walnut picnic area several times in March and April, usually between 10:30 and 12 noon.

Ron Wilson took this shot of a **Merriam's chipmunk** he saw in the South Walnut picnic area, one who seems to be flying. Unfortunately, people have been feeding them peanuts, as evidenced by the shells littering the area, so it's no surprise that **Katie Antista** also reported seeing one by the **willows** in the west part of the space in early April.



Ray Trabucco has been photographing one of our **Chestnut Backed Chickadees** carrying larvae into its cavity nest in a snag branch of a **willow** across the from Plaskon Nature Trail bench—mid to late April. (photo from Cornell U website)

MAY—JUNE CALENDAR

- MAY TRAIL DAY**
Saturday, May 10.....9am
- DAVID MCGUIRE'S SHARKS**
Saturday, May 10.....6pm
- MAY GENERAL MEETING***
Wednesday, May 14.....6:30pm
- MAY HABITAT RESTORATION DAY**
Saturday, May 17.....9am
- NISRINE MACHAKA-HOURI'S WILDFLOWERS of LEBANON**
Saturday, May 31.....6pm
- JIM STEELE'S MAY BIRD SONG HIKE**
Saturday, May 24.....8am
- JUNE GENERAL MEETING***
Wednesday, June 11.....6:30pm
- JUNE TRAIL DAY**
Saturday, June 14.....9am
- JUNE HABITAT RESTORATION DAY**
Saturday, June 21.....9am

**Notice that the 2 meetings are at the Visitor Center.*

WILDLIFE ASSOC. RESCUES DRAW 37 KIDS; 22 ADULTS

Thanks to the San Mateo County Parks Foundation, some animals the are found in our Park showed off for a crowd of Pacificans. **Sharron Walker's** photo shows presenter, Allison, with the Great Horned Owl with one eye, who charmed everyone as did the shy little Grey Fox,& that Sierra Nevada fellow, Thistle the Porcupine, an 11-year-od veteran, who let leader, Michelle show off his rear end weapons.



FACTOID

Richard Karban at UC Davis, found "plant chatter" in **sagebrush**. When hungry **insects** attack this xerophyte, volatile organic compounds (VOCs) are released by the damaged plant, causing herbivore-resistance in plants growing within a distance of 2 feet. This is well within the range of their neighbors, who then know to marshal their defenses against the invaders.



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

The Leaders of "the Friends of SPVP": President, **Jim Mackey**; Vice President, **Carolyn Pankow**; Secretary, **Shirley Drye**; Interim Treasurer, **Bing Huey**; member at large, **Istvan Puski**; *Visitor Center staffing—we have a possible new leader*; Habitat Restoration, **Istvan Puski**; Trail Leader, **Joseph Piro**; Membership, **Jim Steele**; Programs , **Carolyn Pankow**; Trailside Store: **Denise Marcucci** .