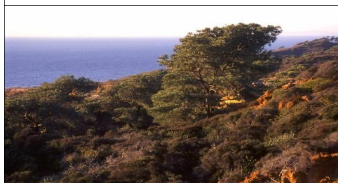


# the FRIENDS of SAN PEDRO VALLEY PARK

## MIKE VASEY to SPEAK on OUR MARITIME CHAPARRAL in APRIL



On Saturday, April 12, **Mike Vasey**, one of our best known Pacifica Biologists, will appear at the Visitor Center at **8pm**. Mike will be talking and showing slides of the plants native to our area, the coastal chaparral, or shaggy, tough plants that in the days of vaqueros necessitated the wearing of “chaps” to push through on horseback. (CACHaparral Field Ins't photo.)

Mike received his Masters on Ecology & Systematic Biology from San Francisco State University. At present he is working on his PhD at UC Santa Cruz, studying the “conservation of maritime chaparral and the influence of fog on this sensitive natural community”.

Mike has taught conservation biology & environmental studies at SFSU since the early 1990s. He has been active in the Pacifica community on the Pacifica Land Trust and on the San Pedro Creek Watershed Coalition. He has been involved in wetland conservation issues for years & is currently working for the recently designated S.F. Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve.

## THE FORMATION OF GEMS—Dr. JEAN DeMOUTH—MAR. 22



One of the more dazzling accomplishments of Mother Earth is to create amazing minerals that we humans fashion into heavily admired and sought-after possessions. Except perhaps for the origin of diamond and pearls, just how this comes about is something most of us are not familiar with. (Myanmar ruby mine from : www.astrologicalgem.com)

On Saturday, March 22, at 7:30 come to our visitor center to hear the popular speaker & geologist for the California Academy of Sciences, **Jean DeMouthe**, talk to us about the geology of how gems are formed, as well as some of the basic geology in the formation of rocks. (Robert Weldon ruby photo)



Jean has degrees in geology and science education from Humboldt State University, SFSU, and UC Berkeley. Dr. DeMouthe is the Senior Collections manager for the Academy, and teaches in the museum graduate studies program at SFSU. She is also the acting county geologist for San Mateo County. Jean comes highly recommended by volunteer **Mila Stroganoff**, former Academy docent.

## FRIENDS NEED EXPERIENCED TREASURER

At our March gen. mtg. “The Friends” will select a committee to nominate new officers. At the April mtg. you may nominate members from the floor. At the May general meeting the election will take place. Right now our main concern is finding a treasurer who will help us deal with our new non-profit status.

## EARTH DAY AT OUR PARK—FOOD & HIKES



Here's another chance to go on nature hikes with our popular leaders: **Judy Spitler** and **Shirley Drye**, & to enjoy an old fashioned hot dog and hamburger barbecue.

(sewnetwork.netbonusdesigns drawing)

Bring your binoculars for **Ms. Spitler's** bird hike which will start at 1:30pm ; **Mrs Drye's** “Find and Identify Native Plants” hike starts at 12:30 pm. Both leaders will meet you at the Visitor Center.



**The barbecue begins at noon** on this native plant day, a day to honor our Native Plant Group. Call **Jean Leonard** at 359-7485 to volunteer a dessert or salad.

## ON THE TRAIL-Sightings

The first pristine blossom of the **pink flowering current** (at right-[www.yerbabuena nursery.com](http://www.yerbabuena.nursery.com)) is showing itself off in the native sun garden.—Feb. 1, and despite all kinds of rough weather the amazing **sticky monkey flowers** look bright & happy—your editor.



**Ranger David de Vasquez** sighted about 20 “fat” quail—who looked deceptively large due to the fluffing out of their feathers in the pm chill—by the entry gate at 4:30pm-1/31(photo of California Quail is from the Save La Cuesta Ridge and Ravine website)

**Katie Antista** walked up the east side of the Hazelnut on Jan 29, looking for the first flowers. She found **milkmaids** in bloom and ripening buds on the **fetid adder's tongue** and the **hound's tongue**. Look for these natives on **Shirley Drye's** Earth Day hike. (milkmaids photo by Tom Jolly)  
(continued on page 4)



## DOUGLAS IRIS—March-April FLOWER

Late one evening, in the Spring of maybe '05, I was on the Hazelnut trail, alone in the approaching darkness, stepping slowly downward, when I saw a small shadow hovering over the now colorless clumps of *Iris douglasiana*. I will never really know what that shape was—tiny bird or giant moth, BUT I was excited by the

mystery. If it had been a moth, it must have been deceived, as the only Lepidopteran I could find that likes Irises is the “lowly” little skipper, & not the large night-flying moths like the **Sphinx & the Polyphemus**.

Apparently, some **Hummingbirds** do exploit the nectar of irises, but talk about keeping late hours! And anyway it's Bumble Bees that usually couple with the irises. (iris-Diana Frissrom ws) (Anna's Hummingbird photo by Tim Knight)

I became more curious about the iris—who, for instance, eats all their abundant vegetation? I never noticed that anything has chomped down on Iris leaves, as they do with the similar appearing foliage of the **soap root**. In fact upon checking the web, I found that **deer, rabbits and mice** find the iris's leaves too bitter & harsh. Many a browser or grazer passes them by. To me, that leaves a lot of leaf surface and *maybe* a bigger, healthier flower in Mar. & April? But speaking of those tough, fibrous leaves: Strange how one man's meat is another “man's poison”—I found out that long ago, **Ohlones** used a sharp abalone shell to separate the

durable strands from the outer edges of the leaves and with the great patience of—a *woman*? fashion them into a strong, durable rope, reliable enough to snare a **deer**. Time to render and weave these strands together for a twelve foot length was 6 weeks.

Well, I think you wouldn't like an endeavor so demanding of your precious days, but maybe you wouldn't mind spending a few minutes to hike up to the irises this spring, and then you can contemplate their role in nature and their past use by humans. And if you do have the time, maybe you can loiter in the late evening to try to catch a pollinator in operation—possibly you'll find out that I'm not too far off base. Just remember to get permission from a ranger before you sneak up this trail at an “illegal” hour.

(for fascinating facts on the Douglas Iris, type in “Douglas Iris food” on Google, and find the choose the “cdfa.ca.gov” website)

Spring unfolds anew.....

Now in my second childhood

Folly, folly too

Issa



## AFTER the STORM-January 15

It was **Hal, Ed, Jim, me [Jorgensen, Decker, Pommier, Joseph Piro,]** and someone new — a friendly German fellow by the name of **Jochen Horn** [who had been scouting the trail for a running club] — bright and early at the Visitor's Center. When we asked the **Ranger David de Vasquez** what we could work on, it was something to the effect of “cleanup anything virtually anywhere” after that big, wild storm that blew through the previous weekend. He and another Ranger were taking crews up the Montara Mtn. Trail, so we headed out with rakes, a small handsaw and some other tools to clean up the Trout Farm/Brooks Falls loop. And a good raking was indeed needed — the fallen branches & leaves were so thick in places you couldn't see the trail surface! Slowly but steadily we made our way along, leaving a well-groomed trail behind us that would hopefully dry out a bit under a sunny, clear blue sky. (photo of (downed euc from Bolsingerblogs.com)

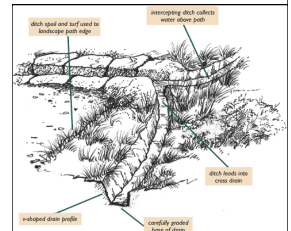
**Joseph Piro**



## DRAINS AND DITCHES for RAIN

Friend, **Yvonne Malloy**, joined **me, Ed Decker & Jim Pommier** on this month's Trail Day. **Ranger David de Vasquez** suggested we could work on rain dips on the Valley View or Montara Mtn. Trails. We decided to do the latter trail, so we set off from the parking lot under a sunny blue sky with our tools. We didn't make it exceptionally far up the trail — just up to 4th switchback I think — but we got a lot done along that stretch. We dug 3 or 4 smooth new rain dips, cleaned out several existing ones and dug out the inside drainage channel along every switchback along the way. It was good weather, good work and good company. What more could one want for a Trail Day?

**Joseph Piro**



## FACIOD

Fur or hair accounts for up to half of all the material in the cavity nest of the **Chestnut-backed Chickadee**. The hair from **rabbits, coyotes, and deer** is commonly used and even at times, hair from a **skunk**. One wonders why, with a nest like that they don't use it in the winter, since the chickadee does not migrate! As doting, attentive parents they also make a layer of fur about 1cm thick that they use to cover the eggs when the adults leave the nest—the perfect comforter!(info from Cornell University Ornithology Website) Think about all of this when **Jim Mackey** shows you another nesting hole of this **Chickadee** on one of his hikes. (Miriam Ellis drawing of this Chickadee is from : <http://www.americanbirdguide.com>)

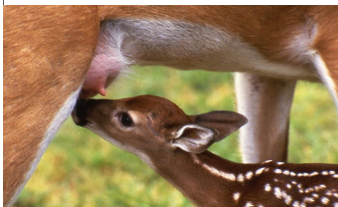


## A NATURALIST'S PERSPECTIVE

By Jim Mackey

March-April 2008

**Are you what you eat?** I was watching some **deer** that were grazing peacefully in one of our meadows by the Weiler Ranch Road, and I wondered, idly, how old they might be. I remembered that our deer tend to breed in



November; the **fawns** are often born in May and continue to nurse until late summer, while the female fawns go on to mature and be ready to breed by their second November – at age 1 ½! A male requires an additional year to become a mature, muscular **buck**, with forked antlers, at age 2 ½! How can they build so much muscle, so fast, on a diet of grass?(fawn, mom-nat.ressource consultants, Inc.)

Okay, the rapidly-growing fawns derived protein from their mother's milk. But where did the doe get the protein to produce the milk? My quandary made me empathize with **Adam** and **Eve** when they were puzzled as to how the milk got into their cow. (This was reported by **Mark Twain**, in "Letters from the Earth", who was privileged to have access to Adam and Eves' diary.) Adam and Eve reasoned that something other than grass, maybe manna from heaven, must be entering the cow, thus enabling her to produce milk. So they divided the day, and night, into alternating shifts so that one of them would be watching the cow at all times. Unfortunately their effort was not rewarded.



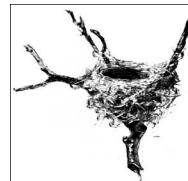
We were on safari in Kenya in 1985 and approaching Lake Nakuru. There appeared to be a doughnut-shaped pink zone around the edge of the lake. As we approached, the zone resolved into hundreds of thousands of **Lesser Flamingos**, most of which were wading with their remarkable beaks in the water, filtering their diet of blue-green algae.

A woman next to me in the van began to munch on some tablets. I asked what they were and she replied that they were dried blue-green algae that she had gotten from a health-food store. "Aha!" I said, "We aren't what we eat, after all, because you & the flamingos are eating the same thing, but look how different you are!"(L Flam whozoo.org/.../flamingos/flamingo)

**Ruminating.** On a warm, sunny afternoon you might see a deer lying, head up, in the shade of an alder at the edge of a meadow. Its jaws may be seen moving

tirelessly, from side to side, as it munches on its **cud**. How wonderful that it can feed without being exposed to the sun and its enemies! Incidentally, its cud is regurgitated herbage that has been fermented and digested (including the cellulose of the plant cell walls) by **microbes** in the 4 stomachs of the deer's **rumen**. **Rabbits** have a diet similar to that of deer, but they lack a rumen. However they have cellulose-digesting microbes in their colons. But the products of this digestion cannot be absorbed through the colon, so rabbits often eat their fecal pellets as they leave the anus. So evolution, not design, has stumbled across 2 different solutions to the same problem.

**Poor Jim's Almanac.** Now is the season, as the late **Cliff Richer** pointed out, when the Park begins to sing to us. Listen for **warblers** and **grosbeaks**. And can we find any nests? (above, rightdrawing of **Yellow Warbler** nest from project Gutenberg w.s.)



## SWEEPING AWAY THE SCOTCH BROOM

**Jim Pommier, Jim Mackey**, and our Hungarian, **Istvan Puski**, hiked through the brush above the Weiler Ranch Rd near the E. Valley View trailhead where they found a growth of **Scotch broom** that "the Jims" had battled before, but this time Pommier was heartened at its diminished presence. However, just as **Katie Antista** battles the **sheep sorrel** in our garden, they gave no quarter to the remaining sprouts of this yellow-flowered plant, and yanked them out like dentists pulling rotten teeth.

Then up the hill they went by an old **eucalyptus** to a patch of **cotoneaster** (which I still need to clear from *my* yard) some of which were as large as a "tumbleweeds", according to Jim Pommier. Once that growth was eradicated they went East on the hill and took out **Pampas grass**, and the "biggest weed", the eucalyptus. Thus went the morning of January 19.

Information for 2 articles supplied by:  
**JIM POMMIER**

[editor note—seeds of Scotch broom can last up to 80 years in the nat. environ] (Scotch broom art is -Karl Urban's wildflower drawings)



## BATTLING THE BRUSH in FEBRUARY

Native plant day—Feb; **Jim Pommier, Jim Mackey, & Istvan Puski** hike quite far up the hill from the west Valley View trailhead and find legions of **pampas grass** & other invasives hidden in the brush. With determination they extirpate each of the insurgents, but half the battle is dealing with the thick resistance of the natives. Jim Mackey lurks elsewhere on the trail to deal a death blow to **Euc** sprouts; he engineers new channels to deal with persistent flooding just below the summit. Our platoon is once again victorious and productive.

**ON THE TRAIL(cont'd)**

**Jim Mackey** is the winner for the first sighting of a **giant trillium** in bloom on the Plaskon on Feb 4.



Look for the “dripping” **Witch’s Butter** that **Ray Trabucco**, photographed & placed in the outdoor VC cabinet.

The **Cooper’s Hawk** nest by shop is active once again according to **Jack Dodson**. (Jack Laws sketch of Giant Trillium)

**JACK DODSON HITS THE TRAIL AGAIN in Feb** Not much



happening but the rain runoff is wonderful, all the water trickling, gushing and pouring into the creek & tributaries. A fine sight and hopeful for the **steelhead** spawn. **Manzanita** is the only thing budding and beginning to bloom now. But there will be a good Spring time after all.

The **deer** have their heavy winter coats and, I hope, don't get too cold. The young ones are out & healthy and the pregnant does maybe somewhere else. Did you know that we replaced our **English walnut trees** with **California black walnut** which reaches only 15 to 35 feet tall? Nine to 17 leaflets on a stem and edible nuts make them attractive. Majestic, maybe not. It's been a pleasure to watch them grow. Not even fruit trees are blooming now, nor many wild flowers. Very few insects—but the **birds** are eating tiny seeds or maybe beginning to nest. Not much in evidence. The **gophers** are really "going to town." Picked up six ancient, crumpled soda cans off trail thanks to the dearth of new growth. (Calif. Black Walnut row from Fallbrook, CA Village News) ( Gopher is UCD



**ANNA’S HUMMINGBIRD IN THE HEADLINES**

The first warm day of the year—Friday, February 8. I had just read the S.F. Chronicle article, “**Hummingbird** chirps with its tail feathers”, which described the way 2 U.C. students discovered the physics of how some birds make noise, in particular the diving humming bird. The students proved that at the end of a dive, as they apply their tail feathers like air brakes, one can hear an audible chirp, which comes from the angle the tail feathers assume. I had often observed hummingbirds diving from on high, though I'd never heard the “chirp”, and that brings me back to that first really warm day in our Park.



I had started the VV Trail & stopped to see the source of the hawk’s cry. Then something dropped from the sky, & against its pure blueness was the (Anna’s hummingbird -Tx. Parks & Wildlife photo)

**MARCH-APRIL CALENDAR**

**MARCH TRAIL DAYS**  
Saturday, March 8.....8am  
**MARCH GENERAL MEETING**  
Wednesday, March 12.....7pm  
**MARCH NATIVE PLANT DAY**  
Saturday, March 15.....9am  
**JEAN deMOUTHE’S FORMATION of GEMS**  
Saturday, March 22.....7:30pm  
**APRIL GENERAL MEETING**  
Wednesday, April 9.....7pm  
**APRIL TRAIL DAYS**  
Saturday, April 12.....8am  
**MIKE VASEY’S MARITIME CHAPARRAL**  
Saturday, April 12.....8pm  
**APRIL NATIVE PLANT DAY**  
Saturday, April 19.....9am  
**EARTH DAY CELEBRATION & BARBECUE**  
Saturday, April 19.....10:30-1:30  
*For all events meet at the Visitor Center*  
*Coming events: May 17—Birds through a lens with Joe Morlan; Jim Steele Music of Birds hike on My 10.*

**NEWS BRIEFS**

**Saturday, Jan. 5—we had a 24 hour total of 2.10” of rain**, and a bit of wind, and trees & branches were down everywhere. **Ranger David de Vasquez** and **Martin King**, park aide, worked to cut and remove an **aspen** tree down in the South Walnut, a large **eucalyptus** that blocked the Weiler Ranch Rd. & a large **willow**, 20” in circumference that had fallen at the far end of the Trout Farm Rd. The Hazelnut had to be closed since large limbs were down, as **Istvan** found out during his explorations. (rain cartoon from bygosh.com)



**Art Armstrong**, our tireless trail worker and leader, with his extraordinary sense of humor, suffered a stroke recently, & at last notice was improving at the Pacifica Rehab and ready for bright cards for his bulletin board.

silhouette of a hummingbird flying back up, not far away. He had no interest in me but wanted other hummingbirds to see & hear. Remembering the article in the newspaper that day, I stood there & made my own study. He continued his dive-bombing descents in the same place & I heard the audible “chirp” he made at the bottom of his dive as he spread his tail feathers to break the descent. For the first time, I both saw and heard it again and again. Having satisfied my need to know, I continued my hiking, hearing a familiar “wheedle” that I knew to be the hummingbird’s song. The little hummer perched on a bush, its throat swelling as it vocalized on this perfect February day.  
**Jack Dodson**