

## VISITOR CENTER "MAKEOVER" IN JUNE AND JULY

SPVP's energetic chief and coastal district ranger, **Matthew DelCarlo**, informed us that the Visitor Center interior will get a summer facelift; included will be: painting, new floor cover, lighting, and other features. Because of this refurbishing, the program scheduled for June, which was **Dr. Shannon Bennett's** scholarly *Zoonoses* (diseases transmitted between animals and man), will be rescheduled to October. **Jim Steele**, bird song expert, with a fantastic knowledge of birds, may give his program on **birds** of SPVP at another venue in July.

## DR. MIKE VASEY BRINGS S.F. BAY ESTUARY RESEARCH TO SAN PEDRO VALLEY PARK ON MAY 21

The Bay and the upstream, inland Delta make up the *San Francisco Estuary*, a realm for which **Dr. Vasey** is now the Director. On **Saturday, May 21, at 6pm**, he will be giving you the history of this vital area, as well as its present state & predicted future.



Tidal wetlands in the S.F. Estuary have declined by 85% and resulted in the endangerment of species such as the **salt marsh harvest mouse** and the **Calif. Clapper Rail**, as well as loss of vital ecosystem services, since so much of this area serves as a nursery for **fish, crabs**, etc., one of its important functions.

We are restoring thousands of acres of tidal wetlands, but we are also fighting against sea-level rise & extreme storms, failing sediment supply & flooding. Will tidal marshes drown with a resulting lack of migration space, sediment supply, and disconnection from watershed processes? Or will this crisis help to bring [our area] together to take restoration & coastal management

[to] the next step towards integrating tidal wetland dynamics into our urban shoreline environments?" (New Chicago Marsh, SF Bay Nat'l Wildlife Refuge; Photo by **Ryan Koenigs**)



Dr. Mike Vasey is not only a renowned expert on the **manzanita**, but has taught conservation biology and environmental studies at SFSU. He lives in Pedro Point and has been active with the Pacifica Land Trust and on the San Pedro Creek Watershed Coalition.

Mike received his BA in History from Dartmouth College & an MA in Ecology & Systematic Biology from SFSU, as well as his PhD from UCSC with a dissertation on the conservation of maritime chaparral, especially as it is influenced by fog.

## SPRING FRIENDS BARBEQUE ON SATURDAY MAY 7, NOON; MONTARA MOUNTAIN BOOK-SIGNING FROM 10:30am-12 NOON



You bring your best gourmet side dish; **Joseph Piro** grills links and burgers on our classy "DelCarlo" barbeque. As you sit on the new "stone-sculpted" furniture, you may hear the strains of the dulcimer or guitar. **Carol Martinez, Skeeter**, and your editor will be setting up this mouth-watering event. Everyone's on K.P. Book-signing by Barbara VanderWerf will be in the museum prior to the barbeque. Join us, ok?

## VISITOR CENTER is FULL OF SURPRISES; NEEDS VOLUNTEERS!

The man with the weather-beaten face from Sonoma County waltzed into the Center maybe 20 years ago now, so that Saturday I was taken aback when the fellow asked if he could take his **llama** up the trail. Now we have instant communication with rangers in the field, but then I felt I had to make the



judgment call. Knowing that horses were allowed up the Montara Mt. Trail, I told him that I was certain it would be fine, as after all the llama was also an ungulate & an herbivorous one at that. Unfortunately, after Mr. Sonoma had loaded up &

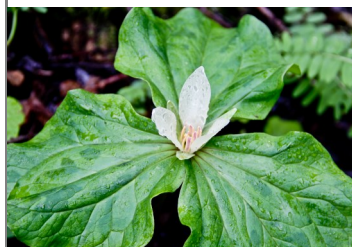
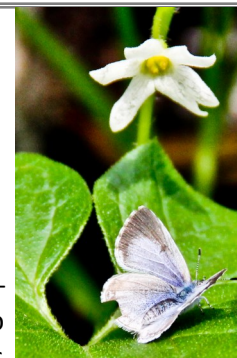
halted his Andean "camel" Ranger X, who thought horses were the "bee's knees", nixed Mr. Llama! But what a great day it was to imagine that beautiful animal sniffing our pungent sage & mint, as it wended its way up our shaggy peak.

But there are also the people you meet from Turkey, Iceland, etc., all the techies from S.F. & Silicon V., the scientists looking for salamanders; & one time a natural foods hike leader.

3 hours once a month, the Center can be your estate home as you gaze at redwoods through the "cathedral" windows above. This is your sanctuary for books & puzzles when it's quiet. Your chance to sit at the honored spot at the desk is there only because volunteers have moved out of town, have had family problems or become a bit infirm themselves. Call our helpful, organized & grateful coordinator, **Mila Stroganoff**, at 359-1642 to join the troops.

## ON THE TRAIL

**Ron Wilson** photographed one of the **echo blue butterflies** flying near the downed bridge on the Brook's Creek Trail on a sunny March 14. The little dusty-azure critter stopped on a **wild cucumber** leaf whose flower decorates



Ron's photo. And to your left is his photo of the **giant trillium** from the Plaskon Nature Trail in mid March. (see page 4)



## DISASTER ON THE BROOKS CREEK TRAIL— FOLLOWED BY TROUT FARM TROUBLES

By Joseph Piro



Ron Wilson

Joseph Piro

Despite a very grey day and a sky that looked to rain any moment, **Istvan Puski** and I showed up for our March 12th Trail Day. After chatting with **Ranger Greg Escoto**, Istvan and I decided to go up the officially closed Brooks Falls Trail to see the bridge washout firsthand and see if we could do any work along the way. We made it up to the bridge OK and what an amazing scene indeed!: *It looked like a chunk of the steep uphill slope behind the bridge gave way during that fierce storm last Saturday night and all the water, mud and vegetation simply tore it from its downhill footing, as it seemed to be hanging on by a single post on the uphill side. Most of the decking and outside railing was still intact, but the inside railing was nowhere to be seen as far as we could see down the muddy tear in the hillside.*

Greg says we'll replace the bridge, but it will probably be a lengthy process -- stay tuned for more info! We headed back down and turned towards the Trout Farm Trail, where we found a muddy river of water streaming onto the small footbridge by the old foundation. We worked there to build a ditch to divert the water off to the side. Then, further down, just a couple hundred yards before reaching the picnic area, we came across a large eucalypt-



Joseph Piro

Joseph Piro

tus tree that had fallen across the trail. But amidst the damage, we also saw plenty of beauty, including the 2 upper tiers of Brooks Falls -- ribbons of white against the green canyon walls -- and the creek flowing fast and clear anywhere you could glimpse it.

Though the wind pried  
with its stiff fingers  
at the very foundations,

though their melancholy  
was terrible.  
It was already late  
enough, and a wild night,

and the road full of fallen  
branches, trees and stones.

From Mary Oliver's "the Journey"



# A NATURALIST'S PERSPECTIVE by Jim Mackey

May/June 2016

Amphibian extinctions. A greater proportion of amphibians have been classified as threatened, endangered or extinct than any other class of vertebrates. These declines are especially common in those species that are amphibious, i.e. have an aquatic and a terrestrial stage. Local extinctions can be produced by habitat destruction, introduced predators (e.g. bullfrogs, game fish, mosquitofish), communicable disease (e.g. Bd - the chytrid fungus), or pesticides. **R.C. Stebbins & S.M. McGinnis**, in their "Field Guide to Amphibians & Reptiles of California." Rev. ed. "12. U. of Calif. Press, conclude that all of these causes of decline are the results of action by humans.

**Elizabeth Kolbert** includes a description of the chytrid fungus of frogs in her Pulitzer-winning book: "The Sixth Extinction, an Unnatural History." She quotes **D. Wake** and **V. Vredenburg**: "One weedy species has unwittingly achieved the ability to directly affect its own fate and that of most of the other species on this planet." Is it fair to

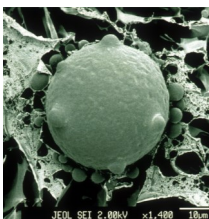
classify humans as weeds? We do exhibit explosive population growth and amazing capabilities of dispersal. (BNP Design Studio royalty-free cartoon of Earth.)

In 1972, our five-year old son was delighted to find a large, old Western toad, *Bufo boreas* (Jim Mackey's photo of



his son, Jim Jr.) in the backyard of our home on Oddstad Boulevard. We have not seen any toads here since then. Should I blame their absence on the much-publicized pandemic of **chytrid fungus**? (scanning electron micrograph of frozen intact zoospore and sporangia of this deadly fungus seen at

right.) Stebbins and McGinnis (ibid) report that declining populations of this toad in Colorado and Wyoming have been linked to the fungus. But I thought of **Jim Steele's** disillusion with the explain-all theory of global warming as the cause of the decline of bird populations, and I decided to consider more local causes. I remembered that Oddstad Boulevard had been constructed over the North Fork of San Pedro Creek. Perhaps a toad-pond was destroyed? Anyhow, what is the value of toads? I remember my Father, in Ohio, tripping over one that was going from our garden to its retreat



under our porch. My children and I saw them in London, and remembered Toad, of Toad Hall, in "Wind in the Willows". [Why depict a wonderful "pest" eater as a greedy, wasteful human? Alas, poor *Bufo*. (**E.H. Shepard** illustration)]

The **Pacific Chorus Frog**, *Pseudacris regilla*, (seen at right with vocal sacs extended-Mendocino County-**James Mackey**, 5/ '14) occurs in all 12 of



Calif's geographic subdivisions. I enjoyed studying populations of them along a transect from the Oregon coast to east of the Cascade mountains. This frog doesn't seem to be vulnerable to the **chytrid fungus**; but it is vulnerable to habitat destruction. There used to be breeding choruses ("breck-eck") of these frogs in seasonal pools where the Pacific Oaks apartments and Park Mall shopping center are now. Children used to collect tadpoles there for rearing.

Could we create a small, seasonal pond in our Park for chorus frogs?

Poor Jim's Almanac. Fence lizards will be bobbing at each other and mating in May and June. I recommend the Weiler road & Valley View Trail.

### MARCH HABITAT RESTORATION DAY

We need more people helping to keep our Park pristine and pleasing for the native plants and critters that feed on them. 'Twas only **Istvan Puski** and **Christine Guzman** that cleared invasives from the Trout Farm area; the biggest threats in this neck of the woods: **vinca** (pictured at right) and **cape ivy**.



### ISTVAN, THE HUNGARIAN, AT WORK

Mr. **Istvan Puski** did a solo on trail day in April, as **Joseph Piro** was ill. He worked on the drainage on the east end of the Hazelnut Trail, about one mile up from the Weiler R.R.

Then on April 16th, habitat restoration day, Istvan pulled invasives from the native plant garden and along the Plaskon Nature Trail—probably some "pretty" **forget-me-nots**, that are dangerously seductive, but ground-greedy plants that offer little or no sustenance to our bugs, birds, and browsers.



### NEWS BRIEFS

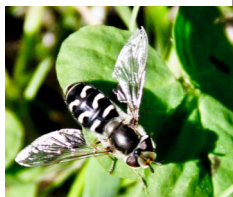
**The Bridge**-Though some say the bridge on the Brook's Creek Trail may not be restored for 2 months, it appears that the initial process of foundation laying is already in its primary stage, according to Ranger **Darrick Emil**.

**The new Executive Director** of the charitable Parks Foundation, **Michelle Beasley**, attended the board meeting of the Friends of SPVP Ap. 19, promising to get help for us to set up a decent program for the public, among other supportive moves.



**ON THE TRAIL** (continued)

Ron Wilson photographed this **hoverfly**, group also called syrphid flies, often pollinators, in the South Walnut area. By the way, some larva of this group of Dipterans eat aphids, etc.



Have you, like me, noticed **crane flies** in your house lately? Here's one Ron shot from the South Walnut area; I've never seen one of this color in my house. Have you? One "plainer one" was visiting our Center just before **Maureen Sullivan's** fine talk.

And a tiny but mighty predatory neuropteran (nerve-wing) was scrutinized and photographed by **Mr. Wilson** on April 15.



Good for Michael Kimbell and wife, who

took a walk before the Sullivan Kangaroo Rat show, & at 5:25 saw a 3 foot gopher snake just beyond the east hazelnut trail junction on the WW Road. Bad for Michael was just missing a photo of the serpent, who turned tail and... (Californiaherps photo)



Of course Ray Trabucco has been busy sighting life forms: special is the **Smith's fairy bells** in early Ap. way back on the lower Trout Farm trail. (photo from sciencehalleyhosting.com)



Ray saw a pair of **Downy Woodpeckers** excavating a nest hole, with chips flying as they enlarged the hole on a decrepit but sought-after tree by the Trout Farm Trail in April. (photo by ibc.lynxed.com)



Happily, a grey fox was seen skulking around the So. Walnut Picnic Area in early April by Ray Trabucco. (photo, Nicholas Wilson)



**MYSTERY PHOTO-CAN YOU IDENTIFY THIS? RON WILSON PHOTOGRAPHED IT, SAYING THAT IT LOOKED LIKE GRAPES IN AN OAK TREE. JIM MACKEY IDENTIFIED IT. A FREE \$5 ITEM FROM OUR TRAILSIDE STORE GOES TO THE NEXT PERSON TO CORRECTLY ID "IT". 355-7466 OR EMAIL EDITOR.**

**MAY—JUNE 2016 CALENDAR**

- B.VANDERWERF "Montara Mt." BOOK SIGNING**  
Saturday, May 7.....10:30am—noon
  - SPRING BARBEQUE FOR FRIENDS OF SPVP**  
Saturday, May 7.....12noon
  - MAY BOARD MEETING OF "FRIENDS OF SPVP"**  
Tuesday, May 10.....7pm
  - JIM STEELE'S BIRD SONG HIKE**  
Saturday, May 14.....8am
  - MAY TRAIL DAY**  
Saturday, May 14.....9am
  - MAY HABITAT RESTORATION DAY**  
Saturday, May 21.....9am
  - DR. VASEY, SF BAY ESTUARINE RESEARCH**  
Saturday, May 21.....6pm
  - JUNE BOARD MEETING OF "FRIENDS OF SPVP"**  
Tuesday, June 14.....7pm
  - JUNE TRAIL DAY**  
Saturday, June 11.....9am
  - JUNE HABITAT RESTORATION DAY**  
Saturday, June 18.....9am
- For all events except board meetings meet at the Visitor Center.*

**FACTOID**

Very few non-social insects care for their young, but the female **earwig** is a very notable exception. The mother will provide her eggs with warmth, clean them to protect them from fungus and protect them from predators. During this period, the only thing she'll eat is any eggs that have gone bad and will not hatch. When the eggs hatch, she will help the babies break through their shells and continue to protect the little ones for another few months until they have molted a second time. She will even feed her babies regurgitated food.



Sources:

Wikipedia:

Burton, Maurice (January 2001). [International Wildlife Encyclopedia](#) Gullan, P.J.; P.S. Cranston (2005). "9 - Ground Dwelling Insects". [The Insects: An Outline of Entomology](#)

Also see: "Scientific American" April, 2016

**The Leaders of "the Friends of SPVP":** President: **Jim Steele**. Vice President & Editor of this newsletter: **Carolyn Pankow**; Secretary: **Shirley Drye**; Interim Treasurer: **Bing Huey**; Visitor Center Desk and Staffing: **Mila Stroganoff**; Habitat Restoration leader: **Istvan Pusk**; Trail Leader: **Joseph Piro**; Membership: **Jim Steele**; Programs: **Carolyn Pankow**; Trailside Store Manager: **Sharron Walker**; Mobile Display Board: **Katie Antista**. Member at large: **Jim Mackey**. *Letters to the editor at: carolynjunepankow@yahoo.com*